

# THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

## THE SHIN SECT OF BUDDHISM

### 1

Of all the developments Mahayana Buddhism has achieved in the Far East, the most remarkable one is the Shin teaching of the Pure Land school. It is remarkable chiefly for this reason, that, geographically, its birth-place is Japan, and, historically, it is the latest evolution of Pure Land Mahayana and therefore the highest point it has reached.

The Pure Land idea first grew in India and the Sutras devoted to its exposition were compiled probably about three hundred years after Buddha. The school bearing its name started in China towards the end of the fifth century when the White Lotus Society was organised by Hui-yüan (334–416) and his friends in 403. The idea of a Buddha-land (*buddha-kṣetra*) which is presided over by a Buddha is as old as Buddhism, but a school based upon the desire to be born in such a land in order to attain the final end of the Buddhist life did not fully materialise until Buddhism began to flourish in China as a practical religion. It took the Japanese genius of the thirteenth century to mature it further into the teaching of the Shin school. Some may wonder how the Mahayana could have expanded itself into the doctrine of pure faith which apparently stands in direct contrast to the Buddha's supposedly original teaching of self-reliance and enlightenment by means of Prajñā.<sup>1</sup> The Shin is thus not infrequently considered altogether unbuddhistic.

What is then the teaching of the Shin?

Essentially, it is a teaching growing from the Original Vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna*) of Amida, the Buddha of Infinite

<sup>1</sup> Transcendental wisdom, or intuitive knowledge—one of the specifically Buddhist terms requiring a somewhat lengthy explanation.

Light and Eternal Life. Amida has a Pure Land created out of his boundless love for all beings, and wills that whoever should cherish absolute faith in his "vows"<sup>1</sup> which are the expression of his Will would be born in his Land of Purity and Bliss. In this Land inequalities of all kinds are wiped out and those who enter are allowed equally to enjoy Enlightenment. There are thus three essential factors constituting the Shin teaching: Amida, his Vow, and Faith on the part of his devotees.

Amida is not one who enjoys quietly in his Land of Purity an infinite light and eternal life, he holds all these qualities on the condition that they are to be shared by all beings. And this sharing by all beings of his light and life is made possible by their cherishing an unconditioned faith in Amida. This faith is awakened in all beings who hear the Name (*nāmadheya*) of Amida, and sentient beings are bound to hear it sooner or later as he has made his vows to the effect that his Name be heard throughout the ten quarters of the world.

Some may ask, "How is it that Amida's vows are so effective as to cause us to turn towards him for salvation or enlightenment?" The Shin follower will answer: Amida is *Infinite Light*, and, therefore, there is no corner of the human heart where its rays do not penetrate: he is *Eternal Life*, and, therefore, there is not a moment in our lives when he is not urging us to rise above ourselves. His vows reflect his Will—the Will as illumined by Infinite Light and imbued with *Eternal Life*; they cannot be otherwise than the most efficient cause to lift us above ourselves who are limited individuals in time and space.

Amida's vows are expressions of his love for all beings, for Amida is love incarnate. Love is eternal life and emits infinite light. Each ray of light carries his Name to the farthest end of the universe and those who have ears are

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese version adopted by the Jōdo followers counts forty-eight, for which see below.

sure to hear it. They are indeed recipients of Amida's love whereby they are at once transferred into his Land of Purity and Bliss, for hearing is receiving and receiving is believing and believing is the condition Amida requires of his devotees.

In short, the above makes up the principal teaching of the Shin Sect.

## 2

The evolution of the Pure Land idea marks an epoch in the history of Mahayana Buddhism. While the latter itself is a phenomenal fact in the history of general Buddhism, the rise of the Pure Land idea illustrates the persistent and irrepressible assertion of certain aspects of our religious consciousness—the aspects somewhat neglected in the so-called primitive teaching of the Buddha.

Mahayana Buddhism is a religion which developed around the life and personality of the Buddha, rather than a religion based upon the words of his mouth. The person is greater and more real than his words; in fact words gain validity because of a person behind them; essentially is this the case with moral teachings and truths. Mere logicity has no spiritual force which will compel us to follow it. Intellectual acquiescence occupies a corner of our surface consciousness, it does not penetrate into the seat of one's inner personality. Words or letters are needed to communicate events detached partly or wholly from personality, and therefore they are more or less impersonal, and to that extent ineffective to move the spirit itself. Religion is nonsensical unless it comes in direct contact with the spirit. This contact is only possible when a real personality stands before you or when his image or memory lives for ever vividly and inspiringly in you. For this reason the Mahayana was bound to rise soon after the passing of the Buddha, and became a form of Buddhism in which the personality of the Buddha occupied the centre although this does not mean that his words were neglected or altogether set aside. Indeed

his teachings were interpreted in the light of his life and personality and followed as containing the seeds which will eventually come to maturity in Buddhahood.

There is no doubt that Buddha was a wonderful personality, that is, there must have been something in him which was super-human impressing his immediate disciples with a supernaturally overwhelming and entirely irresistible power. While still walking among them, Buddha wielded this power over them with every syllable he uttered; in fact his mere presence was enough to inspire them to rise above themselves not only in the spiritual sense but even in the physical because some of his followers believed that his miraculous power was capable of driving away an evil spirit which would cause pestilence.

It is perfectly in accord with human nature to believe that the great personality has divine power known among the Mahayanists as Adhiṣṭhāna. This power goes out of its owner and moves the inmost hearts of those who come into its presence. It is a kind of personal magnetism raised to the *n*th power, we may say. The Buddha attained Enlightenment, that is to say, Siddhartha Gautama of the Śākya family became the Enlightened One after so many kalpas (eons) of moral and spiritual training. Enlightenment means perfected personality—one who is perfect in Prajñā (“transcendental or intuitive knowledge”) and Karuṇā (“love”). Inasmuch as this perfection is the result of the accumulation of all kinds of spiritual merit, it cannot be something exclusively enjoyed by an individual being, that is, something which does not go out of himself in some way. When one is perfected the rest of the world must also to a certain extent share in its perfection, because the world is not a mere aggregate of units individually separated, but an organism whose units are in a most intimate way knitted together. This is the reason why the Enlightenment of the Buddha does not stay closed up in himself, in his individual personality, but is bound to step out of its spatial-temporal

shell into a world encompassing all beings. The appearance of a Buddha therefore corresponds to the awakening of faith in universal enlightenment. The Buddha is creative life itself, he creates himself in innumerable forms with all the means native to him. This is called his *adhiṣṭhāna*, as it were, emanating from his personality.

The idea of *Adhiṣṭhāna* is one of the Mahayana landmarks in the history of Indian Buddhism and it is at the same time the beginning of the "other-power" (*tariki* in Japanese) school as distinguished from the "self-power" (*jiriki*).<sup>1</sup> The principle of the "self-power" school is one of the characteristics of the so-called Hinayana or the earlier school of Buddhism in India. "Self-power" means "to be a lamp to yourself", it is the spirit of self-reliance, and aims at achieving one's own salvation or enlightenment by the practice of the Eightfold Noble Path or of the Six Virtues of Perfection. If this is impossible in one life, the devotee of the self-power will not relax his efforts through many a life as was exemplified by the Buddha who underwent many a rebirth in order to perfect himself for his supreme enlightenment. Recruits for the self-power school must therefore be endowed with a strong will and a high degree of intelligence. Without intelligence he will not be able to grasp the full significance of the Fourfold Noble Truth, and an intelligent grasp of this truth is most necessary for the sustained exercise of the will-power, which is essential for the performance of the various items of morality as prescribed by the Buddha.

The purport of the Fourfold Noble Truth is to acquaint us with the moral law of causation, i.e., the doctrine of karma. Karma means "What you sow, you reap," and the Noble Truth states it in a more formal way from the point of view of spiritual emancipation. The reason why Buddhists condemn Ignorance (*avidyā*) so persistently is that the being ignorant of the Noble Truth which is the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Ta* = other, *riki* = power, and *ji* = self.

law keeps one for ever committing evil deeds. Evil in Buddhist terminology is to ignore the law of causation and the doctrine of karma, for this ignoring involves us in an endless transmigration. Self-power, karma, and causality thus are closely correlated terms in Buddhism, and as long as this correlation continued there was no need for the idea of Adhiṣṭhāna to develop among the Buddhists.

There is however an innate yearning in our hearts to break up this closely knitted correlation existing between karma, causality, and self-power; there is something in the depths of our consciousness always craving to go beyond these terms of mutual limitation. This secret yearning is indeed the primal factor entering into the foundation of the Mahayana teachings. It may be regarded in a way as contradicting the views of the earlier Buddhists or even those of the Buddha. But it had already been on its way to a fuller development when the Mahayanists began to conceive the personality of the Buddha together with his teachings, as the basis of their religious life and thought.

In short, it is human desire to transcend karma, to break through the chain of causation, to take hold of a power absolutely other than "self-power." It may not be quite adequate to call this a desire; it is far stronger, more innate, more fundamental, and more enduring than any kind of desire the psychologist may analyse; it occupies the core of personality; it is awakened in the human heart with the awakening of consciousness, and really constitutes the grand paradox of human life. But it is here where we have the fundamental of the "other-power" (*tariki*) teaching.

Karma, the moral law of causation, is the principle governing human life as it endures in a world of relativity. As long as Buddhism moves in this world demanding the practice of the Eight Paths of Morality and of the Six Virtues of Perfection, the law of karma is to be most scrupulously followed, for without this law all our moral and ascetic endeavours will come to naught. But as our ex-

istence reaches out into a realm of the unconditioned, it never remains satisfied with the teachings based upon the rigid, inflexible law of karma, it demands teachings more pliable, adaptive, and mobile, that is to say, more living and creative. Such teachings are to be founded on things lying beyond the ken of karma or causality which is after all only applicable to the conditionality-phase of existence.

Human life is rigorously karma-bound, there is no denying it, and when we disregard this fact, we are a sore sight. But at the same time one of the human legs stands in a world where karma loses its domination. It may be better to describe this state of affairs thus: while our limited consciousness urges to conform ourselves to the working of karma, the Unconscious attracts us away to the Unknown beyond karma. The Unconscious and the Unknown are not terms to be found in the dictionary of our ordinary life, but they exercise a mysteriously irresistible power over us, before which logic and psychology are of no avail. This most fundamental contradiction which appears in every section of human life refuses to be reconciled in no other way than by the "other-power" teaching of Mahayana Buddhism.

To be living within the boundaries of karma and yet to transcend them—that is, to be and yet not to be—is the climax of irrationality as far as logic goes. "To be or not to be" is the question possible only within logic. Simultaneously to be and not to be means to occupy two contradicting points at once—and can there be anything more absurd, more nonsensical, more irrational than this?

The self-power is logical and therefore intelligible appealing to ordinary minds, but the other-power is altogether irrational, and the fact is that this irrationality makes up human life. Hence the inevitability of Mahayana Buddhism.

