

## SHIN BUDDHISM AS THE RELIGION OF HEARING

Religion in its higher stages is generally divisible into two types: speculative and emotional, active and passive, or dynamic and static. Each of these ways of division is in a sense convenient and has its merit in its own way. But a closer study of religious experience will make it clear that these are not well grounded and not adequate to treat religion in its full extent. So we must be cautious in the study of the psychology of religious experience. The typification of religion is not so easy as is generally supposed. It must have its firm basis both in the inner experience and its direct expressions. What I want to suggest here is that the fundamental types of religion are quite different from those ever given by the scholars. The Seeing and the Hearing types are what I want to proffer instead of those above mentioned. If I adopt here the terms found in the *Daśabhūmi-vibhāṣā-śāstra* and the *Nirvāna Sūtra*, the Seeing and the Hearing types are expressed respectively as "Eye-seeing type" and "Hearing-seeing type."<sup>1</sup> On this subject, however, I have now no time to dwell, so I must remain contented with giving only a slight suggestion regarding the problem of typification of religion.

What I can say here is, after the investigation of great religions of the world, that the Seeing type is best represented by Zen Buddhism of the Rinzai school rather than by the Sōto, while the Hearing type is brilliantly represented by the Shinshū (True Sect) of the Pure Land, or for short by Shin Buddhism. We have thus in Buddhism both types of the primal *modus operandi* of the religious experience. In the world-religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Mohamedanism, Taoism, and Confucianism both of these types

<sup>1</sup> 眼見型, 聞見型.

are mixed to various extents in each, and there we see no one pure and simple type as maintained in Zen and Shin. But this mixture seems to denote a general form of religion and this suggests that Seeing and Hearing do not stand absolutely separated from each other in the intuitive insight of the religious geniuses.

The two types, Seeing and Hearing, are closely inter-related, that is, they both issue from the same source-material making up the intuitive understanding of truth, which is Enlightenment (*sambodhi*). Therefore, the Seeing is sometimes interchangeable with the Hearing and *vice versa*. When I say this it is not my intention to give a mere syncretic idea. Syncretism is of no use when one is earnestly engaged in solving the urgent practical problems of life. Each of these types has its well-grounded existential value which is regulated chiefly by the personal elements. The same experience is captured with different stresses and colourings where personal and environmental factors work. We may say the original experience is like a fountain which flows out in two directions. For this reason psychological echoes vary which come from the seeing and the hearing types of religious consciousness: the one is like the feeling that comes from an arrow at the moment of being shot, while the other is well compared to that arising from an arrow at the moment of hitting the target. In the latter a sense of fruition or completion is remarkable, and in the former the power of penetration is strongly felt. By these analogies we see that the hearing is somewhat broader than the seeing in its experiential field, that is, the former denotes a certain definite content of experience and thought, while the latter intensifies the momentary acuteness of immediate understanding. But from the nature of the case, it follows that this content can be conceived in only one possible manner, i.e. through an immediate mode of knowing, through intuition. It is solely by this mode of knowledge that we can understand something "through itself." Thus the two series

of main differences may be roughly given as follows:

Enlightenment	{	<p><i>Seeing</i>—Deliverance—“Satori” in this life — True void—Speculative—Actively pas- sive—Self-power—The Kōan—Aristocratic (one man or a half man)—Zen.</p> <p><i>Hearing</i>—Salvation—Faith <i>plus</i> Attain- ment in the life to come—Miraculous Ex- istence—Devotional—Passively active— Other-power—The Name (Myōgō)—Demo- cratic (all sentient beings)—Shin.</p>
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If these differences are kept in mind one can somewhat easily understand the existential form of Shin in contrast to Zen. For my chief object is to give in this article some doctrinal exposition of Shin. Now let me give here the evidences and reasons why Shin is named as the religion of the Hearing type.

### 1

The doctrine of Shinshū is fundamentally based upon the three sūtras, that is, the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*, the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* and the *Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha*, and among these three, especially upon the first sūtra. Shinran Shōnin (1137–1262 A.D.), the founder of the Shin Sect, says in his most important work, the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*:

“The *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha* is the truest teaching [of salvation given out by the Buddha Śākyamuni], and this is the Shin Sect of the Pure Land.”<sup>1</sup>

The quintessence of this sūtra is the Original Vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna*) of the Eighteenth, which was called by Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212) the King of the Original Vows which number forty-eight; it reads:

<sup>1</sup> 教行信證. “*The Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Attainment*,” six fasciculi. This was completed in his fifty-second year, and in this are laid down the fundamental principles of the Shin Sect, and upon this is built the entire structure of Shin Buddhism.

"If all beings in the ten quarters, when I have attained Buddhahood, should believe in me with all sincerity of heart, desiring to be born in my country, and should, say ten times, think of me, and if they should not be reborn there, may I not obtain enlightenment, barring only those who have committed the five deadly sins and those who have abused the Good Law (Dharma)."<sup>1</sup>

And this Vow is set in full motion by the passage found in the same sūtra, which was called also by Hōnen Shōnin as "the Passage of Fulfilment of the Original Vow." It runs thus:

"All sentient beings, upon *hearing the Name* [of the Buddha Amida which is deeply and adoringly praised and admired by the Buddhas on account of its authoritative and inconceivable merit and virtue], would awake a firm faith, even for once only, and rejoice in it! [*The Buddha Amida*], with sincerity of His heart, has transferred [all his own merit and virtue compressed into His Name on all sentient beings in order that He may let them obtain their Rebirth in the Pure Land], wherefore those who desire to be reborn in the country [of Amida] would instantly be assured of their Rebirth and abide in the condition of no-retrogression (*avaivartika*), barring only those who have committed the five deadly sins and those who have abused the Good Law."

The basic principle of Shin is included perfectly in this passage. When "the Shōnin instantly came to realise the inmost meaning of the doctrine of salvation through Amida and His all-embracing love for sentient beings, and found his faith firmly established in the truth that leads every sentient being, however ignorant, to the direct path of the Pure Land," in his twenty-ninth year under the personal instruction of his teacher Hōnen, what the Shōnin experienced in his inmost heart is expressed without reserve in this passage. His greatest work, the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*, flows

<sup>1</sup> From the Chinese translation by Samghavarman.

out of this, and his other works all come from this. Therefore Shin is best understood when one understands wholeheartedly the deep significance expressed therein. The essence of Shin is, if I put it another way, ingeniously epitomised in it. And in this important passage we see the character 聞 (Hearing), which denotes the deepest meaning of transference (*pariṇāmana*). Why Shin has come to be characterised as the religion of Hearing, therefore, will be the chief subject to which I want to call the attention of the readers in this article; for the special contribution Shin has made to the history of the development of Buddhism will be seen in this point.

## 2

Shin Buddhism is originally founded for the salvation of the ignorant and wicked. For these are the people who most need religious salvation and their number greatly surpasses that of the wise, so Amida's vow is mainly directed towards their salvation. The Shōnin says in his *Wasan*:

“Why did the Tathāgata Amida come to start His Vows?

It's because He desired to save those sentient beings who sink deep into the delusions of birth-and-death, [and have been long forsaken by the other Buddhas as helpless beings],

By transferring all His merit to them;  
And this compassion He has now perfected.”<sup>1</sup>

This, however, does not mean to exclude the wise from the saving Vow of Amida. They are of course embraced in it, but not as the “regular customers” of Shin. As Gwan-gyō<sup>2</sup> put it, “the ignorant first, the wise second” is the chief object Shin has in view. The *Tanni-shō*<sup>3</sup> tells us:

“Even a good man is reborn in the Pure Land, and how much more so with a wicked man! But people

<sup>1</sup> 和讃, Buddhist Songs in Japanese.

<sup>2</sup> 元曉 (Born, 617, A.D.), a Korean Buddhist scholar.

<sup>3</sup> Tract on Deploing the Heterodoxies.

generally think that even a wicked man is reborn in the Pure Land, how much more so with a good man! Though this latter way of thinking appears at first sight reasonable, yet it is not in accord with the purport of the Original Vow, the faith in the Original Vow. The reason is as follows: He who undertakes to perform a good deed by relying on his own power, has no wish to invoke the Other Power, he is not the object of the Original Vow of Amida. If, however, by discarding his reliance on self-power, he invokes the Other Power, he can be reborn in the True Land of Recompense. We who are fully burdened with passions, have no means to escape the bondage of birth-and-death, no matter what kinds of austerities we perform. Seeing this Amida felt a great pity and started the compassionate Vow for us. The original motive of Amida for making this Vow is thus for the attainment of Buddhahood by the wicked. *Therefore, the wicked who put firm faith in the Other Power are the special vessels for whom [the Vow of] Rebirth is primarily set up.* For this reason the Shōnin said that even if a good man is reborn in the Pure Land, how much more so with a wicked one!"

Of this, we have a rare example of Mimishiro, a burglar and murderer, who may be a Buddhist counterpart of Benvenuto Cellini, the Italian artist and Christian believer. In spite of his bad career Mimishiro could become a devout believer in the Original Vow. Those who have committed the five deadly sins are also, we are told, finally saved, and even those who have abused the Good Law are, if they become new converts to the Pure Land teaching, in the end to be saved. In the *Wasan* we read: "As the power of the Vow is infinitely mighty, even the heaviest of our sins is treated lightly; and as the Buddha-wisdom is boundless and immeasurable, even those who are distracted with evil passions and lead dissolute lives are not forsaken." This is indeed a very dangerous doctrine which seems to recognise anti-nomianism if it be understood superficially, but this is not really the case with Shin followers. When they are

awakened deeper and better to the saving spirit of Amida they begin, with a feeling of gratitude, to reorganise their lives, gently bound by the unseen law of faith, though they are not given outwardly any moral precepts (*śīla*) to observe. They do not allow themselves to grow in waywardness. We may say, therefore, the precepts are found inherently in the faith of Shin. "In all things, good is taken up and bad is forsaken; and all this is due to the Buddha's grace and not our own free choice," says Rennyō Shōnin.

