

Luther and Shinran on *Fides Sola*: A Textual Study

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This paper concerns two men, three hundred years and immeasurable cultural distance apart, who come together in remarkable agreement on the age-old question of means to salvation. How is one saved? By grace? By self-help? Or by a combination of both?

The two men in question: Shinran Shonin and Martin Luther¹, share the answer to this question, and a good deal more. Both were monks within religious traditions which required disciplined exercise of meditative and non-meditative practices for the attainment of their spiritual goals. Both eventually left monastic life, married, and had children. Both continued in ministry, introducing thereby a married clergy into their respective traditions and bringing to an end a long-standing ideal of priestly celibacy.

Both men were profoundly spiritual by nature. As monks, they were conscientious in the fulfillment of the vows and precepts of their monastic traditions. Over time, both became increasingly aware of the futility of their traditional disciplines and of their own efforts in the quest for peace of mind and certitude of salvation. In their persons, both reflected the spiritual anxiety of their troubled and pessimistic ages: if they as spiritually elite (monks) experienced insecurity and anxiety with respect to salvation, how much more the common man.

Both men turned anew to their sources for answer. Despite the fact that the sacred scriptures of the one tradition posited a compassionate superior being (Buddha), and those of the other a loving supreme being (God), both men experienced an unbridgeable gulf between themselves and their

respective Absolutes. Despite heroic striving, they believed themselves unsavable. Eventually, in anguished re-reading of their scriptures, both men came to a discovery which radically changed their conception of their supreme/superior beings and the relationship of needful humans to them. They discovered a compassionate self-giving that asked nothing but receptivity of believers. To the question of means to salvation, Shinran Shonin and Martin Luther answered as with one voice: salvation² is by faith,³ by *faith alone*.

Careful note should be taken at the outset that while Shinran and Luther answer with one voice on the means to salvation, this unison is not carried through to other aspects of their experiencing, thinking and teaching. The cultures and religious traditions which shaped them differ greatly: cosmologically, anthropologically, historically, intellectually, linguistically, experientially. The emphasis in this paper on similarities in one aspect of the soteriological systems of Shinran and Luther, in no way suggests that there are not a great many more dissimilarities in their basic understanding of self, cosmos, and Absolute.

The aim of this paper is not to draw parallels but to draw attention to a shared interpretation of human spiritual and moral weakness and the experience of inadequacy (more powerful in some historical periods than in others) which drives man to seek salvation in and through a supra-human Other. The similarity in the insights of Shinran and Luther into this existential situation, and their response to it in terms of "salvation by faith alone," is shared ground on which Shin Buddhists and Christians can stand in these early stages of what

promises to be mutually enriching exchange between two religions of salvation.

The noting of common strains in the teaching of Shin Buddhism and Christianity in its Lutheran mode has quite a long history. Francis Xavier became aware of them in his conversations with Buddhist "bonzes" (monks) in his journeys in Japan in the late sixteenth century.⁴ In the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century a number of Western scholars, including Friederich Heiler, Gustav Mensching and Henri de Lubac, drew attention to similarities in the teaching of the two founders. Karl Barth treated briefly and somewhat brusquely of Shin Buddhism, considering it "the most adequate and comprehensive and illuminating heathen parallel to Reformed Christianity."⁵

In the recent past more text-oriented comparative studies past more text-oriented comparative studies have considered the commonalities in the two reformers. Fritz Buri's article: "The Concept of Grace in Paul, Shinran and Luther,"⁶ concerns itself with salvation through grace showing Paul, Shinran and Luther as religious thinkers whose personal spiritual experiences within the context of their particular, "latter-day" times led them to view salvation as unattainable through human effort. Salvation is shown in all three to be a gratuitous gift attained to only through trust in a divine power. In the course of his investigation of the concept of grace in these reformers, Buri notes how their grace-monism (emphasis on grace as opposed to works) created both misunderstanding of their doctrine of grace and problems with respect to ethics. He deals at some length with the latter problem.

Paul O. Ingram's study: "Shinran Shonin and Martin Luther: A Soteriological Comparison,"⁷ is a more general treatment of the soteriology of Shinran and Luther. It treats of "latter-day" context in Shinran and "sin" in Luther as concepts descriptive of man's spiritual problem; of Amida Buddha and God as objects of faith; of Other-power and grace as means to salvation; and of the gift of faith as necessary prerequisite for salvation.

In what follows I hope to advance the work of comparison by considering aspects of the soteriology of Shinran and Luther not previously treated, for example, *tariki/jiriki* compared to Luther's "active"/"passive" righteousness; the concept of transference of merits in Shinran and Luther, and the role of hearing in coming to faith in both traditions. Through textual comparison, both founders will come to voice in their own words. Subsequent exegeses or eisegeses of primary texts by followers will not be considered.

SHINRAN SHONIN

Shinran was a follower of the Pure Land School which developed within Mahayana Buddhism in India around the first century B.C. Mahayana, as opposed to Theravada Buddhism, was and is a tradition which addresses itself in particular to the common man in an effort to provide a more realistic, existential response to the quest for enlightenment. The history of Mahayana's various branches reveals a progressive simplifying of the austere ascetic practices held to be necessary for the attainment of enlightenment.

Pure Land Buddhism can be seen responding sympathetically to the needs of those seeking enlightenment as it made its way from India east to China into Korea and eventually to Japan. In the course of its journeyings the original teachings of the Buddha are reinterpreted and adapted to changing times and cultures. Along the way, elements appear which could be read as contradicting the original teachings of the Buddha. A case in point is belief in a force outside of man in whom is fused the compassion of the bodhisattva and the saving power of a transcendent Buddha. This seems a far cry from the self-help, self-emancipation admonition of Gotama Buddha to "work out your salvation with diligence," or the universal Buddhist motto: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves... Hold fast to the *dharma* as a lamp. Seek salvation in *dharma* alone."

In Pure Land Buddhism, the force outside of

man: "Other Power," is used specifically of a savior-figure known as Amida Buddha.⁸ As the bodhisattva Dharmākara,⁹ Amida Buddha was moved by compassion for ignorant, passion-ridden human beings who were incapable, unaided, of attaining birth in the Pure Land¹⁰ and thereby eventual enlightenment. His concern was expressed in a series of forty-eight vows contained in the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, a sutra of central importance both to Pure Land teaching and tradition and to the development of Shinran's reform thought.¹¹ In the 18th Vow (also known as the 'Primal' or 'Original' Vow) Dharmākara pledged to renounce attainment of supreme enlightenment until all sentient beings attained it. This vow reads:

"If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the ten quarters, realizing sincere mind, joyful faith, and aspirations to be born in my land and saying my Name up to ten times, do not attain birth, may I not attain supreme enlightenment..."¹²

The conditions of this Vow being fulfilled, Dharmākara attained both the Name, Amida (Buddha of Infinite Life and Light), and the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. The 18th Vow is the source and guarantee of Amida's saving power.¹³

SHINRAN'S REFORM INSIGHT: TEXT AND CONTEXT

The insight which was to transform Shinran and radically reform Pure Land teaching, arose from his contemplation of a particular text in a particular context. The text was the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*.¹⁴ The context was the age of mappō.¹⁵ In one of his many re-readings of the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, Shinran came to new insight with respect to the saving activity of Amida and his Vow¹⁶ and Name.¹⁷ The 18th Vow had traditionally been read in the context of its teaching that sentient beings could attain to enlightenment through good works (particularly the

saying of Amida's Name) and the consequent accrual of merit. In his new reading of this text, Shinran found himself unshakably unconvinced that works and hence the accrual of merit, played no role in the attainment of enlightenment. Self power was to no avail. One was saved *solely* by faith in Other Power, or, as he later expressed it (following his master Honen): "In Other Power, no selfworking is true working."¹⁸

In that he could not nor would not yield on his revolutionary reading of the 18th Vow (and indeed his new reading of all the Pure Land sutras in the light of his reform insight) Shinran found himself the unwilling originator of a new branch of Pure Land Buddhism. The name of his school, Shin (true) expressed his conviction that his foundation was not only an authentic development of the original teaching of the Buddha and the writings of the seven patriarchs of the Pure Land tradition,¹⁹ but that it also brought the entire Mahayana tradition to perfection.²⁰ Its simple call to "faith alone" as means to salvation made unnecessary the division between sacred and profane, priest and lay. Its 'easy practice'²¹ met and answered the existential anxiety of those whose honest assessment of their weakness gave them little hope for attainment of birth in the Pure Land. Shinran's revolutionary interpretation brought assurance of Amida's indiscriminating compassion for all, but especially for "small, foolish beings," for the "dull and ignorant."²² Among these Shinran counted himself.