We must however remember that the teaching of the other-power school does not mean to annihilate the karma-phase of human life in order to make it absolutely transcend

itself, to live altogether away from its own life. This is an impossibility inasmuch as we are what we are; if we try to deny the present life as we live it, that is surely suicidal, it is no transcending of the earthly life. What the other-power tries to do, indeed what all the schools of the Mahayana try to do is to live this life of karma and relativity and yet to live at the same time a life of transcendence, a life of spiritual freedom, a life not tied down to the chain of causation. To use Christian expression, immanence is conceivable only with transcendence and transcendence with immanence; when the one is made to mean anything without the other, neither becomes intelligible. But to have both at the same time is altogether illogical, and this is what we are trying to do, showing that logic is somehow to contrive to adjust itself to the fact.

The Mahayana philosophers have a theory to solve the question of immanence and transcendence or to explain the relationship between *karma* and *akarma*.<sup>1</sup> This theory, as systematically expounded in Aśvaghosha's *Awakening of Faith*, starts with the idea of Suchness (*tathatā* in Sanskrit). Suchness is the limit of thought, and human consciousness cannot go any further than that; expressed in another way, without the conception of Suchness there is no bridge or background whereby the two contradictory ideas, karma and akarma, could be linked. In Suchness or Thusness, affirmation and negation, that is, all forms of opposites find their place of reconciliation or interpenetration; for affirmation is negation and negation is affirmation, and this interpenetration is only possible in Suchness. Suchness may thus be said to be standing on two legs—birth-and-death which is the realm of karma, and no-birth-and-death which is the realm of akarma beyond the reach of causality.

Suchness is also termed "Mind" (*citta*) from the psychological point of view, and again "Being-Body" (*dharmakāya*).

<sup>1</sup> In Sanskrit *a* is a privative prefix and *akarma* means the negation of karma.



“Suchness” may sound too abstract and metaphysical, and the Mahayana doctors frequently substitute “Mind” for it; “Mind” is a more familiar and therefore more accessible and also acceptable term for general Buddhists, who can thus establish an intimate relation between their individual minds and Mind as final reality. When, however, even “Mind” is regarded to be too intellectual the Buddhists call it Dharmakāya “Being-Body.” *Dharmakāya* is commonly rendered “Law-Body,” but *dharma* really means in this case not “law” or “regulative principle,” but any object of thought abstract or concrete, universal or particular, and *kāya* is “the body,” more in the moral sense of “person” or “personality.” The Dharmakāya is therefore a person whose bodily or organic or material expression is this universe, Dharma. The doctrine of the Triple Body (*trikāya*) has thus evolved from the notion of Dharmakāya.<sup>1</sup>

There is still another term for Suchness, considered principally characterising the teaching of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. It is Emptiness or Void (*śūnyatā*)—one of the terms most frequently misinterpreted by Buddhist critics of the West who have never been able really to get into the Buddhist way of thinking. Emptiness is Suchness in which there is nothing empty. When we speak of Emptiness, we are apt to understand it in its relative sense, that is, in contrast to fullness, concreteness, or substantiality. But the Buddhist idea of Emptiness is not gathered from the negation of individual existences but from the transcendental point of view as it were, for Emptiness unites in itself both fullness and nothingness, both karma and akarma, both determination and freedom, both immanence and transcendence, and jiriki (“self-power”) and tariki (“other-power”).

## 3

The principal Sutra of the Shin sect of the Pure Land

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Studies in the Lankāvatāra*, Pt. III, Chapter III, pp. 308 ff.

school is the *Sutra of Eternal Life* in Chinese translation. The Sanskrit text<sup>1</sup> still available is not in full agreement with the Chinese version which is used by Japanese and Chinese followers of the Pure Land school. The points of disagreement are of various nature, but as it is the Chinese text translated by Kōsōgai (K'ang Sêng-k'ai), that is, Saṅghavarman of Khotan, of the third century, and not the Sanskrit text still extant, which forms the basis of the Pure Land teaching, here will be given a summary of the Chinese version. After this, we will proceed to expound the Shin school as distinguished from the Jōdo school.

*The Sutra of Eternal Life* consists roughly of 9000 Chinese characters and is divided into two parts. Its interlocutors are Śākyamuni, Ananda, and Maitreya or Ajita. The scene is placed on Mount Gridhrakūta where the Buddha sits surrounded by a large number of Bhikshus and Mahayana Bodhisattvas. Ananda observing the Buddha's expression full of serenity, clear, and shining, asks for its reason, and the Buddha begins to tell the whole congregation the story of Dharmākara the Bhikshu who devoted himself to the work of establishing a land of happiness for all sentient beings.

It was long time ago indeed in an innumerable, immeasurable, incomprehensible kalpa before now, that Dharmākara studied and practised the Dharma under the guidance of a Tathagata called Lokeśvararāja. His motive was to perfect a Buddha-land in which every conceivable perfection could be brought together. He asked his teacher to explain and manifest for him the perfection of all the excellent qualities of hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddha-lands, and after seeing all these excellently qualified Buddha-lands he was absorbed in deep meditation for a period of five kalpas. When he arose from the meditation his mind was made up for the establishment of his own land of purity and happiness, in which all the inconceivable

<sup>1</sup> *Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtra.*

excellences he observed were to be integrated. He appeared before his teacher Lokeśvararāja 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 following forty-eight conditions were not fulfilled he might not attain the highest enlightenment. These vows are what is known by Amida followers as his Original Vow.

After this Dharmākara the Bhikshu devoted himself for a space of innumerable, immeasurable, incomprehensible kalpas to the practice of innumerable good deeds which were characterised with the absence of the thoughts of greed, malevolence, and cruelty. In short, he completed all the virtues belonging to the life of a Bodhisattva, which consists of the realisation of Love (*karuṇā*) and Wisdom (*prajñā*). He is now residing in the Western quarter in the Buddha-land called Sukhāvātī, Land of Happiness, far away from this world by a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of Buddha-lands. He is called Amitābha, Infinite Light, because of his light the limit of which is beyond measurement. He is again called Amitāyus, Eternal Life, because the length of his life is altogether incalculable. For instance, let all beings in this world collect their thoughts on measuring the length of Amida's life for hundreds of thousands of kotis of kalpas and yet they would fail to obtain a result.

The forty-eight vows enumerated in the Sutra are as follows:

(1) If in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood there should be hell, a realm of hungry ghosts, or brute creatures, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(2) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood, should return to the three evil paths of existence, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(3) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not all shine in golden colour, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(4) If those who are born in my country after my

obtaining Buddhahood should not all be of one form and colour, showing no difference in looks, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(5) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not have the remembrance of their past lives, at least of things of hundreds of thousands of kotis of kalpas ago, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(6) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not be endowed with the heavenly eye so as at least to be able to see hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddha-countries, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(7) If those who are born in my country after 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.

(8) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not be endowed with the mind-reading faculty so as at least to be able to perceive all the thoughts cherished by beings living in hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddha-countries, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(9) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not be able to step over in the moment of one thought at least hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddha-countries, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(10) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should cherish any thought of the body and be attached to it, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(11) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not be definitely settled in

the group of the faithful before their entrance into Nirvana,<sup>1</sup> may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(12) If after my obtaining Buddhahood my light should be limited and not be able at least to illumine hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddha-countries, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(13) If after my obtaining Buddhahood the length of my life should be limited and not be able at least to last for hundreds of thousands of kotis of kalpas, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(14) If after my obtaining Buddhahood the number of Śrāvakas in my country should be measurable by all beings in three thousand chiliocosms, who, becoming Pratyekabuddhas, should devote themselves to counting for hundreds of thousands of kotis of kalpas, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(15) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should be limited in the length of their life, except those because of their original vows have their life shortened or lengthened, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(16) If those who are born into my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should hear even the name of evil, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(17) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all the immeasurable Buddhas in the ten quarters do not approvingly proclaim my name, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(18) If after 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 for ten times, except those who have committed the five grave offences and those who are

<sup>1</sup> According to Shin, "entering into Nirvana" means "attaining enlightenment", and the attaining of enlightenment which takes place in the Pure Land is to be preceded by joining while here with the group of the faithful.

abusive of the true Dharma, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(19) If after 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.

(20) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all beings in the ten quarters hearing my name cherish the thought of my country and planting all the roots of merit and 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.

(21) If those who are born in my country after my obtaining Buddhahood should not be complete in the thirty-two marks of a great personality, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(22) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all the Bodhisattvas in other Buddha-lands should desire to be born in my country and if they should not be all bound to one birth only, excepting indeed those Bodhisattvas who, because of their original vows to convert all beings, would, fortifying themselves with the armour of universal salvation, accumulate the stock of merit, deliver all beings from misery, visit all the Buddha-countries, practise the discipline of Bodhisattvahood, pay homage to all the Buddha-Tathagatas in the ten quarters, and enlighten all beings as immeasurable as the sands of the Ganga so that all beings might establish themselves in true peerless enlightenment, and further be led on beyond the ordinary stages of Bodhisattvahood, even indeed to the virtues of Samantabhadra, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(23) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all the Bodhisattvas born in my country should not by virtue of the

Buddha's miraculous power pay homage to all the Buddhas, and even in one meal's duration visit all the Buddha-countries numbering as many as hundreds of thousands of kotis, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(24) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all the Bodhisattvas born in my country should desire to cultivate all the root of merit, and if they should not be able to obtain according to their wish every possible article of worship they may require, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(25) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all the Bodhisattvas born in my country should not be able to preach the Dharma which is in harmony with all-knowledge, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(26) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all the Bodhisattvas born in my country should not be endowed with the body of Nārāyana, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(27) If after my obtaining Buddhahood all beings born in my country should be able even with their heavenly eye to enumerate and describe precisely all the objects there which are shining in all splendour and purity in the most exquisite manner, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(28) If after my obtaining Buddhahood the Bodhisattvas born in my country, even those endowed with the least merit, should not perceive a Bodhi-tree most exquisitely coloured and four hundred yojanas in height, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(29) If after my obtaining Buddhahood the Bodhisattvas in my country should not be in possession of perfect knowledge who devote themselves to the reading, reciting and expounding of the sutras should not be in possession of perfect knowledge and eloquence, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(30) If after my obtaining Buddhahood, the Bodhi-

sattvas in my country should be in possession of eloquence and perfect knowledge the extent of which is measurable, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(31) If after my obtaining Buddhahood my country should not be so pure and spotless as to illumine, like a bright mirror reflecting images before it, all the Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters which are in number beyond description and calculability, may I not attain to the Highest Enlightenment.