Thus viewed, what Shin desires to be is from the first a democratic religion, against which Zen, though with the same object in view, does, to all intents and purposes, aim at the deliverance of "one man or a half man" as they express the idea of selection. In consequence of this, Shin advocates hearing, but Zen advises seeing; "Seeing into self-nature" is the motto of Zen. Hearing is an easy practice and practicable for the masses, because it is possible for them just to rely upon the Other Power, i.e., Amida's vow. Seeing is difficult and permitted only to a few *élites*, because it depends entirely upon self-power.

Then why does Shin depend upon the Other Power, disregarding self-power to which other sects of Buddhism constantly appeal? To understand this we must first of all clearly observe how critically the founder reflected upon himself and humanity in general.

The founder had a rare ability in self-introspection. He could allow anything to pass in his mind without reflecting upon it; he was shrewd in reading his self-nature; he could see himself in his proper colours; there was not a particle of self-conceit in his mind. In this respect he was like his teacher Hōnen, who put in his *Wagotō-roku* the following passage: "Everybody harbours daily 800,004,000 thoughts, each of which, when examined, is nothing but an evil seed that drives one into no other places than the three evil paths." Shinran Shōnin himself confessed his miserable feeling as follows:

“To extirpate evil nature in me is beyond hope ;  
 So venomous is my heart, like a serpent or a scorpion ;  
 Even if a good deed is done, it is seasoned with poison :  
 Hence it is called falsehood.”

In another place he says :

“I am the one who is incapable of observing any deed  
 of merit, and for this reason my ultimate abode is  
 no other than hell (Naraka) itself,”

and again :

“Though we imagine our age is that wherein reigns  
 the right Good Law, and we are competent to realise  
 it, yet we are, in fact, extremely mean and ignorant,  
 having no more the heart pure and true ; how could  
 then we aspire for Buddhahood relying upon our self-  
 power ? We must not assume the air of wisdom,  
 morality or purity as we are holding within ourselves  
 all manners of falsehood and unreality.”

We have long lost the “purity of self-nature” and our  
 life is besmeared with sins and ignorance ; the age is degene-  
 rate ; despair reigns in and out ; how could we hope to attain  
 Enlightenment in this life ? Are we to end this life in such  
 miserable state as this ? No ! the Buddha knows already  
 what we are and is throwing the great Light of Wisdom  
 over us that shines through the dark night of ignorance.  
 Illumined by this Light we come to know what the *Nem-  
 butsu*<sup>1</sup> is. The Shōnin says :

“In the world of impermanence and of pain and suffer-  
 ing, which is like a house on fire, where beings full  
 of evil passions are inhabiting, all is vain, all is empty,  
 there is nothing true and reliable except the Nem-  
 butsu, which only is true.”

Standing upon this recognition he decided to choose the  
 Gate of the Pure Land forsaking twenty years' study, both  
 of learning and practice of the Gate of the Holy Path.

“Now, the Holy teaching has many forms, and each

<sup>1</sup> 念佛, (*nien-fo*).



one is productive of great benefits when it is in full accordance with the character of a believer. In these latter days, however, the practice of the Holy Path is by no means to be recommended. For we read: 'In the time when the Good Law begins to decay, not one among myriads of beings could be found who could gain the Path, however much they might discipline themselves [according to the Path] and try to observe the law': and again, 'But there is one Gate of the Pure Land through which only we may all enter the Way, etc.' These are the words unmistakably set forth in our sacred books and commentaries as uttered by the golden mouth of the Tathāgata himself."

The keen, relentless insight into the nature of humanity and the age led him thus to the finding of salvation by faith in the Original Vow of Amida. The essence of the doctrine of Rebirth in the Pure Land is to believe in the Name of the Buddha with absolute single-heartedness. This is the backbone of Shin and this is minutely told only in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*. In the *Commentary on the Discourse of the Pure Land*<sup>1</sup> we read:

"The Blessed one, at Rājagṛha and Śrāvasti, preached to a large number of followers on the miraculous virtue of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitābha) and taught the Name of the Buddha is the pith of the three sūtras of the Pure Land."

By taking up this suggestion by Donran and deeply delving into the inward meaning of the sūtra, the Shōnin came to the conviction that an immovable faith in the absoluteness of the Other Power would save him.

"To mention the one true teaching, the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha* is it... The sole purpose of the sūtra is to reveal the Original Vow of the Tathāgata; that is to say, the Name of the Buddha is the essence of it."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Discourse of the Pure Land* was originally written by Vasubandhu and Donran (T'an-luan, 476-542) produced his *Commentary* upon it.

<sup>2</sup> *The Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*.

The meaning of the passage is this: among all the teachings of the Buddha Śakyamuni what is the truest is only expressed in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*, because the salvation of the ignorant and wicked is promised in no other sūtras than in this. For this reason we can read the essence of all the other sūtras in this one; all the other sūtras are asserted, after all, as the means to lead one to a belief in the Name, *Namu-amida-butsu*. Here the Original Vow and the Name refer to the same source, i.e. the saving power of Amida, the Original Vow being the cause and the Name the result. In other words, the Original Vow bore fruit as the Name. The Buddha Amida, in his disciplinary stage, vicariously accumulated immeasurable virtues and merits necessary for the salvation of all sentient beings, without a moment's impurity of heart and mind, and those virtues and merits obtained are without reserve compressed into His Name. So the Name is endowed with inconceivable power miraculously to work out our salvation. The Buddha transfers the Name to us as the potent cause of our Rebirth in the Pure Land. Upon hearing the Name, therefore, we are instantly saved for ever, being set free from the bondage of birth-and-death. The Shōnin says in his *Wasan*: "If sentient beings, living in this world of five defilements,<sup>1</sup> believe in the Original Vow, they will be filled with merit which is inexplicable, ineffable, and inconceivable;" and again,

"Hearing the Name of the Buddha Amida,  
If one praises it with a deep joy,  
He will instantly obtain the great supreme benefit.  
As he is filled with treasures of merit."

"Hearing" is considered peculiarly important in Shin. Kakunyo Shōnin says, in his *Saiyō-shō*,<sup>2</sup> referring to the

<sup>1</sup> Five defilements are: (1) Defilement of age, (2) of view, (3) of worldly desires, (4) of human-kind, (5) of life, meaning "man becomes short-lived."

<sup>2</sup> A work explaining the significance of the Eighteenth Vow.

*Larger Sūtra*, Zendō<sup>1</sup> and Shinran :

“In the sūtra and its commentaries alike a great stress is put upon the importance of hearing. Accordingly it is apparent that by hearing well, faith and practice necessary for our Rebirth is instantly transferred from the Buddha.”

Then, what is the significance of “Hearing the Name”? To hear the Name does not literally mean to hear the sound of reciting the Name; nor are careless, blank-minded hearing and mere understanding meant here. If these be the cases no such great importance would ever be given to it. In Shin it has a peculiar meaning. The Shōnin says in his *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* :

“Thus is told in the sūtra : hearing means that sentient beings, upon hearing the primary purport and the gist of the Buddha’s Vow, retain no shadow of doubt in their minds [concerning their salvation].”

Here “the sūtra” is of course the *Larger Sūtra* and what he expounds is of “hearing” in the “Passage of Fulfilment of the Original Vow” in the same sūtra. By this we can see that the sūtra can rightly be understood through this one word “*hearing*,” which denotes the establishment of faith, forsaking decisively one’s self-power and relying entirely upon the Other Power, i.e. the Power of the Original Vow. Why is this so? The Buddha, in order to save those ignorant and wicked who are beyond the hope of redemption, started the supreme, unsurpassable Vow of Compassion and vicariously meditating and disciplining for immeasurable kalpas He succeeded in fulfilling the Vow, which was embodied in His Name. On account of this our salvation is possible by hearing the Name. This is the substance of the sūtra. Therefore “to hear the Original Vow without doubt” or “to hear securely under a spiritual leader, the reason that our Rebirth is assured by the Other Power of the Tathāgata” is the meaning of “hearing.”

<sup>1</sup> 善導, Shan-tao, (613-681).

On the contrary, in the Holy Path there is a threefold successive stage of discipline to attain its ultimate end, that is, hearing, thinking and practice. The followers of the Holy Path first hear the teaching of Buddhism, then think about it and lastly carry it into practice, in order to obtain Buddha-wisdom, extirpating all their evil passions with their own efforts and labours.

But in Shin, hearing only is necessary, for thinking and practice are vicariously done on the part of Amida. We may say these two are compressed in one, hearing. By this "hearing" which is unique, we are able, without a moment's delay, to obtain Rebirth through the Buddha's transference of His Name, *Namu-amida-butsu*. Here the Other Power which is the Power of the Original Vow works strongly for our salvation. In other words, to have faith in the saving Vow of Amida is only necessary for us to obtain Rebirth in the Pure Land. So we know hearing is the same with believing after all. For the Shōnin says: "To hear the Original Vow and harbour no doubt of it is hearing;"<sup>1</sup> hearing is here no other than believing;<sup>2</sup> and when he says in the same place: "Hearing is the word that expresses believing," he asserts clearly "believing is hearing." Again the word "Believing-enjoyment" (信樂) in the passage of the Eighteenth Vow is found by him as the same with hearing (聞) in the "Passage of Fulfilment." By these we can see that "hearing is believing" and "believing is hearing." This is peculiar to Shin; it is not found in any other schools of Buddhism. And in Shin, hearing and believing is held to be only possible when based on the Other Power. The Shōnin never uses the words seeing 見 and "satori" 悟, but

<sup>1</sup> *The Ichinen-tanen-shōmon* (Notes on One Thought and Many Thoughts).

