

Love and Life: The World of Religious Faith

It can be said that the human life is a path of being lost in life and death, bewildered by vexations, and plagued by transgressions. Religious inquiry arises when we become aware of these problems and are greatly challenged by them. And when one becomes deeply aware of the problems of death, suffering, and sin, and penetrates through them to be embraced by the compassion of the Buddha and the love of God, there is religious liberation and salvation.

In particular, religions of faith, such as Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism, start from the awareness of sin and attempt to obtain salvation from it by entrusting it to the Absolute, such as God or Buddha.

This paper describes the way all the beings are kept alive by the work of the Absolute, the fundamental life of the universe, in this place of salvation.

Love and Compassion

Religion is the awareness of being kept alive by the fundamental life of the universe. This awareness of being sustained and penetrated by the fundamental life of the universe is a sentiment common to all religions. God and Buddha are personal symbols of the fundamental life of the universe, and God's love and Buddha's compassion are personal expressions of the workings of the fundamental life of the universe. The workings of the life of the universe are emphasized as love and mercy, especially when religious feelings begin with a sense of guilt. The consciousness of guilt is a consciousness of separation from the primordial life of the universe, while the concept of forgiveness of sins or redemption from sins is a consciousness of return to the primordial life of the universe. Here, the root of the universe is met directly in the form of God or Buddha. God is the love that forgives the sinful, and Buddha is the compassion that embraces the ordinary man of sin, life, and death.

The Christian God is also above all the God of love, the God who forgives sinful man. From the moment man becomes independent as a human being, he is a sinful being cut off from the source of the universe and disobedient to God, but God forgives this by love to all extents. In this sense, God's love is to appease the conflict between God and man. God takes upon himself the sins of the human world, forgives them, and redeems the human world with love. It is love that forgives opposites. In love, the relative and absolute worlds are appeased. At the same time, in love, the conflicts of the relative world are soothed.

In "The Book of John..." (4.7-8) also, "Love is from God. Whoever loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God. God is love."

The book of Matthew (22.37, 22.39, 5.44-45) also states, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

"Love thy neighbor as thyself."

"Pray for those who love their enemies and persecute them. Then you may become sons of your Father who is in heaven."

Thus says the Bible. In this way, in Christianity, the God of wrath transformed into a God of love, and Christianity made the leap to a religion of love for humanity that preaches love for God and love for one's neighbor. The uniqueness of Christianity lies in its transformation of a God of wrath into a God of forgiveness and grace.

Paul, too, speaks of love, saying repeatedly that we are members of the body of Christ. Just as there are many limbs in one body, and these limbs cooperate with each other in their separate functions, so we, as part of the body of Christ, are one with Christ and one with

others. Paul sees the relationship between God and man, and between man and man, through the metaphor of the relationship between body and limb, limb and limb, and thereby preaches love for God and love for neighbor under the love of God. It is because Jesus' teaching was received as such a teaching of love that, in Paul, Christianity departed from its old mother and became the religion of all.

Luther, too, in "The Freedom of the Christian" (30), wrote "The Christian does not live in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. He lives in Christ through faith, and in his neighbor through love. By faith he passes over himself to God, and from God he comes again to himself in love, always abiding in God and in God's love. And he always remains in God and in God's love. "

Here, too, in God's love, love for God and love for neighbor are united. It is faith that makes this possible. From faith comes an unending love of God and love of neighbor.

Kierkegaard, in his "Works of Love" (I), also wrote "As a quiet lake has a deep bottom in a hidden spring that no one can see, so human love has an even deeper bottom in the love of God."

In Kierkegaard, too, it is in the love that is poured out from God into man that man has faith in and love for God, and it is in this place of God's love that love between man and man is seen to be possible.

We live by the fundamental life of the universe. The fundamental life of the universe pervades us. In the place of the fundamental life of the universe, we can return to it and become one with others. The workings of such primordial life are expressed as Christian love.

Mahayana Buddhism also teaches the Buddha's great compassion and mercy. Originally, Mahayana Buddhism is a religion that began with the belief in the infinite workings of the Buddha's compassion. Here, it is said that all sentient beings are saved by the Buddha's vast compassion. Like the sun shining equally on the good and the bad, the Buddha's compassion extends indiscriminately to all sentient beings, rescuing them from their suffering and allowing them to be absorbed in his compassion. As stated in the "the vow to save all sentient beings in this world from suffering and distress" of the Four Vows, the Buddha's boundless wish is to help all sentient beings. The Buddha embraces all sentient beings in his great compassion, just as a mother embraces her child. All living beings are kept alive and live in the primordial life field of the universe. In Buddhism, such fundamental life is expressed as the Buddha's compassion. This boundless compassion is the ultimate in religious love.