(32) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, my country from the ground up to the sky should not be filled and ornamented most exquisitely with all kinds of vases made of jewels emitting an immeasurable variety of sweet perfume which rising above gods and men spreads over the ten quarters and if the Bodhisattvas smelling it should not be induced to practise the virtues of Buddhahood, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(33) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in all the immeasurable and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters should not be enveloped in my light and if those coming in touch with it should not enjoy the softness of the body and mind beyond the reach of gods and men, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(34) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in all the innumerable and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters hearing my name should not obtain the recognition of the unborn Dharma<sup>1</sup> and all the Dharanis belonging to Bodhisattvahood, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(35) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, women in all the immeasurable and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters should not, after hearing my name, be filled with joy and trust and awaken their thoughts to enlightenment and loathe their femininity, and if in another

<sup>1</sup> "The Unborn Dharma" means Reality in the absolute aspect, that is, the Dharma not affected by birth-and-death.



birth they should again assume the female body, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(36) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in all the innumerable and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters should not, after hearing my name, always devote themselves to the practice of the holy deeds, in order to perfect the Buddha-truth, this even to the end of their lives, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(37) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in all the innumerable and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters should not, hearing my name, prostrate themselves on the ground to worship me in joy and trust and devote themselves to the practice of the Bodhisattva discipline, thereby winning the reverence of all gods and men, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(38) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, beings born in my country should not acquire whatever exquisite cloaks they wish to have which are permitted by the Buddha, and if these cloaks should not be placed upon their bodies, which require neither cleaning, nor fulling, nor dyeing, nor washing, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(39) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, beings born in my country should not be recipients of joy as great as that enjoyed by Bhikshus thoroughly purged of their defilements, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(40) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas born in my country should not be able to see innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten quarters produced from among the jewel-trees in the land, according to their wish and at any moment desired and so transparently as one perceives one's image in a brightly burnished mirror, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(41) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other countries should, having heard my name, sustain any defects in their sense-organs while pursu-

ing the study of Buddhahood, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(42) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other countries should not realise the samadhi called "pure emancipation" by hearing my name and if they even while in this samadhi should not be able to awaken a thought and pay homage to all the innumerable and inconceivable Buddha-Tathagatas and yet all the time retain their samadhi, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(43) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other lands having heard my name should not be born after death in noble families, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(44) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other lands should not, by hearing my name, leap with joy and devote themselves to the practice of the Bodhisattva discipline and perfect the stock of merit, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(45) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other lands should not by hearing my name realise the samadhi called "Samantānugata" (all-arrived) and if abiding in this samadhi they should not always see until their attainment of Buddhahood all the Buddhas beyond measure and thought, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(46) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas born in my country should not be able to hear, without any effort, whatever Dharmas they aspire to hear, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

(47) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other lands by hearing my name should not instantly reach the stage of no-turning-back,<sup>1</sup> may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

<sup>1</sup> This is the stage where faith is firmly established and no regression ever takes place. *Avāivartika* in Sanskrit.

(48) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other lands by hearing my name should not instantly realise the first, the second, and the third Recognition (*kṣānti*) of the Dharma, and if they should ever turn back in the mastery of all the Buddha-teachings, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.

These forty-eight separate vows were fulfilled by virtue of Dharmākara's loving and unselfish devotion to his work, and the country thus created is known as the Land of Bliss, Sukhāvātī, presided over by him now called Amitābha, Infinite Light, and also Amitāyus, Eternal Life—shortly, Amida in Japanese and Omītofu in Chinese. Ten kalpas have elapsed since the establishment of this miraculous kingdom.

The Sutra then proceeds to the description of the Land of Bliss, commonly designated Jōdo (*tsing-tu* in Chinese), meaning Land of Purity. The description is naturally filled with terms not of this world, being altogether beyond the ordinary human understanding.

The second part of the Sutra opens with Śākyamuni's confirmation of all that has been said before regarding the birth of all beings in the Pure Land of Amida as soon as they hear his Name with joy and trust. The Buddha tells Ananda that all those destined to be born there are those who are definitely established in the true faith even while here, that all the Buddhas in the ten quarters numbering as many as the sands of the Ganga uniformly praise the power and virtue of Amida, both of which are indeed beyond comprehension, and that if we hearing the Name of Amida even once turn our thought towards him, he assures of our rebirth in his country.

(The one most significant remark which is to be made here is that Shinran, founder of the Shin sect, has his characteristic way of reading the Chinese passage containing the characters 至心廻向, "to turn towards. . . in sincerity of thought." "To turn towards whom" is the question here.

Ordinarily it is for all beings to turn towards Amida and direct all their stock of merit towards their rebirth in his country, and no doubt, from the literary point of view too, this is the correct reading. But Shinran reverses the customary way of reading and makes Amida turn all his accumulated merit towards opening the passage for all beings to his Pure Land—where lies the essence of the tariki teaching. That we are assured of our rebirth in Amida's land is not by any means due to our own merit but to Amida's unqualified love for us who in no circumstances can by ourselves work out our own salvation.)<sup>1</sup>

The rest of the Sutra is largely devoted to the narration of the state of things as they are in this world compared with the Pure Land of Amida. The contrast is appalling and the reader would naturally turn away from those disgusting scenes taking place not only in his surroundings but in fact in his own heart day in day out. This depiction is no doubt an annotation added by a commentator, although it now forms integral part of the Sutra itself.

After this Ananda expresses his desire to see Amida's Pure Land, and the entire scene reveals itself at once before Ananda and the whole congregation. The one statement which strikes us here most significantly is: "The four groups of beings on this side at once perceived all that was [on the other side], and those on the other side in turn saw this world in the same way." One may almost feel like making the remark that the Pure Land is the reflection of this world as this world is the reflection of the Pure Land and that if this be the case various inferences may be drawn from this, among which we can point out some theories going directly against the orthodox teaching of Shin.

After this the Sutra ends with the Buddha's usual exhortation to his assembly as to the continuance of the Buddhist teaching and the upholding of the Buddhist faith especially as expounded in the present Sutra.

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion see "Notes" at the end of this article.

## 4

Both Jōdo and Shin belong to the Pure Land school. Jōdo means the "Pure Land" and the official title of the Shin is Jōdo Shin and not just Shin. *Shin* means "true" and its devotees claim that their teaching is truly tariki whereas the Jōdo is not quite so, being mixed with the jiriki idea: hence *Shin* "true" added to *Jōdo*.

The main points of difference between the Jōdo and the Shin teaching are essentially two: 1. Jōdo fully believes with Shin in the efficiency of Amida's Vow but thinks that Amida's Name is to be repeatedly recited; whereas Shin places its emphasis upon faith and not necessarily upon the nembutsu,<sup>1</sup> which is, the repeated recitation of the Name. 2. Jōdo encourages good works as helpful for the devotee being born in the Pure Land; whereas Shin finds here a residue of the jiriki ("self-power") and insists that as long as the devotee awakens his whole-hearted faith in Amida, Amida takes care of him unconditionally and absolutely assures his entrance into the Pure Land. Whatever nembutsu he may offer to Amida is no more than the grateful appreciation of the favour of the Buddha.

The fundamental idea underlying the Shin faith is that we as individual existences are karma-bound and therefore sinful, for karma is inevitably connected with sin; that as no karma-bound beings are capable of effecting their own emancipation, they have to take refuge in Amida who out of his infinite love for all beings is ever extending his arms of help; and that all that is needed of us is to remain altogether passive towards Amida, for he awakens in our hearts, when they are thoroughly purgated of all the ideas of self and self-reliance, a faith which at once joins us to

<sup>1</sup> In Sanskrit, *buddhasmṛiti*, literally, "thinking of the Buddha". But it has come to be synonymous with *shōmyō*, "reciting or pronouncing the Name". For the Jōdo followers *nembutsu* means *shōmyō*, to think of the Buddha is to pronounce his Name, Amida. For further remarks see below and also my *Zen Essays*, Vol. II, p. 159 et seq.

Amida and makes us entirely his. This being so, we as creatures subject to the law of moral causation can accomplish nothing worthy of the Pure Land; all good works so called are not all good from the viewpoint of absolute value, for they are always found deeply tinged with the idea of selfhood which no relatively-conditioned beings are able to shake off. Amida, in his capacity of Infinite Light and Eternal Life, stands against us, ever beckoning us to cross the stream of birth-and-death. Faith is the act of response on our part, and its practical result is our crossing the stream.

One difference at least between Jōdo and Shin or between jiriki and tariki as regards their attitude towards the nembutsu is, according to the author of the *Anjin-ketsujō-shō*,<sup>1</sup> that "The nembutsu as practised by the jiriki followers puts the Buddha away from themselves far in the West, and thinking that they are worthless beings they would now and then recollect the Original Vow of the Buddha and pronounce his Name (*shōmyō*). This being so the most intimate relationship between the Buddha and all beings fails to establish itself here. When a pious feeling however slight moves in their hearts, they may be persuaded to think that their rebirth is approaching. But when they are not too anxious to say the nembutsu and whatever pious feeling they have grows weaker, the assurance of their rebirth wavers. Inasmuch as they are common mortals, it is only on exceptional occasions that they cherish pious feelings; and they thus naturally have an uncertain outlook in regard to their rebirth [in the Pure Land]. They may have to wait in this uncertain state of mind until the time actually comes for them to depart from this life. While

<sup>1</sup> The author is unknown, but this short treatise contains a remarkably clear exposition of the tariki teaching. *Anjin* means "peaceful mind", *ketsujō* "final settlement", and *shō* "treatise"; and the whole title may be rendered "On the Final Peaceful Settlement of Mind." The work has contributed greatly to the philosophy of the Shin.

they occasionally pronounce the Name with their mouth, they have no definite assurance for the Pure Land. This position is like that of a feudal retainer who only occasionally comes out in the presence of the lord. [His relationship with the latter can never be intimate and trustful.] Such a devotee is ever worried over as to how to court the favour of the Buddha, how to be reconciled to him, how to win his loving consideration, and this very fact of his worries alienates him from Buddha, resulting in the unharmonious relationship between the devotee's unsettled mind and Buddha's great compassionate heart. The [jiriki] devotee thus puts himself at a distance from Buddha. As long as he keeps up this attitude of mind his rebirth in the Pure Land is indeed extremely uncertain. . . ."

From this, we see that the jiriki followers' relation to Buddha is not so intimate and trustful as that of the tariki. They endeavour to court the favour of Amida by doing something meritorious, including the recitation of his Name, but this attitude indicates a certain fundamental separation and irreconcilability as existing between Buddha and his devotees. The jiriki thus tends to create an unnecessary gap where according to the tariki there has never been any from the very first. The being conscious of a gap interferes with the assurance of rebirth and your peace of mind is lost. The tariki on the other hand places great stress on the significance of the eighteenth vow made by Amida, and teaches that when the significance of this vow is fully realised, rebirth is assured and the devotee is released from all worries arising from the sense of separation.

What is then the significance of Amida's Vow?