<sup>2</sup> In this article I use *faith*, *believing heart*, and *believing* in the same sense, and differentiate them from *belief* which is, strictly speaking, the intellectual acceptance of a statement made about the truth. Faith, from my point of view, is not believing in an intellectual statement of the truth, but an inner experience, dynamic and spiritual, of it.

hearing 聞 and attainment 證. So he never says "hearing is seeing and *vice versa*." In Zen, this latter is sometimes found, but not in Shin. You may say all this is due to the different structure of intellectual beliefs. Yes, to a certain extent it is so, but all is not said about this problem. If you are a keen observer you will not overlook whence comes this difference; I mean, particularly, the difference in the religio-psychological field of the experience. In saying this, I do not, of course, deny that in the deeper recess of religious experience seeing is freely interchangeable with hearing and *vice versa*, yet where this is possible there Shin is not holding strictly to its own characteristic basis. And this fact gives the ground to Shin's insistence on hearing. The assertion of hearing is, however, not an invention on the part of the founder, for it is well grounded on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and the *Nirvāna Sūtra*. Yet a systematic construction of Shin thought on the basis of hearing is his own. And in doing this he reads very often between the lines with his own wisdom-eye and does not always follow the traditional ways of reading the Buddhist literature.<sup>1</sup> He went even so far as to assert 觀 (contemplation) of 觀彼安

<sup>1</sup> For instance, see my translation of "the Passage of Fulfilment" given above. There an entirely new way of reading is introduced into 至心廻向 (to transfer with sincerity of heart). 廻向 (*hui hsiang*, transference) has been long considered to be the transferring of our merit towards the Buddha, but, contrary to this, the Shōnin interprets it as "the Buddha's transferring of his merit towards us" by delving into the meaning of 令 (to let), of 令諸衆生功德成就 (to let all sentient beings perfect the merit) in the *Larger Sūtra*.

In this connection it is interesting to note a criticism given recently by a Catholic writer who lives in the atmosphere of absolute obedience: "The Japanese monks must have been endowed with a strong personality and incapable of submitting to a discipline, for under pretext of reform they constantly invented new sects, and to justify themselves complicated the details of doctrines already very complex. Shinran, a disciple of Hōnen, pushed the doctrines of his master to extremes, founded the Shin sect. . . ." See the article on "the Religion of Japan" by J. M. Martin in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, edited by E. C. Messenger, vol. I, 1935.

樂世界相<sup>1</sup>, and 見 of 見無量壽佛<sup>2</sup> are the same with hearing.

In the history of the Nembutsu-thought, there are, roughly stated, three stages of development,<sup>3</sup> that is, "to contemplate on or to think of the Buddha," (*kuan-nien* or *i-nien*), "to invoke or recite the Name" (*ch'eng-ming*), and "to hear the Name" (*wên-ming*). And the Shōnin is the first "Hearer" of the Name. Why he was so is based, as suggested above, mainly on his relentless, acute analysis of his own nature and humanity in general. For "contemplation of the Buddha," with a mind of purity and sincerity is impossible for the ignorant and confused, and "recitation of the Name" with a view to accumulate merit is still considered beyond power of the ignorant when they are by nature unqualified as reciters. So the reciting was replaced by hearing. In the *Gwangwan-shō*<sup>4</sup> we read:

"Why, in the Passage of Fulfilment, is 聞 (hearing the Name) used instead of 稱 (invoking the Name)? Because we are incompetent to obtain the benefit of Rebirth with our merit obtained by invoking the Name. Then what is the significance of hearing? It is to hear under a spiritual leader, the primary purport and the gist of the Original Vows. As soon as hearing is settled a joy grows, whereupon one is assured of his Rebirth and abides in the condition of no-retrogression."

In this way "hearing the Name," when it is perfected, naturally comes to possess joy, assurance of Rebirth, and "abiding in the condition of no-retrogression," that is, all these flow at the same moment out of once hearing the Name. Hence hearing is believing. At the moment of hearing the Name penetrates deep into one's heart and establishes itself

<sup>1</sup> "To contemplate on that world of Peace and Bliss" in the *Discourse on the Pure Land*.

<sup>2</sup> "To see the Buddha of Infinite Life," in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*.

<sup>3</sup> See D. T. Suzuki: *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, II, p. 115 ff. 1933.

<sup>4</sup> A book explaining the five essential Vows of Amida, by Kakuyō Shōnin.

as hearing or believing. In other words, we may say, the Buddha's intuition, and not ours, takes place in the inmost seat of our hearts, which goes under the name of hearing or believing. Therefore, hearing or believing expresses the inconceivability of the Other Power, which works chiefly for the salvation of the ignorant through the Name. The Shōnin says: "The Other Power is the power of the Original Vow of Tathāgata."<sup>1</sup> And the power of the Original Vow is embodied in the Name and the Name is given to us as the right definite cause of our Rebirth. So the Name is the object of hearing or believing. Seeing, in the religious sense of the word, is seeing only when it has nothing to see; seeing is no-seeing; no-seeing is true-seeing in its ultimate sense. But believing is believing as far as it has its object to believe though the object is not of any materiality. In Shin the Name of the Buddha Amida is the object of believing. Yet we must not forget in this case that believing too is caused by the Other Power, that is, the Other Power is the motive power or the active agent of our believing and we are not the "motivater" of it. For our believing heart is "that which has been transferred to us by the Power of the Original Vow."<sup>2</sup> Hence it is called "the true believing heart" or "the believing heart solid as diamond," against the self-made, untrue, pretended faith. From this we can see there is no faith apart from the Name; "the true believing heart necessarily contains the Name." The Shōnin sings in his *Wasan*:

"If all the sentient beings in the ten quarters hear the supremely meritorious Name of the Buddha Amida and attain into the true believing heart, they will obtain a great joy in what they hear."

Hearing and believing do not come forth successively in time, they are simultaneously perfected, i.e. in one-thought-moment (一念, *i-nien*) and essentially the same thing.

<sup>1</sup> 言他力者如來本願力也。

<sup>2</sup> 信心者則本願力廻向之信心也。

## 4

That the name of God has a mystic influence over his believers in primitive religions as well as in Judaism and Zoroastrianism is a well-known fact. In some Buddhist literature such as the *Kṣitigarbha-praṇidhāna-sūtra* and the *Daśabhūmi-vibhāṣā-śāstra* the names of the Buddhas are told meritorious when invoked, and destroy sins. But the Name of Amida is different in its content from them and belongs to a different category of thought. It may be said unique in kind in the history of religion, for we can not find any parallel in other religions. The Buddha Amida perfected His Name in order that He might save all sentient beings with it, and gave it out desiring to have it resounded widely and universally. Here is the reason why it is superior to those of the other Buddhas, that is to say, the Name is perfected having its root deep in His great saving Vow. The Shōnin says in his *Yuishin-shō-mon-i*:

“The Name [Namu-amida-butsu] of this Buddha [Amida] is superior to those of the other Buddhas, because it is His Saving Vow.”<sup>1</sup>

How inconceivable and greatly meritorious the Name is can be gathered from the “Passage of Fulfilment” which reads: “Upon hearing the Name one is, in one-thought-moment of faith, assured of Rebirth.” In the same book just quoted above, we read; “It is the Name of the great compassionate Vow that leads all sentient beings into the great, supreme Nirvāna.” As a sharp-edged sickle cuts down all the over-growing weeds, so the sword excellently tempered in the Name<sup>2</sup> works most powerfully and effectively upon us, the ignorant and confused, filled with weeds of sins and evil passions. Before the sword of the Name no weeds can be

<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Chinese Quotations in the Tract on Faith-only.

<sup>2</sup> 利劍即是彌陀號.



left untouched, and as soon as all the weeds are cut down<sup>1</sup> we are "wrapped up in the Name, *Namu-amida-butsu*," which means the establishment of faith in Shin. Thus to throw all our religious experience into the Name originated by the Other Power, paying no attention to one's self-power, is a great characteristic of Shin.

But even when such a supreme Name is perfected, if it is not praised and propagated by other Buddhas, we, sentient beings, shall remain uninformed of it and never be able to believe it. Hence the Seventeenth Vow is vowed, which reads:

"If innumerable Buddhas in the ten quarters, when I have attained Buddhahood, should not all praise and admire and extol my Name, may I not attain Enlightenment."

Now this vow, having been fulfilled the Buddhas in the ten quarters praise, admire and extol the inconceivability of the Name of Amida. "The innumerable Buddhas, countless as sands of the Ganges, depreciating the various good practices, advise all to believe in the inconceivability of the Name, and this, each of the Buddhas does with wholeheartedness."<sup>2</sup>

The Name is "*Namu-amida-butsu*," the hearing of which enables us to obtain faith and Rebirth. Though we say generally "our faith" and "our Rebirth," they are not the outcome we have obtained with our own contrivance and labour, i.e., by our self-power; they are entirely transferred by the Buddha on to us. Hence the doctrine of "transfer-

<sup>1</sup> In this case Zen advocates "abandonment" (放下). Abandonment of what? Nothing but self-will, which is discrimination or sin. In order to complete abandonment, "searching, contriving or pondering" is absolutely necessary, and the last thread of self-will must be cut off to reach the ultimate goal. If not, the devil of self-will is found himself hiding even in the smallest hole of the lotus fibre and singing in triumph. So difficult is this last cutting-off. (See Dr. D. T. Suzuki's *Zen Essays*, II. p. 48-50). "Nothing burneth in hell but self-will," says a Christian mystic. But in Shin all this is done by the Name.

<sup>2</sup> *The Wasan*.

ence," (*parināmana*).<sup>1</sup> It means to transfer the merit of Amida to us and this is the most important principle of Shin. The Shōnin says; "Observing the Shinshū of Pure Land with deep reverence, I find in it two kinds of transference; One is to be reborn in Amida's country, the other to return to this world [in order to help others enjoy the same bliss in that country]." These two are innate, as it were, in the Name, for the Name is the embodiment of the Original Vow; in it are included wisdom, compassion, and merit of the Buddha. For this reason the Name occupies a very high position in the religious thought of the Shōnin.

## 5

Shin teaches faith, and a "believing heart" is fundamentally important to attain Rebirth. "Faith is recognised as the most essential in all the instructions given by the Shōnin,"<sup>2</sup> says Rennyō Shōnin. Because it is greatly meritorious as it is transferred by the Buddha. The Shōnin says: "Faith is the one that is transferred by the power of the Original Vow." This faith essentially consists in the Name of Amida. "There is no other way possible to us to be reborn in the Buddha's country of Peace and Bliss than to attain true faith through the Name, which is the supreme and invaluable jewel." Therefore, when we hear the Name we have faith, which is pure and immaculate, and as it is a gift of the Buddha and not an outcome of our ingenuity, it is always the same in anyone who harbours it. On the contrary, it is not so with other branches of Buddhism, i.e. the Gate of the Holy Path.

