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A COMPARISON OF "SALVATION" IN THE
AMIDA SECTS OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

By

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A COMPARISON OF "SALVATION" IN THE
AMIDA SECTS OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Explained and Delimited.

Christianity claims to be unique and exclusive in the presentation of its Gospel of true salvation. Amidst the numerous other religions of the world, it claims to be the sole carrier of the truth concerning God's way of salvation. "Christianity not only declares that Christ is of worth. It declares that He is indispensable."¹ It makes many exclusive claims such as: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me."² "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."³ "There is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."⁴ These can only mean that through the Christian Gospel alone is man to find salvation.

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1. Robert E. Speer: Missionary Principles and Practice, p. 11.
2. John 14:6
3. Matthew 11:27
4. Acts 4:12

Most of the other religions of the world, however, also have doctrines of salvation. Most of these differ considerably from that of Christianity. There is a certain highly developed branch of Buddhism, however, found in Japan that exhibits a surprising amount of beliefs in common with Christianity in regard to salvation. There are many interesting parallels in the doctrine of salvation as presented by these Amida sects and Christianity. It will be the purpose of this thesis to point up these similarities and to show wherein the doctrines differ. By a comparison of the doctrines, we can see whether the exclusive claims of Christianity are justified, or whether there are in reality two religions which present a common way of salvation.

The explicit purpose of the thesis, therefore, will be to present in detail and with clarity the doctrine of salvation as found in the Amida sects of Japanese Buddhism, and compare it with Orthodox Christianity. A conclusion as to the validity of the view that Christianity and Amidaism are essentially one will be reached.

2. The Subject Justified.

Dr. Hume in his book on the World's Living Religion states:

"A comparative study of religions should not be overlooked. It is very surprising and very profitable to see the similarities and the differences in the beliefs which human beings still hold concerning the Supreme Being or beings, and the results of such

beliefs in the life of the individual and of society."¹
Comparative religion not only gives us information concerning the beliefs of others, but clarifies those which we hold ourselves.

Yet more than the mere value of comparing two religions, added justification of such a thesis is warranted because of the view of some that Christianity and Amidaism are really two different expressions of the same God in His revelation to man. Thus the Rev. Arthur Lloyd, an English clergyman with considerable knowledge of the Amida sects writes:

"Viewed superficially, the Saviours are respectively God-in-Christ and Amida Nyorai--poles apart from each other. Go below the surface, and there is much reason for concluding that the conceptions are identical, and that, without being conscious of it, our worship, under different forms and names, is all the while being directed towards the same object."²

Another representative of this point of view is Kenneth J. Saunders, one-time Professor of the History of Religion at the Pacific School of Religion, and Lecturer in the University of California. In the Haskell Lectures of 1921 he says:

" . . . Christianity and Buddhism, as it has developed in China and Japan, without trying to prove that one has borrowed from the other--an odious phrase when applied to Spiritual things--may humbly confess that each has received the truth as a free gift from the

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1. David Ernest Hume: The World's Living Religions, p. 8.
2. Arthur Lloyd: Shinran and His Work, p. 6.

Father of Lights, who is indeed a wise physician of souls, and knows best how the truth may be revealed to each nation as to each individual."¹

Timothy Richard, a Baptist missionary, has spent forty years in the Far East. He states:

"If, it be, as it is more and more believed, that the Mahayana Faith is not Buddhism, properly so called, but an Asiatic form of the same Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in Buddhistic nomenclature, differing from the old Buddhism just as the New Testament differs from the Old, then it commands a world-wide interest, for in it we find an adaptation of Christianity to ancient thought in Asia, and the deepest bond of union between the different races of the East and West, namely, the bond of a common religion."²

In the face of such viewpoints of educated men, it seems well for us to investigate the doctrines of both Amida Buddhism and Christianity and see if they are in reality the same, or if Christianity is exclusive and unique as it claims to be.

B. Method of Procedure

The method of procedure will be first to trace the historical development of the Amida sects of Japanese Buddhism. This will serve to orientate the reader in the general field, to show the process of development of Amida-ism, and to point up the influence of the background and heritage from which it arose. With a historical orientation, we can better appreciate some of the doctrinal

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1. Kenneth J. Saunders: Epochs in Buddhist History, p. 68.
2. Timothy Richard: The New Testament of Higher Buddhism, p. 39.

emphases found in these Amida sects.

The following chapters will present the comparison of particular aspects of salvation in the Amida sects and Christianity. The general concept of God, man and sin; the means and goal of salvation and the practical outworkings of salvation will be considered. In each chapter a detailed account of the Amida doctrine will be set forth with points of similarity and dissimilarity with Christian doctrine brought out. The supposition throughout the thesis will be that the reader is acquainted with Christian doctrine, and it need not be given in detail. At the conclusion of each chapter a summary of the chapter will be given, pointing up the main emphases and showing in concise form the comparison.

The conclusion will be drawn from the material presented in the body of the thesis and will concern itself with the validity of the claim of Orthodox Christianity to the uniqueness and exclusiveness of its Gospel as opposed to those who feel that it is essentially identical with Amidaism.

C. Sources of Data

In preparing this comparison use has been made of the works of both Christians and Buddhists, of both those who hold to the uniqueness of Christianity and those who identify it with Amidaism. A translated catechism of

the most influential Amida sect (Shin) was used to advantage, as well as a personal interview with its translator, the veteran missionary educator of Japan, Dr. A.K. Reischauer, who will be quoted many times through his various works.

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMIDA SECTS IN JAPAN

A. The Buddha and Primitive Buddhism

"The story of Buddhism is one of the greatest chapters in human history. It has done more to civilize mankind than any other movement except Christianity, and it numbers more adherents than any other religion."¹

This great movement which has had such an influence on the Orient was begun by the Buddha Guatama in the latter half of the sixth century B.C. in India. Although the founder probably did not set out to found a new religion, yet the movement which he began has been called "the first religion in the world to become international."²

Born the son of a Hindu rajah, Guatama was raised in a Hindu atmosphere pervaded with Hindu beliefs including the dreaded law of Karma--which makes the deeds of this life the cause of rebirth into the next life (transmigration). It was while in quiet meditation under a Bo tree that he received his "Enlightenment". Here he realized the four Noble Truths that would release one from the wheel of life and that were placed at the core of Primitive Buddhism, namely: (1) All existence involves suffering. (2) All suffering is caused by indulging in inherently insatiable

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1. Kenneth J. Saunders; Buddhism, p. 9.

2. Hume; op. cit., p. 59.

desires. (3) Therefore all suffering will cease upon the suppressing of all desires. (4) However, while still living, every person should live in accordance with the noble eight-fold Path of right belief, aspiration, speech, action, livelihood, endeavour, thought, concentration.¹ The essential teaching of Guatama Buddha (also known as Sakyamuni) was that of bettering (or enlightening) oneself through meditation and works until it no longer is necessary to be reborn into the world, but rather enter Nirvana.

Although the accounts in Buddhist scriptures of Sakyamuni and his ministry are exaggerated, he did meet with popular recognition. This Primitive Buddhism ignored transcendental problems (which it felt to be unanswerable, believing all to be in a state of change or flux with nothing permanent.) It concerned itself for the most part with the attaining of Nirvana for the individual. Guatama's " . . . main emphasis was on saving oneself from a world which is thoroughly infected with misery. He did not teach a personal diety, worship or prayer."² This simple ethical-moral system taught by Guatama did not exist long before definite doctrinal changes were introduced.

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1. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
2. Ibid., p. 59.

B. Doctrinal Change

1. Hinayana Buddhism.

The Primitive Buddhism instituted by Guatama lasted some hundred years. Its philosophy gradually became crystallized in what has become known as Hinayana Buddhism. This is the orthodox branch of Buddhism and it continued its predominance until about the beginning of the Christian era. Hinayana Buddhism broke up into many sects having little doctrinal difference. Instead of ignoring transcendental problems as Sakyamuni and Primitive Buddhism did, the Hinayana school abandoned agnosticism and put forth answers to the problems. It became analytical rather than psychological.

"Buddhism was thus transformed from an agnostic and positivist system, concerned only with suffering and the alleviation of suffering, into a realistic and materialistic philosophy. It became a definite and rigid philosophical system, instead of remaining a body of truth which were effective irrespective of metaphysics."¹

2. Transition from Hinayana to Mahayana.

In its finished form, Hinayana laid emphasis upon: (1) The necessity for men to strive after salvation from the wheel of life and death (the religious aspect); and (2) the fact that all phenomena are unstable compounds of a certain fixed number of stable elements (the philosophic aspect).²

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1. William Montgomery McGovern: An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism, p. 14.
2. Ibid., p. 16.

Both of these doctrines deviated somewhat from earlier Buddhism. Hinayana made a distinction in degree between mere salvation or the attainment of Nirvana and Buddhahood. Thus a man might attain Nirvana without becoming a Buddha. This distinction was not made in Primitive Buddhism. Also in the philosophic phase, Hinayana supposes a fixed number of stable elements. This is not found in Primitive Buddhism which held that all is change.¹

In opposition to these new doctrines another school, the Mahayana, arose in an attempt to return to the spirit of the original teachings.² This reformation, however, resulted in the formation of a religion and philosophy which retained something of the spirit of but little of the letter of the earlier faith. It developed into a much more comprehensive and profound system than the simpler Buddhism from which it sprang.

3. Mahayana Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism changed the doctrines of Hinayana to better fit the spirit of the early teachings. In returning to the "spirit" of the founder, however, they emphasized doctrines implicit in his teaching rather than explicit and thus became more liberal. The Mahayana is thus Developed Buddhism rather than Original Buddhism.

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1. Ibid., p. 17.

2. Cf. Protestant Reformation.

It was this group that probably originated the terms Hinayana (smaller vehicle) and Mahayana (larger vehicle) to show their superiority over the more conservative school.¹

"Broadly speaking, the difference between Mahayanism and Hinayanism is this: Mahayanism is more liberal and progressive, but in many respects too metaphysical and full of speculative thoughts that can frequently reach a dazzling eminence; Hinayanism, on the other hand, is somewhat conservative and may be considered in many points to be a rationalistic ethical system simply."²

The Orthodox Hinayanists adhered to the words of their master as literally as possible while the more liberal Mahayanists broadened and developed the original teachings.

