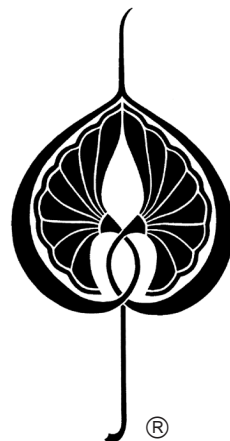


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## Awakening Faith in the Pure Land Section of the *Qixinlun*

Christopher Callahan

Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University

Towards the end of the treatise known as the *Dasheng Qixinlun* (Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna, T. 1666),<sup>1</sup> the reader is told of an excellent expedient means devised by the buddhas to protect and strengthen the faith of those who lack courage and strength. This expedient means is the practice of wholehearted meditation on Amida Buddha.<sup>2</sup> Through this meditative practice, the practitioner will be born in the buddha land beyond, where one will always see the Buddha, maintain non-retrogressive faith, and be forever separated from evil paths of existence. In a treatise known for its systematic exposition of the One Mind (*isshin*, 一心), modern scholars have regarded this reference to the worship of Amida with suspicion and a few have even questioned whether this section (T. 1666:583a12–21, hereafter PL section) was a part of the “original text” or a later interpolation. Indeed, the majority of the *Qixinlun* is given over to philosophical discussion of the One Mind, and this reference to Amida is the only mention of a specific buddha or bodhisattva in the text. Moreover, some might question whether the proposed practice of meditation on Amida Buddha with the intention of being born in his Pure Land is in keeping with the central tenets of the treatise: that all things are of the One Mind and that the mind being permeated with suchness is a pure potentiality of buddhahood. If all things are of the mind, can we not say that Amida and his Western Paradise are merely creations of the mind and ultimately unreal? If the mind is permeated with suchness and serves as the matrix or womb of enlightenment, what need does the practitioner have in meditating on an external buddha in a distant land?<sup>3</sup>

While the scholarly suspicions concerning this section and its relation to the text as a whole are certainly well warranted, earlier scholarship has often presupposed in their examination of this section a certain

understanding of Pure Land faith and practice, an understanding that post-dates the sixth-century text. Beginning with Shandao (613–681) in China and continuing with Hōnen (1133–1212) and Shinran (1173–1262) in Japan, Pure Land practice increasingly became identified as saying the name of Amida Buddha, with meditation playing less a role and even being considered an indication of a lack of faith in the other power of the Buddha. The brief exhortation to meditate on Amida in order to strengthen one’s faith found at the end of the *Qixinlun*, even if it was a latter interpolation, represents a different conception of Pure Land faith and practice, both earlier and continuing within other schools.

In order to understand this section and re-examine the relation of it to the *Qixinlun* as a whole, it is necessary to return this section to the period in which the text that we now have was most likely translated/composed. After a brief introduction to the questions concerning the origin, authorship, and production of the text as well as the doubts over the PL section, this short paper will provide two close readings of the PL section. First, we will offer an **inter-textual reading** of the PL section, examining its language in the light of earlier texts. Second, we will then give an **intra-textual reading** of the section, showing how it fits in the text as a whole. Even if this section was a later interpolation, there is much in the text that foreshadows the section and reveals a rationale to this “addition.” Through these two close readings, we will locate the meaning of the PL section in terms of earlier Buddhist texts and the treatise as a whole.

#### I. THE AWAKENING OF FAITH AND SCHOLARLY DOUBT

The *Qixinlun* is a text that has occasioned a lot of doubt. Scholars are still unsure of who authored the text and where and when it was composed and translated, if indeed it is a translation at all. Without the discovery of some new document, many of these questions will no doubt continue.

According to the earliest known commentary by Tanyan (516–588), the text was composed by Aśvaghōṣa (first or second century CE), the famed Indian poet and supposed author of the *Buddhacarita* (Life of the Buddha). According to the comprehensive catalogue of Buddhist texts called the *Lidai sanbaoji* (Record of the Three Treasures of the Successive Dynasties, 597), the treatise was written by Aśvaghōṣa and a translation was made in 550 by the Indian monk Paramārtha (499–569), a translator

of many important Yogācāra treatises, such as the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (Compendium of Mahāyāna, T. 1593). A catalog compiled in 730 called the *Kaiyuan shijiaolu* (Catalogue of the Buddhist Teachings in the Kaiyuan Era, 開元釋教錄, T. 55:2154:538b) lists a second translation of the treatise by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda (650–710), the translator of the eighty fascicle *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (Garland Scripture, T. 279).