In the latter the followers also take into account rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida and talk often about the meritorious effect of the Name. Yet this is done entirely

<sup>1</sup> The idea is clearly expressed in the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* as follows: "There can not be anything, whether it be practice or faith [for our Rebirth], which is not perfected by the Tathāgata Amida's transference, whose Vow-mind is pure and genuine."

<sup>2</sup> *The Ofumi*, Letters of Rennyō Shōnin, Pt. V, No. 10.

in accordance with their main teachings they uphold. So there is no talk of faith in the Name. Even if they estimate the value of faith they do so generally as a means to some definite practice they have in view. In the Jōdo sect they, of course, hold the Name in great appreciation; yet differing from Shin they assert that faith is obtained by their efforts and contrivances. To attain faith, therefore, they must exert all their abilities and recite the Name with their minds ever-strained in righteousness. And yet they cannot absolutely rely upon the merits and virtues accumulated by their own practices, so they expect the Buddhas to come to receive them into the Pure Land at their death-bed. As their faith is thus based upon self-power it varies among themselves. Read the *Goden-shō*:

“Faith varies so long as it is based on self-power; for we all have different intellectual capacities and the faith based upon them cannot be identical: whereas the faith based on a power other than the self is one that is given by the Buddha to us, ignorant beings, regardless of our moral attainments.”<sup>1</sup>

Here we see how the idea of “transference” is basic to the doctrine of Shin. In the *Wasan* we read: “Faith is awakened by the Vow, so attainment of Buddhahood by the Nembutsu is natural.” For this reason there is no need of waiting for the Buddhas to come to receive us at our death-bed. The faith given to us by the Buddha is so great as to make us attain Buddhahood; it is ineffable, inexpressible and inconceivable; even Maitreya, the future Buddha, cannot measure the depth and greatness of the Buddha-mind. Read the *Saiyō-shō*:

“If this faith is understood as ‘true mind’ it cannot be a deluded heart of the ignorant; it is entirely the Buddha-mind, and when this Buddha-mind is transferred to the heart of the ignorant it is called faith.”

<sup>1</sup> The Life of Shinran, by Kakunyo Shōnin.

From the point of view of sinful mortals it will be something like this: to take refuge in Amida with deep reverence and singleness of heart, and to have no trace of doubt in the mind is the true faith; and out of this genuine faith joy flows, as is generally the case with the mystical experience of religious souls. For when faith is established Rebirth is assured; our body and mind are soaked in joy and we now recite the Name living in vital faith. This experience is no doubt ecstatic, but the sectarian structure has tended and hardened, rather than melted, emotion, intellect and will. We have not been accustomed to speak about mystical experience in Shin as in Christianity. Therefore, the expression is in great measure restrained. This can be seen, for example, in the interpretation of joy. There are two phases of joy: one concerns the attainment of Nirvana in the life to come, that is, assurance of Rebirth; the other concerns the settlement in the order of steadfastness. The former is prospective joy (歡喜) and the latter is actual joy (慶喜). This double-faced joy is nothing but an evidence that Shin is the "Gate of double-benefited doctrine," while Zen is called the "Gate of single-benefited doctrine," for in Zen "satori"-experience is all in all, and no rebirth is recognised after death.

Now it will be well to notice here the significance of reciting the Name in Shin. The recitation of the Name means neither the accumulation of any special merit nor the attempting to obtain Rebirth. What it means is to express one's deep gratitude for the Buddha. The reason is this: The Buddha is constantly throwing his all-saving light, which is wisdom, over all sentient beings, with his never-tiring compassionate heart. By this light of wisdom faith is awakened within us, and the essence of our faith is the Name. So the recitation of the Name is naturally possible to the devout followers. The Shōnin says, "The true faith necessarily contains the Name." Commenting upon this passage Kakunyo Shōnin says:

"[The Shōnin says], 'the true faith necessarily contains the Name.' What this really means is this: As soon as one hears the primary purport of the Original Vow under a spiritual leader he is taken up into the spiritual Light of Amida; now having been taken up into the all-saving Light of Amida he is naturally enabled by that saving power to recite the Name. And this recitation is nothing but the practice of gratitude for the Buddha's favour."<sup>1</sup>

The Buddha Amida gives, with his mind true and sincere, His Name which arises from the Original Vow to all sentient beings in the ten quarters, with a view to make them all obtain Rebirth in the Pure Land. If hearing is carefully and decisively done by the devotees' faith is instantly established in them, which has its essence in the Name of Amida. In consequence of this, the "true faith" naturally moves the devotees to recite the Name. The recitation, in this case, does not allow to include any egoistic purpose. In the *Wasan* we see a following warning:

"Upon obtaining the true faith, the recitation of Name is all given by the Buddha; so it is named no-transference on our side. If we offer it to the Buddha it is repudiated as self-willed."

The Name which is the essence of our faith and is also the right definite cause of our Rebirth is now turned, after the attainment of faith, into that which is recited for the gratitude to the Buddha. Thus the Shōnin purified Buddhism from the last shreds of relying upon merit as was taught by his teacher Hōnen and insisted that salvation is by faith alone, and nothing else.

## 6

The true faith, as I have mentioned above, is established instantaneously upon hearing the Name born of the Original

<sup>1</sup> *The Hongwan-shō.*

Vow. In the *Kuden-shō*<sup>1</sup> we read: "What is essential in Shin is that the assurance of Rebirth in one-thought-moment is the origin of the sect." Here "one-thought-moment" means faith. Hence the phrase, "faith of one-thought-moment."<sup>2</sup> This is an abrupt faith, because it is awakened by the Power of the Original Vow. It is the true cause of Rebirth in the True Land of Recompense. Of this one-thought-moment we have double meaning: one shows that "faith is not double-hearted," i.e. single-heartedness; the other the "ultimacy of awakening of faith, in which a wide and great and inconceivable joy is inherent." But these two are not separable, both help mutually to make clear the content of faith. When faith is considered in this way there naturally follows the doctrine that "when an abrupt awakening of inner faith takes place our Rebirth is instantly assured in our everyday life."<sup>3</sup> This doctrine has its basis chiefly, among others, upon the Passage of Fulfilment, and the interpretation of 卽得往生 (*chi tē wang shêng*) given by the Shōnin has, in this case, the deepest significance. The Shōnin says in his *Ichinen-tanen-shōmon* as follows:

"卽 means instantaneousness, which is not a mere momentariness in time; again it means 'to accede' or 'to settle,' i.e., 'to settle in the order of steadfastness'; 得 is 'to have already gained what is to be gained': if one obtains true faith he is instantaneously taken up into (攝取, *shē ch'ü*) the mind of the Buddha, who is the unobstructed Light, and never forsaken. 攝 is 'to accept', and 取 'to welcome to receive'; when he is 'accepted' and 'welcomed to receive' into the saving Light he is simultaneously settled in the order of steadfastness (*samyaktvaniyatarāṣi*); this is called 'to obtain Rebirth (往生)'."

*Chi* is here used to express "crosswise passing-over"

<sup>1</sup> "Sayings and Doings of Shinran, Orally Transmitted", by Nyōshin to Kakuño.

<sup>2</sup> 一念之信. If this is the case with Zen, the exclamation "Ah!" will come out.

<sup>3</sup> 一念發起平生業成, (*i nien fa ch'i p'ing shêng yeh ch'êng*).

(横超, *hêng ch'ao*), by which is denoted that the stream of bad Karma which binds us to the five evil paths is passed over crosswise with the Other Power, that is, the bondage that binds us to birth-and-death is cut off abruptly by the Other Power. If this is stated conversely, "crosswise passing-over" means "to be assured instantaneously of Rebirth."<sup>1</sup> *Chi* denotes, therefore, the abrupt working of the Other Power through us. This interpretation of *chi* is peculiar to the Shōnin, for it is not asserted on the subjective side as is generally the case with the Gate of the Holy Path, but on the objective side, i.e. on the side of the Other Power. To understand this point more clearly let us take the *P'u-sa-ying-lo-pên-yêh-ching*, wherein the following meaning is explained: The Bodhisattvas succeed in abiding in the condition of no retrogression of the first grade of the "Dwelling stage" (*ch'u chu*) only when they deliver themselves from the hindrances of discrimination and attachment to the Dharma as well as to the self after they have disciplined for 10,000 kalpas. And again in the *Dasābhūmi-vibhāṣā-sātra* it is related as follows: "The Bodhisattvas can abide in the condition of no-retrogression of the first rank of the Bhūmi (*ch'u ti*) after they have finished successfully the discipline of one great asamkhya kalpas."

But the Shin devotee of the Nembutsu, though he is not free from the above hindrances can instantly abide in the condition of no-retrogression<sup>2</sup> without cutting off evil passions, when he, hearing the purport of the Name, lives in "the faith of one-thought-moment." This is because the bad karma that binds him to the six evil paths<sup>3</sup> and the four forms of birth<sup>4</sup> is made ineffective by the inconceivable work

<sup>1</sup> *The Gutoku-shō.*

<sup>2</sup> In Shin, "abiding in the condition of no-retrogression (*avai-vartika*)" is used in the same sense as "to be settled in the order of steadfastness (*samyaktvaniyatarāṣi*)."

<sup>3</sup> The six evil paths are: Hells, the world of hungry ghosts, the animal world, the world of fighting demons, the human world, Heavens.

<sup>4</sup> The four forms of birth are: Those born from a womb, the

of the Name, when his faith is established, even if he does not discipline himself for any time whatever. In the *Mattō-shō*<sup>1</sup> the Shōnin says: "As soon as faith is awakened our Rebirth is assured [while we are still on earth]." Why is this so? Because

"the Buddha with his compassionate heart, originally intended to save the short-lived beings such as we; and his intention was embodied in His Vow. The Vow has already been fulfilled, and the Buddha is at present abiding in Buddhahood. Hence the assertion: 'As soon as faith is awakened our Rebirth is assured.' If it is necessary to invoke His Name many times in order to be saved, how could those who are constantly exposed to death-threat or those whose days are numbered avail themselves of the Vow? But this is not the case with the Original Vow."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in Shin, the great event of Rebirth is assuredly promised of any one the moment he rejoices at hearing the Name at anytime of his life.<sup>3</sup> Kakunyo Shōnin says:

"If a devotee, at any time of his life, awakens one thought of trusting himself to the Buddha, under the instruction of a spiritual leader, he should regard this moment as the end of his earthly life."<sup>4</sup>

What is here remarkable is that Rebirth is assured whenever faith is awakened, and the assurance of Rebirth is not specially limited to the last hour of death as is held mainly by the Chinzei branch of the Jōdo sect.<sup>5</sup> This egg-born, the moisture-born, those that come into existence through transformation,

<sup>1</sup> Tract on the Light of the Terminating Period.