What for Shinran had earlier been the awesome requirements of the 18th Vow: to realize sincere mind, joyful faith, desire for birth in the Pure Land, were now seen in new light. They were not *demand*ed. They were *given*. Amida's gift to those who single-heartedly, single-mindedly abandoned self-power and doubt (for doubt revealed a clinging to self-effort), was the transfer of his own pure, true, real sincerity, joyful faith, desire, and the worthy saying of his Name. Viewing self and reality with the mind of Amida made manifestly clear both the compassionate saving

intent of Amida's Vow, and the extent to which blinded human nature needed to be saved. This led to displacement of self-trust by absolute trust in Amida, displacement of faith in self-power by absolute faith in Other Power.²³

Surrendering self-power and embracing Other Power, Shinran experienced himself saved, "grasped, never to be abandoned."²⁴ In Pure Land terminology, he had realized *shinjin*²⁵ or, more correctly, 'had been made to become so'; for there was no doubt in his mind that it was not self-power but Other-power, the Vow-power of Amida, that had brought him to *shinjin*.²⁶

Shinran describes his moment of conversion as an abrupt "leaping crosswise," a being "carried over" by Another. This contrasts with the traditional understanding of self-powered, gradual progression from one stage of spiritual attainment to another. It is an experience on instantaneous, radical, irreversible transcending of the realm of samsara (birth-and-death).²⁷ Through Amida's sharing of mind and merits with the devotee, birth in the Pure Land is experienced in the here and now, in the midst of karmic-bound existence.²⁸ Peace of mind and joy of heart take over. Particularly moving for Shinran is the knowledge that Amida's promise "was for myself, Shinran, alone! . . . a being burdened so heavily with karma . . ."²⁹

Shinran's new reading of the sources of his tradition assured him that salvation was by faith alone, that faith was an unmerited gift, and that this gift was, in part, the Giver himself.³⁰

LUTHER'S REFORM INSIGHT: TEXT AND CONTEXT

The text which brought Luther to a new and comforting understanding of salvation was Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. The context was an age of anxiety and decadence unparalleled in the history of the West.³¹

Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, 1:17 contained the awesome words: "In it the righteousness of God is revealed." This saying had long been a

stumbling block for Luther. His personal sense of sinfulness before God struck terror in his heart on every reading; for by "righteousness" he understood that "formal or active righteousness . . . with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner."³² But as he struggled to understand Paul's meaning, all of a sudden he came to insight. What he discovered (as did Shinran in another text and another context) was not God's impossible demanding of righteousness but his gratuitous giving of it:

"There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith . . ."³³

In this radically new reading of *Romans* 1:17, Luther found the gracious God he had so anxiously sought. He was now possessed of the conviction that the merciful God who had promised to save mankind was a God to be trusted. Not by sullied human works and practices, not by merit-centered self-effort would man be saved but *solely*³⁴ by trustful faith in the saving promise of God, fulfilled in the Word (Christ).³⁵

In the space of a moment Luther felt that he was "altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."³⁶ All of Scripture now appeared in new light, all of it revealing God as Initiator and Giver, man as passive receiver of God's action.³⁷ In all this gracious giving, Luther felt personally addressed: "He who was completely God (Christ) . . . gave Himself for me—for me, I say, a miserable and accursed sinner."³⁸

As was the case with Shinran, Luther's new interpretation conflicted with the accepted teaching of his tradition. It was the position of the Church that man, aided by God's grace, cooperated in his own salvation. Even Augustine, Luther's mentor on the doctrine of righteousness, and the one to whom Luther appealed for support in his new reading of Paul, could not be stretched to the lengths Luther now wished to go.³⁹ The Augustine who had argued for justification by faith alone against Pelagius had elsewhere argued that "The

God who created you without your cooperation, will not redeem you without your cooperation . . .⁴⁰ But for Luther, Augustine's *sola gratia* had now to give way to *sola fide*. Emboldened by his reform insight, he swept aside any cooperation whatsoever.⁴¹ Salvation was by *faith alone* in *Christ alone*. His own self-powered striving for merits, his scrupulous fulfillment of the letter of the law, despair over his inability to feel that he was pleasing God, were revealed for what they were: prideful trust in "works-righteousness" as a means to salvation.

In this new reading of *Romans* 1:17, Luther finds his 'gracious God' and certitude of salvation. He does so by an interpretation of Scripture that presents righteousness as imputative and passive. Not only does he here depart from traditional teaching, but he finds himself obliged to reshape the entire soteriological teaching of the Church around this new reading. This involves redefinitions or reconfigurations of a good many doctrines including 'grace', 'sin', 'merit', 'good works', and 'fallen human nature', particularly with respect to freedom/bondage of the will.

HUMAN NATURE IN SHINRAN AND LUTHER

The shared belief of Shinran and Luther in salvation by faith alone is matched by a shared belief in the depravity of human nature, despite the manifest differences in their perceptions of what it is to be human.⁴² Moreover, it would appear to be the case that their pessimistic conception of human nature was greatly influenced by a personal sense of sinfulness and by the degenerate spirit of the age in which each lived.

Shinran grew up in a tradition which divided history, at least with respect to *dharma*, into three major periods.⁴³ The first period (*shōbō*), thought to have covered the first five hundred years after Gotama's death, was held to be the period of "true doctrine." The second period (*zōbō*), of one thousand years duration, was known as the period of

"counterfeit doctrine." The third period (*mappō*), thought to last ten thousand years, was considered the period of "degenerate doctrine".⁴⁴

In the period of "true doctrine," the Buddha's teachings were applied in true (hence meritorious) practice, with the consequence that devotees could attain to enlightenment by means of self-effort. In the period of "counterfeit doctrine," the teachings continued, but such practice as there was, was false, with the result that no one could attain to enlightenment. In the age of "degenerate doctrine," teaching alone existed, practice was totally absent. In this age of the Last Dharma, no one, monk nor lay, was able to perform any meritorious work. Attainment of enlightenment was absolutely beyond human reach.⁴⁵

Shinran recognized this "Last Age" of degeneracy—an age marked by wars, disasters, false teaching, impurity of life—in the period in which he lived. But he did more than recognize it as an objective historical situation. He internalized it, locating it within human beings. He recognized it in his own experience of spiritual debility⁴⁶ and in that of his time. It was an age of impotence: he spoke to it of the unlimited power of Other Power. It was an age of inability to merit: he spoke to it of the compassionate indiscriminating transference of Amida's merits. It was an age of existential anxiety: he spoke to it of assured salvation by faith alone. It was an age deeply convinced of the fact that none could attain to birth in the Pure Land: he spoke to it of Amida's concern for all, especially for the weak and sinful. He spoke of the "true" (Shin) teaching of entrustment to the compassionate Primal Vow, which was their one and only gate into the Pure Land.⁴⁷