The divisions of Buddhism have been likened to the major Occidental faiths with Hinayana compared to Judaism, Mahayana to Christianity (both arising from the older, more conservative faith), the unreformed Mahayana to Roman Catholicism and the reformed Mahayana (the Amida sects) to Protestantism.³

" . . . as Christians far outnumber Jews, so do Mahayanists far outnumber Hinayanists, as Christianity has had far more cultural connections than Judaism, so has Mahayana at the expense of Hinayana ineffaceably linked itself with the civilizations of vast parts of Asia; and as the early fathers of the Christian church and the schoolmen of the Middle Ages built up a religious and philosophical system far more important than the ideas expressed in Rabbinic schools, so is Mahayana the outcome of centuries of speculative development, enriched by materials from all sources, and expounded by the great bulk of the ancient metaphysicians of India and

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1. Ryukan Kimura: A Historical Study of the Terms Hinayana and Mahayana and the Origin of Mahayana Buddhism, p. 8.
2. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki: Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism, p. 2.
3. McGovern, op. cit., p. 1.

China, while Hinayana has remained far more narrow and confined in its philosophic evolution."¹

C. The Canons of Buddhism

The canons of Buddhism should be referred to here, even if only in the most summary way. Among the great library of Buddhist scriptures, almost any and all doctrines can be derived. In fact,

"There is no single canon of scriptures accepted by all branches of Buddhism. There are rather various canons which though having some things in common nevertheless differ also materially."²

The Pali canon accepted by the Hinayana is usually accepted as the oldest and most authentic. The Mahayana canon seems to have been written or compiled later.

"Acvaghosa, the first Mahayana expounder known to us (was) living about the time of Christ . . ."³

"It is extremely hazardous to put anything approaching a chronological order to the sutras known as Mahayanist, but one can safely state that the Prajnaparamita group belongs to the earliest period of Mahayanist activities, and was probably produced in the first century B.C."⁴

"The Mahayanist sutras are unquestionably much later than the main portion of the Hinayana canon, and is evidenced by the language and style employed. Many of them, however, must have been composed at the time of Kaniska (first century A.D.)"⁵

"The majority of Mahayanist sutras probably reached their

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1. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
2. August Karl Reischauer: "Buddhism" in The Great Religions of the Modern World, (Edited by Jurji,) p. 110.
3. Suzuki, op. cit., p. 7.
4. Beatrice Lane Suzuki: Mahayana Buddhism, p. 10.
5. McGovern, op. cit., p. 188.

settled form between Nagarjuna (second century) and Asenga (fifth century)."¹ From this evidence we see that the first Mahayanist scriptures were written in their crude form around the time of Christ. It is the Mahayanist canon which concerns us directly for it is in these scriptures that the Amida sects find their doctrine of salvation. The three Sutras which are the basis of Amida Buddhism, although purporting to be the work of Sakyamuni, were not translated into Chinese until the third century A.D.² It is commonly supposed that they were not written until after the time of Christ.

D. Geographical Extension of Buddhism

1. China and Korea.

In the third century B.C. King Asoka championed the cause of Buddhism and tried to make it a world religion. At this time there were at least eighteen different sects.

"We are yet in the dark about the part played by Asoka in the propagation of Buddhism . . . we are not aware whether he supported any particular school of Buddhism or Buddhism in general."³

Yet he did support the cause and was the Buddhist Constantine. There was great missionary activity during his

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1. Ibid.
2. Takeichi Takahashi and Junjo Izumida: Shinranism in Mahayana Buddhism and the Modern World, p. 23.
3. Nalinaksha Dutt: Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and Its Relation to Hinayana, p. 19.

reign and Buddhism in India was on its upward march. This was Hinayana Buddhism, however, and it began to decline in the eighth century A.D. Hinayana Buddhism never had any real influence north of India.

It was the Mahayana Buddhism that spread to the North and became the great influence in China and Japan. Buddhism reached China in the first century and after being well founded there, the Chinese became missionaries of the faith. After the important Indian sects had been introduced, sects peculiar to China arose. It was in China that the Amida sect, as such, was born and by the seventh century it was well established. From China, Buddhism spread to Korea (372) and finally to Japan in 552.

2. Japan.

a. Older Sects

Buddhism was "sent" to Japan by the king of Pakche in Korea when he made a gift to the Japanese emperor of an image of the Buddha. After some trying times, Buddhism became firmly established when Shotoku Taishi became prince imperial. As the Asoka of Japan he spread the faith with great effort. With his support Buddhism prospered much.¹

At first, merely a general or fundamental Buddhism was preached in Japan, but after it became firmly established and other priests and missionaries from China

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1. Reischauer, op. cit., p. 131.

and Korea came in, sectarian difference arose. During the Nara Epoch (710-790) six distinct sects appeared in Japan and gained great prominence in and around the capital city of Nara.¹

Since these Nara sects became too powerful politically, the Emperor Kwammu moved the capital to Kyoto (784) and sent two promising young men to China to bring back a purer form of Buddhism. Thus, Dengyo Daishi brought the Tendai sect to Japan and Kobo Daishi introduced the Shingon sect.² It is from the Tendai sect in Japan that the Amida sects developed.

The Tendai sect is a very comprehensive sect, trying to harmonize all the teachings of the Buddhist scriptures in spite of the many contradictions. In this sect, salvation could be gained by law, faith, or contemplation. It was a young Tendai monk, Genshin (942-1017) who really began the Amida movement in Japan. After trying to find salvation through his much learning, he finally came to the position that salvation comes through the worship of Amida.

"He did not attempt to establish a new sect, and remained within the Tendai fold to his death; but his influence had much to do with the formation of the new sects that began to spring up in the next generation."³

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1. August Karl Reischauer; Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 87.
2. Sir Charles Eliot; Japanese Buddhism, p. 360.
3. James Bissett Pratt; The Pilgrimage of Buddhism, p. 479.

b. Amida Sects

(1) Yudzu Nembutsu

The first Amida sect in Japan, which also was the first distinctively Japanese sect, was founded by Ryonnin, also a Tendai monk who was influenced by Genshin's writings. He, too, came to the conclusion that salvation was to be found in the prayer to Amida Buddha called the Nembutsu. This prayer consists of the words "Namu-Amida-Butsu" and means, "Hail Amida Buddha" or "I worship Thee, Thou Buddha of Eternal Life and Light."¹ As the result of a vision of Amida, Ryonnin founded the Yudzu Nembutsu Sect which had at its heart this Nembutsu prayer.

(2) Jodo

The Yudzu Nembutsu sect was soon eclipsed by the Jodo or Pure Land sect which is one of the great Amida sects today. This sect was founded by Genku (Honen Shonin) who was a student in the Tendai monasteries. He studied the doctrines of all sects,

"But in all his seekings he found no peace for his soul. Like Luther more than three centuries later, Genku longed for a deeper assurance of salvation and a more vital religious life than was offered at the centers of learning upon the slopes of Hieizan."²

On chancing upon the writings of Genshin, Genku joyously found what he had been searching for. In 1175 he

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1. Reischauer: "Buddhism" in The Great Religions of the Modern World, p. 134.
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 107.

founded the Jodo sect and became a prophet of the "new way" of salvation--through faith in Amida. Whereas the Yudzu Nembutsu put much emphasis upon the merit of the individual--merit gained through repetition of the Nembutsu, the Jodo laid greater emphasis upon the place of faith.

(3) Jodo Shin

The greatest and most highly developed Amida sect was founded by Genku's great disciple, Shinran Shonin. He, too, studied as a Tendai monk. Like Genku he found no satisfaction in all of his studies.

"His spiritual vexations . . . were not lessened by his great learning. On the contrary, they increased more than ever. He found himself more disturbed and agitated than before."¹

He decided that the solution of vital problems could not be helped much by knowledge and virtue. Because of a vision, he went to learn from Genku.

Shinran carried the Amida doctrine a step farther than Genku. He broke entirely from past tradition by marrying and eating meat--something unheard of for a monk. Because of his practices, he was banished from Japan, but upon his return he founded the Jodo Shin Shu (the True Jodo Sect). He broke further from tradition than Genku and carried his doctrines to their completion. His doctrine of salvation by faith was much more clear and emphatic

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1. Takahashi and Izumida, op. cit., p. 10.

than his master's.

It was Shinran who first promulgated the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.¹

"It was left for Shinran . . . to teach that no merit of ours is necessary, not even a parrot-cry, but only gratitude for the salvation which has already been accomplished. No wonder that the early Roman Catholic missionaries in Japan described Shin Shu as a kind of Lutheranism. Like Luther, Shinran cast away the last remnants of the 'trashy doctrine' of merit, and like Wesley, he was an evangelist and a hymn-writer . . ."²

Shinran was thus a "Protestant of Buddhism".

Thus we come to the object of our study and see its historical background. The Amida doctrine of Japanese Buddhism is found preeminently in the Jodo Shinshu and it is this sect that will furnish most of the material of our study.

"There are in Japan four sects of Buddhism which profess a belief in Amida and practice the Nembutsu. Two of these--the Yudzunembutsu and Ji,--are insignificant in influence and numbers. The other two--the Jodo and the Shinshu are weighty and numerous, comprising between them more than one half of the Buddhist believers in this country. The Shinshu is the youngest, and by far the most popular of them all, and carries to its logical conclusions the principle of Salvation by Faith in the Vow of Amida, the One Buddha, which lies at the root of the doctrinal system of all four sects."³

It is difficult to see how a doctrine of salvation by faith could have evolved from the teachings of the Buddha Sakyamuni. Yet in these Amida sects of Japan this doctrine

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1. Suzuki: Mahayana Buddhism, p. xxxviii.
2. Saunders: Epochs in Buddhist History, p. 176.
3. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 2.

is basic and here Buddhism has reached its apex. Says
Professor Suzuki,

"Is it not really wonderful to see that Buddhism which started with the doctrine of self-salvation through enlightenment as it is still taught by the Hinayanists, has finally come to teach the doctrine of faith which alone has saving power for all sinners even with all their mountain-high load of sin on their shoulders."¹

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1. Suzuki: Mahayana Buddhism, p. xxxviii.

CHAPTER II

THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF SALVATION

Any concept of salvation is necessarily dependent upon a concept of God, man, and their relationship to one another. These concepts are basic to a doctrine of salvation and influence the means, the goal and the outworkings of salvation. This chapter will, therefore, consider these essential concepts of God, man and sin in Amida Buddhism in comparison to orthodox Christian belief.

A. Concept of God

Orthodox Christianity has always held a strict monotheistic view of God. He is an eternal, personal God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is transcendent and yet immanent. He exists in three Persons--Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To effect the redemption of man he entered the universe as a man in the Person of Jesus Christ, who lived, suffered, died, arose, and ascended to heaven where he reigns eternally. The Christian God is a God of love and holiness, all-wise and all-powerful.

In Christianity these various characteristics or attributes of God receive a different emphasis at particular times, yet they fit together in a harmonious whole. The concept of God held by the layman is essentially at one with the concept of the orthodox Christian philosopher

or theologian. The God of Amida Buddhism has many points of similarity with that of the Christian, at least superficially. Yet the variance between the God-concept of the common Amida-worshipper and that of the Buddhist scholar is great.