<sup>2</sup> *The Kuden-shō*.

<sup>3</sup> It is told that when one is assured of Rebirth there blooms a new lotus-flower in the pond of the Pure Land.

<sup>4</sup> *The Shūji-shō*.

<sup>5</sup> The Seizan, another branch of the Jōdo sect, put a stress upon the actual obtainment of Rebirth in the ordinary moments of one's life, though it does not deny Rebirth at the death-hour. In this respect it has much affinity to Shin, but more affinity it has to Shingon and Zen that assert respectively "the attainment of Buddhahood in one's



branch of the Jōdo maintains that Rebirth is only attainable by keeping one's mind steadfastly in the right thought at the hour of death, and moreover, it is necessary at the same time to wait the Buddhas to come to receive him into<sup>1</sup> the country of Amida. This is called "Rebirth promised at the death-hour."<sup>2</sup> which stands in contrast to "Assurance of Rebirth in the ordinary moment of one's life" in Shin. Why then do the followers of the Chinzei come to pay so much attention to the hour of death? A passage in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitō-padeśa* will perhaps answer to this question: "Why does the working of mind for a short time at the death-hour surpass the power obtained through one's whole-life's discipline? Because his mental power at the time, though short it is, is so strong and furious like fire or poison that it perfects a great thing. As the mind works energetically decisively it supersedes the power attained through one hundred years' religious austerities." This may be the reason they are earnest to uphold "Rebirth promised at the death-hour." But Shin differs from them. The Shōnin says in his *Mattō-shō*:

"The devotee of the true faith, as he is once saved and never forsaken, is settled in the order of steadfastness while he is still alive on earth; so he needs neither worry about his dying hour nor expect the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to come to receive him into the country of Amida. As soon as faith is established Rebirth is also assured."<sup>3</sup>

Rebirth is thus assured in one-thought-moment of faith; body" and "seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood."

<sup>1</sup> Why is this necessary? Three reasons are given in the *Kangotō-roku* by Hōnen as follows:

- (1) in order to have one's mind in the right thought;
- (2) in order not to miss the right way of Rebirth;
- (3) in order to keep out of harm's way.

<sup>2</sup> 臨終往生 (*lin chung wang shêng*).

<sup>3</sup> In his *Gutoku-shō* the Shōnin clearly asserts that "As soon as one receives with faith the Original Vow his life ends, and simultaneously he obtains Rebirth." Of course no physical death is meant here.

it is abruptly done. Hence "Rebirth in one-thought-moment." And this one-thought-moment of faith continues to work ever after effectively to the end of the devotee's life. For this reason, the faith of Shin is asserted double-benefitting, that is, on the one hand, the devotee is enabled to settle in the order of steadfastness in this world, and on the other, qualified assuredly to realise Nirvāna (Enlightenment) in the Pure Land on his being reborn there. And the former idea is quite original in the history of the Jōdo doctrine, for "to settle in the order of steadfastness" has been generally understood to be obtained in the Pure Land. But the Shōnin decided it as the actual benefit of faith in this life.<sup>1</sup> Here he seems to have had a great mystical experience under the form of faith which is comparable to the "satori"-experience in Zen, for he declares it as equal to Enlightenment, which is only realisable, according to his view, in the Pure Land. Giving expression to his inner joy he says:

"Since we have heard the compassionate Vow which is  
supramundane,  
How could we be the ignorant mortals fettered to  
Birth-and-Death?  
Though we continue to live in the same impure bodies  
filled with sins,  
Our minds live already in the Pure Land to enjoy  
their free play."

Thus benefitted we are no longer miserable beings as before. Though it is hardly possible for us to take superficial, thoughtless delight in worldly things we feel a certain deeper joy caused by the assurance of future realisation of Nirvāna. Life seen through the problem of death is the real life we can firmly stand upon. The world which once seemed illusory and full of evils is not so loathsome and repulsive. Transitoriness and ephemerality of our life and the world does not actually disappear in any way, but reflecting upon

<sup>1</sup> The idea is best seen in his new way of reading the Eleventh Vow in the *Larger sūtra*. See the *Ichinen-tanen-shōmon*.

ourselves we feel happy to know, even if we may remain sinful as ever, that we are already protected, here and now, by the saving Light of Amida. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* we read: "Even in a particle of dust the myriad Buddhas live and are now preaching the Good-Law." A particle of dust is a thing trivial and insignificant, but when we know the myriad Buddhas are preaching therein our hearts cannot remain cold at this stupendous finding. So when we rediscover what and where we are we cannot help deeply appreciating the Buddha's favour. We are no longer lonely wayfarers; every night we sleep with *Namu-amida-butsu*, every morning we wake with *Namu-amida-butsu*; we are always with the Buddha. Thus protected, we see the world in a new light and find that this is the very place for us to work for the betterment of humanity. With a deep joy and gratitude we go out in the world to help others harbour the same faith. Here arises a deeper affirmation of our actual life and the world we live in.<sup>1</sup> Faith is indeed a miracle-worker in a deeper sense of the word. The Shōnin, rejoicing in his faith-experience, says:<sup>2</sup>

"Going on board the ship of the great compassionate Vow and floating out on the broad ocean of Light, there the wind of supreme merit blows softly [to make us feel refreshed], and the waves of various evils and misfortunes die away."

The actual experience of salvation is thus beautifully described in the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*. This sounds like a "satori"-experience, and really this is in a sense the realisation of Enlightenment, for he says it is equal<sup>3</sup> to the ultimate

<sup>1</sup> Shin is very often understood as typically pessimistic, but it is not necessarily so. Rennyo Shōnin says: "It is wonderful I could live up to the eighty-fourth year of age this year; longevity seems to be really in full accordance with the teaching of the Shinshū."

<sup>2</sup> A Christian would say here, "In Him I live, move and have my being," and a Zen follower, though different in tone yet the same in psychology, "All is well with the world and with oneself."

<sup>3</sup> 等正覺, (*tên chêng chiao*).

Enlightenment realised in Amida's country. It is, as it were, Enlightenment in the form of faith. But it is not recognised as the last stage wherein one can live fully contented; if so recognised, the *raison d'être* of Shin is denied, because Shin teaches the double-benefit as I have explained above. When the "satori"-like side of the faith is affirmed all in all the True Attainment in the Pure Land is lost sight of, which means heterodoxy. The ultimate goal of Shin is the True Attainment (Nirvāna, Enlightenment) only realisable in the Pure Land. Therefore, even if "to settle in the order of steadfastness" is something like a "satori"-experience, it cannot be recognised as the True Attainment. It is an *avant-goût* of the ultimate goal. So continues the Shōnin:

"Whereupon, the darkness of ignorance (*avidyā*) is dispelled and straightforward we can go onto our ultimate goal, the Land of immeasurable Light, wherein we are to attain Mahāparinirvāna. And after the Attainment has been achieved we come back again to this world to help others obtain the same Attainment<sup>1</sup> we have, with a great compassionate heart like that of Samantabhadra [who is the embodiment of compassion]."

By these quotations we may say that the Attainment stands in contrast to "satori," and denotes a broader denotation than "satori" in its experiential field. If Yang-ming Yen-shou (died, 975 A.D.), a great Chinese syncretist, could live so long as to see the rise of Shin in the thirteenth century he would have declared more emphatically than he did in the following remark:

"Those who follow Zen without Nembutsu may fail nine out of ten in their attainment of the final goal, whereas those who practise Nembutsu will all without exception come to realisation, but the best are those who practise Zen and Nembutsu, for they will be like a tiger provided with horns."

<sup>1</sup> This is called "gensō-ekō" (還相廻向), which is one of the great characteristics of Shin.

For he once said in praise of the devotee of the Nembutsu:

“Marvellously wonderful is the inconceivable benefit given by the Buddha-power through the Nembutsu! It has never been heard of.”

This latter is quoted by the Shōnin in his *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*.

Here it is very interesting to note that the Shōnin did not use the word 悟 (satori), except in the quoted passages from other sources, in the exposition of his own teachings, and this is specially the case where faith is the subject-matter. He used throughout his works the word 證 (attainment), which is also read “satori” in Japanese. And again he did not use the word 見 (seeing) in the same manner as in the case of 悟 (satori); what he used, instead, is the word 聞 (hearing), which meets the eye very often on the pages of his works. Whence is this difference? It may not be a mere difference in words or in doctrinal construction. It seems to have its basis chiefly on the different psychological grasp of the same source-experience of the ultimate reality, which will be called “the original flowing.” Hence my type-theory of Seeing and Hearing. The former uses very often an analogy of “a mirror” to express its experience, while the latter, “the sea.” The contrast is also seen among the Christian mystics, between Meister Eckhart and Ruysbroeck the Admirable on the one hand, and St. Teresa on the other, but it is not fully typical as in the case of Zen and Shin.

It may not be out of place here to note briefly *en passant* about the thought of “gensō-ekō” as it appeared in our last quotation from the Shōnin. The *gensō-ekō* which is, literally rendered, “to return and transfer,” means returning after one’s Rebirth in the Pure Land to this world of sufferings in order to save his fellow-beings. According to Shin, those who are reborn in Amida’s country obtain the great enlightenment of Nirvāna, enjoying a life everlasting, and are

forever free from the bondage of birth-and-death. But these blessed ones never take rest in the Pure Land enjoying their free blissful life, they do not want to spend their time there doing nothing because the Pure Land does not mean for them a "celestial lubberland." So they start on the new lines of work, i.e. they manifest themselves over and over again in the world of suffering in order to deliver their fellow-beings from sin and ignorance. In the *Wasan* we see the following stanza:

"Those who are reborn in the Land of Peace and Bliss,  
Returning to this evil world of five defilements  
Work to an infinite degree without weariness just like  
the Buddha, Muni of the Śakyas,  
For the benefit of sentient beings."