Luther's view of human nature, while essentially that of his tradition, was clearly influenced by the despairing, guilt-conscious spirit of his age. For the Christian tradition up until the time of Luther, human nature is a fallen nature. Through the sin of Adam (original sin), the original justice (harmony) of the various levels of man's being was destroyed, leaving him weakened and disposed to

wrongdoing. Every human being, therefore, was the victim of an external influence: the human society burdened by original sin into which he was born, and an internal influence: his own weakened nature characterized by concupiscence. Whereas the tradition read concupiscence as "propensity to sin" and considered man capable of performing good works, Luther read it as "total depravity" and denied man this capacity.⁴⁸ He saw the divine image in man being replaced in the Fall by "the image of the devil."⁴⁹

In order to understand Luther's pessimistic view of human nature, one must understand the historical context within which he contemplated the scriptures of his tradition (particularly the Pauline) and the major religious figures who preceded him (particularly Augustine). The age in which Luther was born has been described as "a time of human tragedy unparalleled in Europe, and perhaps elsewhere in world history";⁵⁰ "the most psychically disturbed era in European history";⁵¹ an age in which people saw "their fate and that of the world only as an endless succession of evils";⁵² and age whose "most characteristic feature" was acute anxiety.⁵³ Famine, plague, war; social, political and religious upheaval; hopelessness and despair with respect to salvation; morbid preoccupation with death and judgment; conviction that disaster and tragedy were the deserved judgment of God upon an evil age—such was the sin-burdened setting in which developed Luther's conception of self, world, and God.

While writers⁵⁴ and artists⁵⁵ of this period discovered "everywhere signs of decadence and of the near end . . .,"⁵⁶ Luther concentrated his attention on decadence within the Church. His particular concern was with what he held to be false teaching based on incorrect interpretation of the scriptures.⁵⁷ On the basis of his reform insight, he rejected the traditional teaching which held that man was saved by a combination of God's grace and meritorious works on the part of man. In its place he presented what he held to be "the pure teaching"⁵⁸ rooted in the conviction that salvation

was by faith alone.

To an age beset by anxiety, a heightened sense of sinfulness, and an often unspiritual drive to merit righteousness, Luther preached the comforting doctrine of an "alien righteousness" gratuitously bestowed upon man by virtue of the infinite merits of Christ.⁶⁰ To an age in which popular belief held that the gates of Paradise were closed to all⁶¹—despite the greatest exercise of self-power—Luther spoke with confidence of the power of Another.⁶²

The reform insights of Shinran and Luther reveal a human nature burdened by moral and spiritual weakness.⁶³ For Shinran, these burdens are blind passion and ignorance resulting from the evil carried over from one's beginningless karmic past. For Luther, the burden is concupiscence (in his peculiar reading of this term) resulting from original sin and intensified by personal sinning. Human nature is further burdened by being born into and living in an age of corrupt doctrine and corrupt practice. So depraved and spiritually incapacitated is this age that it is, in and of itself, unsavable.

Given the existential situation described above, it follows as a matter of course that Shinran's buddhology and Luther's theology are preeminently soteriologies. Their concern is not primarily with the being (essence) of their respective Absolutes but with their doing, with their saving activity. Their message to an anguished age is of a *Soter* who takes upon himself the sole meriting of salvation and, in doing so, creates a new double-layered reality for those who abandon themselves in trusting belief.

SALVATION IN SHIN BUDDHISM

The essence of salvation for Shin Buddhism is enlightenment. It is liberation from the darkness of error, ignorance and an evil heart, and the attainment, through Amida's Light, of right-seeing and hence right-mindedness. It is entry into eternal bliss, that is, rebirth in the Pure paradisaical Land

(understood differently according to differentiation of consciousness). The source and guarantee of salvation for Shin Buddhists is the self-denying Vow of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara. Its "efficient cause" is Amida's Name, which is empowered by the Vow to effect salvation.

The means to salvation for Shin Buddhists is the transference to the devotee of the merits acquired by Amida in his prolonged, self-sacrificing striving for enlightenment. Merit-transference is the heart and soul of the concept of *tariki*. The devotee contributes nothing but receptivity to this saving activity, which includes the very disposing of the believer to believe.

In Pure Land teaching prior to Shinran, merits accrued through self-power were directed towards rebirth in Amida's Pure Land. But Shinran's revolutionary reading of the *Larger Sutra* (and other pertinent texts) consciously and consistently places the directing of merit with Amida and not with the aspirant.⁶⁴ This understanding of merit-transference follows logically from Shinran's teaching on the active role of Amida (*tariki*) and the receptive, passive role of the believer. It is also of a piece with Shinran's "mappō-soteriology." The directing of self-powered (*jiriki*) merits towards attainment of birth in the Pure Land is simply not possible given the corruption of human nature, the absence of the Buddha-nature in the age of the Last Dharma.⁶⁵ It is by virtue of Amida's merits, and Amida's merits alone that sentient beings are freed from the endless cycle of birth-and death and transported to the Pure Land. The understanding of merit-transference is crucial to the understanding of the generosity and compassion of Amida as expressed in the Primal Vow.⁶⁶

For the Pure Land tradition in general, Amida's compassion and saving intent are universal.⁶⁷ His illuminating Light embraces all, nor "does it differentiate by time, or place, or any circumstance."⁶⁸ Reflecting on this, Shinran writes: "There is absolutely no falsehood in the statement: 'All will be taken up and none left

behind'."⁶⁹ In fact, on Shinran's reading of Amida's saving intent, one would have to conclude that Amida has a predilection for those least likely to be considered candidates for buddhahood. In a classic text, Shinran states this reading powerfully: "Even a good person is born in the Pure Land, how much more so an evil person!"⁷⁰

In Shinran's understanding, an evil person's awareness of his sinfulness may open his eyes to his need for Other Power while a good person's awareness of his virtue may blind him to his depravity and confirm him in the illusion that self-power is a means to enlightenment. Amida's compassion, however, will eventually find a way to reach both the disillusioned evil and the illusioned good. Where the opening lines of Shinran's major work, *The Kyōgyōshinshō*, make it clear that Amida's Vow assures universal deliverance, the *Tannishō* (a collection of Shinran's utterances by a disciple) underlines this all-inclusiveness: not only the good, but above all the evil; not only those engaged full-time in austere practices, but also the stupid and the ignorant, the small and the helpless; all manner of people, in all walks of life, dwell in Amida's constant compassion.⁷¹ All will be taken up and none left behind.

SALVATION IN LUTHER

Whereas for Shinran, Amida expresses compassion for sentient beings through the Primal Vow, Luther sees God's mercy toward fallen humanity expressed in what he calls "God's first promise"⁷² contained in *Genesis* 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The "seed of the woman" in this text was read as Christ,⁷³ who would liberate humanity from the evil power which held it in bondage. For this reason, the Christian tradition saw *Genesis* 3:15 as the *protoevangelium* (the first 'good news'), because it was understood to contain the promise of

a savior.

Salvation, for Luther, begins with this primal promise which is "certain and reliable, and is surely carried out, because God carries it out."⁷⁴ God's vow to save, restated in many forms down through the history of the Hebrew Scriptures,⁷⁵ is always found yoked together with faith,⁷⁶ the object of which is Christ⁷⁷ who, as Word made flesh is the historical fulfillment of the saving promise of God.