According to the *Anjin-ketsujō-shō* it is this.<sup>1</sup> "The purport of all the three Sutras of the Jōdo school is to manifest the significance of the Original Vow. To understand the Vow means to understand the Name, and to understand the Name is to understand that when Amida, by bringing

<sup>1</sup> The following is more or less a free translation.

to maturity his Vow and Virtue (or Deed) in the stead of all beings, effected their rebirth even prior to their actual attainment. What made up the substance of his Enlightenment was no other than the rebirth of all beings in the ten quarters of the world. For this reason, devotees of the nembutsu, that is, of the tariki are to realise this truth each time they hear Amida's Name pronounced that their rebirth is indeed already effected, because the Name stands for the Enlightenment attained by Hōzō the Bodhisattva<sup>1</sup> who vowed that he would not attain enlightenment until all beings in the ten quarters of the world were assured of their rebirth in his Pure Land. The same realisation must also be awakened in the minds of the tariki devotees when they bow before the holy statue of Amida Buddha, for it represents him in the state of Enlightenment which he attained by vowing that he would not have it until all beings were assured of their rebirth. When any reference is made to the Pure Land, they should cherish the thought that it is the realm established by Hōzō the Bodhisattva for the sake of all beings whose rebirth there was assured by his Vow and Enlightenment. As far as the devotees themselves are concerned they have nothing in their nature which will enable them to practise any form of good either worldly or unworldly since they only know how to commit evil deeds; but because of Amida's having completed an immeasurable amount of meritorious deeds, which constitutes the substance of Buddhahood, even we who are ignorant and addicted to wrong views are now destined for the Land of Purity and Happiness. What a blessing it is then for us all! We may believe in Amida's Original Vow and pronounce his Name; but if we, failing to perceive that Amida's meritorious deeds are our own, stress the merit of the Name in order to assure ourselves of rebirth, we would indeed be committing a grievous fault.

<sup>1</sup> Dharmākara, the name of Amida still on the stage of Bodhisattvahood.



“When the belief is once definitely awakened that *Namu-amida-butsu* symbolises the truth of our rebirth assured by Amida’s Enlightenment, we see that the substance of Buddhahood is the act [or fact] of our rebirth, and consequently that one utterance of the Name means the assurance of rebirth. When, again, the Name, *Namu-amida-butsu*, is heard, we see that the time is come for our rebirth and that our rebirth is no other than the Enlightenment attained by Amida. We may cherish a doubt, if we choose, whether Amida has already attained his Enlightenment or whether he has not yet attained it; but we should never have a doubt as to our rebirth being an accomplished fact. Amida has vowed not to attain his Enlightenment as long as there is one single being whose rebirth has not yet been assured. To understand all this is said to understand the significance of Amida’s Original Vow.

“While the *jiriki* teaches us that it is on our side to make vows and to practise good deeds if we wish to be assured of our rebirth, the *tariki* teaches just the reverse: it is on the side of Amida who makes vows and practises good deeds while the effect of all this is matured on our side—the fact which altogether goes beyond the reason of causation as we see in this world or anywhere else.”

It is thus evident that for the *tariki* devotees the Buddha is not very far away from them, indeed that they are living with him, in him, “rising with him in the morning and retiring at night again with him.” Amida to them is not an object of worship or thought which stands against them, although as far as logical knowledge goes which is good for the world of karma and birth-and-death, Amida is a being quite apart from us who are nothing but ignorant and sinful beings. It is by faith that we transcend the logic of dualism, and then, in Shin terminology, we are assured of our rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida. Faith is an eternal mystery, and the truth and vitality of Shin faith is rooted in this mystery.

To quote further the author of the *Anjin-ketsujō-shō*: "Generally speaking, the nembutsu means to think of the Buddha, and to think of the Buddha means that the Buddha has by the karmic power inherent in his Great Vow cut asunder for all beings the bonds whereby they are tied to birth-and-death, and that he has thus matured the condition for their rebirth in the Land of Recompense<sup>1</sup> where once entered they would never retrograde, and further that when thinking of this merit accomplished by the Buddha they take advantage of his Original Vow and give themselves up to it, their threefold activity [of body, mouth, and mind] is supported by the Buddha-substance and raised up to the state of enlightenment which constitutes Buddhahood. For this reason, by being thoroughly in the nembutsu we are to understand that our pronouncing the Buddha's Name, or our paying him homage, or our thinking of him is not an act originating in ourselves but doing the act of Amida Buddha himself." (Or shall we say "living the life of Amida," or "living in Christ and not in Adam"?)

What the Shin devotees have against their fellow-believers of the Jōdo teaching is that the latter are a mixture of jiriki and tariki and not tariki pure and simple, that if one at all advocates tariki, this must be thoroughly purged of the jiriki element, and that tariki even to the slightest degree tainted with jiriki is not only logically untenable but is a revolt against the universal love of Amida which he entertains for all sentient beings. As long as one puts a whole-hearted trust in the Original Vow of Amida, one ought not to harbour even an iota of jiriki idea against it; when this is done, the entire scheme goes to wrack and ruin. Jiriki means literally "self-power," that is, self-will, and what self-will is needed in the work of transcending the karmic law of causation which binds us to this world of relativity? The self-will is useful and means something while we stay in the realm of birth-and-

<sup>1</sup> That is, the Pure Land proper.

death, but what is to be achieved by the Buddhists is the realisation of things of eternal value. The self-will is called *hakarai* by Shinran, founder of the Shin school of the Jōdo (Pure Land) teaching. *Hakarai* is "to contrive," "to calculate," "to lay down a plan," "to have an intention," for one's rebirth in the Land of Amida. Shinran has consistently disavowed this *hakarai* as the essence of jiriki lying in the way of absolute faith in which all the Jōdo followers are to accept the Original Vow of Amida. So we have the following in one of his epistles given to his disciples:

"By jiriki is meant that the devotees, each according to his karmic condition, think of a Buddha other [than Amida], recite his Name, and practise good deeds relying on their own judgments, that they plan out their own ideas as regards how properly and felicitously to adjust their activities of the body, mouth, and mind for the rebirth in the Pure Land. By tariki is meant whole-heartedly to accept and believe the Original Vow of Amida whereby he assures those who pronounce his Name to be born in his Pure Land. As this is the Vow made by Amida, it has a sense which cannot be prescribed by any common measure of judgment—a sense which is beyond sense, i.e., intention. The devotees have an intention to move in accordance with their own ideas, and thus their doings have sense.

"The tariki devotees, however, have placed their faith whole-heartedly in Amida's Original Vow and are assured of their rebirth in the Pure Land—hence they are free from sense [or from intention of their own]. This being so, you are not to imagine that you would not be greeted by Amida in his Land because of your sinfulness. As ordinary beings you are endowed with all kinds of evil passions and destined to be sinful. Nor are you to imagine that you are assured of rebirth in the Pure Land because of your goodness. As long as your jiriki sense is holding you, you would never be welcomed to Amida's true Land of Recompense."

To begin with, according to Shinran, Amida's Original Vow is a mysterious deed altogether beyond human comprehension, and now that you have awakened faith in it, what worries could ever harass you? What contrivances could ever save you from sinfulness so completely as to be worthy residents of the Pure Land? You just give yourselves up absolutely to the mysterious workings of the Original Vow and, instead of growing anxious about or being vexed by anything of this world, be satisfied with yourselves, be free as the wind blows, as the flowers blossom, in the unimpeded light of Amida. Shinran frequently advises not to think of good, nor of evil, but just to throw oneself into the mysterious Original Vow and be "natural."

To be "natural" (*jinen*) means to be free from self-willed intention, to be altogether trusting in the Original Vow, to be absolutely passive in the hands of Amida who has prepared for you the way to his Pure Land. We find that mysteries surround us on all sides when we as intelligent beings at all reflect on things claiming our attention and try to carry on this reflection to its further limits. It makes no difference whether reflection comes to an end or goes on endlessly; it is always confronted by a mystery, for the very fact of endlessness is a mystery. We have thus no other way but to give ourselves up to this mystery, which, from the Shin point of view, is known as the mystery of the Original Vow or the mystery of the Name. When this mystery is reached which is the limit of intellectual reflection, it is comprehended, not indeed in the way of the intellect, but intuitively, that is to say, it is accepted unconditionally—which is another way of describing faith. In terms of the Shin teaching, the faith thus awakened is the assurance of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land, and those who have this faith are said to be already walking in the Pure Land in company with all the Tathagatas. That the Shin devotees of true and never-relapsing faith are the equals of Maitreya Bodhisattva is a most significant declaration on

the part of the Shin teachers. It is evident that the faith advocated by them is an identical state of mind with Enlightenment realised by all the Buddhas. As for the real supreme Enlightenment the devotees are to wait until they reach the Pure Land itself. In so far as they still belong to this world, the body may commit acts of impurity, but the mind is already where all the Tathagatas are, that is, in the Pure Land. To live this mystery is known as being "natural," following the course of things, especially of things of the spirit, as arranged by the Original Vow of Amida.

To have the body in this world of time and space with the mind somewhere else, to let the body live a life of evils as it cannot do anything different and yet to keep the mind in the Land of Purity in the most friendly relationship with all the Buddhas—how can this be possible? Apart from the psychological and philosophical question of body and mind, how can one individual totality be at two points at the same time? Logically stated, the Shin expressions such as above referred to are full of difficulties, in fact impossible for intellectual solution. But one thing we can say about the statements made by the Shin teachers is that, generally speaking, religious intuition consists in consciously coming in contact with a realm of absolute values, which stands in no spatial or temporal relationship to this world of senses and ratiocination, but which forms the basis of it, gives it its meaning, and without which it is like a dream, like a dew-drop, like a flash of lightning. The relation of the body and the mind, of this world and the Pure Land, of sinfulness and enlightenment, and of many other forms of opposition is an inscrutable mystery so long as it is viewed from this world, but it becomes at once natural and acceptable when we become conscious of another world which Christians may call supernatural, and the truth thus dawned upon one is "revealed" truth. Here also lies the mystery of the Original Vow and of the Name, which is indeed the mystery of tariki.

## 5

A comparison with Christianity may help us to understand the characteristic teaching of Shin as a development of the Pure Land doctrine and also as a school of Mahayana Buddhism however strangely formed at first sight it may appear. The following points of difference may be observed as existing between Buddhism and Christianity:

1. Amida to all seeming may be regarded as corresponding to the Christian notion of God. Amida however is not the creator, nor is he to be considered the author of evil in this world, which inevitably follows from the notion of creatorship.

Whatever evils there are in this world, they are all our own doings, for everything karma-conditioned individuals can do is necessarily evil and has no merit entitling them to appear before Amida. This polarisation of Amida and individual beings (*sarvasattva*) is one of the specific features of Shin thought. In this respect its followers may be said to be transcendentalists or dualists.