In Pure Land Buddhism, too, Amitabha Buddha is said to have taken a vow to save all sentient beings out of his vast and boundless compassion and to have practiced it. Amitabha Buddha's great compassion extends to all corners of the universe, preaching the unsurpassed Dharma for all sentient beings and encompassing all sentient beings. The light of Amitabha's boundless compassion is indiscriminate, transcending good and evil, and illuminating all sentient beings. There is no evil that can prevent us from being ingested into Amitabha Buddha's boundless compassion. Amitabha Buddha will not ingest and discard any evil person or sinner.

Amitabha Buddha is infinite light and infinite life. The awareness of being enveloped by this infinite light and life means that one has been taken into the infinite mercy of Amitabha Buddha and is saved. Amitabha Buddha symbolizes the primordial life of the universe, and his infinite compassion symbolizes its workings. The fundamental life of the universe is everywhere in the universe and resides in every being in the universe. This is expressed in the compassion of Amitabha Buddha, who freely works in the worlds of the ten directions to help sentient beings. Everything that exists in the universe is penetrated by the fundamental life of the universe and is connected by one life. The Pure Land belief that all sentient beings

can attain Buddhahood by being surrounded by the light and life of Amitabha Buddha's mercy is an expression of this.

The meaning of “Transfer of merit”

The Jodo Shinshu concept of the "The salvation of all sentient beings is provided by the power of Amitabha Buddha's true wish" also expresses the infinite workings of true life in the universe and the boundless mercy of the Buddha. Shinran believed that it is not by the merit of our own good deeds that we, ordinary people, can be sure of our own rebirth in the Pure Land, and that we can never save ourselves by our own strength. Shinran's idea of salvation by absolute faith was that the boundless compassion of the Buddha would work on such ordinary people, manifesting its mysterious power and saving us.

It was with this in mind that Shinran, in his *Kyogyoshinsho* (Shinnokan), included a quotation from the “Muryouju-Nyorai-e,” another translation of the “Muryōjūkyō (Sukhāvātī-vyūha),” and gave it a unique reading, thereby reversing the meaning of the concept of Ekou. If we read the quotation in the usual way, it reads as follows.

“The sutra says, all sentient beings, if you hear the name of the Buddha and rejoice in faith, or if you sincerely turn your practice to him and wish to be born in the land of the Buddha, you will be able to live forever and ever.” This is what it means.

However, Shinran boldly read the phrase "sincerely turn your practice to him" as “Buddha sincerely turn his mind to us.” If we read the phrase as "sincerely turn your practice to him," it means that we, sentient beings, should turn our practice to Amitabha Buddha, and through his work, we will be reborn in the Pure Land. However, if we read it as Shinran's, “Buddha sincerely turn his mind to us” then even the action is greatly transformed as we are told that it is all the work of mercy directed toward us sentient beings from Amitabha Buddha. In Shinran's view, the desire of sentient beings to be born in the Pure Land by hearing the Buddha's name, establishing faith, and reciting the Nembutsu is all the work of the Absolute's love. Herein lies Shinran's unique view that he has renounced all self-reliance and has devoted himself to absolute faith. This is where Shinran's entire experience of deepening his belief in absolute otherness comes into play. The boldness of Shinran's reading stems from the depth and thoroughness of his experience.

Therefore, Shinran also has his own interpretation of the 18th wish of Amida Buddha, which is found in the *Muryōjūkyō* (Sukhāvātī-vyūha) (Kanjou). The Eighteenth wish states that three states of mind are necessary for rebirth in the Pure Land: Shishin, Shigyo, and Yokushou. In other words, it is essential to have pure sincerity, to believe rejoicingly and to wish to be born in the Pure Land. In Shinran's view, however, it is impossible for an ordinary person with a high level of vexation to develop such three states of mind. Therefore, such states of mind are also thought to be caused by the urging of the compassionate mind of Amitabha Buddha.

It is impossible for us ordinary people to make our own aspiration, and this is due to the mercy of Amitabha Buddha and his work. The work of our own aspiration is not our own aspiration, but the aspiration of the Tathagata. It is also impossible for the mind to desire to be reborn in the Pure Land on its own, but only through the working of the Buddha's compassionate heart. Furthermore, the practice of nembutsu, or the act of reciting the Buddha's name, is also the work of the Amitabha Buddha through us ordinary people. The act of chanting Nam-Mu-Amida-Butsu is itself a work of Amitabha Buddha, and the ability to recite the Nembutsu is also a result of the Tathagata's action, and is a result of his great compassion.