Luther speaks of God revealing himself to humanity "dressed and clothed in His Word and promises."⁷⁸ The Word of God is the means by which everything that is, was brought into existence. When God utters (utters) his inner Word, creation comes to be.⁷⁹ When God in saving compassion speaks out his Word in flesh, a fallen creation comes to new being in fulfillment of God's promise. To hear the word, to believe the promise, to trust unreservedly in the saving power of Christ, is all that is asked in this scheme of salvation; for "no man by his works, but God by His promises, is the author of our salvation."⁸⁰

The saving of mankind begins and ends in self-renunciation on the part of God. This is expressed in Pauline terms as "*kenosis*"; that is, the self-emptying of the Word who is "God Himself."⁸¹ The Word divests himself of his divinity, renounces paradise, and enters human history in order to fulfill God's saving promise and regain paradise for fallen humanity.⁸² In clothing himself in the poverty of human flesh, he heals its infirmity and overcomes the various levels of alienation that sunder man from God, from himself, from others, and from nature. God's emptying of self for the sake of mankind is consummated in the crucifixion when Christ's humanity is "given over" in atonement for the sins of man. For Christ's self-denial and self-giving on the cross, "God has highly exalted him . . ." (*Phil. 2:9*) Resurrected, he enters triumphant into paradise, opening wide its gates to mankind. And there he has "bestowed on him the name [Jesus] which is above every name . . ." (*Phil. 2:9*)

The closed doors of Paradise⁸³ were opened when Christ "once and for all merited and won for us forgiveness of sins on the Cross."⁸⁴ The notion of transference of merits⁸⁵ found in Shinran are found here also. Again, it is of a piece with a soteriology which hold human nature incapable of any meritorious action, and proclaims salvation "by faith alone." Luther calls upon the believer to "have confidence in nothing but the merits of Christ,"⁸⁶ who, as "Proprietor and Savior . . . has performed a superabundance of works and merits."⁸⁷ Luther's certitude of salvation lies in knowing that the attainment of eternal life is based not on his own virtues and merits, but rather on Christ who is "my merit and the price of my righteousness and salvation."⁸⁸

In contradistinction to the teaching of his age on merit, Luther harshly rejects the presumption that it lies in one's own power to contribute towards one's salvation.⁸⁹ In fact, one who so presumes "adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty."⁹⁰ The action of saving lies entirely with God in Christ.⁹¹ We are saved by no other means than Christ "imputing his righteousness to us, bestowing his merits on us, and holding his hand over us."⁹² Like everything else that pertains to salvation, the merits of Christ are "the gifts of God and works which he alone performs."⁹³ Righteousness is attained to "not actively but passively."⁹⁴ Luther makes very clear distinction between "active" and "passive" righteousness.⁹⁵ Active righteousness is the attempt to merit salvation through self-effort.⁹⁶ Passive righteousness, on the other hand, is absolute abandonment in faith and trust to the saving activity of God, in Christ.⁹⁷ What for Shinran is *jiriki* and *tariki* is for Luther *active righteousness* and *passive righteousness*.

Luther calls passive righteousness "the righteousness of faith," whereas active righteousness is human reason's claim to righteousness⁹⁸ and as such is "but filthy rags."⁹⁹ There is no middle ground between these two kinds of righteousness.¹⁰⁰ They are simply antithetical. On this distinction between the two rests the whole doctrine

of justification (righteousness) by faith. Justification is not self-gift, it is gratuitous gift of God.¹⁰¹ Human merits (self-power) and Christ's merits (other-power) cannot coexist together.

Even though man stands in God's favor by virtue of an alien (extrinsic) righteousness imputed to him, not merited by him,¹⁰² Luther nevertheless urges the Christian to "glory in the merits of Christ as though he himself had won them."¹⁰³ The believer who in faith and trust has surrendered self to Christ, shares with Christ all that he has merited.¹⁰⁴ He may "boast of the merits of Christ and all his blessings, as though he himself (the believer) had accomplished them all himself."¹⁰⁵ But it is not only his virtues and merits that Christ gives over to the believer—it is his very self.¹⁰⁶ Passive righteousness means that the believer is peacefully and joyfully "set down amid strange treasures merited by the labors of Another."¹⁰⁷

As with Shinran, this transference of merits takes place instantaneously. In the instant of being justified through faith, Christ's righteousness "swallows up all sins in a moment."¹⁰⁸ To this gift of faith is added grace which "does not come in portions and pieces, separately, . . . rather it takes us up completely into its embrace . . ."¹⁰⁹ Nor is sin "nullified or eradicated" (to use Shinran's words with respect to evil karma at the moment of *shinjin*);¹¹⁰ for the believer is "semper peccator, semper penitens, semper justus," that is, at one and the same time sinful and just.¹¹¹ Sin is in one as long as one lives. Because of the merits of Christ, God declares the sinner righteous in spite of the sin.¹¹² Luther's righteousness is extrinsic, imputed; it is Christ's righteousness. The believer, remains "semper peccator," a sinner in the totality of his being and doing. Clearly, 'faith alone' is the only means to this righteousness. Human works are but "filthy rags" compared to the spotless garment Christ spreads over the believer who, though transformed by the power of faith (granted as gift), nevertheless is and remains a sinner.¹¹³

The sinner has always been at the heart of Christianity. God's love goes out in a special way

to the weak and needful.¹¹⁴ Matthew's gospel, for example, has Christ say: "For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (9:13). Luther, reflecting *Romans* 5:20, draws attention to the relationship between the mercy of God and man's need: "for grace does not abound except where sin and wretchedness abound."¹¹⁵ It abounds where there is admission of need.¹¹⁶ Nor is grace bestowed because of status or practice. The works of priests and nuns are no different than the works of laborers or housewives, "all works are measured before God by faith alone."¹¹⁷ The saving Word is addressed to all who can hear, not simply to the literate and the learned. Trusting faith, simplicity of heart, and genuine humility are the only prerequisites for the reception and the gift of grace that brings salvation.

THE FAITH-EVENT IN SHINRAN

"Hearing" (listening to the teaching) is central to the Buddhist striving for enlightenment, especially in the early stages of practice. But in Shin Buddhism, according to one commentator:

"... hearing is not just the beginning, it is the alpha and omega of religious life; for ultimately what is heard defines what one is, the complete identification being none other than the experience of *shinjin*."¹¹⁸

That faith (*shinjin*) comes through hearing is a central tenet of Shin Buddhism. Hearing is the means by which the saving power of Amida's Vow and Name is directed to the devotee and *shinjin* is realized.¹¹⁹ 'Hearing' and 'awakening' to Amida's call are two inseparable aspects of the one moment in which a person is grasped by the saving power of the Vow. Awakening to *shinjin* is an instantaneous event rather than a process,¹²⁰ despite the fact that it involves a number of factors: hearing, being illumined, awakening, trusting, responding, and abandoning (self). It is instantaneous because it is solely the work of Amida and not the laborious, cumulative achievement of weak and sinful human beings.

The compassionate call of Amida heard by the receptive devotee is a startling call which brings one to awareness of who and what one is: ignorant, blinded by passions, deluded as to one's true nature. Hearing the call in Shin Buddhism creates the possibility for illumination. Illumination, the work of Amida's saving Light,¹²¹ opens man's closed and blinded self to the truth of his depravity and to his inability to rise, of his own power, above his abject state. With illumination comes wisdom, a new kind of knowing which discloses not only man as captive to his passion but Amida, in a sense, as captive to his compassion. For what one now realizes is that one is saved not only *despite* one's depravity, but *because* of one's depravity.