Amida is the pure embodiment of love. Whoever believes in him as saviour, he is sure of being taken up by Amida and sent to his Pure Land. Amida's love makes no distinction between evil-doers and good men, because as Shinran says there is no evil strong enough to prevent one's being embraced in Amida's infinite love, nor is there any good in this world which is so perfect and pure as to permit its agent into the Land of Purity without resorting to the Original Vow. We who belong to this world of relativity are always conscious of what we are doing, for we are so constituted and cannot be otherwise. When we do something good, we become conscious of it, and this very consciousness it is that destroys the merit of goodness. The being conscious of something comes out of the idea of selfhood, and there is nothing more effective than the idea of selfhood that will disqualify one as candidate for the Pure Land of Amida. The unqualified acceptance of the tariki

is what leads to the presence of the infinitely loving one. For this reason, as long as we are creatures of the world conscious of its relative values, we lose the right to be with Amida and his hosts. Good men cease to be good as soon as they become conscious of their goodness and attempt to make something out of it; evil-doers have their sins eradicated and become worthy of the Pure Land at the very moment they are illumined by Amida's light: for Amida is a kind of melting-pot of good and evil, in which faith alone retains its absolute value. Not being the creator, Amida has no idea to discipline beings. He is the Light of Love shared universally by all beings. However bad they are, Amida knows that it is due to their karma and that this never proves to be a hindrance to their entering into the Pure Land. What he demands of them is faith. This keeping Amida away from responsibilities and relativities of this dualistic world marks out Shin as a unique religious teaching.

2. In Christianity God requires a mediator to communicate with his creatures and this mediator is sacrificed for the sake of the latter whose sin is too dark to be wiped off by their own efforts. God demands an innocent victim in order to save souls who are not necessarily responsible for their unrighteousness because they are born so. This proceeding does not seem to be quite fair on the part of God, but the Christian experience has demonstrated at least its pragmatism. In Shin Amida performs in a sense the office of God and also that of Christ. Amida with Amidists is Light(*ābha*) and Life(*āyu*) and Love(*karuṇā*), and from his Love and Life issue his vows, and it is through these vows that Amida is connected with us. The Vow is mediator, and as it emanates from Amida's Love, it is just as efficient as Christ in its office of mediatorship. One thing we must observe here is that in Christianity concrete images are made use of while in Shin words and phrases, more or less abstract in a sense, are given out to do the work of a

mediating agent, as is exemplified in *Namu-amida-butsu*.

3. The Christians like to think that their religion is based on historical facts while Buddhism especially Shin is a metaphysical reconstruction, so to speak, of the ideas and aspirations which generally make up a religion. For this reason, Christianity is to its followers more solidly and objectively constituted. Here is one of the fundamental differences—indeed the fundamental difference—between Christianity and Shin. Shin in accordance with the general make-up of Buddhism is not dualistically minded, however much it may so appear superficially, and then it does not take very kindly to the idea that objectivity is more real than subjectivity. Truth is neither subjective nor objective, there is no more reality in what is known as historical facts than in what is considered psychological or metaphysical. In some cases historicity is mere fiction. History takes place in time, and time as much as space depends upon our intellectual reconstruction. Religious faith, however, wants to grasp what is not conditioned by time and space, it wishes to take hold of what is at the back of historical facts. And this must be Reality transcending the polarisation of subject and object. History is karmic, and Shin aspires after the akarmic or that which is not of history.

Amida is above karma, he is not of history, he is akarmic; that is to say, all historical facts, all karmic events have their origin in Amida and return to him, he is the alpha and omega of all things. From him, therefore, are all his vows taking effect in the world of karma where we sentient beings have our temporal and spatial abode. Some may say that Amida is too metaphysical to be an object of religious consciousness which requires a concrete and tangible historical person. To this Shin would answer: As long as we are on the time-plane of relativity, we may distinguish between metaphysical and historical, between abstract ideas and concrete events; but in genuinely religious faith once realised there are no such discriminations to be made, for



faith is attained only when there is the going-beyond of a world of contrasts, which is the leaping over the gap of dualism.

4. There is no crucifixion in Shin, which is significant in more than one way. The crucified Christ is the symbol of self-sacrifice I suppose for the Christians, but at the same time to see the figure of crucifixion on the altar or by the country roadside is not a very pleasant sight, at least to the Buddhists. The sight, to tell the truth, is revolting, almost the symbol of cruelty or of inhumanity. The idea of washing sin with the blood of Christ crucified reminds us of the primitive barbarism of victim-offering to the gods. The association of sin and blood is not at all Buddhistic.

"I am saved by the blood  
Of the Crucified One."

This will never awaken in the Buddhist heart a sacred exalted feeling as in the Christian. The agony of crucifixion, death, and resurrection making up the contents of Christian faith, have significance only when the background impregnating old tradition is taken into consideration, and this background is wholly wanting in Buddhists who have been reared in an atmosphere different not only historically but intellectually and emotionally. Buddhists do not wish to have the idea of self-sacrifice brought before their eyes in such a bloody imagery. It is a Jewish sentiment.

The Buddhist idea of death is rest and peace, and not agony. The Buddha at his Nirvana lies quietly on his bed surrounded by all beings including the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. His horizontal posture is a great contrast to Christ on the cross. The Buddha is again represented as sitting in meditation, symbol of eternal tranquillity.

5. The Christian notion of vicarious atonement may be considered corresponding to the Buddhist notion of merit-transference (*pariṇāmana*), but the difference is that somebody in one case is to be sacrificed for the fault of others,

while in the other case it is merit accumulated by the Bodhi-sattva that is desired to be transferred on to other beings. As far as the fact of transference is concerned, there is an analogy between the Christian and the Buddhist, but the analogy stops here. In Buddhism, naturally including Shin, the idea is positive and creative in the sense that value produced in one quarter of the universe is made to spread all over it so that the whole creation might advance towards Enlightenment. Strictly speaking, there is no idea of atonement in Buddhism, especially in Shin—which makes indeed the position of Shin unique in the various systems of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy.

Amida, according to the teaching of Shin, has no intention to interfere with the working of karma, for it has to run its course in this world, the debt incurred by one person is to be paid by him and not by another. But the mysterious power of Amida's Name and Vow—which is the mystery of life to be simply accepted as such all the logical contradictions notwithstanding—lifts the offender from the curse of karma and carries him to the Land of Purity and Happiness, where he attains his supreme enlightenment. While karma is left to itself, what is beyond the reach of karma which may be termed the akarmic power of Buddha, is working quite unknowingly to the karma-bearer himself. But he begins to realise this fact as soon as faith in Amida is awakened in him. Faith works this miracle in his consciousness. Although he knows that he is subject to the law of karma and may have to go on in spite of himself committing deeds of karma, his inmost consciousness, once his faith established, tells him that he is bound for Amida's land at the end of his karmic life on this earth. It is by this inmost consciousness in the Shin devotee that the truth of merit-transference (*pariṇāmana*) is demonstrated. In a similar way Christians feel assured of vicarious atonement when their faith is confirmed in Christ. Whatever theological and ethical interpretation may be given to this, the truth or

fact, psychologically speaking, remains the same with Christians and Buddhists: it is the experience of a leap from the relative plane of consciousness to the Unconscious.

Crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension—these are really the contents of individual religious experience regardless of difference in philosophical reconstruction. Different religions may use different terminology which is the product mainly of intellectual antecedents. To the Shin Buddhists, resurrection and ascension will mean rebirth in the Pure Land and Enlightenment while crucifixion and death will correspond to the death, i.e. abandoning of “self-power” (*jiriki*). That the abandoning of self-power is death is a well-known experience with the Shin followers, and it is at this moment that they utter from the depths of their being the “*Namu-amida-butsu*.” This utterance just for once of Amida’s Name puts an end to all their sufferings and agonies of the beginningless past and they are born in Amida’s Pure Land. Their bodily existence as far as they are conscious of it will continue in the world of karma, but as their faith tells them, they already belong to another world. The Christians may not agree with this form of interpretation, they may like to ascribe all such experiences to Christ himself while their individual human salvation is regarded to come from believing in supernatural events. This is quite natural with the Jewish genius and Jewish tradition. Even when they say “to die in Adam and to live in Christ,” I wonder if they mean by this our going through all the spiritual experiences individually and personally of Christ himself, instead of our merely believing in Christ as divine mediator.

6. The Christian relation of man to God is so to speak individualistic. By this I mean: Christian salvation consists in saving oneself through God’s discriminative favour conferred upon one particular being, and this particular being has no power to extend his favour over his fellow-beings for the reason that this power belongs to the giver and not to

the recipient; all that the latter can do is to go on preaching, i.e. to talk about his experience, and to let others awaken interest in him. With the Buddhists everything they do is dedicated to the spread of Enlightenment among their fellow-beings; in fact, the motive which instigates devoted Buddhists to the understanding of the Dharma and to the practice of the Buddhist virtues is said to lead all sentient beings to Enlightenment, and all their self-improvement is to this purpose. It may be said thus that the Buddhists work for salvation of their fellow-beings including themselves while the Christians are busy with their self-salvation and that the former are socialistically motivated and the latter individualistically.

Superficially, Shin like Christianity aims at self-salvation; the relation of Shin followers to their Amida may support individualism; for they are concerned with themselves only and Amida is supposed to be the only helping agency. But when we examine more closely its teaching, we discover that Shin is after all Buddhistic in its socialistically-mindedness. Its route of merit-transference (*pariṇāmana*) is double and not single. One route is the way to the Pure Land, the steps of all Shin devotees are directed naturally towards Amida and his country; but as soon as they are born there, they come back to this world of karma and work for their fellow-beings. This way is known as the "return route". The Pure Land is therefore not the place of self-enjoyment but a kind of railway station where passengers stay for a while but never for any length of time. It will be great mistake to regard the Pure Land as the permanent house for Shin people. Indeed, if they were to stay there even for a few days, they would be bored to death, for if every desire of theirs is granted as soon as it rises in their hearts, they are thoroughly deprived of the feeling of strife or effort or resistance, and this deprivation would surely result in altogether eradicating the sense of living in the inhabitants of the Land of Happiness—which

is the same thing as death. And Shin followers do not decidedly wish to be buried alive in the land they have coveted to live and enjoy themselves to the fullness of their being. They surely want to be born there, but not to live like corpses. If they are to live at all, they must come back among us once more and work with us and for us. There must be a return route in the Pure Land to this world of karma and relativity. All those therefore who are bound for Amida's country are those who are desirous to be back in the world they used to live in, and here again to experience all resistance that is in the way to Enlightenment for the sake of their fellow-beings. The Christians once in Heaven show no desire to come back to their former home, although they may not know what to do up there in company with Christ and the angels. Swedenburg gives a detailed account of heavenly life, but as far as our earthly viewpoint goes, there does not seem to be very much there that will make us envious of a life in Heaven. It is for this reason I believe that some Christians of modern days bring the kingdom of God down on earth, the realisation of which being their aim while here.