1. Popular Concept

The Buddha Amida in the popular concept is very similar to the Christian God. James Bissett Pratt writes that for the rank and file Amida

" . . . is hardly different from 'Our Heavenly Father', except that in the back of their minds lurk the dim realization that if they were philosophers they would interpret him in some more profound sense."¹

To the average Amida Buddhist, Amida is the one, true, eternal God. Some moderns (who according to Reischauer were influenced by Christian thought) speak of Amida as Creator and Father and ascribe to him practically all of the attributes of the Christian God.² Thus Lloyd speaks of Amida as "the Father of all"³ and "the Being through whom the worlds were made."⁴

a. One God

Mahayana Buddhism has many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which are worshipped, but Amida Buddhism alone has a

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1. Pratt, op. cit., p. 648.
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 217.
3. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 21.
4. Ibid., p. 77.

concept of one God to be worshipped with the whole heart. Contrasted with the rest of Buddhism, the Amida sects pay almost no respect at all to Sakyamuni who is usually credited with the founding of Buddhism. He is simply regarded along with others as a teacher of the Gospel of Amida. Shinran himself is reported to have said that "the only reason why Sakyamuni appeared on earth was that he might make known to men the Great Saving Vow of Amida."¹

Sakyamuni along with all the other Buddhas is relegated to a secondary place. Amida alone is worshipped in the households. In the temples and public places, however, a limited worship is given to others as well. The Catechism of the Shin Sect lists the Gosonsama (the Five to be Worshipped) which includes certain high priests and founders of sub-sects as well as Amida.² Amida is always given primacy, however, and the lesser worship which is offered to these secondary personages has been compared to the worship by an Anglican of St. John or St. Paul.³

Although Amida alone is truly worshipped, the other Buddhas and venerable beings are not altogether forsaken. Amida is so interpreted as to include all other

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1. Ibid., p. 13.

2. August Karl Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 25.

3. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 59.

gods. Therefore, although " . . . every God and Buddha worshiped by man deserves reverence and worship,"¹ these are all included in the worship of Amida. As the greater includes the lesser, so Amida includes all other gods. He is "the pleroma of the God-head."² Thus although Amida is the only God worshipped, other deities are not excluded.

b. The Character of God

(1) Eternal

All of Buddhism has the idea of an eternal, impersonal Law which pervades the universe, so it is not odd that the Amida sects should hold to an eternal God. This is implied in Amida's very name. The answer to the question in the Shin Catechism "Who is Amida Nyorai?" is,

"Amida Nyorai is the Buddha whose name is Namu Amida Butsu. This is Sanskrit and when translated means, 'The Glorious One Who has Boundless Life and Truth,' or 'The Glorious One from Eternity whose Light Radiates Freely in all Directions.'"³

Amida is known as "the Unoriginate."⁴ Descriptions of Amida in the Sutras refer to him as the Being whose Length of Life is Immeasurable in Past, Present, and Future.⁵

(2) Personal

It is difficult to see how the concept of a personal God could evolve from the teachings of Sakyamuni,

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1. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 57.
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 217.
3. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 31.
4. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 77.
5. Ibid., p. 63.

yet to the Japanese Amidaist, Amida is very personal. In contrast to the pantheistic, impersonal Law (Dharma) of normal Buddhism, the average Amida Buddhist believes in a God having all the characteristics of a person. This is seen throughout the popular concept of salvation (amplified below) in the hymns they sing¹ and in the worship they give.

(3) Other Attributes of God

Involved in the very name of Amida are the qualities of Life and Light. His special attributes, however, are wisdom and mercy. One of the hymns of the Shin Sect begins:

"Eternal Life, Eternal Light!
Hail to Thee, Wisdom infinite,
Hail to Thee, mercy shining clear . . ."2

Arthur Lloyd, who admittedly tries to show the kinship between Christianity and Buddhism using Christian terminology,³ sees in these attributes of Amida a kindred concept with the Christian Trinity. Amida, as the center and heart of the Trinity is the source of Mercy and Wisdom.

"When the Compassion of the Most High is to be manifested to men, Kwannon, the Embodiment of the Compassion which is in the God-head, becomes Incarnate; when the Wisdom of the Father or his Might is set forth, Seishi, the Embodiment of Divine Wisdom, manifests himself in and

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1. Kenneth J. Saunders: Buddhism in the Modern World, p. 59.
2. Saunders: Epochs in Buddhist History, p. 178.
3. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 35.

through some human personality."¹

"The Three, therefore, are at once distinct in Person and one in Essence."² Although this doctrine of a trinity is certainly pressed to an extreme by Lloyd, yet the main attributes which characterize Amida are mercy and wisdom.³

Notably lacking in the attributes of Amida is that of holiness or justice.

"The God of . . . Christianity is a God of love and justice, while the Buddha is mercy itself and nothing more . . . The Buddha never judges. The God of Judaism was represented by Christ to be the God of love, yet he is made to judge our sins and mete out punishments accordingly. Amida of the Shin-shu, however, knows only of infinite love for all beings . . ."⁴

A God without holiness is an inferior concept by far than that of the Christian. To the Christian the holiness of God is essential.

c. The Work of God

It is in the work of Amida in saving man that many have seen an amazing similarity to the Christian concept of the Incarnation and Redemption. The belief of the Amida Buddhist is that Amida was once, countless ages ago, a man--Hozo Bosatsu. As the man, Hozo Bosatsu, he

"cast away his kingly rank and became earnest in religion. This disciple had aroused in himself a heart of great mercy so that he took pity on all living beings of the Three Worlds; and desiring to save all who

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1. Ibid., p. 61.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
3. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 39.
4. Suzuki: Mahayana Buddhism, p. 49 (Yamabe: "Amida as Saviour of the Soul," Eastern Buddhist v. 1, No. 2)

are suffering from sin, he endured whatever difficulties and hardships he met. He made forty-eight vows to fulfil which required many years of good works. When finally he had fulfilled these vows, he attained perfection and became the Buddha called Namu Amida Butsu."¹

Although Lloyd, following his usual extreme position, in a footnote states that, "according to Shinshu teachings, he [Hozo Bosatsu] existed as Amitabha before his appearance on earth in the form of a man,"² the usual point of view is that " . . . Hozo Bosatsu [was] seeking, like all other good Buddhists, to get rid of the constant reincarnations into the life of this world and to become a Buddha."³ Lloyd makes much of Amida "emptying" himself to become man,⁴ yet it is usually viewed as a man becoming God.

It was during his life as Hozo Bosatsu that Amida's great vow was made on which the Amida Sects pin their salvation. Because of the great mercy of Amida (or Hozo Bosatsu--their difference being only one of original and resultant position, i.e. Amida is the " . . . resultant position of which Hozo Bosatsu is the origin in the chain of cause and effect"⁵ this great vow was made for the salvation of sinners. This vicarious vow of Amida, which is his redemptive work, is of the greatest significance in

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1. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, pp. 32-33.
2. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 46.
3. Willis Carl Nungent: Amida Buddhism in Japan and the Appeal of the Christian Gospel, p. 31.
4. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 78.
5. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 35.

the Amida doctrine of salvation.

An important distinction between Christianity and Amida Buddhism should be noted here. There is absolutely no historical reference for the person of Hozo Bosatsu. This difficulty is seen in Amidaism and the answer to the question "Was Hozo Bosatsu a historical personage?" is answered,

"He was a historical personage but he does not belong to the period of authentic history. The world is always changing and generations come and go. So as regards Hozo Bosatsu there is no other way than to accept his historicity upon the authority of Shaka Nyorai [Sakyamuni], who is more than an ordinary witness."¹

Further justification of his historicity is given by saying that all events in the mythological age of Japan are without historical evidence. If we deny the historicity of this man we must deny much of ancient history. "In a world of such vicissitudes one must guard against getting too nearsighted and believing only what can be historically established."²

Amida Buddhists accept the historicity of Hozo Bosatsu on Sakyamuni's testimony (although the sutra in which he is mentioned was probably written centuries after Sakyamuni),³ yet there is no historical evidence for him. Reischauer calls him the "fiction of a fertile imagination,"⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 33.

2. Ibid., p. 34.

3. Ante., pp. 12-13.

4. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 260.

and Saunders refers to him as a "mere myth."¹ Here, then, is a radical difference between Amida Buddhism and Christianity. The Christian Saviour has an ontological reference in the historical personality of Jesus Christ. Amida Buddhism has no such historical Saviour in their system. Their belief in Amida is thus reduced to belief in an idea.

2. Philosophical Concept

a. Non-personal God

There is a real and notable difference between the concept of God held by the common Amida Buddhist and the scholar or philosopher. Of Great importance is the philosophical concept of Amida's personality. Invariably the Buddhist philosopher will say,

"If Amida is spoken of as personal, it is only by way of accommodation to suit the doctrine to the intelligence of the average man who cannot think in the concepts of philosophy."²

To the philosopher in Amidaism, as in the rest of Buddhism, God remains the non-personal Law or Dharma of the universe.³ To the question Is there a personal God? the Buddhist scholar replies,

"No, yet truth accommodates itself; there is an absolute and apparent truth about the Buddha; and to the vulgar herd he is more real than a philosophical abstraction, more personal than the Dhamma . . . Let them worship a

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1. Saunders: Buddhism, p. 131.

2. Ibid., p. 220.

3. Kenneth J. Saunders: "Christianity and Buddhism" in the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, v. 1, p. 137.

a personal Amida."¹

According to Mr. Kanei Okamoto, a bonze of the Jodo Sect, Amida may be defined in a philosophical way (the correct and true way) and in a vulgar way. Philosophically, Amida

"is the essence of all things and unobstructed Light, Time, Space, Life. One can in this measure conceive him as eternal. But he is not a transcendant creative God--such as God in the Christian conception."²

He is rather a Force identified with the eternal notions of Time and Space.

Further evidence of this philosophical concept of God is given by Mr. Kenryo Kawasaki, a bonze of Shinshu. He states, "Buddhism does not recognize any omnipotent God exterior to the creature, to whom he dictates his duties. Buddhism is exclusively a human, moral and philosophical system."³ And another bonze of Shinshu, Mr. Kaworu Otani, commenting on the difference between Christianity and Shinshuism says, "The essential difference is that we have no God. All the philosophy of Shinshu . . . remains purely human."⁴

To the philosopher then, apart from Nature, there is no God.⁵ The concept of a personal God is found only among the unlearned populace. To the philosopher, Amida

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1. Saunders: Epochs of Buddhist History, p. 175.
2. Emile Steinilber-Oberlin: The Buddhist Sects of Japan, p. 189.
3. Ibid., p. 202.
4. Ibid., p. 235.
5. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 103.

disappears into the usual Buddhist abstraction of neither the personal nor the impersonal and is found to be " . . . nothing else but emptiness itself."¹ He vanishes into the thin mist of the Absolute about which nothing can be affirmed.