'Hearing' and 'responding' are also yoked together in coming to faith in Shin Buddhism. Shaken in one's depths by the enormity of what one has heard and understood, the devotee responds with the grateful and trustful utterance of Amida's Name: *namu-amida-butsu* (*nembutsu*). The *nembutsu* expresses a wealth of meaning: it expresses, first and foremost, absolute faith and trust in the veracity and sincerity of Amida's Primal Vow.¹²² It bears witness to the fact that *shinjin* has been realized.¹²³ It is humble affirmation of the truth of one's depravity, revealed by Amida's light. It is rejection of self-power and the embracing of Other Power. It is a spontaneous expression of gratitude for rebirth in the Pure Land, settled here and now in *shinjin*. The *nembutsu* is all these things brought to being and expression in the devotee not by self-power, but by Other Power.¹²⁴ It is solely by virtue of the transference of Amida's own merits (virtues) that man can rise above doubt and calculation to single-minded abandonment to Amida. Arriving at *shinjin* in Shin Buddhism is something *undergone*, not *undertaken*, by the devotee. The closest one comes to independent human action is trustfully 'letting-be-done-unto'.¹²⁵ Amida is the active Giver, man the passive receiver.

It was clear to Shinran, from his own expe-

rience, that those who were practitioners of self-power as means to salvation might well have difficulty accepting his teaching on salvation by faith alone. His so-called "easy-practice" demanded the difficult virtue of humility. The merit-minded would have to be disabused of the belief that they were, in part, the instruments of their own salvation. They would have to be brought to acknowledge the fact that tallying merits and self-glorying in one's good deeds sullied even the best of human acts (if man could, in his depraved state, do *any* good deed in the age of mappō).

Shinran knew also from personal experience how the self-power practice of merit-accruing and recitation of the Name deluded man into thinking that these actions would bring him to enlightenment. He had himself undergone a series of conversions, progressing from meditative and meritorious practices, inspired by the 19th Vow (which prescribed prayers, practices and desires) to the more centered and purer practice of the recitation of Amida's Name in the 20th Vow.¹²⁶ He had seen in himself and sensed in other devotees a certain duplicity, a submerged conviction that it was the practice (their *saying* of the Name)¹²⁷ and not faith in the power embodied in the Name, which would bring them to salvation. In his heart of hearts Shinran was aware that if salvation depended, even in part, on his own works and practices, it was not an assured thing. With this conviction he embraced the "faith alone" demand of the 18th Vow (as he interpreted that Vow). The shift to the 18th Vow is none other than a leap of faith. For there is a moment between yielding self-power and trustfully embracing Other Power when one imagines one stands nowhere. But in actual fact, the trust and faith, the relinquishing of doubt required to make the leap, are all the gift of the merciful Giver who has brought one to *shinjin*. One finds oneself accepted, affirmed, in all one's poverty and delusion, by the Vow which "grasps us, never to abandon . . ."

"To realize this *shinjin* is to rejoice and be glad . . . to leap and jump, expressing bound-

less joy . . . to dance to the heavens . . . to dance on the earth."¹²⁸

Leaping and dancing express, for Shinran, the joy and gratitude that floods the being of the person of *shinjin* in that moment of sudden, radical shift from self-centeredness to Other-centeredness, from self-mind to Amida-mind. With this new mind comes a new view of self and of Buddha-nature. The existential anxiety that is rooted in ignorance is dispelled. Doubt is cast out. Concern with good and evil is eliminated.¹²⁹ The new self, liberated from calculative self-effort (*hakara*),¹³⁰ lives on amidst the suffering of the karmic world with a peace and joy not of this world.

THE FAITH-EVENT IN LUTHER

When one turns to the faith-event in Luther one notes the centrality of 'Word' and 'hearing'. The Word is the means by which God reveals himself and his compassion for fallen humanity.¹³¹ That God chose 'Word' as his means of communication with humanity underlines the central Christian belief in the personal nature of God. Conversation is his mode of relationship. He is a God "who never appears except in the only vehicle of the hearing of the Word."¹³² The Word is God addressing man. The Word is God redressing man. And it does so by disposing him to be a truster and a believer. But this he can only be if he is a hearer. "To such an extent has everything been reduced to an easy way of life," writes Luther, that God "requires only ears."¹³³ Not the burden of ceremonies, not works, simply passive acceptance of the Word of God by an organ more adapted to receptivity than to action:

"Therefore the ears alone are the organs of a Christian man, for he is justified and declared to be a Christian, not because of the works of any other member [organ] but because of faith."¹³⁴

External hearing of the Word is linked with the internal activity of the Spirit.¹³⁵ The Spirit

disposes the soul to hear this word as Word of God.¹³⁶ The Spirit illumines¹³⁷ the self-centered darkness of man and brings him to awareness of his depraved state. Perceiving his inability to rise unaided from his depths, man opens self to the saving Word, which both bears and is the good news of God's merciful promise of salvation. Illumined by the Spirit, man accepts and assents to this Word in unshakable certitude that God has spoken and that what he has said is true, even though he does not fully understand this Word in its depth and mystery.¹³⁸ He then yields himself passively and trustfully to the power of the saving Word, for ". . . as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works."¹³⁹

When man in sincerity and honesty opens self to God's saving Word, he encounters truth. In a sudden, shattering insight, the unholy nature of the human and the all-holy nature of the divine is revealed. This insight, thus far precluded by self-satisfaction and self-glorying, heightens man's awareness of his ungodliness and creates the moment for genuine self-accusation. The Word of God, heard in the conscience, accuses man of sin and self-righteousness. Man recognizes his sin as hateful,¹⁴⁰ accuses self of sin,¹⁴¹ and in so doing confirms the judgment of God that in his presence "there is none who is just."¹⁴² That man can attain to insight as to his true nature, and rise to self-judgment, lies not within depraved human powers. It is solely the merciful work of the Word and the illumining Spirit within him:

"For the fact that we declare His word righteous is His gift, and because of the same gift He Himself regards us as righteous, that is, He justifies us."¹⁴³

Acknowledging his true state, man abandons self-righteousness and the constant justifying of himself and his sin before God. The 'letting-go' of self-righteousness is, at the same time, and embracing of external (alien) righteousness, ". . . for it cannot happen that he who is filled with his own

righteousness can be filled with the righteousness of God."¹⁴⁴ For the merit-minded, this is a step demanding courage and profound humility.¹⁴⁵

Humility is a basic step in coming to faith in Luther.¹⁴⁶ But it is not, strictly speaking, *self-humiliation*; that is, a work wrought by the self. It is the Spirit who works humility by confronting man with his true image.¹⁴⁷ Word and Spirit reveal to man that his unbelief and self-glorying have, in fact, been a form of self-idolatry.¹⁴⁸ In the light of this new view of needful self and merciful God, confession is now made as to man's rightful relationship to the divine.¹⁴⁹ With this sincere admission, a shift has taken place from egocentricity to theocentricity, a dethronement of prideful self and an enthronement of God as Lord, and Savior, and gracious Giver of all good things.

It is important to note that Luther never loses sight of the fact that man, though fallen and depraved, nevertheless lives in an order of redemption. No sooner has the Fall taken place than God, moved by compassion, speaks out his promise of the advent of the saving Word. Thus the leap of faith that demands self-accusation and the abandonment of self-effort as preludes to true faith, always take place in human awareness of divine fidelity to a promise made. So unshakable is Luther's belief in the compassion behind this promise that he is prepared to offer himself "to the will of God even for hell and eternal; death, if God so will . . ."¹⁵⁰ It is, then, in a benevolent and merciful (if chastising) presence that man, informed by the Word and enlightened by the Spirit, contemplates the truth about himself and the human predicament. Misery and mercy; impotence and omnipotence; hatefulness and holiness; emptiness and fullness, judgement and justification—these are all held in paradoxical unity on Luther's thought.