7. Here we have for a while to dwell upon the distinction between salvation and enlightenment, for what Shin followers desire is after all enlightenment and not salvation. Enlightenment is the objective of the Buddhist life irrespective of schools and creeds, and in this Shin with all its Bhakti formulas is no exception. In this it is Buddhistic as much as Zen or Tendai (*t'ien-tai*). I have sometimes used the word salvation in connection with Shin faith, but, to be exact, it is not at all proper to designate Shin experience as salvation in the Christian fashion.

The Christians aim at salvation and not at enlightenment. To save one's soul from damnation is what constitutes Christian piety. But Buddhists desire to be enlightened, to get rid of ignorance, which will emancipate them from the bondage of birth-and-death. Shin however

seems to want to be saved from karma which corresponds to sin in the Christian sense; but in truth Shin followers know the impossibility, as long as they are living in this world of relativity, of escaping karma; however much they endeavour with all their intellectual and ethical strength which they have in them, there is no way for them to be emancipated from the inevitability of karma. For this reason, they submit themselves to it, and seek another method of transcending it whereby they can go back to their original freedom: the method consists in throwing themselves before the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life, who is in charge of a Land of Purity and Happiness well provided with all the necessary conditions for attaining Supreme Enlightenment. Thus the first objective of the Shin followers is to be born there, which means instantly to realise enlightenment. Indeed, being born in Amida's Land means no more than attaining enlightenment—the two terms are entirely synonymous. The ultimate end of the Shin life is enlightenment and not salvation. This world of karma and relativity does not furnish them with an environment favourable for the realisation of supreme wisdom, and it was for this reason that Amida established a special Buddha-land for the sake of his devotees where things are so conditioned as to make them instantly come to the realisation. And when this realisation comes to them, they hurry back to this world and work for their fellow-beings. Even Shin people though unknowingly are living for the enhancing of enlightenment in the world at large. With all their consciousness of sin or a karma-bound life, they are striving after enlightenment and not for individualistic salvation.

Popularly, Shin is understood to teach the doctrine of "Nembutsu ōjo," literally "to go and be born by thinking of the Buddha." By this it is meant that when one thinks of the Buddha, i.e. Amida, with singleness of heart and in all earnest, one after death will go to and be reborn in the

Pure Land. In practice, "thinking of Amida" is pronouncing his Name once or more times. According to Shin, once is enough if it comes from absolute faith in Amida, but Jōdo tells us repeatedly to say *Namu-amida-butsu*; and here lies one of the essential differences between Shin and Jōdo, to which reference has already been made. At any rate, the "Nembutsu ōjo" sums up to popular minds the teaching of both Jōdo and Shin. But a closer analysis shows that merely being born in the Pure Land is not what is really promised in the Sutras. As was stated before, rebirth is advised because of the Pure Land being the most favourably conditioned environment for enlightenment which is the aim of the Buddhist life, both of tariki and of jiriki. The practical outcome of this is the identification of rebirth and enlightenment, and being assured of rebirth means the foretasting of enlightenment. It is for Buddhas alone, the most highly perfected beings, to enjoy Supreme Enlightenment, while what is granted to us, ordinary mortals, is to experience something of enlightenment and thereby to orient ourselves—this orientation is the foretasting and the assurance of rebirth.

From the general point of view of Buddhism, however, what is most essential in the life of every Buddhist is to come back to this world of karma and work for others like Śākyamuni himself in the enhancement and realisation and prevalence of Enlightenment. Although the "Nembutsu ōjo" appears to be the sole concern for Shin followers, we must not forget that Shin is also one of the Buddhist schools however superficially its Bhakti construction may suggest its alien associations.

8. "Where is the Pure Land?" we may ask. This is not at all a difficult question when we know what Amida is and when our faith is established in him; but to the outsider who has never dived into the mystery of Shin it presents insurmountable difficulties and contradictions. In fact, the question of the Pure Land is the fundamental problem of

religion and wherever the objective validity of faith is inquired into the question inevitably comes up. The Shin doctors have exhausted their philosophical ingenuity upon its solution. As the Christian conception of Heaven is not so definitely and concretely described as the Buddhist Pure Land is, the Christians do not seem to be so troubled with the whereabouts of Heaven.

According to Shin, the Pure Land is located in the West. Is this a symbolical expression? Or is it to be taken literally, i.e. spatially? Either way, there is no satisfactory reasonable solution of it. The orthodox Shin interpretation is spatial and Shin followers are persuaded to believe in the realistic existence of the Pure Land somewhere away in the West, at the distance of an infinite number of miles from this earthly habitation of ours. Those who try to give different constructions to the statements in the Sutras, are denounced as heretical. The scientifically inclined followers of Shin are sometimes too honest and simple-minded and take the orthodox teaching too logically, condemning it as altogether unscientific. But the truth is that the conception of Amida and his Pure Land is in one way too complicated and in another way altogether too simple. Too simple because when the relative plane of consciousness is abruptly transcended, an unexpected view opens before the devotee and all that has been annoying him emotionally as well as intellectually vanishes away—nothing can be simpler than this. But the problem becomes too complicated when it is approached from the logical and metaphysical point of view because it leads to many another problem involving the whole field of the philosophy of religion—which is the task to be undertaken by the specialists only. For the plain average man in the street the most practical and ready approach to Shin will be to take everything told him by its teachers as gospel truth, and by blindly following it one day he will awake to its truth and understand it in his own light. The will to believe will naturally take him where



he ought to be. It is therefore said that "Do not ask questions, for their solution is in you and not from the mouth of the teachers." So with the most essential question of Shin including that of the Pure Land, one's personal experience is the sole key to its solution. Once a Shin devotee called Shōma was asked whether or not Amida is capable of helping you out of karma, Shōma immediately answered, "You are not yet helped by him!" Being solely a matter of intimate personal experience, a discussion of the matter here is an idle business, one may declare. The Christians are no doubt similarly disposed toward questions such as are raised here. To those who have really got into the experience of Shin or in fact of any genuine religious faith, all those discussions are much ado for nothing.

9. One of the most remarkable features of the teaching of Shin or Jōdo generally concerns Amida's Name and Vow. Christianity has nothing corresponding to it.

When Amida was to attain Enlightenment, he vowed that his Name should be heard throughout the universe so that those who hear it may come to him. So his Name came to possess the mysterious power of awakening the soul of his devotee in the faith of Shin. The significance of a name is an historical fact; when you know the name of an evil spirit you can call him up and bring him to your service in any way you like. When an initiation ceremony takes place among some primitive people, the first thing for the initiate to be informed of is the name of the god to whom they are to offer their prayers. To know the name of an object is the same as naming an object and bringing it to existence. Naming in a sense is creating, and creation is the most wonderful event and a mysterious power. When Amida willed to have his Name fill the world, his idea was to rouse his own image in the heart of every being. When this individual Amida devotee responds to the call of Amida who is the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life, his faith is confirmed and the assurance of rebirth in Amida's

land is attained. This is deep calling unto deep. Although the orthodox Shin followers do not like this way of expressing the idea, the truth when it is logically presented ultimately comes to it. Amida's Name is heard because the devotee has something to respond to it, and this something must be of the same order as Amida himself, otherwise there cannot be any response in any sense. The Name goes out from Amida riding upon the ether-waves to the furthest end of the universe, and every substance there so organised as to feel the vibrations echoes the sound back to the originating source; the communication thus established is no other than faith and he is said to have entered upon the order of steadfastness. Faith which is the assurance of rebirth comes into being only when this echoing is mutual between Amida and his devotee. To be more exact, the pronouncing of the Name is possible only when the devotee's own inner Amida so to speak is awakened from the darkness of Ignorance, or, we might again say, released from the bondage of karma. When the latter event does not take place, the pronouncing of the Name is mere shadow with nothing really backing it, there is no correspondence between reality and expression, between content and form, between heart and lips. When Shin states that the pronouncing for once is enough, it refers to this fact, while the reason why Jōdo insists on repetition is based upon what may be termed the psychological law of imitation and of reproduction. By this I mean that when a certain motion is imitated say even for a few times the very fact of repetition sets up the whole mechanism corresponding to it. When this is repeated for a sufficient number of times it ceases to be mechanical and finally evokes the original impulse, and then the mind will come to consider it its own spontaneous creation. The repeated pronouncing of Amida's Name advised by Jōdo, however mechanical and contentless in the beginning, gradually sets up a process of rearrangement in the consciousness of the practiser who becomes thus unwittingly as it were conscious of the presence

of Amida in his own inner being. When this moment is realised he utters for the first time from the depths of his soul the Name of Amida as the power lifting him from the burden of karma. Philosophically, then, Jōdo and Shin may be said to be speaking about the same psychological truth; but from the point of view of practical method of teaching, Shin tends to emphasise the critical moment itself whereas Jōdo is more for the process of education.

When both Jōdo and Shin talk so much about the nembutsu which means "thinking of the Buddha," how is it that they at all refer to the Name (*myōgō*)? Strictly speaking, thinking and reciting or pronouncing are not the same, you think of an object but may not pronounce its name, while a name may be thought of or pronounced independently by itself, apart from the object to which it is attached. How did the pronouncing of the Name come to such a prominence as at present it does in the Jōdo teaching?

In the beginning of the history of the Pure Land school, the nembutsu was practised in its literal sense, the followers thought of the Buddha in their minds, formed his images before their eyes, and perhaps recounted all the excellent virtues belonging to him. This is thinking of the Buddha. It demands a great deal of mental concentration, it is quite an exacting exercise, and requires a long arduous training in meditation before one can absorb even a small portion of the Buddha's excellent personality into his own spiritual system. Most of us will soon grow tired of the exercise and may discontinue it though unwillingly. There must be some easier method to educate ourselves to be good Buddhists.

The object of the nembutsu, "thinking of the Buddha," was to see him face to face so that the devotee could advance in his spiritual life and finally even come to the attainment of Buddhahood. But as the exercise involves so much application of the psychological energy, it cannot be practised by every Buddhist however devotionally minded he may be. He must be given a new method much easier than the

“thinking of the Buddha” and this they found in repeatedly pronouncing the Name of the Buddha.

A name as was stated before contains in it the mysterious power to recall everything associated with it, i.e. the object with all its details. It is true that a name can be detached from its object and itself treated as an object. But when a devotional mind pronounces the name of its object of worship, the name will inevitably bring up in it things connected with the Buddha. The devotee while pronouncing the Name may not necessarily meditate on the Buddha with any degree of mental concentration, but the recitation at least directs his attention towards Buddha with all that follows from it. Thus when the Buddha’s Name is repeatedly, steadily, single-heartedly pronounced, it is not an impossible event that he appear before the devotee or in his mind with all his characteristic marks, major and minor, although these may not be in full detail. The *shōmyō*, “pronouncing the name,” thus came to help the *nembutsu*. “thinking of the Buddha.”