Few scholars today accept that the treatise was composed by Aśvaghoṣa, and many regard the text that we have as an apocryphal work composed in sixth-century China. The main reason why the authorship of Aśvaghoṣa is challenged is that many of the doctrinal concepts found in the text represent later developments of Mahāyāna Buddhist thought that could not possibly have been known by the Aśvaghoṣa of the first or second century CE.<sup>4</sup> To make matters more complicated, questions have been raised concerning whether or not Paramārtha is indeed the translator, and it has even been suggested that the second translation by Śikṣānanda was based on a Sanskrit translation of the Chinese original. While the lack of a Sanskrit original or extant Tibetan version has led many scholars to suppose that it was composed in China, the literary quality of the text suggests that its origins are not entirely Chinese. In comparison with other forged translations, the *Qixinlun* does not quote from known translations and has no known allusions to Taoist or Confucian texts. Moreover, the text is written in an extremely concise manner without literary embellishment, out of keeping with the ornate *pianliti* style that was popular in the sixth century.<sup>5</sup> This evidence has led many scholars to conjecture that some form of the text was produced in either India or Central Asia and that the author or authors, perhaps even Paramārtha himself, rewrote the text in light of sixth-century Chinese intellectual concerns.<sup>6</sup>

Like the treatise itself, the PL section has occasioned doubts and has often been interpreted as a later interpolation by some unknown author. According to Walter Liebenthal, the fourth section on faith and practice is “one of the most corrupt sections in the whole treatise,”<sup>7</sup> and the admonition to practice meditation on Amida (*buddhānusmṛti*) is in contradiction with an earlier statement that true *samādhi* neither abides in the characteristics of perception (*lakṣaṇa*) nor in the characteristics acquired (*upalakṣaṇa*).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he finds that the exhortation to meditate on Amida, whom he regards as a petitionary deity, is in contrast with the conception of the pervasive yet impersonal “Cosmic Mind” expressed in the main body of the text. Concerned with

this incongruity, Liebenthal wonders if Tanluan (476–542?) or one of his disciples “tampered” with the text or if the author of the text was pressured by Amida worshippers in his community.<sup>9</sup> In the notes to his English translation of the *Qixinlun*, Yoshihito Hakeda similarly finds that this section “does not belong to the discussion of five practices but is an appendix.”<sup>10</sup>

In perhaps the foremost study of the *Qixinlun*, KASHIWAGI Hiroo has also argued that the PL section is possibly an addition to the text. Without denying the historical relation between *tathāgatagarbha* thought and Amida faith, as demonstrated in the reference to Amida in texts like the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*Baoxing lun*, T. 1611), the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* (*Ru Lengjia jing*, T. 671), and Paramārtha’s translation of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (*She dasheng lun*, T. 1593), Kashiwagi notes that the connection between the contents of these texts and Amida faith is by no means necessary. Many other *tathāgatagarbha* texts, such as the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* (*Dafengdeng rulaizang jing*, T. 666), the *Buzeng bujian jing* (Neither Increasing nor Decreasing Sutra, T. 668), and the *Foxinlun* (Buddha-Nature Treatise, T. 1610), do not mention Amida at all. In addition, if one looks at the different translations of the first category of texts, the reference to Amida is not always found. Based on this evidence, Kashiwagi argues that the connection between *tathāgatagarbha* thought and Amida faith is not a necessary relation but merely a product of historical circumstance.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these doubts, Kashiwagi nevertheless finds that meditation on Amida as an expedient to attain non-retrogressive faith is given a position in the entirety of the *Qixinlun* through a suggestion of this practice found in the seventh item of the “Reasons for Writing” at the beginning of the text. Moreover, noting the resemblance of this conception of meditation on Amida as an expedient to attain non-retrogressive faith with passages from the *Shizhu piposha lun* (Treatise Analyzing the Ten Stages, T. 1521) Kashiwagi supposes that the latter may have played a role in the formation of the text of the *Qixinlun*.<sup>12</sup>

## II. AN INTER-TEXTUAL READING OF THE PL SECTION

Before offering an intertextual reading of the PL section, it is necessary to say something of the Pure Land Buddhist literature that predates the *Qixinlun* and forms the background of the PL section. Although Pure Land Buddhism did not take shape as a separate school of Buddhism with a particular understanding of faith and practice in