In the hearing of the Word; in believing the promise; in acknowledging one's sinful state revealed by the Spirit; in accusing self before the all-holy God (and thereby justifying God in his words); in rejecting dependence on one's own merits; in embracing Christ alone as Savior, one

arrives at faith, according to Luther's teaching. But at each stage of the way, it is God who works the transformation. As with Shinran, coming to faith is something undergone by man, not undertaken: "This faith is no human achievement . . . it is God's good gift."¹⁵¹

With faith, comes grace and salvation, unearned, unmerited, by virtue of the Word and the promise. Faith alone, in Christ alone, creates "a different spirit and different mind, and makes a quite new man."¹⁵² Man now lives in a new relationship to self, world and God. The grace and graciousness of God fills him with joy and gratitude, and a certitude of salvation that dispels all anxiety:

"Faith is a living and unshakable confidence, a belief in the grace of God so assured that a man would die a thousand deaths for its sake. This kind of confidence in God's grace . . . makes us joyful, high-spirited, and eager in our relations with God and all mankind."¹⁵³

CONCLUSION

The soteriological teachings of Shinran and Luther come to be in existential faith-crises. Their personal, spiritual anxiety as to salvation reflects that of their age. Their teaching is profoundly influenced by text and context. The inherited text, in each case, undergoes emendation to respond to the needs of the context in which they are reflecting on and interpreting their traditional sources.

Salvation for Shinran lies in the work of Amida's Vow and Name. The Vow expresses compassionate intent to save all sentient beings. The Name, empowered by the Vow, effects what is promised.

Salvation for Luther lies in God's promise and Word. The promise expresses God's merciful intent to save fallen beings. The Word effects what is promised.

In the teachings of both traditions, salvation

is worked by virtue of the transference of merits; in both, the human element is represented by passive receptivity of this saving activity, by *faith alone*.

Vow, Name and Faith. Promise, Word and Faith. These sets of inseparables form the essence of the soteriology of two religious founders whose religious traditions are in most other respects worlds apart.¹⁵⁴

FOOTNOTES

1. Shinran Shonin (1173-1262) was a Buddhist monk of the Tendai sect, later a student of Pure Land Buddhism under Honen (1133-1212) and finally founder of the Shin Buddhist sect. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was an Augustinian monk, later reformer and founder of the Lutheran tradition.

2. Western scholars frequently refer to Shin Buddhism as a religion of salvation (cf. Alfred Bloom, *Tannisho: A Resource for Modern Living* [Honolulu: The Buddhist Study Center, 1981, p. 11]; Joseph Spae, *Buddhist-Christian Empathy* [Tokyo: Orient Institute for Religious Research, 1980, pp. 88, 90, 183]). For Shin Buddhists, salvation is understood as release from the eternal cycle of birth-and-death and the assurance of supreme enlightenment.

3. The word 'faith', despite its inadequacy, comes closest to translating the Japanese word '*shinjin*' (cf. footnote 24 below).

4. Cf. James Brodrick, *Saint Francis Xavier* (New York: The Wicklow Press, 1952), p. 382.

5. *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), Vol.1 pp. 340-344.

6. *The Eastern Buddhist*, IX, 2 (October 1976).

7. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XXXIV, 4 (Dec., 1971).

8. "Other Power" (*tariki*) refers both to Amida Buddha and to his saving power. It is set over against *jiriki*, signifying self-powered activity with respect to salvation. It was the Pure Land patriarch T'an-luan (476-542) who "illustrated Amitabha's (Amida's) soteriological role by calling the Other Power and the supreme Reality engaged in the salvation of all sentient beings." Spae, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

9. For Shinran's understanding of the bodhisattva Dharmakara, cf. *Passages on the Pure Land Way* (Jōdo monrui jusho) gen. ed. Yoshifumi Ueda, Shin Buddhism Translation Series (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1984), p. 76-77.

10. The Pure Land is the realm of ultimate bliss, a realm of enlightened and purified beings. It is not to be understood spatially or geographically but as a "way to express a formless reality through concrete form or imagery." *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'* (*Yuishinshō-mon'i*), gen. ed., Yoshifumi Ueda, Shin Buddhism Translation Series (Kyoto, 1979), p. 99.

11. Although Shinran's teaching is based on the three principal sutras constituting the Pure Land group of Mahayana Literature: the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life* (2 vols.); the *Meditation Sutra* (1 vol.); and the *Amida Sutra* (1 vol.), it is the *Larger Sutra* in particular which is the source of Shinran's thought.

12. Translation by Taitetsu Unno. Cf. "The Nature of Religious Experience in Shin Buddhism," in *The Other Side of God: A Polarity in World Religions*, ed. Peter Berger (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981), pp. 261-262.

13. *Passages on the Pure Land Way*, p. 129.

14. Shin Buddhists hold that this sutra contains "the true teaching for which Śākyamuni Buddha appeared in the world." *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

15. Cf. below, p. 12f.

16. The Original Vow is Amida himself expressed in human terms . . . " D. T. Suzuki, *Collected Writings on Shin Buddhism* (Kyoto: Shinshu Otaniha, 1973), p. 68.

17. Amida's Original Vow is none other than

the pronouncing of his Name . . . "Ibid.

18. *Letters of Shinran (Mattōshō)*, ed. Yoshifumi Ueda, Shin Buddhism Translation Series I (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1978), p. 23.

19. In his major work, *The Kyōgyōshinshō: The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*, 4 Vols. (Kyoto: Shin Buddhism Translation Series, 1983)—a somewhat eclectic collection of Buddhist sutras and commentaries—Shinran shows himself rooted in authentic Buddhist tradition and deeply previous masters (particularly Honen) who were instrumental in leading him to his reform insight.

20. Cf. *Letters*, p. 21, where Shinran speaks of Shin Buddhism as "the consummation of Mahayana Buddhism."

21. 'Easy practice' is related to Other Power; 'difficult practice' to the self-effort means to salvation. Cf. *Passages on the Pure Land Way*, p. 78; *Tannishō: A Shin Buddhist Classic*, translated by Taitetsu Unno (Honolulu: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1984), p. 20.

22. Cf. *The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way*, vol. I, p. 58; cf. *Tannishō*, p. 21, 28.

23. "To be free of self-power, having entrusted oneself to the Other Power of the Primal Vow—this is faith alone." *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*, p. 29.

24. *Letters*, p. 19.

25. *Shinjin* expresses an experience of radical religious transformation which awakens one to a new and true grasp of self. It sets one irrevocably on the path to appropriation of one's Buddhature and to birth in the Pure Land. A central feature of *shinjin* is the realization that salvation is not a human achievement but the work of Other Power.

26. 'To be made to become so' (*jinen*) "means that without a practitioner's calculating in any way whatever, all his past, present and future karmic evil is transformed into the highest good. To be transformed means that karmic evil, without

being nullified or eradicated, is made into the highest good, just as all waters, upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water." *Letters*, Intro. p. 15; *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*, p. 32.

27. "In the space of a moment, quickly and immediately, one leaps and attains supreme true enlightenment. Thus it is called leaping-cross-wise." *Notes* p. 93; cf. also *Notes*, pp. 34-35.

28. Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, p. 152.

29. *The Tannishō*, Epilogue, p. 35.

30. Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, p. 149; cf. also *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling (Ichinen-tanen mon'i)*, gen. ed. Yoshifumi Ueda, Shin Buddhism Translation Series (Kyoto, 1980), p. 14.