It is because of the working of Amitabha Buddha's true power that we are able to hear the name of the Buddha, and by hearing the name of the Buddha, we are able to rejoice in our faith. Therefore, this faith is not something that is generated by our own power, but is a work of love from the side of the Absolute. Our faith is also a gift of the power of Amitabha Buddha's true wish, which has been transferred to us sentient beings. Faith arises from the wish of the Tathagata and is the manifestation of his compassion. Shinran's idea of absolute other power is that all things are the work of the Absolute, Amitabha Buddha.

The word "Ekou" originally means "to incline oneself toward" or "to turn to the side of," or "to turn toward and direct one's work in that direction. In Mahayana Buddhism, this usually means that we should do some good deeds and direct our merits to others, so that all living beings may attain right enlightenment.

In Shinran's view, however, it is impossible for ordinary people, who are deeply sinful and full of worldly desires, to do such good deeds. Nevertheless, if we are to be saved, it must be by the absolute working of Amitabha Buddha. Shinran calls such work of the Absolute "Ekou." There, the same work of Ekou is reinterpreted from self-motivated to other-motivated. He says that all the Ekou from us sentient beings is also Ekou from the Absolute, Amitabha Buddha. The source of all Ekou is the working of the love of the Absolute, Amitabha Buddha. Shinran's statement in his "Kyogyoshinsho" (testimony volume), "If you consider Shinshu's Kyogyoshinsho, it is the benefit from the redirection of great mercy of Tathagata to us. The teaching given, the recitation of the Buddha's name, the acquisition of faith, and the testimony one receives are all the result not of one's own power, but of the workings of the mercy of the Absolute.

It is with this in mind that the power of Amitabha Buddha's true wish is emphasized. We sentient beings are saved from our sins, leaving our sin karma as it is, because of Amitabha Buddha's great compassion and great mercy. We live our lives by the power of this true wish. All that we do in our daily life is supported by this power. This wish power pervades the entire universe and will continue to work forever. It is, so to speak, the great life force of the universe. Religion started from the primordial feeling of being made alive by this primordial power.

In Shinran's view, the Ekou is the working of the Buddha toward sentient beings, and the influence rendered by the Absolute toward the relative.

There are two types of workings: the outward and return phases. Ouso (outward phase)-Ekou is the working of sentient beings to attain Pure land of Buddha. The teaching, practice, faith and testimony are all part of this Ouso-Ekou. This is the direction from the relative world to the absolute world.

Kansou (return phase)-Ekou is the working of sentient beings who could attain the Pure land to benefit other sentient beings by returning from the Pure land. This is the direction from the absolute world to the relative world. Shinran's view is that both Ouso-Ekou and Kansou-Ekou are the working of the wish of Amitabha Buddha and the of love from the Absolute. Since any kind of practice is impossible for a person with so many worldly desires, there is no other way but to think of both the Ouso and the Kansou as the work of love from the Absolute.

Moreover, it is said that such outward and return phases are one. Indeed, the outward phase is the direction to the Pure Land, and the returning phase is the direction from the Pure Land, which seem to point in the opposite direction of each other. However, from the perspective of the absolute world, both directions are identical. In fact, the point of arrival of the outward phase is also the starting point of the return phase. Shinran, in his "Shojo-Matsuwasan" (hymns on the three periods), also states.

Namu Amida Buddha's work
is so benevolent, extensive and marvelous.

Ouso (outward phase)-Ekou shall immediately
return as Kansou (return phase)-Ekou.

Thus he says. The benefits of salvation obtained in the direction of the outward phase from the relative world to the absolute world are immediately turned around in the direction of the return phase from the absolute world to the relative world, manifesting Amitabha Buddha's vast and boundless compassionate work. The direction from the relative world to the absolute world is at the same time the direction from the absolute world to the relative world. The outgoing and returning phases are circular and infinitely continuous. Both the outgoing and returning phases are the turning of the same Amitabha Buddha's true wish power, the work of the Absolute.

In the same "Shojo-Marawasan" (hymns on the three periods), it is also said

From the great compassion of the Ouso (outward phase)-Ekou,
we receive the great mercy of Kansou (return phase)-Ekou.
If there is no Ekou of Tathāgata,
how can we attain Bodhi in the Pure land?