Instead of trying to invoke the Buddha-images in silent meditation, the devotee will now recite his name and make psychology do the rest of the work. It goes without saying that he is not merely to practise the *shōmyō*, but this must go along with the *nembutsu*, the thought of the Buddha. The *shōmyō* is a great aid to the *nembutsu* exercise. While the *shōmyō* is not the *nembutsu*, the former, as time went on, came to be identified with the latter, and nowadays when we talk of the *nembutsu*, it may not mean “thinking of the Buddha” or “invoking the Buddha-image,” but in fact the *shōmyō*, “pronouncing or reciting the name,” unless a reservation is made. The mystery of the name has usurped, it may be said, the original office of memory.

Historically, the *shōmyō* practice is related to the *kō-an* exercise in Zen Buddhism. Of this the reader is asked to go over my *Zen Essays*, Series II, pp. 115 ff. The only point on which I should like to make a remark here is the shifting

of psychological attitudes. In the nembutsu proper, the thought was essentially directed towards the Buddha which was quite the thing to be, but in the shōmyō identified with the nembutsu the attention, not necessarily deliberate and fully intentional, is more concentrated on the mechanism of repetition. Naturally, the devotee's mind is on the Buddha as his Name is pronounced, but not, as in the case of the nembutsu, on reproducing the Buddha-image before his mental eye. While there is every opportunity of the shōmyō turning into mere repetition of the sounds "*Na-mu-a-mi-da-bu-tsu,*" the psychological tone of consciousness created by a monotonous recitation will one day when time matures prepare the way for the devotee to the awakening of faith in Amida. The Jōdo's advice to say the nembutsu aims in all probability to create this psychological moment, although its leaders may have some subtle philosophy to interpret the teaching of the Nembutsu-Shōmyō.

In this connection it will be of great interest to recall what Hōnen, the founder of the Jōdo school of Buddhism in Japan, has to say about the significance of the shōmyō, the pronouncing of the Name of Amida, in the cultivation of the Jōdo faith. He advises in the paper known as *Nimai-Kishōmon*, "the double-sheet document": "Generally stated, to trust in Buddha does not mean to think of him mentally, it is simply to pronounce his Name, which is to trust in his Original Vow. Let not those followers of the nembutsu stop at mentally thinking of him, let them audibly pronounce his Name. For besides this pronouncing the Name there is no right cause that will definitely determine our rebirth; besides this pronouncing the Name there is no right act that will definitely determine our rebirth; besides this pronouncing the Name there is no right karma that will definitely determine our rebirth; besides this pronouncing the Name there is no thinking of Buddha that will definitely determine our rebirth; besides this pronouncing the Name there is no transcendental wisdom that will definitely determine our

rebirth. Further, there is no threefold mind apart from the pronouncing of the Name; there is no fourfold discipline apart from the pronouncing of the Name; nor is there the fivefold recollection possible without the pronouncing of the Name. Amida's Original Vow is no other than the pronouncing of his Name; the mind that loathes the defiled land lies at the bottom of this pronouncing the Name."

10. We now come to the consideration of the Original Vow made by Amida, relying upon which all the followers of Jōdo believe in being reborn in the Land of Purity and Happiness. This idea is unique to this school of Buddhism. It is true that every Bodhisattva in the beginning of his spiritual career makes a number of vows and bends all his efforts to their fulfilment. Amida's case is no exception, but so far Amidism is the only religion that developing out of this idea has most successfully maintained its moral and spiritual vitality.

The Original Vow (*hongwan* in Japanese and *pūrva-praṇidhāna* in Sanskrit) is the expression of Amida's Will or *Karunā* ("love" or "compassion") which he cherishes over all beings. *Karunā* constitutes with *Prajñā* the personality of every Buddha; with *Prajñā*, "transcendental wisdom," he contemplates the world and perceives that it is in its nature of Suchness; while by *Karunā* he comes out of his meditation to live among us, and this coming out is the utterance of his vows known as Original Vow.

"Original," i.e. *pūrva*, literally means "before" spatially and temporarily, and "vow," i.e. *praṇidhāna* = *pra* + *nidhāna*, means originally or rather ordinarily "application," "attention," "intense energy," and in Buddhism "wish," "will," or "prayer." So the Original Vow is Amida's Will-power, in this case Amida's compassionate heart, which is, with him from the beginningless past; in other words, the Original Vow is Amida himself expressed in human terms. As long as Amida abides in his meditation, as long as he is with himself as *Prajñā*, he is not at all accessible to beings or to

the plane of relativity. But he is also the embodiment of *Karuṇā* by which he feels for other beings than himself and knows how to express this feeling in terms of the Original Vow. In the Original Vow, therefore, Amida communicates with us karma-bound beings and we in turn come thereby in touch with Amida. Relatively speaking, Amida's Original Vow awakens in us what corresponds to it but what lies in us quite latently. To express the idea more intelligently, for general Buddhists Amida's will to help us out of the ocean of birth-and-death is no other than our faith in Amida. In Amida faith is the will to help and in us this will becomes faith; his will and our faith are consubstantial as it were, hence a perfect correspondence between the two terms of Reality. The mysterious power abiding in the Original Vow is the mystery of Amida himself who in the terminology of Shin is Infinite Light and Eternal Life. In Christianity God's will or love for humanity, may I say, is expressed in the crucifixion of his only son, i.e. as a concrete event in the history of karma-bound beings; whereas in Shin Buddhism Amida's will takes the form of intense determination and its solemn declaration. The latter may seem insipid, inane, and evaporating compared to the Christian realism. But in point of fact the Shin together with its parental *Jōdo* has been the most irresistibly-inspiring power in the history of Far Eastern Buddhism, and this power has been exercised without ever shedding blood, without committing cruelties, without persecuting heresies.

## 6

There is another and last consideration I like to make about Shin, which concerns the practical life of its followers. Strictly speaking, Shin is not to have any professional priest class corresponding to those we see in the other schools of Buddhism. The Buddhist priests are generally supposed to practise asceticism, leading a life quite dissimilar to that of the laity. They live in specially constructed buildings and

under regulations specially meant for the enhancement of their moral and spiritual life, they are devoted to the study of the Buddhist texts, they read and recite the Sutras, they sing the hymns, they conduct various ceremonies on various occasions, they give sermons, they perform burial rites, they are invited out to laymen's houses to hold the customary religious services for the commemoration of the dead, in short they lead a life apart from that of the secular people. The idea is that the priestly classes are those Buddhists who are exclusively devoting themselves to the study and propagation of the religion they profess. As they are specialists as it were, their daily lives are supposed to be exemplary and models for the laity. They have their reason of existence when the rest of the world is engaged in wars of greed, anger, and folly; it is so refreshing and inspiring to see a group of souls given up to the cultivation of the various Buddhist virtues. In spite of the economic questions involved in their way of living, it does good to society in more ways than its members realise, and they are not to be treated with indifference, much less with disdain or antagonism.

However this may be, from the purely theoretical point of view, Shin is the religion of the laity and for the laity. No special form of discipline is demanded of its followers; no distinct curriculum of study is prescribed; no accumulation of merit just for the sake of rebirth is required; and by just having faith in Amida as the author of the Original Vow, the devotee is assured of his entrance into the Pure Land after his departure from earthly life. Such a simple and easy religion—this is what is claimed for Shin uniformly by its founder and his successors—does not necessitate the establishment of any institution exclusively devoted to the maintenance and propagation of its teaching. But in point of fact we are all historical beings, we cannot live away from our past, indeed the present has no meaning whatever without its past. So, Shin too could not escape its history, its environment, i.e. its karma; its present status is that of



a hybrid between the old schools of Buddhism and a pure religion of the laity. Shin teaches tariki but practises half jiriki—which is indeed from the practical point of view wholly inevitable.

As all is the work of the "other-power" and to be left to the functioning of Amida's Original Vow and the only thing needed on this side is to have "a steadfast faith," the Shin followers do not practise asceticism as the means of courting Amida's favour. What distinguishes the jiriki school from the tariki is essentially their life of asceticism, and when this is no more demanded of the Buddhists, all the differentia marking out the priesthood disappear. And this was exactly the teaching and life of Shinran Shonin, the founder of Shin Buddhism. In fact, the secularising movement has been going on ever since the time of the Buddha; the rise of the Mahayana really opens the inchoate stage of this movement. The secularisation of the Sangha institution or rather its abolishment means the doing away with the Arhatship ideal of Buddhism, which in turn means the democratisation of the whole system of Buddhism. And, we can say, this movement of secularisation and democratisation has culminated in the evolution of Shin Buddhism in Japan. I add that if another face-about is needed of Japanese Buddhists, it would be to make a backward movement without losing all the experiences which were gained during its long history in India, China, and Japan.

By a backward movement I wish to mean that the Buddhists must go back to their primitive ideals: let them practise asceticism, let them devote themselves to a life of unselfishness in all its possible forms; let them aspire to carry out the Bodhisattva ideals (*bodhisattva-caryā*); let them form a colony of Arhats to demonstrate the possibility of a society free from greed, anger, and folly; let them see to it that all our sciences and philosophies can be utilised for the welfare of all mankind, and that all our economic systems are not to be established on the basis of materialism

but on the principle of interpenetration as expounded in the Buddhist Sutras.

## NOTES

### 1

The Shin idea of "merit-transference" (*pariṇāmana*)<sup>1</sup> somewhat differs from the general Mahayana idea of it. In the latter merit created anywhere by any being may be turned over to any other being desired or towards the enhancement and prevalence of Enlightenment in the whole world. A Bodhisattva practised asceticism not only for the perfection of his own moral and spiritual qualities but for the increase of such qualities among his fellow-beings. Or he suffers pains in order to save others from them and at the same time to make them aspire for Enlightenment. Merit-transference has thus also the nature of vicarious atonement. The idea is based on the principle of interpenetration as advocated by the philosophy of Kegon (*avatamsaka*), which is to say that one grain of sand holds in it the entire cosmos not only as a totality but individually.<sup>2</sup> With the Shin, however, the source of this activity lies with Amida, and from Amida alone as the centre starts the spiritual vibration known as merit-transference. This is the fulfilment of his Original Vow. Reference has already been made on p. 245 of this article to one famous passage in the *Sutra of Eternal Life*, the regular reading of which is revised by Shinran Shōnin. According to him, the transference starts from Amida to all beings and not from all beings to the realisation of enlightenment. When this merit-transference is made to originate exclusively from Amida, we see where the idea of tariki comes from. We can almost say that the entire structure of the Shin teaching is dependent upon this Shinran's interpretation of the principle of merit-transference.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 259 et seq. of the present number of *The Eastern Buddhist*.

<sup>2</sup> *Zen Essays*, III, p. 123 et seq.