31. Cf. p. 14f.

32. *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, various years and editors), vol. 34, p. 328 (hereafter abbreviated LW).

33. *Ibid.* "Justice" and "righteousness" are used interchangeably in translations of this text.

34. So clear was this to Luther that he took an extraordinary step. In his translation of Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* 3:28, he altered the text: "a man is justified by faith" to read: "A man is justified by faith alone."

35. "For by the mercy of God the Word took on flesh for the purpose of fulfilling the truth of the promise made to the fathers of the Old Testament concerning the incarnation of the Son of God." WA, 4.12.13 (WA=*The Weimar Edition: D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1883-]). English translation of texts not contained in LW are drawn for the most part from Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953).

36. LW, 34: 328.

37. *Ibid.* Luther now finds God's action all over Scripture: "I also found in other terms an analogy as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us; the power of God, with which he makes us

strong; the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God."

38. WA 56.204.14ff; cf. also WA, 57.169.10 (Hebrews); WA 40.I.299.9.

39. WA 2:489.

40. "Sine te fecit te Deus. Non enim adhibuisti aliquem consensum, ut te faceret Deus . . . Qui ergo fecit te sine te non te iustificat sine te. Ergo fecit nescientem, iustificat volentem." Serm., 169, II, 13 in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: 1879-1890), 38, 923.

41. ". . . [the] faith alone that justifies is the work of God, not of man . . . other works he performs with our cooperation, this alone he works within us without our cooperation." WA, 57.222.5 (Hebrews); cf. WA, 18.754.6.

42. *Letters*, pp. 57, 61; *The Tannishō*, p. 26; *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*, p. 48; Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, p. 18; WA, 57.69.15; WA, 56.361.15; WA, 40.297f.

43. A number of theories and timetables are to be found in Buddhism's eschatological view of history. Cf. Taitetsu Unno's "Mappō," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1986).

44. The period of *mappō* is also known as "the Last Age." Cf. *Shinran's Hymns on the Last Age [Shozomatsu Wasan]* (Kyoto: Ryukoku University Press, 1980). In these hymns, Shinran's intent "is not merely to lament the degeneracy of the Last Age but to clarify salvation through Amida's Primal Vow. . . ." *Ibid.*, 1980, p. xvi; Cf. Alfred Bloom, "Shinran's Philosophy of Salvation," in *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, vol. 5, no. 2 (June, 1964), pp. 120-127.

45. The Jewish tradition expresses a similar sentiment. When the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism, found himself in a difficult situation he would go to a certain place in the woods, light a sacred fire, pray a certain prayer, and answer would be given. His successor did likewise, he knew the place, he knew the prayer, but he did not know how to light the fire. Yet his prayer too was

answered. After another generation or so, not only the art of the fire, but also the prayer had been lost. Yet the place was still known and that sufficed. Eventually, all three means to enlightenment had been lost. But Judaism continued to tell the story.

46. In the first six *Hymns of Lament* (contained in *Hymns on the Last Age*), Shinran—out of the realization of *shinjin*—speaks of himself.

47. "Because the power of the Vow is without limits, /Even our evil karma, so deep and heavy, is not burdensome; /Because the Buddha's wisdom is without bounds, /Even the bewildered and wayward are not abandoned." Shinran's *Hymns on the Last Age*, p. 37.

48. ". . . no man can either have or do anything good, but only evil, even when he performs the good." WA, 56.355.24f; cf. also WA, 40.293.23ff.

49. WA 42:478

50. Lynn White, Jr., "Death and the Devil," in *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) p. 44.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

52. J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: Doubleday 1949), p. 30.

53. White, p. 46.

54. Cf. a poem of Eustache Deschamps: "Time of mourning and of temptation, /Age of tears, of envy and of torment, /Time of languor and of damnation, /Age of decline nigh to the end. / Time full of horror which does all things falsely, /Lying age, full of pride and of envy, /Time without honor and without true judgement, /Age of sadness which shortens life." Huizinga, p. 33.

55. Cf. Pieter Brueghel's "Triumph of Death" in the Prado, ". . . it is a pageant of the annihilation of the human race, unrelieved by any hope for this world or another." White, p. 31. Cf. also the works of Hieronymus Bosch and the 'Dance of Death' woodcuts of Hans Holbein the Younger. All three artists were contemporaries of Luther.

56. Huizinga, p. 31.

57. WA, 43.386.21.
 58. WA, 51.536.11; cf. also WA, 51.529.1.
 59. LW, 31: 298; WA, 56.158.10f.; 56.158.14.

60. That "... the merit of Christ ... is the treasury of the church only a heretic would deny. For Christ is the Ransom and Redeemer of the world, and thereby most truly and solely the only treasury of the church." LW, 31: 216. Luther distinguishes the "treasury of the church" from "the treasury of indulgences." *Ibid.*

61. Huizinga, p. 31-31.

62. "... Another, who has freed me from the terrors of the Law [works], from sin and from death, and who has transferred me into freedom, the righteousness of God, and eternal life." LW, 26:177; cf. also LW 26:9.

63. Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, p. 124.; *Letters*, p. 64.

64. To arrive at this revolutionary reading, Shinran took liberty with the grammatical rendering of the 18th Vow. Cf. Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, p. 50, 72; Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1965), pp. 48-49. Luther likewise took liberty with the sacred scriptures of his tradition in adding the word "alone" to *Romans* 3:28.

65. "With my mind as deceitful as serpents and scorpions, I am incapable of accomplishing virtuous deeds of self-power. Unless I rely on the Tathagata's [Amida Buddha's] merit-transference, I will end without shame or repentance." *Hymns of Lament*, p. 99.

66. The same generosity and compassion is expected of those who Amida has "directed" through merit-transference to the Pure Land. Shinran gives expression to this in his teaching on *ōso-ekō* ("going forth" to the Pure Land) and *gensō-ekō* ("returning" to the world to help relieve the burden on other sentient beings with whom one is related through interdependence.) Cf. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*, vol. I, p. 63.

67. "Amida's Primal Vow does not discrimi-

nate between the young and the old, good and evil; true entrusting alone is essential." *Tannishō*, p. 5; cf. also op. cit., p. 22.

68. *Passages on the Pure Land Way*, p. 42

69. *The Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 4.

70. *Tannishō* p. 8; cf. *Letters*, p. 61. Shinran cautions those who would distort this teaching with the words: "Do not take poison, just because there is an antidote" (*Tannishō*, p. 24).

71. *Tannishō*, p. 24; cf. also *The Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 103.

72. John Dillenberger, p. 16, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings* (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

73. "Christ is the Seed of the woman. . . . Without this seed it is impossible for any man to escape sin, death, hell. Dillenberger, p. 16.

74. LW, 3:26; LW, 26: 386; WA, 42, 567.9.

75. Dillenberger, pp. 274-275.

76. Dillenberger, p. 277: For "God never has dealt, and never does deal, with mankind at any time otherwise than by the word of promise. Neither can we, on our part, ever have to do with God otherwise than through faith in His word and promise."

77. LW, 26: 296.

78. LW, *Companion Volume: The Exegetical Writings*, p. 50.

79. LW, 22: 11-13.

80. Dillenberger, p. 274.

81. LW, 22: 12.

82. "... Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God . . . emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." *Philippians* 2: 5-7.