"The transformation from the relative world to the absolute world is not possible by one's own power. The transformation from the relative world to the absolute world is impossible by one's own power, so it must be considered as a work of the Absolute's love. Both the outward and return phases are for the salvation of sentient beings and are the work of the Buddha's great compassion and mercy.

The outward and return phases are circularly connected. The direction towards the Pure Land is, at the same time, the direction of the return to the defiled land. The flow of true life in the universe is circular. Within this endless flow of true life in the universe, there is a flow to the absolute world and a flow from the absolute world. Riding this flow toward the absolute world is what is called faith, and riding this flow down from the absolute world to the relative world is the work of benefiting sentient beings. These two streams are, by nature, one indivisible flow. The religious mind that arises in our hearts is also part of this flow of true life in the universe. Shinran's view that the outward and return phases are one and the same as the workings of Amitabha Buddha's true power is based on his absolute trust in the great life of the universe, which is always in circulation. This is the essence of religion.

Faith as a Gift of God

In Christianity, too, our faith itself is a work of God's love and grace. Before we ask, we have already been caught by God. Faith is a choice, but we are chosen before we choose.

The work of God's love is manifested as revelation. It manifests itself as the Word, and as Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the Word. It is the grace of God and the act of God. Only through this work of God's love can one enter into faith. Faith itself is already illuminated by the light of divine revelation and is in the hands of God's salvation. Faith is a work from the relative to the absolute, but it is itself possible through the work of the Absolute toward the relative. In this respect, Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism have much in common.

In fact, Paul pursued a position of faith alone, but for him, even this faith was not something that came from his own strength, but was given to him by God. Paul entered the path of faith alone because he knew that any effort on his part to reach the path of faith was futile. For him, then, faith had to be a work of God and a benefit from God before it was a work of the self.

This is well expressed when Paul says in "Romans" (8:20), "The creature has not

submitted to emptiness because of his own will, but because of the One to whom he has been subjected. In deep faith, the self becomes nothing before God, but this too is not by its own power, but by the power of God's love.

Paul also says in the "Preface to Corinthians" (2.5) that the faith of man is "not by the wisdom of men, but by the power of God. This is what Paul said in his letter to the Corinthian believers when they were about to fall into partisan envy and strife. Paul was trying to teach that faith is a gift of God's love, not something given by Paul or acquired by them.

Paul's view is similar to that of Shinran in the Tannisho (the sixth section). Belief is a gift from Tathagata, and it is not something to be selfishly encouraged, or to argue with others about who is one's disciple and who is another's. Shinran believed that he could not have even one disciple. For Shinran and Paul, who had renounced all self-reliance, faith in the Absolute itself was a work of love from the Absolute, and they received it as a gift.

Even in Augustine, faith is regarded as a passive act prompted by the call of God's love, and it is emphasized that faith is also a gift of God. According to Augustine, the human heart is so invaded by original sin that it cannot come to God on its own or even take direction toward God. The human heart can dispel the darkness of original sin only by being given the path to God by God. The way to God is given as a grace from God, not as a reward for man's good deeds. The will to believe itself is also a work of God's love, a divine favor, raised up in man. Augustine's "Confessions" is, in a sense, an attempt to speak of this. The whole of the Confessions is unified by the idea that his own entry into the path of faith was due to the unilateral love, patience, and grace of God.

Luther also says that faith is a gift given to man by God, itself is by the will of God, and that man can enter the path of faith at the prompting of this will of God. For Luther, faith is the work of God at work in us. Man is a sinful being governed by original sin, and any good deed or achievement on his part, insofar as it is the work of man, bears sin. Therefore, it is only through the work of God that such a human being can enter the path of faith. Moreover, this work of God is expressed as the miracles of Jesus Christ. Man can enter the path of faith through the miracles of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God suffered for mankind and opened the path of faith for mankind.

Luther started from a deep sense of sin and came to a position of faith alone, and yet he also attributed his faith to the grace of God's love. In this respect, Luther is similar to Shinran. Shinran, like Luther, started from a deep sense of sin and came to a position of faith alone, and he also attributed this faith to the gift of mercy that originated from the wish of Tathagata. In this, we can see the common religious sentiment of both of these religious figures, who trusted in the power of the Absolute Other and were committed to the power of the Other. Both Luther and Shinran entrusted everything to the great life of the universe, and found the path of faith in the place where they were penetrated by it.