The Buddhist philosopher affirms that personality implies limitation, and therefore denies the personality of the Absolute which is unlimited. Since super-personal concepts are beyond our ken, the Buddhist philosopher says that the Absolute cannot be known and sinks into a sub-personal concept. The Christian philosopher, realizing that the super-personal is beyond human conception, retains a personal concept of God as the highest concept man can have.

b. God as a Personification

Although for the philosopher, Amida cannot be considered to be personal, yet he may be looked upon as the personification of a principle or of an ideal of mercy and wisdom. He is an ideal rather than a person. "Amida may . . . be regarded as the ideal personification of mercy and wisdom, but not as a personal being whose characteristics are mercy and wisdom."² Any kind of a description of Amida whatsoever becomes an anthropomorphism. "Amida should be thus the permanent possible reality which ought to be the only object,

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1. Ibid., p. 128.

2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 222.

of human ideals, and will never be fully realized by us even in the infinite future."¹

B. Concept of Man

To the Christian, man was created in the image of God by God himself. He is the highest creation, created with an immortal soul. Although created perfect, man, by a voluntary choice, sinned, thus estranging himself from God. Since this first act of disobedience, man has been in a state of sin and depravity being able to do good only through the agency of the Spirit of God.

1. Man's Origin and Status in Creation

The concept of man in the Amida sects is not much different from the doctrine in other Buddhist sects. Although some few Amidaists might believe that man is the immediate creation of Amida, this is certainly not the common belief. The Amida sects with the rest of Buddhism are influenced, though not to such a great extent, by the Law of Karma and the doctrine of reincarnation. There is little speculation as to just how existence began, yet ignorance and suffering seem to be at its very heart. "Man is . . . not the creation of an all wise and loving God, but, like all individual existence, is an accident of primordial Ignorance."²

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1. Takahashi: op. cit., p. 86.

2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 234.

Man, rather than being the highest creation as in Christianity, is in an intermediary position. He is at the center of the scale of beings and can go either up or down in his next incarnation. His future state will depend upon his deeds in this life as regulated by the Law of Karma.

2. The Law of Karma

According to the Law of Karma, continuous reincarnations occur depending on the deeds of the former life. These incarnations will continue unceasingly until the blind "will-to-be" becomes enlightened and Nirvana is attained. At the core of this Karma is ignorance. Man is therefore under the control of ignorance and in a state of suffering until he becomes enlightened. He is caught with the rest of creation in this "inescapable, inexorable, impersonal principle of justice and moral retribution."¹

3. The Doctrine of the Soul

Although the average Amida Buddhist is quite unaware of the philosophical doctrines concerning the soul and some few may believe in the existence of a soul that continues in the next life, Buddhism teaches the doctrine of the non-ego. By this Anatta doctrine it seems as though the very existence of the human self is denied; certainly its permanency is.² According to this doctrine there is

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1. Hume, op. cit., p. 70.

2. Reischauer: "Buddhism" in The Great Religions of the Modern World, p. 101.

nothing immortal or permanent about man. The "self" is a delusion.¹ A Jodo priest in Japan, Ishizuka San, says, "We deny the unique, self-existent entity of the ego. We need no such hypothesis as that the soul is immortal."²

4. The State of Man

Man's present state according to Amida Buddhism is one of depravity. In the Shin Sect " . . . man is regarded as totally depraved and beyond the possibility of saving himself."³ Man is a slave of sin in the endless chain of rebirth. Even though in the pantheistic conception, all men have a little of the Buddha-nature and in a degree may be advancing toward Nirvana, yet the state of man in Amida Buddhism is essentially sinful and depraved.

C. Concept of Sin

The Christian concept of sin is that rebellion against or disobedience to God as he has revealed Himself. It is that thought, word or action which is contrary to the character of God. It is a willful action on the part of a morally responsible man contrary to the will of a holy God.

1. Buddhism in General

Sin in Buddhism takes on a different significance. In most of Buddhism sin is the result of ignorance and may be regarded as "evil". It is not "the wages of sin is death"

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1. Hume, op. cit., p. 70.
2. Saunders: "Christianity and Buddhism" in Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, v. 1, p. 138.
3. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 113.

but the wages of ignorance is suffering. Sins are acts of ignorance and man is not so much a sinner as he is a fool. He needs a renewal of mind rather than a change of heart. Buddhism, thus, seeks to make sages rather than saints. "Sin . . . in Buddhism is not to be regarded as a moral affront to God, but rather as a foolish act which necessarily brings the one who commits it a present or future evil."¹ Sin is usually thought of as the resultant evil rather than the cause.

Because of its doctrine of Karma, Buddhism necessarily believes in birth-sin. Evil resultant from the deeds of the former life are brought to bear in the present life.

2. Amida Buddhism

Although it is from the above background that the concept of sin in Amida Buddhism comes, and although this concept has influenced Amidaism, yet the Amida sects have a little different concept of sin. Sin to them is deeper than the outward or resultant evil. It is a matter of the heart.

"Sin is not regarded as mere outward evil or misfortune, as it is so often in Buddhist thought, but rather as a condition of the heart which may cause outward evil or misfortune."²

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1. Ibid., p. 240.
2. Ibid., p. 113.

In Amida Buddhism as in Christianity, sin is a condition of the heart. All men are regarded as sinful. All are living in the bondage of evil.¹

The concept of sin in the Amida sects, however, is still far from the Christian conception. The Shinshu Catechism states:

"Sin is an abstract thing. It stands for a certain state of our spiritual activity, and as a result of this state we are caught in the meshes of sin whence arise all our misfortunes and sufferings."²

The effects of sin enchain man³ and man's depraved heart cannot cleanse itself but it must submit to the power of Another.⁴ This, then, brings us to the means of salvation.

D. Summary

We have seen in this chapter a number of similarities between the concepts of Amida Buddhism and Christianity. Most of them are more or less superficial similarities. The popular concept of God seems very close to the Christian concept, yet the philosophical concept is far removed from it. Amida essentially is not the personal God of mercy and wisdom of the popular concept, but rather the non-personal pantheistic Law common to all Buddhism. The belief in Hozo Bosatsu who was a man who became God has no foundation in fact. The "Saviour" in Amida Buddhism

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1. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 39.
2. Ibid., p. 40.
3. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 104.
4. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 47.

is still far removed from the historic Christ. Rather than God becoming man, Amidaism holds that a man became God.

Man in the Christian concept is of much more value than man in Amida Buddhism. Being created in the image of God as the highest creation, having an immortal soul, man is a being quite distinct from the rest of creation. Christianity has no concept of transmigration or Karma. Both systems, however, regard man as depraved and existing in a state of sin.

Sin, far from being an abstraction as it is in the Amida sects, is a very real thing to the Christian. It has a moral significance. Its basis is in disobedience rather than in ignorance. Both Amidaism and Christianity, though, see sin as a spiritual condition of the heart.

Considering these similarities we find that there are seemingly common beliefs in some concepts of these two religions. Yet viewed more critically the uniqueness and greater consistency of Christianity is quite evident. There is little approach toward the great concept of a personal, holy, loving God who created man in his image and then became incarnate to redeem man from his sin.

CHAPTER III

THE MEANS OF SALVATION

The Christian doctrine of salvation lies at the very heart of its belief. Man, being a sinful being, is and always has been unable to save himself. To satisfy the justice of a holy God it was necessary for God himself to become man and atone for sins. This he did in the Person of Jesus Christ who died on the cross bearing the sins of men.

Man's sins having been atoned for, all that is now necessary for salvation is for man to believe on Christ as his Saviour and apply his work of redemption to himself. No works are necessary or can be meritorious in the Christian way of salvation. Faith in Christ alone is necessary. To be saved, according to the Scriptures, man must recognize his need as a sinner and believe on Christ as his Saviour. This belief involves a deep conviction and not a mere superficial assent of the intellect. Faith in Christ involves the giving up of one's self to God.

A. The Holy Path of the Past (Works)

Historically Buddhism has been a religion in which man worked out his own salvation. The works of man determined his future life. Faith had little place, if any, in this ethical-moral system. Salvation was attained through

meditation and good works.

Amida Buddhism distinguishes between two different doctrines of salvation--salvation by works or philosophical wisdom (Holy Path) and salvation by faith (Pure Land Path). It does not deny that salvation by works is possible--or may have been possible in the past. Yet this way of salvation is not practical for the common man, especially in these degenerate days. "It is possible for the few strong men, and especially was it possible for strong men back in the golden age of humanity."¹

Many Amida Buddhists will recognize the validity of good works as a possible way of salvation which may have been effective in the past for a selected few. During the time when Sakyamuni was on earth teaching salvation by the Holy Path it is possible that men may have been saved through Law rather than Grace. Some Amidaists, in fact, recognize the possibility of a man saving himself through the Holy Path even now, yet it is by all means most difficult and is possible only for a limited few. For the common man salvation by faith is the only practical way. The Shin Sect holds that some few may have been saved by the Holy Path in the past, but now none, not even those with superior knowledge, can be saved in this manner.²

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1. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 255.
2. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 227.

Since Sakyamuni's time people have degenerated and can no longer gain salvation by the Holy Path.¹ The only way of salvation offered by the Shin Sect is that of faith.

B. The Pure Land Path of the Present (Faith)

1. Man's Inability to Save Himself

Although not denying the possibility of attaining salvation through meritorious works in the past, the Amida sects declare that

" . . . the great mass of mankind, especially in these degenerate days, need help from Another and can be saved only through the grace of Amida who has worked out a way of salvation for all living beings through his vicarious sufferings and hardships."²

Man, being sinful, cannot cleanse his depraved heart. He is unable to save himself.³ The Shinshu Catechism states:

" . . . we are deeply involved in sin and evil from which it is impossible to extricate ourselves through whatever efforts we may put forth."⁴

"Man cannot be saved by his own knowledge, deed or virtue. This is the fundamental basis of Shinranism."⁵ Man must be saved by faith.

This doctrine of salvation by faith rather than works is not purported to be a new addition to Buddhist doctrine. The Shinshuist traces it back to Sakyamuni him-

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1. Ibid., p. 140.
2. Reischauer; Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 255.
3. Reischauer; A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 47.
4. Ibid., p. 42.
5. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 127.

self. It will be remembered that to Shinran and his Shinshu followers Sakyamuni was revealed merely to give forth the Gospel of Amida. This, Sakyamuni is purported to have done in the latter part of his ministry. He first seemed to preach a doctrine of salvation by works. Yet he is said to have spoken to his father thus: "'The plain man can be saved only by this way of uttering the Name with their pure faith.'"¹ This doctrine of salvation by faith is reputed to be the final and most important teaching of Sakyamuni.