83. LW, 1: 66.

84. LW, 37: 192; LW25: 32; WA 40: II: 22, 24. After his reform-insight, Luther was critical of the traditional concept of merit insofar as it was claimed that "Christ's merits are the treasure from which the indulgences come." (LW, 32: 62-63) He continued nevertheless to speak in soteriological context of the merits of Christ, though he now set these sharply in contradistinction to human merit-

ing. (Scholars in the Lutheran tradition are, in general, uncomfortable with the concept of merit. They consistently feel themselves called upon to explain away Luther's use of "the merits of Christ" in his post-reform teaching and preaching. Luther, however, holds that "No Christian is so naive as not to know that Christ's merits and suffering take away our sins and save us. All believe that he died for our sins. From this it is clear that Christ's suffering and merit are a living treasure and give everlasting life to all who share in it." *Ibid.*)

85. D.T. Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, pp. 60, 72, states that merit transference is more commonly known as vicarious atonement in the Christian tradition. But in actual fact the two ideas are not the same. Vicarious atonement merely takes away the debt, it makes possible the meriting, but is not in itself the meriting. Atonement and meriting are two different notions, two different effects of Christ's suffering and death.

86. *LW*, 30: 309.

87. *LW*, 26: 132; *WA*, 40.I.232.30; *LW*, 26: 374.

88. *LW*, 26: 295; *WA*, 56.318.14; *WA*, 1.264.29ff.

89. *LW*, 32: 63.

90. *LW*, 31: 40; *WA*, 18.636.4f.

91. "For Christ alone it is proper to help and save others with his merits and works." *WA*, 8: 599.

92. *LW*, 42: 165.

93. *WA*, 5: 169.

94. *LW*, 26: 392; *WA* 40.I.597.28f.

95. "This distinction is easy to speak of; but in experience and practice it is the most difficult of all, even if you exercise and practice it diligently." *LW*, 26: 10.

96. *LW*, 26: 9; *WA*, 40.I.48-50.

97. "... we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and suffer Another to work in us, to wit, God." *WA*, 40.I.41.; *WA*, 18.728.27f.

98. *LW*, 26:5.

99. *WA*, 2:44; 2.411.1; 7.433f. Quoted in U. Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel* (St.

Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 113. Cf. also Dillenberger, p. 17.

100. *WA* 40.I.48.30; *LW* 26: 9.

101. *LW*, 32: 228; 25: 31.

102. *LW*, 42: 165; cf. *WA*, 56.158.10f.

103. *LW*, 42:164.

104. Dillenberger, pp. 86-87: "Therefore a man can with confidence boast in Christ and say: 'Mine are Christ's living, doing and speaking his suffering and dying, mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, suffered, and died as he did.' "

105. *WA*, 6: 132ff.

106. *LW*, 31: 298 ". . . all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours." Cf. also *LW*, 26: 167-168; *WA* 5.608.8ff.

107. *WA* 6.132.8.

108. *Ibid.*

109. Dillenberger, p. 23.

110. *Letters*, Intro. p. 15; *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*, p. 32.

111. "Thus a Christian man is righteous and a sinner at the same time. . . . None of the sophists will admit this paradox, because they do not understand the true meaning of justification." *LW*, 26: 232. Cf. also *LW*, 25: 434 (*WA*, 56.442.17.); *WA* 56.270.6.9.

112. Dillenberger, p. 129: "For as long as I live in the flesh, sin is truly in me. But because I am covered under the shadow of Christ's wings, as a chicken under the wing of the hen, . . . God covereth and pardoneth the remnant of sin in me. . . . "

113. *WA*, 56.268.31ff.

114. "... the love of God which lives in man loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good." *LW*, 31: 57.

115. *LW*, 10: 367, Luther cautions those who would say: "If grace is superabundant where sin was abundant, then let us be abundant in sin, so that we may be justified and grace may be superabundant." *LW*, 26: 169 (*WA*, 40.I.286.10ff;

30ff.)

116. "The one who is most depraved in his own eyes is the most handsome before God and, on the contrary, the one who sees himself as handsome is thoroughly ugly before God, because he lacks the light with which to see himself." *LW*, 10: 239.

117. *WA* 6: 540-541.

118. *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*, p. 90.

119. "Hear means to hear the Primal Vow and be free of doubt. Further, it indicates *shinjin*." *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*, p. 32. Cf. Also *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls (Songō shinzō meimon)*, gen. ed., Yoshifumi Ueda, Shin Buddhism Translation Series (Kyoto, 1981), p. 35.

120. *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*, pp. 32-33; 36; Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, pp. 127-128.

121. Light plays an important role in Buddhist teaching. The Buddhas are always represented as luminous beings who have overcome the darkness of ignorance, the root cause of delusion and suffering. In the Pure Land tradition where the depravity of human beings is painted more darkly, light symbolism plays a central role. The name Amida, means 'infinite light', and Amida's light is understood to be a crucial instrument in bringing one to a true view of self and reality.

122. "The Buddha speaks no falsehood, and how can the Original Vow lie?" "Tract on Steadily Holding to the Faith," in Suzuki, *Collected Writings*, p. 127.

123. "... there is no *shinjin* separate from *nembutsu* . . . [and] *nembutsu* separate from *shinjin*." *Letters*, p. 40; cf. *Tannishō*, p. 18-19.

124. *Letters*, p. 64.

125. Shinran, in one of his letters, writes: "the right way to plan salvation is not to plan at all."

126. Cf. Unno, *op. cit.*, p. 266-268.

127. *Tannishō*, p. 19.

128. *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*,

p. 46; cf. *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*, p. 40.

129. *Tannishō*, p. 27; p. 19.

130. *Hakarai*, for Shinran, is "a synonym for self-power, it refers to all acts of intellect and will aimed at achieving salvation." *Passages on the Pure Land Way*, p. 73.

131. "... for the Lord Himself to speak is to give out and manifest His Word, but as something to be heard." *LW*, 11: 164.

132. *WA*, 57.215.1ff.; cf. also *WA*, 2.509.13.

133. "A man becomes a Christian not by working but by listening." *LW*, 26: 214; *LW*, 29: 224.

134. *LW*, 29: 224 (*WA*, 57.222.5); cf. also *WA*, 3.262.7f.

135. "... while the Word of life, grace, and salvation is proclaimed outside, the Holy Spirit teaches inside at the same time." *LW*, 29: 198; Cf. also *WA*, 3.256.10-13; 1.632.9; 57.186.25.

136. "Thus hearing does not come from the flesh, even though it is in the flesh; but it is in and from the Holy Spirit." *LW*, 26: 171; *LW*, 51: 166f; *WA*, 5: 550.

137. On the Spirit as Illuminator, cf. Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953).

138. *WA*, 10.1.328.

139. Dillenberger, p. 55.

140. *WA*, 3.465.5.

141. *WA*, 56.254.9.

142. *WA*, 56.229.7ff.; cf. *WA*, 56.449.20; *WA*, 3.289.33f.

143. *LW*, 25: 212.

144. *WA*, 56.219.3-4.

145. *WA*, 18.632.30.

146. *WA*, 56.218.13; 3.429.9.

147. *WA*, 3.429.7ff; *WA*, 56.366.14; *WA*, 1.2.42.

148. *LW*, 31: 46.

149. *WA*, 56.218.7-20.

150. *WA*, 56.391.9-10.

151. *WA*, 4.266.27; 3.649.17.

152. WA, 42.452.19-21.

153. Dillenberger, p. 2.

154. The concern of this paper has been the noting of similarities in the soteriology of Shinran and Luther. The differences in their world view and spiritual worlds of meaning are many. Shin

Buddhism, for example, has no Creator, no deity, no Fall (and its consequences for a debilitated human nature), no judgment, no vicarious atonement (through physical sacrifice), and no predestination (though this has to be questioned). But of these another time.