Religious Decisions

Faith, in each case, has the character of a decision. But this religious decision itself is also a work of the love of the Absolute. The act of believing is certainly an act of the self. However, if there is a place where one asks for one's own strength, it has not yet become true faith. The true religious decision is to abandon self and throw oneself into the vast workings of the Absolute. There, by all means, one must be able to be worked upon by the Absolute. My work of faith is at the same time the work of Buddha's mercy and God's love. My believing is also the call of God and Buddha.

As stated in the second section of the Tannisho, in his later years, Shinran told his disciples who came all the way from the Kanto region, "Whether you believe in the Nenbutsu or not, it is your decision to do so. However, that decision must be one that is supported by the power of the Amitabha Buddha's true wish. Shinran himself, after abandoning his training at Eizan and after a long period of hesitation, threw himself onto the path of faith in the power of Absolute Other through his encounter with Honen. It must be said that Shinran's decision was not based on his own free will, but on the power of the Buddha's mercy that supported and guided him.

Furthermore, in order for such a religious decision to be made in the form of throwing oneself into the bosom of the Absolute, the problems of death, suffering, and sin must be borne by the individual in his or her religious existence as his or her own, irreplaceable, and sincere problems. When the anguish of guilt, life, and death is driven to the extreme in one's religious existence as one's own problem of life and death, it is at the very tip that one encounters the vast power of salvation that transcends the self.

Shinran's comment in "Tannisho" (Gojo), "If we consider carefully the five kalpa thoughts of the Amitabha Buddha, it is for the sake of Shinran alone", is an expression of his religious beliefs at the very limit of his existence. Furthermore, if we pay attention to the following words, "I am grateful to Amitabha Buddha for wanting to save me, a being with that much karma, and for his true wish to save me." we can see that behind Shinran's conviction, "his true wish for me alone," it is evident that there was a religious existence of a single person who bears the burden of guilt, life, and death. The burden of sin, life, and death must be borne by each and every religious single person. Only then can there be an encounter with the Absolute, and it is possible to be saved in the place of the true power of the Amitabha Buddha's wish. From the Absolute's side, the vast work of love of the Absolute is received through each and every religious single person. The tip of the Religious Independent is the point where the Absolute and the Relative meet. Each religious Independent Person is the center of the vast and boundless circle of the Absolute's great compassion and mercy.

Kierkegaard also states that from the ethical to the religious stage, human existence is placed in a place of decision. To exist is to try to become one's self. And this is ultimately possible by being grounded by God through the religious decision of faith. For this to happen, each person has no choice but to stand before God as a single person, bearing his or her own sins. What truly exists is not the masses, but the individual alone standing before God. The relationship between God and man is established only through this single person. In Kierkegaard, as in Shinran, the work of the Absolute's love is received through each sin-bearing single person.

We are all alive and living in the fundamental life field of the universe. The workings of this primordial life are received as the love of God and the compassion of Buddha. Each of us is a center of this vast and limitless circle of love and compassion. Cosmic life works through these myriad centers.

Eternal life

Religion is an emotion of return to the true life of the universe, a demand to gain eternal life by entering into the true life of the universe. Religions based on faith in the Absolute, such as Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism, obtain this eternal life by establishing faith. Through faith, one converts from finite life, lost in life and death, to eternal life. This conversion to eternal life is captured by the direct feeling of "being born again. It is the birth

of a new self, a new birth, a rebirth. In the true life of the universe, the true self is found, penetrated by it. There, the death of the self is the life of the self, and each moment of life is eternity.

Such faith in eternal life is found in the belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ established in primitive Christianity. By believing that in God's love Jesus died and rose again, we, too, are expected to die and rise again. In Christianity, death is associated with sin, but by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we can be resurrected to eternal life. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we die to sin and live to love. We die to self and live to God.

In the Book of John (11.25-26), he also says

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

It is said. Here it is said that those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God, will have eternal life. In John, God is eternal life, and His Son Jesus is also eternal life. One can encounter God through this Jesus and enter into eternal life. Here is a profound thought of life.

In the same "Book of John" (12.24-25)

"If a grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die, it remains only a grain. But if it dies, it will bear fruit in abundance. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it and go to eternal life."

The well-known words of Jesus, also speak to the idea that one can attain eternal life by dying to self and living to God. Here, life is death and death is life. In God's love, life and death are one. Life is eternal.

The same thought is also found in the Book of Luke (17.33), expressed as the words of Jesus, such as, "He that would save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose it shall keep it."

The idea of the "Gospel of John" was that by believing in the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God, we can have eternal life. In fact, in the Book of John (5.24-25), he also says

"He who hears My words and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has passed from death to life."