"For the weary, the heavy-laden, the sinner, the great Sakyamuni at last opened the Gate of Faith in the Mercies of Amida, and thus made his system all-embracing and universal, by welcoming to his fold the ignorant and sinful as well as the wise and holy."²

2. The Vow of Amida

At the heart of the Amida sects' doctrine of salvation is the holy vow of Amida. While Amida was on earth as Hozo Bosatsu he made 48 vows which he vowed to fulfil before attaining Nirvana. These vows were made out of his deep compassion for human beings and required many ages of good works, reincarnations, sacrifice and hardships to fulfil. The vows were basically concerned with providing a way of salvation for all sentient beings conditioned upon faith in his Name.

The most important and crucial vow for the Amida

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1. Ibid., p. 75.
2. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 3.

sects is the 18th. It states:

"If all the beings, after I have obtained the Bodhi [Buddhahood], should direct their pure devotion to be born in my country, and should devote themselves only 10 times to the Grace of that country, and could not, nevertheless, be born therein, then may I not obtain the highest knowledge, barring, however, those who have committed 5 Anantarya sins such as to murder father, mother or teacher, to break peace among monks, as well as to shed blood from the Buddha, and those who blame the Buddha's teachings."¹

In short, this vow declares that Hozo Bosatsu (Amida) would not attain Nirvana until by his great merit all men might be saved through believing on his name.²

The exclusion of those who have committed the 5 deadly sins has caused certain difficulties. Shinran claimed that these conditions of the 18th vow applied to him alone.³ Further study of the sutras and vows of Amida makes it clear that no sins are too great to warrant exclusion from Amida's mercy. "The Grace of the Buddha extends . . . immeasurably, so that he will never forsake even the wicked."⁴ The Amida sects hold that no one is too wicked or sinful to be saved by Amida. His great vow is many times quoted without this limiting condition. Thus Lloyd gives the essence of the vow: "If I cannot procure salvation for all Beings, I will not accept the Buddhahood for myself."⁵

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1. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 42.
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 111.
3. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 52.
4. Ibid., p. 53.
5. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 96.

It was Amida's great, boundless mercy that prompted him to make this vow. He did not want his own paradise alone. He desires that all men be saved. It is this Original (18th) Vow that is at the core of the Amidaist's doctrine of salvation.

"In the True Sect of the Pure Land [Shinshu], we discover the true and universal love of Amida, who wished to save all creatures from suffering and ignorance. His love is the net of infinite mercy cast into the sea of mercies in order to catch there the ignorant rather than the wise, and the sinner rather than the just man. This infinite love and mercy reside eternally in Amida-Buddha, whose will to save all creatures knows no limit."¹

3. Reliance Upon Amida's Vow

a. The Nembutsu

The act of applying the vow of Amida to the individual is that step of faith which is evidenced by the repetition of Amida's name. After Amida's "exaltation" he received the name "Namu-Amida-Butsu." Faith in Amida's vow is realized by reciting the Nembutsu prayer--Namu-Amida-Butsu.

"The very indefectible virtues of . . . his accumulated merits he concentrated in his own name, wishing all sentient beings to appropriate the same by calling upon his name, and promising that whenever any would from their hearts so call upon him, he would grant them birth into his Pure Land of Nirvana."²

Thus "the Original Vow will be realized only by means of the Nembutsu."³

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1. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., p. 209.
2. Saunders: "Christianity and Buddhism," p. 140.
3. Takahashi: op. cit., p. 164.

The recitation of the Nembutsu is a basic doctrine of Amidaism. The earlier Yuzunembutsu Sect placed great emphasis upon repeating the Nembutsu as necessary for salvation. It was a means of acquiring merit. Ryonin, founder of the Yudzunembutsu, is said to have repeated it 60,000 times in one day.¹

The Jodo Sect did not place such an emphasis on repetition of the Nembutsu as necessary to salvation. Yet this sect also laid a certain stress on merit.

"While Amida's grace was held to be sufficient to save, still the believer was warned to be strict in his observance of certain rules of conduct and was made to feel that, after all, good works had a great deal to do with one's salvation."²

The Shin Sect carried the doctrine of salvation by faith to its extreme. It placed no meritorious value whatsoever upon the repetition of the Nembutsu but relied upon faith alone. The Catechism asks, "What must we do to be saved by Amida Butsu?" The answer is:

"We are saved by believing on Amida Butsu. Rennyō says, 'The important thing according to the Founder's teaching is nothing else than this heart of faith. He who does not know this is to be regarded as an outsider; he who knows what faith is has the true works of a Shinshuist.'³

At least theoretically, the repetition of the Nembutsu is not a saving work, but the significance which lies behind it is efficacious.

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1. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 104.
2. Ibid., p. 112.
3. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 42.

b. The Deeper Significance

The true act of faith is deeper than the mere repetition of the prayer. What follows or is implied in the repetition is the important thing. The implications involved in the Nembutsu are the vitals of faith.

"When a man hears the recital of the Myogo [the Nembutsu], he places himself by faith in a position of entire and absolute trust in the Mercies of Him whom he believes to have done such great things for him. By this act, a vital union is effected between the believer, who is sinful, and Amida, who is sinless, a union which cannot be effected without the cutting of sin and evil."¹

According to the Shinshu Catechism it is by hearing the significance of the Nembutsu which convicts man of sin. He realizes his own hopeless, sinful condition and then trusts firmly and without a doubt in the might and mercy of Amida.² "When we hear the name of Amida we acquire belief in a certain salvation . . ."³ Thus to the Amidaist, faith cometh by hearing.⁴

It is, therefore, not the repetition of the Nembutsu which saves, but the faith which is behind it. The Nembutsu is to be repeated only when accompanied by pure faith. It is not to be a mechanical empty formula. It implies and involves the whole will and grace of Amida and is to be repeated only with sincere and earnest trust in

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 91.
2. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, pp. 42-43.
3. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., p. 207.
4. Cf. Romans 10:17.

Amida's Vow and in complete faith in Amida's goodness.¹

Faith in his name represents faith in his vow.²

"Shinran holds that man should not call upon the name of the Tathagata to be saved by 'that stock of merit' or virtue, but simply should utter his name with a pure faith in his Original Vow."³

For Shinran, absolute faith in, and practice of, the Nem-buttsu means that the believer is no longer living in his own self, but in the power of Amida. Amida is thus living in the believer and the believer in him.⁴

c. The Origin of Faith

Not only does faith in Amida save the sinner, but the very faith expressed comes from Amida. The faith which appropriates the heavenly good is a gift from Amida.⁵ It is the believer's heart which does the believing, but the faith comes from Amida.

"If a man who had only the faith which relies upon self prays to Amida for help and salvation, however earnestly he may pray he can not attain the great joy which is called the Peace of Heart because he relies on himself. But in the case of the man whose faith comes through the strength of Another, when he prays he relies entirely upon Amida's commandment of great mercy which calls us unto salvation. Therefore the Great Joy which is called either Faith or Peace is the faith which is the gift of Another."⁶

There is nothing which man does whatsoever to earn

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1. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., p. 189.

2. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 184.

3. Ibid., p. 74.

4. Ibid., p. 98.

5. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 25.

6. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 44.

his salvation. It is recognized that he cannot cleanse his own sinful heart but must throw away any self-reliance or attempt at self-reformation and permit Amida to enter his heart, sinful though it be. "Just like a pearl of great value in the dirty water, we receive the Buddha Heart into our filthy heart of sin."¹

d. Repentance

Because of this absolute dependence upon Amida rather than any human attempt at reformation, some Amidaists feel that their doctrine of grace is more lofty than the Christian doctrine. The Christian is saved from his sin while the Amidaist is saved in his sin.² For the latter there need be no outward reformation. Amida will save man no matter how sinful he be or even if he continues in sin.

Although there seems to be no idea of the remission of sin in that sin is taken away or forgiven,³ yet there are indications of repentance. "The recitation of the Nembutsu with faith implies repentance for sin in the past and the desire to avoid it in the future."⁴ There is an indication that the man who trusts in Amida and realizes his sin ought to repent.⁵ However, repentance is not necessary to salvation. Amida will save regardless.

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1. Ibid., p. 48.
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 258.
3. Saunders: "Christianity and Buddhism," p. 142.
4. Eliot, op. cit., p. 370.
5. Saunders: "Christianity and Buddhism," p. 142.

"Mere contrition or troubling about the soul, or constant introspection cannot save. All that is required is Conversion, the turning of the heart to Amida. The rest will come in due and natural course."¹

e. Misuse of the Nembutsu

In the Shin and Jodo Sects, the Nembutsu is not to be used as a "work" toward salvation. Yet it is very difficult to keep the common people from making this inference. They many times do not make the necessary distinction and repeat it superstitiously for merit in attaining salvation. They fail to see its underlying significance and trust in their vain repetitions as efficacious.² "Doubtless it is often misused as a mere mechanical contrivance for acquiring merit."³

A definite problem concerning the use of the Nembutsu in the Amida sects in regard to salvation is evident. "There is a split in Amidaism between those who hold that "one calling" is sufficient rather than "many callings." Some say that only one repetition of the Nembutsu with faith is sufficient, while others hold that a certain number of repetitions must be made as a minimum."⁴

D.T. Suzuki states that

"However sinful a man or woman might be, if he or she once pronounced his [Amida's] name in absolute sincerity of heart, it was enough to bring such a one into the

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., pp. 107-108.
2. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 75.
3. Pratt, op. cit., p. 557.
4. Eliot, op. cit., p. 369.

most intimate connection with him."¹

Yet other Amidaists are still too conscious of the old Karma doctrine to hold that a deathbed repentance can lead to immediate entrance to Paradise.² They feel that more than "one calling" is necessary. Thus although in theory there is no merit attached to the repeating of the Nembutsu, yet most Amidaists feel that repeating it has a crucial influence upon one's salvation.

4. The Essence of True Faith

It might be well to sum up the orthodox Shinshu doctrine of faith since this is crucial in our study. A quotation from an Amidaist, Kojun Shichiri, will serve well for this purpose.