In the *Shōshin-ge*, Shinran Shōnin makes the following statement: "On entering the World of Lotus (Pure Land) one attains instantaneously the supreme enlightenment of Suchness and Dharmakāya. And thus well qualified he returns to this world freely playing in the forest of the worldly passions and there shows his supernatural psychic powers, and entering the garden of birth-and-death manifests himself in various ways in order to save all."

And again in the *Wasan* we read: "On entering the Promised Land one attains immediately the supreme enlightenment of Nirvāna and at the very moment of his attainment he harbours the great compassionate heart [for all sentient beings]. And all this is meant as due to the working of Amida."

To be reborn in the Pure Land and return to this world to help others attain Enlightenment—this is impossible for the ordinary mortals to carry out freely on their own accord unless they are saturated with the saving power of Amida; all the spiritual resources for this work is entirely supplied by Amida's compassionate heart to save all. This thought seems to be lacking in Christianity.

Therefore, when Ste Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus (1873-

1897), a modern Catholic mystic, gave voice to this thought at her death-bed many Christians were deeply struck with wonder and admiration. She said: "Ce (la béatitude du ciel) n'est pas cela qui m'attire—je veux passer mon ciel a faire du bien sur la terre"; and again, "Je compte bien ne pas rester inactive au ciel, mon désir est de travailler encore." When her sister said to her "You will look down on us from heaven" she replied "No, I will come down. Would God have given me this everlasting desire to do good on earth after my death unless He had meant me to fulfil it?"<sup>1</sup> By these words and the miracles she wrought at the time of the Great War she has now become quite a popular saint among the Christians. Does this not demonstrate to a certain extent that this way of thinking is quite new to Christendom?<sup>2</sup>

## 7

In Shin, as stated above, the "satori"-experience based on self-power is entirely denied and anything that seems to be religious experience is not openly recognised as the neces-

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire d'une Ame, écrite par ell-même*, p. 246; F. Younghusband: *Modern Mystics*, p. 175. In almost the same spirit a Shin devotee Baroness Kujō when she lay dying, said: "I wish to be reborn quickly so I can return to this world to work for Buddhism."—(Mrs. D. T. Suzuki's *Buddhism and Practical Life*, p. 20, 1933). Again a commoner called Shōma, a devout Shin follower said: "I can not remain lying idly under my tomb-stone," meaning to come back to this world to work for the salvation of others.

<sup>2</sup> In this connection I will quote an Indian Christian Sadhu S. Singh's words which will be a further illustration of what I want to say. The Sadhu said: "The Saints in Heaven, though they help men spiritually on earth, are not allowed to come down and work directly, but only indirectly, through other men. The angels could easily convert the world in ten minutes. Some of them have asked for the privilege of being allowed to suffer in this world, but God refused their request, because He did not wish to interfere with men's freedom by such an exercise of miraculous power..." (H. Streeter and J. Appasamy: *The Sadhu*, p. 205). Though converted into Christianity the Sadhu still remained a Hindu at heart. Hence this talk given in his ecstasy. This seems to mean he was moved by the idea of incarnation in Hinduism, but checked by his newly gotten idea of Christianity.

sary condition to salvation. But this does not mean that faith in Shin is possible without any personal experience. If this be the case Shin cannot be a living religion in any way; when the "original flowing" is lost any religion will remain at best mere acceptance of cold dogmatic abstraction, which is like a cast-off skin of a cicada or a snake and it will finally die away. But Shin is, as the statistics show, at present, the most influential and vital religion in Japan.<sup>1</sup> When the Shōnin, in the Kamakura era, proclaimed that faith<sup>2</sup> is the most essential thing for salvation, he in all likelihood wished to spiritualise and vitalise the Buddhism of the Heian era. When you survey the Buddhist sects that surrounded the Shōnin you find almost all of them engaged in prayers mainly of petition, outward practices and ceremonials, which he naturally considered deviating from the true spirit of Buddhism. To the Shōnin who was burning with the desire to have a genuine religion they all seemed devilish though they were disguised as Buddhism. Twenty years' study on Mount Hiei did not bring any light on the problem he was grappling with. So he asked earnestly and devoutly for spiritual guidance to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara at Rokkakudō in Kyōto wishing for response within one hundred days, and on the ninety-fifth day he was happily told there lived a holy priest Hōnen at the Yoshimizu monastery who was then preaching the doctrine of salvation through Amida. With a deep joy he called upon Hōnen at his monastery and heard him preach, visiting there for another one hundred days, never minding inclement weather, and then he could finally come to realise the inmost meaning of the doctrine of salvation through Amida, and to his heart's fullest content, he found his faith firmly established in the truth that leads every sentient being to the direct

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Suzuki's *Japanese Buddhism*, p. 49, 1938. Rev. Martin says: "The Shinshū had a great success, and is at present the most flourishing of the Buddhist sects," *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> The word used by the Shōnin in this case is 信心 (*hsin hsin*), which means literally "believing heart."



path of the Pure Land. Yung-chia is said to have attained "satori" in one night<sup>1</sup> under Hui-nêng, but the Shônin needed at least one hundred days, to be converted into the doctrine of salvation through Amida and before he could say, "As for me there is no other secrecy than to follow and believe in the instruction of my teacher who told me, 'only to recite the Nembutsu and be saved by Amida'."

By this we can easily see that faith here meant a rare great religious experience. Religious experience is generally understood in some such way as this: it is not the acceptance of an opinion, be it ever so true, nor is it believing in dry dogmas or academic abstractions, nor is it to partake in ceremonials; but it is a personal experience, it is an insight into the nature of reality, it is not a mere emotional thrill, not a subjective fancy, it is the self integrated into ultimate reality; it is of self-certifying character, it carries its own credentials. This is all right so far as the intuitive insight is concerned, but a keen observer will find that here moves Beyondness<sup>2</sup> through it, which Zen is used to nullify by saying, "There is not a fragment of a tile above my head, there is not an inch of earth beneath my feet." Yet even in Zen this element of Beyondness seems to flash forth in a moment of the "satori"-experience<sup>3</sup> when we see Bodhidharma's expression that "When one is deluded he runs after the Dharma, but when he gets enlightened the Dharma pursues him," and again Tê-shan's exclamation that "However deep your knowledge of abstruse philosophy, it is like a piece of hair placed in the vastness of space; and however important your experience in things worldly, it is like a drop

<sup>1</sup> I can not believe this is literally the case with him. There must be some term, whether short or long, of the psychological antecedents that led him to the *dénouement* of his spiritual struggle.

<sup>2</sup> Jikaku Daishi (794-864) says: "When the wisdom of Suchness fully coincides with the state of Suchness the latter evokes the former; this is called recompence." This "recompence" corresponds psychologically to what I here mean by "Beyondness," which may presently be the experiential basis for the doctrine of "Other Power."

<sup>3</sup> See Dr. Suzuki's *Zen Sssays*, I. p. 232; II. p. 18-9.

of water thrown into an unfathomable abyss." This Beyondness, when it once appears through personal experience affirms itself strongly and maintains its natural claim to self-sufficiency and independence, authority, and autonomy, and works upon the experienter with a power of exhilarating fascination. It is quite of a different nature from what is superficially recognised as a mere subjective projection. Through this Beyondness, if religio-psychologically observed, the Shōnin heard the voice of the Other Power, which is a voice of Eternity. If this observation is correct, then I would say that Shin faith is affirmed on the side of Beyondness, that is, on the reverse side and never on the experienter's side, that is, on the front side, which is the case with followers of the Holy Path. Therefore, "insight into the nature of reality" or "seeing into self-nature,"—such active and positive expressions never appear in the phraseology of Shin. For such is only possible, Shin considers, on the side of Beyondness, but impossible on our side. Faith contains undoubtedly a kind of intuitive understanding, but it is not ours, but the Buddha's, taking place in us. Thus the overturning (轉, *chuan*) of everything affirmed on the front side, as is done by the Holy Path, is the fundamental principle of the Pure Land, especially of Shin. Hence the unique doctrine of transference (*pariṇāmana*), and to express this idea of transference, "hearing" is specially used in Shin, which suggests "passively perfected intuition."

The point will be made clearer when we know the meaning of the little particle 卍 (*chi*). *Chi* is the most important term with a delicate shade of meaning in the experience and thought of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and is peculiar to the Oriental mentality. It is, in one sense, a source-material with which the abstruse philosophies of Mahāyāna Buddhism are woven. And it occupies a significant position in the philosophy of Tendai and Zen Buddhism. In Tendai we have three, six or more ways of interpreting

*chi*, and also in Zen we see *chi* used very often.<sup>1</sup> It seems in both cases to be a self-evolving form of wisdom attained through a long assiduous practice of spiritual discipline. In Shin it is also a highly esteemed term in connection with faith,—“When the faith of one-thought-moment is established simultaneously (*chi*) Rebirth is assured and one is settled in the order of steadfastness”, but not very often as in Tendai and Zen. Why is this so? Because our mental attitude to *chi* is quite different in Shin; in the former two *chi* is the key-note of their religious thought, so it is affirmed from the front side, but in the latter it is affirmed from the reverse side according to the psychology of “overturning,” which means “from the Buddha’s side”; for we are incompetent and unqualified on account of our feeble-mindedness to talk about *chi* in the same manner as is done in the other sects. In consequence of this, we are naturally led to appreciate much more 如 (*ju*) rather than *chi* as we feel more concretely Beyondness or the Other Power in *ju* rather than in *chi*. *Ju* is “eternal living” and is considered as the content revealed by *chi* and *chi* as the form of bringing in *ju*, in the epistemology of religious experience, although both are never clearly separable ideas; in fact they are only two phases of one concrete experience of the ultimate reality which is called supreme Enlightenment. The idea will be suggested by the following description respectively of “satori” and faith. “Satori” is described as “flashing like a lightning or a spark issuing from striking flints,”<sup>2</sup> while faith is given by the Shōnin twelve meanings, of which two are 滿 (Fullness) and 成 (Fruition).