John's thought was that if one had faith, he could be saved by God's love and have eternal life at the present time. Therefore, the idea of the final judgment is ignored here. Rather, it is said that one is already judged at the time of the establishment of faith.

The Christian God is also a symbol of the fundamental life of the universe. We can attain eternal life by returning to this primordial life of the universe.

Paul also emphasizes that we can obtain eternal life through faith in Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. In "Romans" (6.23), too.

"For the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In Paul's view, God's love to save mankind is manifested in a decisive way in Christ's death and resurrection on the cross, and by establishing faith in it, we can be born again from sinful life and attain eternal life. In the book of Galatians (2.19-20), we are also told:

"I am with Christ on the cross. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. But I live now in the flesh through faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

For Paul, in faith in Jesus Christ, to die with Christ, to live with Christ, and to leave everything to Christ, was to truly live. In faith in Christ, the old man, burdened with sin and death in himself, passes away, and the new man comes in. The self is made new, and all things become new. Man dies to Adam and lives to Christ. This is possible by entrusting everything to Jesus Christ. This is what it means to live by faith. This is the essence of

religion. To renounce all ego, to be reborn under the Absolute, and to attain eternal life through Him is the essence of religion. The birth of a new self under the Absolute, the new birth, is the unique emotion of religion.

Kierkegaard also says that when we break off from worldly things and give up this infinitely, a new life is given to us. True faith is to die to worldly things and to be given an entirely new life by a great spiritual power. As it is said that he who seeks loses this and he who loses these gains this, when one renounces and gives up everything and surrenders oneself to the Absolute, life is restored and one's intimate relationship with God is restored. Kierkegaard captured this in the concept of "repetition."

As described in "Fear and Trembling," when God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, Abraham abandoned his earthly parent-child ethic, absolutely obeyed God's request, and offered his son as a sacrifice. But then God brings Isaac back to life, and Abraham gets his child back. What is gained in this exercise of faith, this repetition, is not merely the original earthly life, but a new religious life, a life in which all is left to God.

Kierkegaard sees a similar religious truth of <repetition> in the Book of Job, in "Repetition" (Part II). When deprived by God's attempts of worldly things, such as his possessions, his flesh and blood, and his health, the righteous Job was plunged into a serious state of despair, leading him to rebel against God. But when Job repented and took refuge in God's absolute power, God gave him back what he had lost, multiplied by the amount of what he had lost. Again, what he gained through this exercise of faith was not a mere earthly life, but a new religious life in which he entrusted everything to God. The way of life has deepened. The fact that God returned to Job his wealth multiplied is symbolic of this deepening. Religious life means dying to the finite life of this world and being reborn into eternal life.

Pure Land Buddhism also teaches eternal life. To be reborn in the Pure Land, as taught by Pure Land Buddhism, means to attain eternal life. According to the Pure Land scriptures, if one renounces worldly cares and continues to pray to the name of Amitabha Buddha, one is sure to be born in the Pure Land, bathed in the infinite light of Amitabha Buddha and the infinite life of Amitabha Buddha, and gain an immeasurable life. Amitabha Buddha, the Absolute who is the essence of Pure Land Buddhism, is the symbol of the great life of the universe that envelops and pervades all living things in the universe. We can attain eternal life by being made alive and enveloped by this great life. This is what it means to live in the Pure Land. Pure Land Buddhism teaches that this eternal life can be attained through absolute faith in the salvation of Amitabha Buddha. Through this faith, we can be reborn from the finite life of this world to eternal life. Therein lies our absolute trust in the great life of the universe.

Shinran also teaches that one can attain rebirth in the Pure Land immediately upon attaining faith. In the Gubakusho (the first volume), it is written "Belief in and acceptance of the true wish of Amitabha Buddha means immediate attainment to the Pure land. In other words, by believing in the Amitabha Buddha's true wish, one's own self-reliant self dies and new self entrusted to the absolute shall be born anew. When one has faith, one can realize that one's self dies and is reborn anew, and that the eternal life of the Buddha pervades one's self. In a single thought of faith, death is transformed into life. The nembutsu (the continuous chanting practice of Amitabha Buddha's name) practitioner, in that moment of nembutsu, dies to self and attains eternal life. In this respect, it is in common with the faith of Paul, who said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

Our life in this world is the life of an ordinary person of sin, life, and death, but when we realize in faith in the Absolute that our finite life itself is already encompassed by the infinite and eternal, the life of sin, life, and death becomes eternal life as it is. In faith, life becomes death and death becomes life. In the great life of the universe, life and death are

one. Such absolute trust in the great life of the universe is the faith of Pure Land Buddhism.