"Faith means complete trust in Amida and therefore utter renunciation of self-help. A devout and mystical member of the Shin sect whose writings are held in much respect, expresses it thus: 'We are to believe deeply in the mercy of Amida, but if you are too concerned with your state of mind, the very mercy of Amida may prove to be a hindrance to the growth of your faith. If you strive to grow in faith thinking this must be accomplished for your salvation, the very effort will smother it. For faith means unconditionally to submit oneself to the Other, and the straining is the outcome of self-power; the heavier you step the deeper you go into the mud of self-power, and the further you stand from the Other-Power . . . There is no need for you to look backward and forward and to carry along such old stuff as Nembutsu or faith or joyful heart. As soon as you realize the destiny of your sinful experience and the infinite unconditional love of The Other, begone with the last trace of self-assertion in whatever form, and abandon yourself,

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1. Suzuki: Mahayana Buddhism, p. xxxviii
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 257.

heart and soul, at the feet of the Saviour."¹

A fitting end to this section is a hymn attributed to Shinran and used in the Shin Sect.

"What though in faith my way I wend
To that Pure Land of thine,
With all my flesh doth falsehood blend,
And in my soul no spark of truth
No wholesome light doth shine.

Too strong, too strong earth's clinging mesh,
My soul entangled lies;
My very deeds of righteousness
Cry falsehood to the skies!
And passion as a serpent's tooth
Gnaws this poor heart of mine.

What though my spirit steeped in shame,
Unmerciful and fickle be,
Yet by the virtue of his Name
And trusting in his Ark of Love
I cross the waves of misery.
All impotent as is my might,
My heart though cold and dead,
Yet by his Grace, his saving light
Through me on darkened souls is shed,
Enkindled from above."²

C. Ultimate Universal Salvation

Faith in Amida is essential to immediate salvation according to the Amida sects. With this faith, immediate entrance to the Pure Land is assured at the time of death. Nevertheless there are many indications that ultimately all men will be saved. Because Amida's mercy is boundless and knows no limit he will make it possible for all men to be born into his Pure Land.³ Although it may take many

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1. Pratt, op. cit., pp. 654-655. (Quoted from The Eastern Buddhist, vol. III, No. 2.)
2. Saunders: Epochs of Buddhist History, p. 179.
3. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 260.

more reincarnations yet eventually even the vilest sinner who does not trust in Amida will be saved. "The Grace of the Tathagata extends even to those who neglect to believe in, and depend upon, the Grace and Power of the Tathagata."¹ Amida Buddhism holds to a universal redemption.²

This universal love of Amida has been contrasted with the "limited" love of the Christian God who saves only those who believe in Him.³ Again we see the distinction between the Christian God of holiness and justice and the Buddha Amida who is merely love. Rather than a limitation, the holiness of God is a distinctly higher concept. The Christian God's love is not limited, rather his justice prohibits his acceptance of those who reject His love.

D. The Philosophical Interpretation

Although the philosopher in Amida Buddhism and the Christian philosopher may use identical terminology concerning the means of salvation, yet their meanings are far removed from one another. It was seen in the preceding chapter that the common believer and the Amidaist philosopher have different concepts of God. They must necessarily have different concepts concerning the means of salvation. The Buddhist philosopher says, "The process of faith or grace

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1. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 45.
2. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., p. 236.
3. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 46.

in Buddhism is not a supernatural process at all, but a natural process . . ."1 The pure Grace of Amida "does not mean any supernatural power as is meant by other religions, but a natural power . . ."2

"The Grace of the Tathagata is essentially neither abstract nor supernatural nor subjective but concrete, natural and objective against the grace of God in some other religions which is essentially abstract, supernatural, and subjective. The Grace of the Tathagata is found 'within' this Nature. It is the Grace hoped for. It is the Grace believed in. It is the Grace yet to be realized realistically."3

Again we find the philosopher putting a serious barrier between the seeming similarities between Amida Buddhism and Christianity. It logically follows that the philosopher who denies the existence of a personal God would necessarily deny the means of salvation made possible by such a God. Faith in Amida means something entirely different to the philosopher and to the common believer.

E. Summary

The way of salvation in Amida Buddhism and Christianity seems to have many similarities, yet in this doctrine also we find noticeable and basic differences. The differences noted in the concepts of God, man and sin also apply here and are heightened by others. Amidaism admits the possibility of a man earning his salvation by his meritorious

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1. Ibid., p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 8.
3. Ibid., p. 114.

works which is impossible in Christianity. Amida himself is only a God who has earned his salvation in this manner.

The whole doctrine of salvation in Amida Buddhism is inter-related with the Law of Karma and reincarnation which is entirely foreign to Christianity. Amida worked out his vow through many incarnations until he finally reached Nirvana. Whether such a vow would make any difference with regard to the salvation of others even in Buddhist philosophy is questionable. This is certainly a much inferior concept than that of God taking upon Himself man's sin and suffering death for every man.

A conversion experience in Amidaism does not take away or forgive man's sin. The sin of the believer stays with him and is not removed. According to Christian doctrine the believer's sin is forgiven and removed.

The necessary repetition of the Nembutsu has no counterpart in Christianity. Faith in Christ need be confessed through no set formula. In Amida Buddhism the practice of repeating the Nembutsu almost invariably degenerates into a meritorious work for salvation.

The belief that all men will ultimately be saved is contrary to orthodox Christianity. Salvation in the Christian scheme is limited to those with faith in God.

The obvious contrast between the concept of the Buddhist philosopher and that of the Christian needs little comment. Salvation to the Christian is definitely a super-

natural experience. It is not found "within" this world,
but it has a supernatural reference.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOAL OF SALVATION

Orthodox Christianity teaches that the life beyond is, for the believer, a state to be anticipated with great joy. Heaven is the ultimate goal of salvation and there the Christian expects to enjoy eternal life with his Creator and Redeemer. The Christian's heaven is a place of joy and grandeur beyond one's greatest expectations. There is no sin or evil there. There is no sorrow or pain. There is only peace, and joy and happiness. There is personal fellowship with God and His resurrected children. The soul of a Christian continues in a conscious state after physical death. Immediately upon death it enters Paradise. Although there is much which the Christian does not profess to understand concerning the future life, yet he is certain that it is one of a personal existence full of joy and fellowship with God having an absence of anything undesirable.

In Amida Buddhism the concept of the future life can again be divided into two very different and quite opposite views. The average believer has a concept of Paradise very close to that of the Christian while the philosopher again differs greatly from the uneducated. The concept of Paradise depends upon the concept of God and, in

the case of the Amidaist, upon the amount of education one has received.

A. The Popular Concept

1. The Abode of Amida

In the "Amidaology" of the common Amida Buddhist after Amida provided a way of salvation for all men through his saving vow he entered his Buddha state and prepared a place for all those who would call upon his name.¹ It is to this Pure Land that Amida calls his own. The Amida believer, therefore, who believes in a personal God also believes that his God has prepared a place for him when he dies.

"The salvation offered by Amida consists of rebirth in his Paradise, which all ancient accounts agree is situated in the West and where all shall enjoy wonderful powers of body and mind."²

This Western Paradise is thought to have been created by Amida to be peopled by those who have faith to invoke him.³ It is the place where Amida now exists and where he calls his own to dwell with him. The Amidaist has fond hopes and expectations of finally reaching this Pure Land. "The rank and file of the four Pure Land Amida sects expect at death to go to the Western Paradise of Amida, much as the simple Christian expects his soul to go to

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1. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 12.

2. Eliot, op. cit., p. 367.

3. Arthur Lloyd: Buddhist Meditations, p. 23.

heaven."¹

2. Characteristics of the Pure Land

There has been much discussion about the Buddhist state of Nirvana. It has been referred to as the cessation of being, extinction, or total annihilation. In most of Buddhism it is chiefly a negative state² and is an "escape" from this world of suffering and reincarnation. In Amida Buddhism, however, the future state of the Buddhist is not only an escape from the evils of this life but also an entrance into a future life of bliss having, not a negative, but a positive content.³

a. Personal Existence

Regardless of the difficulties involved in the concept of the non-immortality of the soul, the Buddhist layman ordinarily believes in a Paradise where there is personal existence. He foresees personal fellowship with Amida and the saints,⁴ The Pure Land is regarded as a permanent residence for all eternity.⁵ It is a place where life continues and where somehow the "personality" in the present life is not lost but lives eternally. There is a real continuity and identity of the individual.⁶

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1. Pratt, op. cit., p. 560.
2. Hume, op. cit., p. 72.
3. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 243.
4. Ibid., p. 244.
5. Eliot, op. cit., p. 367.
6. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 113.

b. Happiness

As in the Christian concept the Amidaist commoner believes in a Paradise where all is happiness and where no evil is. There is no impurity whatsoever in the Pure Land. This earthly life is filled with sin and suffering. The Pure Land is contrasted with it.

"It is a place of perpetual smiles flowing from the source of all happiness. There one meets neither suffering nor sin, only beauty, goodness and joy. Those who are reborn there enjoy unending bliss. They are endowed not only with infinite freedom and wisdom, but also with . . . pure love and compassion."¹

The similarity between the pious Amida Buddhist's concept of Paradise and that of the Christian is quickly observed in the following letters written by Amida Buddhists. Not only the concept of Paradise but the whole concept of salvation may be seen in the following letter by an old woman.

"I am old and I am a woman, and it is not expected that a woman will know much of such subjects, but I will tell you what thoughts I have. I am weak and sinful, and have no help in myself; my hope is all in Amida Buddha. I believe him to be the Supreme Being. Because of the wickedness of men, and because of human sorrow, Amida Buddha became incarnate and came to earth to deliver man; and my hope and the world's hope is to be found only in his suffering love. He has entered humanity to save it; and he alone can save. He constantly watches over and helps all who trust in him. I am not in a hurry to die, but I am ready when my time comes; and I trust that through the gracious love of Amida Buddha I shall then enter into the future life which I believe to be a state of conscious existence, and where I shall be free from sorrow. I believe that he hears prayer, and that he has

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1. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., p. 210.

guided me thus far, and my hope is only in his suffering love."¹

Another pious Amida believer on her deathbed writes to her friends:

"I have been ailing for several days past, and, believing my sickness to be a messenger of death, I am filled with joy, trusting myself entirely to His mercies. . .The manifestation of the Tathagata (Amida) is the earnest and pledge to us of our entrance into Paradise. Why should we doubt? . . .Should my sickness change for worse, I shall never see you again in this life. But I shall, of a certainty, see once more, in the Pure Land, all those who are partakers with me in the faith that I have in Amida."²

Although these letters are the exception rather than the rule, we can see the close relationship in many respects to the Christian doctrine.