The doctrine of merit-transference is really one of the significant features of Mahayana Buddhism and its development marks the start of a new era in the history of Buddhist philosophy. Before this, the accumulation of merit or the practice of good deeds was something which exclusively concerned the individual himself; the doer was responsible for all that he did, good or bad; as long as he was satisfied with the karma of his work, to enjoy happiness or to suffer disaster was his own business and nothing further was to be said or done about it. But now we have come to deal with a different state of affairs. We are no more by ourselves alone, each is not living just for himself, everything is so intimately related that anything done by anybody is sure to affect others in one way or another. The individualistic Hinayana has now become the communistic Mahayana. This was really a great turning point in the evolution of Buddhist thought. When it was joined to the Original Vow of Amida, Shin naturally made Amida the source of all the activities belonging to merit-transference. Here we find ourselves confronted with still another advance or movement effected in the history of Mahayana Buddhism. Instead of a mutual transference of merit we have now all such activities issuing from one source which is according to Shin Amida Buddha. Individual beings cease to send out transference-waves from themselves, they are no more self-creative, they are now made to be passive recipients owing all that they are or do to the "other-power" who is a being of great wisdom (*prajñā*) and love (*karuṇā*).

This movement on the part of the founder of the Shin school of Buddhism was indeed a leap—technically known as "crosswise leap." Instead of making one continuous progress ahead which has no end or rather which is a never-ending course, he abruptly turns towards Amida and throws himself up into his arms. The Mahayana way of thinking hitherto pursued by the jiriki doctors is here completely revised.

## 2

In one sense the Shin conception of the religious life may be said to be dualistic, probably all religions belonging to the Bhakti group are dualistic, and it is on account of this that we generally encounter terms of paradoxical relationship in the course of religious philosophy. Shin tries to reconcile them in accordance with the Mahayana system of thought but the old traces are recognisable.

Amida always stands against karma which works independent of him. Karma is the world of all sentient beings, and their object of following Shin is to understand this world, i.e. to transcend karma and break through the bondage of birth and death. What Amida does for them is to embrace them in his love and take them to his Land of Purity and Happiness. The karma world is left to itself, as long as beings are still here, they allow themselves to be ruled by karma, for there is no other way of living. Death however puts an end to this relativity-bound existence, and one is free to go to Amida's world. This opposition between karma and akarma which is Amida runs through the system of Shin thought.

This form of dualism is also observable in the Christian notion of sinner and saviour. But what differentiates Shin from Christianity in this respect is that Amida is not the dispenser of reward or punishment, he does not interfere with the working of karma in any particular cases; but in Christianity God chastises sinners and rewards those who behave. Amida lets karma alone, with him there is no rewarding, no punishing. If a sinner feels he is punished, it is his own construing of the event; as far as Amida is concerned, he is all love, there is no thought in him of punishing anybody, such discriminative judgements are not in him. He is like the sun in this respect shining on the unjust as well as the just. A sinner comes to the Pure Land with all his sins, or rather, he leaves them in the world where they be-

long, and when he arrives in the Pure Land he is in his nakedness, with no sinful raiments about him. Karma does not pursue him up to the Pure Land. Amida's dealing with karma is in its generality. He is akarma itself and has nothing pertaining to the other term.

The idea of punishment belongs to human society which is governed by hate and love, and which therefore cannot transcend human psychology. To conceive God as judge and executor is Jewish-Christian and not Buddhist and brings him down to the world of karma. While the Shin conception of Amida is quite personal, he is above human frailties, his light has no shadow, his love is absolute, and whoever listens to his call ready to run into his extended arms will be embraced by him regardless of the devotee's past life, i.e. of his karma. Karma naturally follows its own course, but the devotee no more feels its burden however heavy and ordinarily unbearable and often unreasonable it may be. Karma is not wiped off, it is there all the time, but it has lost its effect on him; as far as he himself is concerned, karma is altogether vanished, his intellectualism may have to recognise the objectivity of karma, but his spiritual life is filled with the love of Amida. So says Shinran in the *Tannishō*: "While my body is in the world of karma my mind is in the Pure Land of Amida." Again, "When Amida's Name is heard, all the evil karma of so many kalpas is wiped off." This does not mean that karma as a sequence of objective events is eradicated, but that its effect on the devotee is nil—which amounts to the same thing as the non-existence of karma or the cancellation of sin. He is living in the world as if not in it. In so far as the intellect divides and does not integrate, a form of dualism always goes on in the philosophy of religion. It is only in the religious life itself that all the paradoxes raised by the intellect vanish without giving the devotee any inconvenience. Hence Shin's advice: Give up your "self-power," morally and intellectually, accept Amida's call without questioning, and live a life

of absolute passivity, i.e. of "other-power." A life of absolute passivity, a life entirely given up to "other-power" is a life of the love of God—of the love wherewith God loves himself.

## 3

The life of tariki is a life of passivity, when jiriki is all abandoned, Amida occupies the devotee's heart; while his relative existence chained to birth and death has to suffer karma, he lives as it were a life of Amida as he is now possessed by Amida. This living a life of Amida is known as the responding to his call, the hearing of his voice, the taking refuge in his Name. The mysterious power of the Name which is the foundation of the Pure Land teaching comes from living this kind of life. The Name is in the words, the voice of Amida, when he vowed that his Name should reach the ten quarters of the world, so that all beings would hear it, it meant that all beings if they quietly but intently listened by purging out everything from their minds they could receive the voice of Amida. This purging must be complete, otherwise the voice cannot be heard. Shin therefore insists on the purging and listening, perhaps more positively on the listening, because the listening is effected only when the purging is complete. Shin is always more positive than negative. "Listen and believe!" This is Shin's constant advice given to its followers. No learning is needed, no logical acuity, no accumulation of knowledge secular or spiritual, is recommended, but just listening with a mind emptied of self-power will put it in tune with the voice of Amida, and a new life begins with it.

## 4

The Shin followers are generally bitterly against offering prayers for any special favours, thinking that it is the direct violation of the principle of tariki; for as long as Amida takes care of you and karma has its own course to

follow, what use is there to make petitions to any higher powers? Not exactly fatalistic, but more in a scientific spirit, they are joyous sufferers of all kinds of events of this world. This may be in general accord with the Mahayana attitude towards prayers.

When Myō-e Shōnin (1163–1232) was asked by some one to offer a special prayer to the Buddha for his own benefit, the Shōnin said: "I pray every morning and every evening for the sake of all beings and I am sure you are also included among them as one of sentient beings. There is no special need to offer a prayer for one single particular person. If your wish were something to be granted in the general scheme of things it would most assuredly be granted; but if not, even with the power of the Buddha, nothing could be done for you."

The Shin people are consistent as far as their conception of Amida is concerned in rejecting individual favouritism, so to speak. But they often forget that there are other kinds of prayer besides mere asking for a favour or an intercession. When, for instance, prayer is the utterance of the suffering soul to emancipate itself from the bondage of karma or to be helped out of being hopelessly drowned in the ocean of its own sin, it is really of religious significance, and in full accord with the spirit of the Shin teaching.

Shin makes a sharp distinction between karma and akarma, a world of defilement and the Land of Purity, sinful beings and the Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life. This dualism, as I stated before, runs through the teachings of Shin, making up indeed the chief one of its characteristic features. It therefore insists that its followers should realise the fact to its fullest extent that this is an evil world and they have nothing in their being but evil, actual and potential, and for this reason and solely for this reason that they are to give themselves up to the loving help of Amida and to be reborn in his Land of Purity where they become thoroughly purged of their evils and defilements and

made fit for final enlightenment. This is really the principle by which all the schools of Jōdo are made possible, and without which Amida with his Land of Purity is of no avail. Amida and his Land belong to the realm of pure consciousness whereas sentient beings inevitably with their evil karma are of the world of sense-experiences. These two worlds, Amida and sentient beings, are diametrically opposed. To enter into the one, the other is to be abandoned unconditionally, for there is no half-way, you cannot have one leg in the one and the other in the other, except by means of prayer, which, translated into Jōdo terminology, is to realise the sinfulness of the karmic life. This realisation is the moment of absolute faith secured in Amida. The reason why Shin puts great stress on the sinful life of relative beings is to make them thus turn towards Amida and his Land.

Whatever the Shin followers may say, prayer to my mind corresponds to their "white road" which crosses the river of birth and death or of fire and water. Driven by the wild beasts and highway robbers who are found inhabiting everywhere in this world of defilement, sinners come to the shore and are about to be drowned in the waves of fire and water; they are desperate, they are completely at a loss what to do: if they go back they are sure to be devoured by the beasts, and proceed they cannot, for the waves are too high to ford; they have not yet descried the narrow white road which spans the stream, but which does not seem to be secure enough to cross. Then for the first time they hear the voice of the Buddha standing on the other shore and calling them to come to him without cherishing a doubt as to the security of the road which leads to him. With a bound they cross, and they are safely taken up in the arms of Amida. This hearing or the recognising of Amida's voice at the moment of despair is on the part of the sinner prayer. that is to say, the utterance of *Namu-amida-butsu*. By this Shin followers effect a successful bridging of the world of



karma-experience and the Land of Purity. They are not yet actually in Amida's Land for they are still in this world, but, as Shinran declares, they are in their minds walking about in the Pure Land.

## 5

The interrelationship of the karma world of sense-experiences and of Amida's transcendental world of values is very difficult to explain logically, and it has been a subject of heated discussion of the Jōdo teaching inclusive of Shin. The Pure Land is said to be so many hundreds of thousands of kotis of lands in the West, which however has never been visited by inhabitants of this world, which has never been an object of experience, that is to say, which can never be made accessible to our sense-experiences. And yet what a power of allurements the idea has had on all the followers of the Jōdo! An intellectually and empirically impossible thing has an absolute value irresistibly to turn our minds towards it. This cannot be laid aside as an utter absurdity. Somehow Amida's shadow must be hovering about us.

To follow the Shin way of thinking, is it not after all an illogical attitude on our part to take the sense-world as the starting point of all our ratiocination and to build up our intellectual structure of reality on it? Would it not rather be more logical and sure of results if we try to interpret this world as experienced by our senses by the aid of ideas growing out of our inmost perceptions? As far as certainty and demanding acceptance are concerned, these inner perceptions are just as persuasive and compelling as sense-perceptions; indeed the former are more so than the latter in the sense that the inner experiences have a controlling power over the empirical world. In other words, the world of karma loses its baneful effects as Amida's Land of Purity is envisaged. Instead of Amida being defined in terms of the sense-world, he fills the latter with his Vow

and makes it shine in his own Light. This is known by Shin followers as Amida illumining the world with his infinite light. The individual devotees vanish and become parts of "adornment" (*vyūha*) as set up by Amida. When this order is reversed, that is, when instead of Amida interpreting our lives we try to paint Amida in our own worldly light, Amida is never taken hold of, Amida is lost in the multiplicities of things, he ceases to shine over us and our lives become meaningless. This is the reason why when some Shin philosophers attempt an empirical description of Amida and his Land, they invariably flounder. The so-called doctrine of localisation as long as they proceed from experiences of this world falls flat and fails to lure more really religious-minded people.

It is for this reason that Shinran explains this world of relative values to be altogether a falsehood and there is nothing real in it to be trusted.

DAISETZ TEITARO SUZUKI