Compared to the vastness of the universe, each individual human being is infinitesimally small. However, it is within each of us, this infinitesimally small being, that the great life force of the universe is at work, and it is this life force that sustains us and keeps us alive. In trusting in such a great cosmic power, when we die to our small self and give ourselves over to the great life of the universe, our finite life, which is close to the infinitesimally small, becomes at the same time an eternal life. This trust in the eternal life of the universe is the faith of religion and salvation.

Life and Light

The great life of the universe, from which we are born and die, is referred to in Buddhism as the Dharma or Dharma-body. The Dharma body is the body of the Buddha, the fundamental life of the universe. It is the place of eternal life. But this Dharma-body is the very workings of the universe, which cannot be seen, nor can it appear in form or shape. As Shinran wrote in his "Yuishin Shou"

"The Buddha nature is the Dharma nature, and the Dharma nature is the Dharma body. The Dharma body has neither color nor form. Therefore, it is beyond our mind and transcends words."

In this sense, the Dharma body, which is the true nature of the Buddha, represents the invisible and fundamental unifying power inherent in the universe.

In Buddhism, the Dharma-body, which should be called the workings of cosmic life, is absolute nothingness without color or form, and therefore, it is also thought to appear in all forms. Shinran, in his *Kyogyoshinsho* (Shoukan), also states

"The formless universally pervading Dharma-body is the body of Dharma nature. Because the Dharma nature is ultimate tranquility, the Dharma-body is formless. Because of its formlessness, it can be in any form."

As its true nature is the enlightenment of the Buddha, Dharma-body transcends any form. Since it is beyond any form, it can take any form. In Pure Land Buddhism, the Dharma-body was divided into two kinds, Dharma-body as Dharma nature and the Dharma-body as salvation means. It is in order to recognize the invisible side of the workings of the fundamental life of the universe and the side that takes visible form and works.

Amitabha Buddha, as taught in the Pure Land scriptures, was also the Dharma- Body of salvation means, symbolizing in visible form the workings of the great life of the universe. Amitabha Buddha, as the Dharma-body of salvation means, manifests itself as immeasurable life and immeasurable light. That is why Amitabha Buddha is also called Amitayus (Immeasurable life-span) Tathagata besides Amitabha (Immeasurable light) Tathagata. Amitabha (Amitayus) Buddha is the immeasurable life of the universe and the Buddha who symbolizes the fundamental truth of the universe. Amitabha Buddha is thought to have attained enlightenment in the eternal past, ten kalpas ago, and to be presently preaching the Dharma with his immeasurable life. The light of his wisdom is boundless and unobstructed by anything. That is why the light of Amitabha Buddha is called "immeasurable light," "infinite light," or "unhindered light," illuminating the entire universe and saving all sentient beings equally. This light of Amitabha Buddha is also called "wonder light" because it works in mysterious ways that ordinary people cannot comprehend.

Shinran, in his "Ichinen Tanen" wrote

"This Tathagata is light, and light is wisdom. Wisdom is the form of light. As wisdom has no form, it is called the Buddha of mysterious light."

Amitabha Buddha symbolizes the great life of the universe that sustains us, the living beings, from the very foundation.

In the Amitayurdhyana Sutra, too, Amitabha Buddha appears as a vast and boundless form, radiating light to illuminate the world in the ten directions, and embracing sentient beings in the nembutsu practice and never abandoning them. Shinran praises this in several verses in the "Jodo Wasan" as follows.

Since Amitabha Buddha attained Buddhahood,
ten kalpas have passed.
The halos emanating from the Dharma-body
have been illuminating each and every corner.
The light of wisdom is infinite and shines through everything.
Return to the light of truth.
The halos of salvation are infinite and
all things that receive it shall be liberated from
the perception of being or not being.
Return to the awareness of ultimate equality.

The infinite light of Amitabha Buddha, which sees things equally, illuminates the phase of finite discrimination and reveals the truth of equality and oneness. The light of absolute freedom of Amitabha Buddha is the light of infinite light, and those who come into contact with this light leave behind the evil perception of being or not being, and attain the knowledge of absolute equality. The light of Amitabha's salvation shines down from the absolute world to the relative world, even to the depths of hell, embracing all living beings.

Brilliance of Being

Under the infinite light of the Absolute, all things in the universe are interconnected, continuous, and equally saved. Shinran, in his "Tannisho" (the seventh section), says, "Nenbutsu is the path of the unhindered one," explaining that Nenbutsu is the path that leads to all things without hindrance. He further continues as following.