3. Immediate Entrance upon Death

Another very noticeable difference between Amida Buddhism and the older Buddhist belief is that concerning the time of entrance into the blissful future state. Buddhism generally teaches that salvation is a long, slow process and that Nirvana is attained only after many reincarnations. Amidaism on the other hand teaches that Paradise is entered immediately upon the death of the believer.³

It has been mentioned before that some Amidaists are still too conscious of the Law of Karma to admit of a deathbed repentance resulting in immediate rebirth into

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1. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, pp. 245-246.
2. Ibid., p. 246.
3. Ibid., p. 257.

Paradise, yet the common teaching is that the believer will enter Paradise immediately after death.¹ This belief has so impressed itself upon the minds of the believers that some have committed suicide to hasten their entrance into the Pure Land.² The death of the body is considered to be simultaneous with the birth of the soul into the Pure Land.

4. The Work of Bodhisattvas

There is a peculiar doctrine in Amida Buddhism which has no counterpart in Christianity. It is the concept of the Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is a being who has already escaped the incarnations of this life and has reached enlightenment yet who returns to earth to aid others in their search for salvation. There are many Bodhisattvas who are thus helping others because of their great love for humanity.³

B. The Philosophical Concept

1. Nirvana as an Abstraction

As might be expected the Amida philosopher again denies any similarity of the Amida's Pure Land to the Christian's heaven. Mr. Mochizuki, a lecturer on the Jodo doctrine states,

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1. Ibid., p. 257.

2. Ibid., p. 113.

3. Saunders: "Christianity and Buddhism," p. 142.

"By the term Pure Land, or Paradise of Amida, we express the idea of an unlimited abstract land. It is Nirvana, the supreme state of Buddhist perfection or Buddhahood. . . The Paradise of the Pure Land is Amida himself, who is essence, time, space, and absolute wisdom. . . Amida Buddha is the absolute, and . . . his Paradise is also an absolute notion."¹

To the philosopher, the conception of Paradise held by the populace is another accommodation of language for the unlearned. To them Nirvana continues to be, as to all Buddhists, a great void.²

Nirvana is explained as "concrete emptiness."³

"Buddhaship itself is nothing but the concrete empty as such."⁴ Since Amida, for the philosopher, is nothing else than the non-personal Law which pervades the universe, the whole concept of a Paradise prepared for the believers is untenable for them. His Western Paradise "is really not a place but a state of mind."⁴

2. Paradise as Absorption into the Absolute

Discarding the vulgar belief of Paradise, the Amida philosopher, in true Buddhist style, finds man's ultimate salvation in the realization of his oneness with the Law-principle of the universe.⁵ "The ultimate goal does not consist in being born . . . in the Pure Land but in realizing one's essential unity with the Buddha."⁶

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1. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., pp. 194-195.
2. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 247.
3. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 98.
4. Pratt, op. cit., p. 661.
5. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 109.
6. Pratt, op. cit., p. 661.

Philosophical Buddhism holds no doctrine of individual immortality. There may be a certain social immortality in one's absorption into the absolute, but there is no immortality in the Christian concept.¹ "The 'Western world' as the Pure Land is within the actual world."² Salvation basically consists of becoming aware of one's essential oneness with the universe.

C. Summary

The ultimate goal of salvation as conceived by the uneducated Amida Buddhist definitely has very basic similarities with that of orthodox Christianity. In fact by the mere exchanging of a few proper names one might easily pass for the other. Both believe in a continued personal existence with fellowship with their God. Both contrast the future happiness with present evil conditions. Both are planning to enter Paradise immediately upon death. It is the Amida doctrine of the Bodhisattva alone which differentiates it seriously from the Christian concept.

Yet as before the Amida philosopher and scholar rather than supporting and clarifying this concept, destroys it completely as a simple belief of the uneducated. The Amida philosopher again shows his essential Buddhist nature

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1. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 131.
2. Ibid., p. 18.

and his oneness with Buddhism in general. Paradise as a conscious state is a figment of the imagination. In reality, for him, it is being absorbed into the non-personal Law and is void of any content.

CHAPTER V

THE PRACTICAL OUT-WORKING OF SALVATION

Orthodox Christianity has a definite place in its system of thought for good works. These works in no way influence one's salvation yet necessarily come about as results of one's faith. The very nature of the Christian faith cannot help but issue forth in works. Because of the love of Christ in the believer's heart and the desire to be like Him, works follow upon faith. In fact one's faith can be seen by one's works. The life of the Christian has been changed entirely from what it was. He has become a new creature. His life is characterized by love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.¹

A. The Life of the Believer

1. Indwelling Happiness and Peace

The Amida Buddhist believes that a certain inner change has taken place in his life as a result of his faith. Although an outward change might not be so evident, yet

" . . . when we look at the inner man of him that has accepted the principle of Faith, we find a happiness and peace, such as one who has not yet believed cannot possibly understand. This internal happiness and peace will necessarily show itself in the quiet, peaceful

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1. Galations 5:22, 23.

strength that will characterize our daily lives."¹

In answer to the question "What is the state of mind of him who believes in Amida?" the Shinshu Catechism states:

"Before we know Amida we spend our lives in sin as a result of which we are drawn down into the evil way and are submerged in suffering. But when we listen to the Voice of Salvation we are saved from our sinful condition . . . Our hearts are filled with a great peace and a great joy."²

The one who believes in Amida dwells in the glory of Amida's light and enjoys the protection of every God, Buddha and Bodhisattva.³ The believer experiences a subjective change when he has true faith.

2. The Hope of the Future Life

The great expectation of the believer concerning the future state of bliss has been pointed out in the previous chapter. Many believers live in such joy and expectation of the future state that their present life has been turned into a Paradise.⁴ Shinran himself emphasized that salvation began in this life and was continued in the next.⁵ The present life of the pious believer is characterized by the great hope of the life to come.

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1. Lloyd: Shinran and His Work, p. 114.
2. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 43.
3. Ibid., p. 49.
4. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 113.
5. Ibid., p. 257.

B. The Place of Works

1. Practical Antinomianism

The Amida sects have a varied emphasis upon works. In the Jodo Sect certain works--such as the repetition of the Nembutsu--even after faith are considered necessary to add to one's stock of merit and make one's calling and election sure.¹

"Jodo attaches a certain importance to right conduct after the act of faith as necessary to salvation, and no doubt Shin also recommends it, but Shin believers consider that once the promise has been received they are safe forever, whatever their shortcomings."²

To the Shinshuist there is no obligation to go to church or attend religious observances. There is no need for acquiring further merit. Everything has already been done for man's salvation.

There are no restrictions on the Shinshuist's life. Contrasted with the pious believer or monk of other Buddhist sects, he is entirely free. "Neither what I eat, nor my attitude towards marriage, nor anything of this kind can possibly affect my eternal salvation."³ Practically, the Amidaists are antinomians.⁴

The greater one feels the need for religious practices, the smaller one's faith. "So long as one needs

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1. Lloyd: Shinran and His Work, p. 115.
2. Amy Bosanquet: "Present Day Buddhism in Japan," in the Church Missionary Review, June 1925, p. 129.
3. Lloyd: Shinran and His Work, p. 13.
4. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 258.

much religious practices he has evidently little faith in the Other Power."¹ There is no necessity for works, for one's salvation is already procured. A man may even continue in sin and be assured of salvation if he trusts in Amida's vow.

2. Works are the Results of Faith

Although no works are needed for salvation according to Shinshu doctrine, yet works do come as the result of one's faith. The Catechism states that

" . . . where there is a flame of faith within, it will show itself in the smoke of conduct without. When we live in the sea of Amida's light, the light of virtue naturally shines forth."²

Works preceding faith are of no avail. Yet good works are expected to flow spontaneously from faith.³

These works do not involve legalistic ritual or religious observances, but rather express themselves in one's whole life. The believer has a responsibility as a good citizen of this world.

"Our duty is to live according to the family, professional and national morals of our social station, and not to distinguish ourselves by exterior acts or manifestations. The believer of the Shinshu sect can lead the life of his own choice provided it is an honest life. He can be a merchant, an industrialist, an official, soldier, peasant, workman or fisherman. He must be a good citizen, a good husband, a good father and a good son."⁴

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1. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 40.
2. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 52.
3. Bunyio Nanjio: A Short History of the 12 Japanese Buddhist Sects, p. 127.
4. Stienilber-Oberlin, op. cit., p. 201.

Human morality must be observed and the believer is to be a peacemaker among men. He is to be careful in regard to the duties of his present life.¹ In short, he should be a model citizen.

3. Works as Expressions of Gratitude

The works done after conversion are to be accepted as expressions of thanksgiving and devotion. "After a man has once obtained faith in Amida he commits all to his power, and his worship, though frequent, consists of nothing but thanksgiving."² All of the works done following faith are regarded as works of gratitude for salvation. The chief work of gratitude is the uttering of the Nembutsu.³

It is this repetition of the Nembutsu which seems so much like a works' righteousness. Yet the careful Shinsuist will say that "our constant practices of reciting His Name are not . . . a means for securing merit thereby, but only as our pure devotional actions themselves."⁴ This practice is purely one of gratitude. A distinction may again be drawn between this repetition of Amida's name by the Jodo Sect and the Shin Sect.

"With the Jodo the devotional repetition of the Buddha's name is a necessary action of the pious to deepen the faith, without which salvation will never be complete;

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1. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 49.
2. Eliot, op. cit., p. 381.
3. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 53.
4. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 28.

while according to the Shin School it is simply an action of gratitude or an expression of thanksgiving, after one's realizing the Buddha's power conferred on one."¹

Not only the repetition of the Nembutsu but all of the believer's action are to be "thank-offerings." These works may not be different from the non-believer, but there is a different motive--thanksgiving. Thus the believer's works are different. The more the gift of salvation is appreciated, the more thanksgiving is expressed through works.²

The actions of thanksgiving are so all-inclusive that even lies and sharp practices are included. The Catechism asks, Are we to regard these things also as expressions of gratitude? The answer given is as follows:

"Lies and sharp practices themselves are not expressions of gratitude. When we pursue our daily duties and work cheerfully and assiduously, even though we indulge in lies and sharp practices, we help spread the Way of Buddha, and so even our lies and sharp practices become expressions of gratitude."³

C. An Illustration of Practical Work

It is significant that both the Jodo and Shin Sects are engaged in social service.

"One important activity, which has been almost entirely in the hands of the Shin sect for many years, is the prison chaplaincy and prisongate work. There are about 600 prison chaplains, who have full access to the pri-

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1. Takahashi, op. cit., p. 28.
2. Lloyd: Shinran and His Work, p. 116.
3. Reischauer: A Catechism of the Shin Sect, p. 54.

soners and are present at their interviews with visitors and hold services for them inside the prisons. Some of these are genuinely interested in the criminals."¹

This is one of a number of illustrations of how the faith of the Amida Buddhist does have some positive influence in the life of the nation. To a certain extent it has here another common aspect with Christianity. A vital faith invariably manifests itself in works.