Thus we seem to have two kinds of series, if psychologically observed, in almost parallel lines, that is, on the one hand, *chi*, Seeing, “Satori” and Dharmakāya, and on the

<sup>1</sup> For examples: 卽心是佛 *chi hsin shih fo*; 卽心卽佛 *chi hsing chi fo*. See Dr. Suzuki’s paper on “Ignorance and World Fellowship” in *Faith and Fellowship*, edited by A. D. Millard, p. 42, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> 閃電光, 擊石火. See Dr. Suzuki’s *Zen Essays*, I. p. 284-5.

other hand, *Ju*, Hearing, Attainment and Sambhogakāya.

Then, how is *ju* understood and appreciated by the Shōnin? In order to have some knowledge about it let us take up one chapter in the *Mattō-shō*. When we can understand it we know the *raison d'être* of Shin in its deeper aspects and will come to see why "hearing" is of such importance in Shin which almost ignores "seeing," as was done by the Shōnin, who with his penetrating insight read the true spirit of the Buddha suggested by such passages as 聞其名號 (*hearing* the Name of Amida) and 聞名欲往生 (*hearing* the Name, desire to be reborn in the country of Amida) in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*. The text runs as follows:

By 自然 (naturalness, *tzū jan*) what is meant?; 自 means "naturally" or "on its own accord," which means "not a devotee's own contrivance and effort based on self-power, [but the Other power of the Buddha that enables us naturally to obtain salvation]; 然 is "as such" which means "to leave things as they are," that is, "not by the devotee's contrivance, but entirely by virtue of the Tathāgata's Vow whereby we obtain salvation"; hence 法爾 (*fa êrh*). It (*fa êrh*) means to leave things as they are to the virtue of the Tathāgata's Vow"; there is no room left in the Vow for the devotee to assert his self-power; what works here is entirely the Virtue of the Dharma [which is the power of the all-saving Vow of Amida]; therefore it is called *fa êrh*. As the Vow is already in action to save us, salvation is the natural outcome. The devotee is not to think that he is saved only by his self-willed contrivance. For this reason, I was told [by my teacher Hōnen] that meaninglessness is the meaning [of faith].

By explaining word by word the meaning of *tzū jan*, which is the same as *fa êrh*, the Shōnin tried to show that our Rebirth in the Pure Land is naturally achieved as Amida gives us or transfers on us what is needed, whether it be faith or practice. By this we know that when any thought

based on self-power departs, the Power of the Original Vow carries out its compassionate mission most perfectly and quite naturally<sup>1</sup> just as flame goes up and water runs downhill. So natural is the saving function of the Other Power originating from the Vow. The text continues:

By naturalness is meant "to work perfectly natural from the start." The Vow of the Buddha Amida works from its start naturally towards its purpose; any contrivance on the part of the devotee can in no way perfect it; the Vow promises to welcome those who have faith in *Namu-amida-butsu* with a genuine believing heart in the Vow, not hampered by any thought, good or bad, when the Vow fulfils itself.

The purport of the Vow is to make us attain Supreme Buddhahood. Supreme Buddhahood is free from any form; as there is no form properly attributable to it; it is called naturalness. When it has any form attributable to it, [as the ignorant generally imagine] it cannot be called Supreme Nirvāna. With the view to let the devotee know that Supreme Buddhahood is beyond any form<sup>2</sup> the Buddha Amida manifested himself, so I have heard, as the saviour for the first time, [that is, ten kalpas ago when He attained Enlightenment fulfilling His great Vow]. The chief purpose of Amida is then to show us the state of naturalness<sup>3</sup> [of the Absolute Tranquility of

<sup>1</sup> Zen would say here:

"Never touch it, never touch it,  
let it remain where it is,  
If you touch

it soon turns muddy like a stream in the valley."

What is "it" then?—Naturalness of the Dharma.

What is "touching"?—Self-contrivance.

<sup>2</sup> A monk asked a Zen master: "Why do you say 'mind is Buddha'?" "To stop a child's crying" is the answer. "How is it when the child stops crying?" "No-mind, no-Buddha," came from the master.

<sup>3</sup> Here we see two kinds of naturalness: one is the "Naturalness of the Power of the Vow" (*yüan li tzü jan*), explained in the first two paragraphs of the text; the other is the "Naturalness of Absolute Tranquility" (*wu wei tzü jan*), explained in the third. The relation of the two is that of function and essence of the same one naturalness.

the Attainment in the Pure Land].

When one comprehends this reason he should be careful not to speak always about naturalness here mentioned henceforth. If he always speaks about this naturalness the meaninglessness which is the meaning [of faith] will begin to become meaningful.

All this comes from the inconceivability of the Buddha-wisdom.

Now by going on board the ship of Naturalness of the Power of the Vow we are led into the world of Naturalness of Absolute Tranquillity. This is Supreme Nirvāna or Enlightenment, which is called Dharmakāya (the Law-body of Enlightenment). It has no visible colour, no tangible form; it is beyond thought and word; it has no beginning and no end, existing from eternity to eternity, and altogether transcends space and time, which, we may say, is the object of realisation in Zen by "satori" in this life. But when it is realised as the concrete content of Amida's Enlightenment it is called Attainment, which is manifested as the True Land of Recompense, wherein Amida lives now as the Law-body of Accomodation. And this True Land of Recompense is the ultimate destinaton of the devotees of Shin, and there they are reborn by the natural working alone of the Power of Amida's Vow. Therefore Naturalness of the Power of the Vow is inseparable from that of Absolute Tranquillity; the two are complementary in the whole economy of salvation. And quite the same relation is here found between the Law-body of Enlightenment and the Law-body of Accomodation.

Then why does not Amida abide eternally in the Law-body of Enlightenment and remain in His supreme state of Wisdom? The reason is this: Amida desires to let others

Read the following *Wasan*:

"Faith is awakened by the Vow, so the attainment of Buddhahood by the Nembutsu is natural; naturalness is the Land of Recompense, wherein we can attain undoubtedly the great Nirvāna."

drink from the same fountain of Enlightenment He himself drinks and makes them all attain the same Buddhahood He now enjoys. Amida does not like to remain as a freezing impersonality but desires to be "anthropopathic." Thus moved by the great compassionate heart He took the personal appearance as Dharmākara and started the great Vow to save all sentient beings, and meditated for five kalpas and disciplining himself for innumerable kalpas and he finally achieved great success in the completion of the unprecedented Vow, and now abides in his Land of Peace and Bliss. Hence the Law-body of Accomodation or the Recompense-Buddha (Sambhogakāya).<sup>1</sup>

The Shōhin says: "From the treasure-sea of the Absolute Oneness<sup>2</sup> came the one incarnating himself as a Bodhisattva called Dharmākara, and this personage, by having started the Vow which nothing can obstruct, and finally fulfilling it became the Buddha Amida. Hence he is called the Tathāgata of Recompense," and again "In this Absolute Oneness originated the Law-body of Accomodation." Hence "accomodation" (*fang pien*) means "to take the form and proclaim His Name in order to make His Enlightenment be known to all sentient beings."<sup>3</sup>

By these quotations we know that Amida is the self-manifestation of Absolute Oneness (or "as-it-is-ness") or the dynamic display of the "True Void." Showing thus himself

<sup>1</sup> The relation between the two kinds of Buddhahood, i.e. Dharmakāya and Sambhogakāya, is explained in the *Wasan* as follows:

"The Buddha Amida, it is told, attained Buddhahood ten kalpas ago, yet before myriads of kalpas He was already the Enlightened One."

"Feeling great pity upon the long dark night of ignorance, The Eternal Buddha (the Enlightened One) who shines with His boundless Light, manifested Himself in the Land of Peace and Bliss (Pure Land) as the Buddha of unobstructed Light (Amida)."

<sup>2</sup> 一如, this means "the world of Naturalness of Absolute Tranquillity."

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from the *Ichinen-tanen-shōmon* and the *Yuishin-shōmon-i*.

as the Recompense-Buddha, Amida gives out His Name as the cause of Rebirth to all sentient beings. Therefore the object of worship in Shin is the Recompense-Buddha<sup>1</sup> who now abides in the True Land of Recompense. We can see here Shin puts a great stress on the side of "Miraculous Existence," though the True Void and the Miraculous Existence are not two different things, but only two phases of one absolute Reality. And again, that the True Void which is generally described as "Pureness of original self-nature" or "State beyond thought, word and image" is recognised by the Shōnin as "the treasure-sea of the Absolute Oneness," is very suggestive to know which way the wind is blowing with regard to the Shin-structure. It is very interesting to note, in this connection, that the Shōnin uses regularly a simile of "the sea" to explain the significance of "fruition" or "fullness" which seems to correspond psychologically to the experience of "plenitude" of Grace in Christianity, while in the Gate of the Holy Path, especially in Zen, the "mirror" is generally used as a simile to express the eruption of its momentary intuitive insight. The difference of similes, "sea" and "mirror," seems to me quite significant to know where lies the basic experience of Shin and Zen respectively.

<sup>1</sup> By worshipping the Recompense-Buddha we are, in truth, worshipping the Law-body of Enlightenment (Dharmakāya). The meaning of this is practically suggested by the Shōnin who chose especially as his object of worship "the Name of ten characters," which is one of the three kinds of Names used in Shin. The Name which was personally adopted by the Shōnin is 歸命盡十方無碍光如來 (Kimyō-jinjippō-mugekō-nyorai), meaning "To take refuge in the Tathāgata of Unobstructed Light that shines through the ten quarters." The other two are: 南無不可思議光如來 (Namu-fukashigikō-nyorai), denoting "Adoration to the Tathāgata of Inconceivable Light" and 南無阿彌陀佛 (Namu-amida-butsu), "Adoration to the Buddha-Amida (Infinite Light and Life)." These three are, after all, the same in meaning, yet they seem to be different in the *Wort-gefühl* they give in suggesting no-materiality and universality of the object of worship. When we come to Rennyo Shōnin we see the idea is more graphically shown by his following words: "In Shin the picture of the Buddha is better than the image of the Buddha [as the object of worship]; yet the Name is so much better than the picture."