“Shinran, in order to support my parents' filial piety, has never yet performed the Nembutsu, even for a single repetition. Because, we, living beings, are all related as parents and siblings in this world, and we should all become Buddhas in our next life, in order to save them all. If it were only through the goodness of one's own efforts, one might think of saving one's parents by chanting nembutsu. However, if we simply abandon our own efforts and quickly attain enlightenment, we should first use our divine power to help those who are related to us, no matter what karmic suffering they may be under during their four lives in the six realms.”

Since all living beings are the parents and siblings of all beings of the world, if we become Buddhas in the next life, we want to help them all. By abandoning our own efforts if we could quickly attain enlightenment, we would want to save all those who are related with us, no matter what their circumstances are or what karmic suffering they are undergoing, by means that transcend divine power.

There is a cosmological resonance here, that all beings are connected by the same life and that existence is continuous. Even merits made in one corner of the universe spread throughout the entire universe to help all things come to be. In this world, because all things are interconnected in the place of fundamental life, one act will always affect other people and other things. Moreover, this is possible only by being illuminated by the unhindered light of Amitabha Buddha and being embraced by it. That unhindered light is the life that

reveals all things through all things, the life that pervades and sustains all existence. In this respect, the world that opens to salvation leads to the world that opens to enlightenment.

In Christianity, for example, St. Francis of Assisi is said to have called water, wind, sun, moon, fire, and all things his brothers and sisters, to have cut the cross and blessed them, and to have preached to birds and beasts without distinction. This too must be rooted in the belief that all things in the universe are connected by the same life as God's creation, and that all existence is continuous in God's love and light. The workings of the great cosmic life that pervade not only human beings but also all things, living and non-living, is the love and mercy that religions can feel.

In the Muryōjūkyō (Sukhāvātī-vyūha)(Kan-jyō), it is also explained that in the Pure Land, in response to Amitabha Buddha's 17th wish, countless Buddhas and Tathagatas throughout the universe all praise the great power of Amitayus Buddha and the wonders of his merits. But this Pure Land is not a world far away from this world; it is what is happening in this world. All of nature is the call of the Buddha, as well as the voice of the praises of the Buddhas. All of nature is both the expression of cosmic life and the voice of praise for it. Here, too, Nenbutsu-mon (Salvation by chanting Amitabha Buddha's name) and Shōdō-mon (Salvation by our own efforts) ultimately arrive at the same worldview.

In such a world of life and light, everything that exists in the world shines in its life and light, as it is, each in its own way. Such a way of being is said to be Hōni or Jinen-Hōni. The way of being in which all things, whether human or material, exist as they are in accordance with the Dharma (Truth), is called Hōni or Jinen-Hōni. There is no room for man's wise judgment, and all things are affirmed as they are, naturally.

Hōnen also refers to the principle of the doctrine of Hōni in "Hōnen Shōnin Gyōjō Ezu (Picture of the Conduct of Hōnen Shōnin)" (No. 21).

“There is such a thing as the principle of the Hōni. The flames rise in the sky, and the water flows downwards. Among sweets there are sour and sweets. All of these are the principle of Hōni. Amitabha Buddha's true wish is to guide all sentient beings with their sins by chanting its name, and if we say nothing but nembutsu, the coming and going of the Buddha will be in accordance with the principles Hōni.”

Flames rise above, water flows below, there are sweets that are sour and sweets that are sweet. All of this is in accordance with the Dharma. In the same way, welcoming by Amitabha Buddha is a natural principle. Here, too, the idea that the manifestation of truth is the manifestation of all things as they are.

Shinran, in the "Jinen-Hōni Chapter" of the Mattōshō (Fifth Letter), explains Jinen-Hōni and says the following.

“The word “Ji” means of one's own accord, and is not by the work of a practitioner, but is naturally bring about the result. The word "Nen" also means naturally bring about the result, and is not by the action of a practitioner, but is by the wish of Tathagata. The word "Hōni" is by the power of this Tathagata, so naturally brought about is said to be “Hōni.”

It is said to be “Jinen-Hōni” to abandon the self-judgment or discretion of the nembutsu practitioner and to entrust oneself to the wish of the Amitabha Tathagata. At this time, all things, as they are, manifest the Dharma virtues of the Amitabha Buddha's true wish. This is a recollection from Shinran's final days, at the age of 86, when he was deeply committed to the deepening of his sins and the satisfaction of his vexations. When all things, human and otherwise, are left to themselves as they are, as they emanate from the true life of the universe, the truth is present.