D. Summary

Definite, if superficial, similarities may be seen in the effects of salvation in the life of the individual in both Amidaism and Christianity. Although neither religion accepts works as meritorious yet both insist that works do follow faith. There are definite and basic differences, nevertheless. In Christianity there is a necessity laid upon the believer to cease from evil and do good while the Amidaist may continue in sin.

Also the basic motivation for good works is of a different character. The Amidaist performs works out of gratitude while the motivation of the Christian is love. In fact, in contrast to the antinomian philosophy of the Amida Buddhist, there is a "law of love" which the Christian professes to follow. The Christian has a positive, out-flowing love for God and his fellow men. This would

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1. Bosanquet, op. cit., p. 133.

prohibit him from indulging in certain practices entirely acceptable to the Amidaist. The social work of Christendom is also significant in its comparison to the limited work of Amida Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

From the evidence in the foregoing material a conclusion may be reached concerning the validity of the view held by some that Christianity and Amidaism are in reality one and the same system of thought. In contrast to this position is that which holds to the essential uniqueness and exclusiveness of Christianity.

A. General Outline of the Comparison

It would be well first to set down a general outline of the comparisons noted in the body of the thesis. The conclusion may then be drawn with this outline before us. The outline will make evident the basic similarities and differences between the beliefs of common Amida Buddhism and Orthodox Christianity.

<u>Amida Buddhism</u>		<u>Christianity</u>
	GOD	
Personal		Personal
Eternal		Eternal
Wisdom		Wisdom
Love		Love
No Holiness		Holiness
Redeemer		Creator and Redeemer
Man became God		God became Man
Vicarious Vow		Vicarious Death
No Historical Reference		Historical Reference
	MAN	
No Special Place in Creation		Highest Creation
Deeds of Former Life Cause Present Life		Made in Image of God
Non-ego		Immortal Soul
Possibility of Saving Self		Unable to Save Self
Depraved and Sinful		Depraved and Sinful
Reincarnation		No Reincarnation

SIN

Abstract, Result of Ignorance	Disobedience or Rebellion Against God
Condition of Heart (or Mind)	Condition of Heart
Universal	Universal
Little Need for Repentance	Need for Repentance
No Need for Reformation	Need for Reformation

MEANS OF SALVATION

Through Faith	Through Faith
No Need for Forgiveness	Sins Forgiven
Works not Meritorious	Works not Meritorious
Possibility of Salvation by Works	No Possibility of Works Salvation
Universal Salvation	Salvation of Believers

PARADISE

Abode of God	Abode of God
Personal Existence	Personal Existence
Happiness and Joy	Happiness and Joy
Immediate Entrance upon Death	Immediate Entrance upon Death
Bodhisattva	

OUTWORKING OF SALVATION

No Special Change	New Creature
Inner Joy and Peace	Inner Joy and Peace
Hope of Future Life	Hope of Future Life
Works Done for Gratitude	Works Done out of Love
License	Holy Life
Works - the Result of Faith	Works - the Result of Faith
Limited Social Service	Great Social Service

B. Basic Differences

The similarities of the two systems may be noted from the outline and have been pointed out throughout the body of the thesis. It is the basic differences, however, which concern us primarily at this point. Unless there is basic and fundamental unity between the two systems of thought, the apparent similarities become superficial.

1. Philosophical Amida Buddhism

It has been noted at numerous places in the thesis

that the main comparison is in reality between the belief of the uneducated, common Amida Buddhist and orthodox Christianity. Invariably the educated Buddhist philosopher or scholar is basically in agreement with Buddhism in general. Apart from terminology there is no comparison between philosophical Amida Buddhism and Christianity. Thus the educated Amida Buddhist would never claim that Amida Buddhism was identical with Christianity. In fact, philosophical Amida Buddhism is far removed from the Christian faith.

It is this very fact which the Western scholars who have seen a kinship between Christianity and Amidaism have overlooked. They have dealt with the customs and beliefs of the uneducated and have seen certain similarities. They have not realized that the similar terminology was a mere accommodation of language as far as the scholar was concerned. The close similarities then become a matter of education for the Buddhist. When an Amida Buddhist becomes educated he uses the same nomenclature but fills it full of an entirely different meaning. Basically the similarity is a matter of terminology and as the Japanese become better educated the similarity will cease to exist.

Buddhist literature may speak of faith, paradise, sin, etc. and the layman will take these terms at face value while the meaning is far removed from the Western concept of these same things. Basically, therefore, Christianity

and philosophical Amida Buddhism are as far removed as any other Buddhist sect.

2. "Vulgar" Amida Buddhism

Even overlooking this basic and underlying difference between philosophical Amida Buddhism and Christianity, however, there are still essential differences between the "vulgar" belief of the people and the Christian doctrine.

a. God

Basic to a doctrine of salvation is a concept of God. The Christian God and Amida (even as seen by the uneducated,) when examined closely cannot possibly be confused as being identical. In the first place Amida Buddhism has no ontological reference for the person of Hozo Bosatsu whatsoever. He is therefore relegated to the infinite past. The only knowledge of him is that written in three sutras since the time of Christ. Without such a historical reference, the belief in Amida is in an idea rather than a person. Contrary to the belief of some modern philosophers and psychologists, belief in an idea is not the same as belief in a fact. Thinking does not make it so. This lack of any factual knowledge concerning Amida is in direct contrast to the Christian's belief in the historic Jesus.

Yet, even if we were to accept the historicity of Hozo Bosatsu, the difficulty would not be erased. To accept his way of salvation it is necessary to accept the fact that men have earned their salvation. Amida is only the

kind of a God that any man might become through his own efforts. This to the Christian is impossible.

Even if this possibility of Hozo working out his own salvation were accepted, there is no reason to believe that his vow would be efficacious in the salvation of others. There is no Creator-God who rules the world who could accept or reject Hozo's plan of salvation for the world. To accept this theory of Hozo's vow and attainment of Buddhahood entails acceptance of the Buddhistic concept of the origin of the world, the Law of Karma, transmigration for all are involved in the salvation of Hozo Bosatsu.

By-passing the theory of how Amida became God, we still find difficulty in harmonizing his character with that of the Christian God. The Christian's theology would be entirely upset if the attribute of holiness were omitted. The Christian's God is a holy God, a God of justice. Even His love is influenced by His holiness. Without this essential attribute of holiness, any comparisons between the God of the Christian and any other is definitely inadequate.

Since the entire doctrine of salvation is so closely related to the concept of God, the above difficulties in and of themselves would preclude the possibility of an identity between Amida Buddhism and Christianity. Although identical qualities or attributes are applied to Amida, they involve only the most superficial similarity when basic differences are considered. Attributes may furnish

a comparison, but are not sufficient to affirm an identity. The attributes of an idea are far removed from the attributes of a person.

b. Man

A close examination of the concepts of man in Amida Buddhism and Christianity also give evidence of differences. Essential to the Christian concept of salvation is the fact that man was made by God in His image. It was this same man which God desired to redeem. It was God's love for His own creation that brought Him to earth. This does not harmonize with Amida Buddhism. In Buddhism there is no essential difference between man and the rest of creation. Man is merely the product of his former deeds. He is caught in the vicious wheel of life. There is no real reason why he should be saved any more than any other being. The mere fact that he is considered depraved and sinful (as is all creation in Buddhism) does not identify him with the Christian concept of man.

c. Sin

Further differences are noted in the concept of sin. Sin is not taken seriously in Amida Buddhism. It is not very real. There is no need for forgiveness--for remission of sin. There is no need for the believer to forsake his sin. Because the Amida believer considers all men to be sinful and thinks it may be a condition of the heart it does not follow that he means by sin the Christian

concept. Sin is not rebellion against or disobedience to a righteous God. It is very abstract and it makes little difference in the believer's life.

d. The Means of Salvation

Although both Amida Buddhism and Christianity proclaim salvation by faith, there is a real difference between faith in a vow or an idea and faith in a person. Many people have faith in something--even false gods, but faith in and of itself is not saving. Unless one's faith is directed toward the right object, it is not efficacious for salvation. The fact that both systems use the same word is of little importance.

e. Paradise

As has been noted, the concepts of Paradise are very similar. Yet they too are dependent upon the concept of God. Once God is removed or changed, Paradise succumbs or is changed accordingly.

f. Outworking of Salvation

One of the greatest tests of a religion is the effect upon the individual and upon society. There is no particular need for the life of the Amida Buddhist to be different after faith than before. He is saved in his sin. There is no obligation for him to live a peculiar life. There is a necessity laid upon the Christian, however, to live a sanctified life. The Christian is a new creature in Christ. His life has been completely changed. The differ-

ence is evident. His works evidence his faith. The influence of these two religious systems upon their respective societies is self-evident.

C. Conclusion

As a result of the foregoing considerations there is but one conclusion that can be logically deduced. Amida Buddhism and Christianity are not basically similar with superficial differences. They are rather basically different--as different as Christianity and Buddhism in general --with superficial similarities. The uniqueness and exclusiveness of the Christian Gospel is not threatened by the doctrine of the Amida sects of Japanese Buddhism.

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APPENDIX

Origin of the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Amida Buddhism

An interesting side light of the discussion of this thesis which has not been considered is that of the origin of this doctrine of salvation in Amida Buddhism. In what way are these similarities between Buddhism and Christianity, striking though superficial, to be accounted for? There are a variety of answers given depending upon the time this doctrine is thought to have entered Buddhism.

If, as some believe, Sakyamuni did include in his teachings a doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, he may have been influenced by the writings of the Jewish prophets. It is entirely possible that he was acquainted with the Old Testament writings of the prophets of the exile. If this teaching entered Buddhism after Sakyamuni, it could have been incorporated in the system after the conquest of Alexander, and thus be influenced by the Old Testament.

If the doctrine of divine grace did not appear until the three sutras were written (after the time of Christ) there may have been a direct Christian influence upon Mahayana Buddhism. It is also possible that the Mithras cult in Persia exerted influence upon it. The doctrine of salvation by divine grace is also found in popular Hinduism but whether it entered Hinduism or Buddhism first is not

known.

"Whatever its origins, the doctrine of divine grace did not reach any degree of real vitality in Buddhism until after the formation of the great Pure Land Sects in China and Japan which make this their central teaching. These sects regard Shan-tao (Zento, Japanese) as their greatest teacher. He is known to have lived in Sin-an-fu China when there were Nestorian missionaries there and may have been influenced by them. If this concept didn't come from Christianity, it was probably strengthened by influences of Nestorian Christianity and made a vital doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism."¹

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1. Reischauer: Studies in Japanese Buddhism, p. 70.