I have tried in this article to give a brief exposition of the doctrine of Shin, taking up such main items as Faith, Joy, Rebirth, Settling in the order of steadfastness, and Nembutsu for gratitude,—all of which flow naturally and instantly out of the once “hearing of the Name.” By this the reader will perhaps understand what the existential form of Shin is. But to make my exposition clearer and more demonstrative I will quote a passage from Kakunyo Shōnin,<sup>1</sup> the third patriarch of the Sect:

“He (i.e. Shinran) rejoiced, forgetting himself,<sup>2</sup> in faith transferred by the Buddha Amida, with His true mind, and instantly taking refuge in the Vow-sea, i.e. the Name in which all necessary practices for our Rebirth are perfected, he recited, constantly harbouring his inner faith, the Name [for gratitude] with a vital force, and thus he was benefitted to his life’s end by the Light that transcends time and space.”

I will add two more letters of Rennyo Shōnin,<sup>3</sup> the eighth patriarch of the Sect, as these, I think, will best serve to show, in a brief but excellent way, what the faith and life of Shin is.

\* \* \*

The reason why the Original Vow of the Tathāgata Amida is called supramundane is that it is the supreme Vow of salvation fundamentally started for the benefit of ignorant beings such as we who, living in this later defiled world, commit sins and do evil things. If so, then how should we accept this Vow and how should we believe in Amida in order that we may obtain Rebirth in the Pure

<sup>1</sup> 覺如上人 (1270–1351). The passage here quoted is from his *Hōonkō-shiki*.

<sup>2</sup> 忘己, this means to rely absolutely upon the saving Vow, becoming free from the thought of self-power.

<sup>3</sup> 蓮如上人 (1415–1499). We have now eighty letters of Rennyo Shōnin, compiled and divided into five parts. What I quote here are No. 4 of Pt. II and No. 12 of Pt. V.

Land? Of this we are entirely destitute of any knowledge. Your kind instruction upon this point in detail is most desirable. The answer to your question is this: Sentient beings in this later degenerated age should only believe in Amida with single-hearted devotion. If they decidedly do take refuge in the Buddha Amida with singleness of heart, and even if they do not depend at the same time upon other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they are taken up into the great Light of the Buddha, which He throws over them, vowing with His great compassionate heart to save them all, however hopelessly sinful they may be. The meaning of this is well evidenced in a certain sūtra as follows;<sup>1</sup> "The Light shines universally in the ten quarters; sentient beings who believe in the Nembutsu are all taken up into it; and when they are once taken up into it they are never forsaken." Accordingly, those who are destined to go to the five or six evil paths are detained in safety and the ways that lead to those evil paths are closed by the inconceivability of the Power of the Vow of the Tathāgata Amida. The meaning of this is evidenced by the passage in a certain sutra as this:<sup>2</sup> "When the five evil paths are passed over crosswise those paths will be naturally closed." Those who believe, therefore, in the saving Vow of the Tathāgata without the least shadow of doubt can not go to hell (Naraka) on their own accord, even if they desire to go there, because they are already taken up into the saving Light of the Tathāgata Amida and predetermined to be reborn in the Land of Bliss. For this reason, we, who owe greatly and abundantly like a bulky measure of rain and mountain to the Tathāgata's mercy and compassion, should only recite the Name of the Buddha throughout day and night, and this should be done in the sense of requiting the Buddha's favour. This is the very thing meant by obtaining the True Faith.

With reverence, I remain. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> *The Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Larger Sukhāvatī-vyāha.*

Any one who is desirous to get thoroughly into the quintessence of the faith of our religion (Shin) need not always be wise and ingenious; he is only to know himself to be deeply sinful and shallow-minded; and understanding that there are no other Buddhas than Amida who can save even such a miserable soul as he; he should straightway determine to cling tightly to the sleeves of the Buddha Amida with whole-hearted devotion and depend entirely upon Him in regard to the obtainment of his Rebirth in the Pure Land. If he should do this, the Tathāgata Amida, filled with a great joy, will shed his great saving Light, which radiates many times eighty-four thousand beams, from His body and take him up into it thenceforward. So we should understand that this is the meaning of the passage in a certain sūtra, which runs thus: "The Light shines universally in the ten quarters; sentient beings who believe in the Nembutsu are taken up into it; and if they are once taken up into it they are never forsaken." Oh! I see there is now no trouble of my attaining Buddhahood! How excellent and praiseworthy the Original Vow which is supra-mundane is! How grateful we do feel for the Light of Amida! If we do not come in contact with the potent condition of the Light it is entirely beyond hope for us to extirpate dreadful sickness which is ignorance and karma-hindrance, accumulated from time immemorial. Fortunately, however, here is one who, on account of his past good karma, could meet with the potent condition of the Light and has now firmly established faith in the Other Power; though it seems he has established faith by himself yet it is soon clearly understood that the faith he has now harboured is transferred by the Tathāgata Amida; therefore it is not the faith which the devotee obtains by his self-power, but it is the great faith in the Other Power, as now clearly observed, transferred by the Tathāgata Amida on to all sentient beings. For this reason, all of those who have once awakened the faith in the Other Power through the

favour of Amida should feel grateful for Him and always recite the Name in order that they may requite the Buddha's favour.

With reverence, I remain . . . . .

\* \* \*

We have in these the exquisite, easy exposition of the doctrine of salvation by faith in the shortest possible manner, but you must not imagine by these that Shin is a shallow, superficial popularisation of Buddhism. Japanese Buddhism has generally its basis upon the abstruse philosophy of Mahāyāna Buddhism, yet on the surface it seems to have taken a very easy and simple form, and this is particularly the case with Shin. Take and read the standard work of Shin, the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*; there you will see twenty-one sūtras and thirty-three śāstras and commentaries are freely quoted to give a firm ground to the faith-system of the Shōnin. The work is well worth one's life study. Yet in spite of his grand scholarly work the Shōnin's heart was ever intent to present Buddhism as a living religion and offer it widely to the masses. If Buddhism has truth in it, and is a living religion full of vital power, it can neither remain as the Buddhism of meditation in India nor as that of contemplation and commandment (*śīla*) in China; it should not be confined to the mountain recesses or secluded monasteries, to be monopolised by the choicest few; it must be active and effective in the grim realities of life; it should be practical and not be a subject for scholarly speculation. With these ideas in mind, it is likely that the Shōnin looked through the various teachings given by the Buddha Śākya-muni, and finally found under the personal guidance of Hōnen the teaching of salvation by faith in the Original Vow of Amida, as is promulgated only in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*. He saw there the general summary and conclusion of all the Buddhist teachings. Declares the Shōnin:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 如來所以興出世，唯說彌陀本願海。

“The reason why the Tathāgatas [including Śākya-muni] manifested themselves in this world is solely that they might proclaim the great ocean of Amida’s Original Vow.”

Firmly confident with himself and his ideas of salvation, the Shōnin came out with his Shin Buddhism as the religion of the masses and householders. Such an undertaking was only possible for such a personage as Shinran Shōnin who, in spite of his wide learning and deep scholarship came down from the seat of priesthood in all humility to the level of the masses to go in company with them,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Shōnin never intended to be the founder of a sect. The fact is known, among others, by the following passage:

“I, Shinran, have no disciples to be called mine. The reason is this, that when I preach the teaching of the Buddha Tathāgata to all sentient beings in the ten quarters I am only acting as a proxy of the Tathāgata; I have no intention to propagate any novel idea of my own concerning Buddhism; what I have in view is nothing but to believe for myself, and to let others know and believe, in the teaching of the Tathāgata. Except for this I do not teach anything else to call others my disciples.”

Holding this attitude he came in contact with many followers and called them “my friends and companions in faith.”—*The Letters of Rennyō Shōnin*, No. 1 of Pt. I. See also the *Tanni-shō*, chap. 6.

The Shōnin is also said to have uttered the following words, beautiful and memorable, at his death-bed:

“I am, now at the end of my life, going back to the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss, but will return among you like the waves that wash the shore of Wakanoura.

If you have a joyous feeling by yourself know that you are in company with another person;

If you two share a joyous feeling, know that there is a third person with you; and the [unseen] one [in each case] is no-body else than Shinran himself.”

Here the “joyous feeling” denotes that of the Shin devotee who, living in faith transferred by Amida, recites the Name which originates in the Vow. By this we can see that a mystical fellowship between the Shōnin and his followers is kept warmly for ever through the faith in the Name.

(By the way it is interesting to find a somewhat similar expression to this in the New Testament, which runs: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Though this is undoubtedly beautiful in thought there is a wide difference from

calling himself "a simple-hearted man with a shaven head."<sup>1</sup> His religious greatness is seen from the posthumous title "the Great Master of Seeing into Truth,"<sup>2</sup> given by the great Emperor Meiji. The title is derived from the passage, "Seeing into Truth with Wisdom-Eye,"<sup>3</sup> which appears in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*. The great religious genius as he was "saw into truth" and presented it to us as the religion of "Hearing." By this, and by this only, we who are ignorant and confused, are enabled to open up as flowers of Enlightenment in the life to come, just as the lotuses bloom into pure white flowers, with their roots deeply buried in the muddy pond. Says the Shōnin in his *Shōshin-ge*:<sup>4</sup>

"If any man, whether good or bad, hears and believes the all-saving Vow of the Tathāgata Amida, he will be praised for his excellent, supreme comprehension of the Name, and is called a white lotus flower (pundarika), by Śākyamuni and all other Buddhas."

And again, in the *Wasan* we read:

"Convincing ourselves as a mass of worldly passions, If we trust ourselves to the power of the Original Vow We shall be enabled to enjoy the supreme virtues<sup>5</sup> of Dharma-essence (Nirvāna) in the life to come, As soon as we leave our bodies filled with impurities."

KENSHO YOKOGAWA.

what I quoted above, as "my name" here means the name of Jesus and does in no sense originate in a vow as we have in Shin Buddhism.

<sup>1</sup> 愚禿 (gutoku).

<sup>2</sup> 見眞大師 (Kenshin-Daishi).

<sup>3</sup> 慧眼見眞 (Egen-kenshin).

<sup>4</sup> 正信念佛偈 (Shōshin-nembutsu-ge) is the full title of it and 正信偈 (Shōshin-ge) is its abridged form, (Song of the Genuine Faith in Nembutsu).

<sup>5</sup> The supreme virtues numbering four are "Eternity, Joy, Non-ego, and Purity."