Amida until the Tang dynasty (618–907), references to Amida and his Pure Land are found in a number of sutras that were translated into Chinese beginning as early as the Later Han (25–220).<sup>13</sup> The oldest sutra that refers to Amida is Lokakṣema’s translation of the *Pratyupanna-samādhi-sūtra* (*Banzhou sanmei jing*, T. 418, hereafter *Pratyupanna-sūtra*) in 179. While this text merely mentions Amida in passing, several translations of the Larger *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* were made first by Lokakṣema in the late second century (T. 362), Zhi Qian in the mid-third century (T. 361), and then Buddhahadra and Baoyun in the early fifth century (*Foshuo Wuliangshou jing*, T. 360, hereafter *Larger Sutra*).<sup>14</sup> These texts relate the story of Amida, describe the splendors of his Pure Land, and enumerate his vows to enable all sentient beings to be born there. After Kumārajīva’s (344–413) arrival in Changan in 401, the shorter *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* was translated (*Foshuo Amituo jing*, T. 365; hereafter *Amida Sutra*), as well as several translations of sutras and treatises that mention Amida, such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*Miaofalianhua jing*, T. 262:25c, 54c; hereafter *Lotus Sutra*), the *Dazhidu lun* (*Great Wisdom Treatise*, T. 1509:108c), and the aforementioned *Shizhu piposha lun*. In addition to the two *Sukhāvativyūha* sutras, another sutra that played a central role in the development of the Pure Land tradition in East Asia and is the *Guan wuliang shou fo jing* (*Contemplation on the Buddha of Infinite Light Sutra*, T. 365, hereafter *Contemplation Sutra*). Although traditionally thought to be a fifth-century translation by Kālayaśas (fl. early fifth century), it is now widely regarded as an apocryphal text.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, we should make mention of a short treatise called the *Wuliangshoujing youbotishe yuansheng ji* (*A Discourse on the Sutra of Eternal Life and Gāthā of Aspiration to be Born in the Pure Land*, T. 1524; hereafter *Treatise on Rebirth*) that is attributed to the Yogācāra master Vasubandhu (fl. late fourth or fifth century) and which was translated by Bodhiruci (sixth century) in 529. Also, an alleged disciple of Bodhiruci named Tanluan produced an important commentary on this treatise called the *Wangshenglun zhu* (*Commentary on the Treatise on Rebirth*, T. 1819), which is roughly contemporary with the *Qixinlun*.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the unified picture and singular interpretation presented in later developments in the Pure Land tradition, it must be stressed that these sutras and treatises present a diversity of conceptions of Amida and his Pure Land as well as a variety of practices and understandings of faith. When comparing the above-mentioned texts in

terms of their relevancy to the questions concerning the PL section, one of the questions that arise is just how we are to conceive of Amida and his Pure Land. According to Paul Harrison, the three main Pure Land sutras describe Amida and Pure Land as if they actually exist, while the *Pratyupanna-sūtra* presents a vision of Amida and his Pure Land as ultimately empty and a mind-only illusion.<sup>17</sup> Although the three Pure Land sutras do describe Amida “as if” he is a historical personage and Sukhāvātī “as if” it is a real geographical place, the picture presented in these texts is a little more complicated than naïve realism. In the *Larger Sutra*, Amida is also portrayed as having a resplendent buddha-body and an infinite lifetime, and his Pure Land is presented as a nirvana-like realm that is both empty and endowed with qualities of purity, quiescence, and eternity. Similar to the statement in the *Pratyupanna-sūtra* that the mind creates and is the Buddha (T. 418:906a), the *Contemplation Sutra*, which describes sixteen visualizations of Amida and his Pure Land, finds in the eighth visualization of Amida that “this mind creates the Buddha, this mind is the Buddha” (T. 365:343a). Based on the transcendent vision presented in these sutras, the *Treatise on Rebirth*, after describing the three perfections of Amida, the bodhisattvas, and Sukhāvātī, maintains that these three are ultimately the one dharma principle, the unconditioned *dharmakāya* (*asaṃkṛta-dharmakāya*) of True and Real Wisdom (真實智慧無為法身; T. 1524:232b).<sup>18</sup>

Another problem that arises when looking at these texts is the variety of practices and different understandings of the mind of the practitioner. In the *pratyupanna-samādhi* described in the *Pratyupanna-sūtra*, Amida is merely presented as an example of a form of meditation in which one beholds the buddhas of the present. Similarly, the *Shizhu piposha lun* describes the “easy practice” (安行) of saying the names of the buddhas, of which Amida, who has assured birth in his Pure Land for those who recite his name, is discussed as the example *par excellence*. In the three main Pure Land sutras, a variety of practices are outlined, such as performing various meritorious deeds, transferring merit, saying the name of Amida Buddha, wholehearted concentration on the Buddha, and contemplating the features of Amida and his Pure Land. Later in the *Treatise on Birth*, these practices are structured into a single visualization practice with five gates: (1) worshipping Amida; (2) praising him by reciting his name; (3) vowing to be reborn, which is explained as *śamatha*; (4) contemplating Amida and his Pure Land, which



is explained as *vipaśyanā*; and (5) transferring merit to other beings (T. 1524:231b).<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these various practices, the texts also describe the mental state of the practitioner. In the eighteenth vow of the *Larger Sutra*, meditation on the Buddha is described as having three aspects: a “sincere mind” (至心), “serene faith” (信樂), and the “desire to be born” (欲生) (T. 360:268a). In the *Contemplation Sutra*, it is said that those born in Amida’s land possess three kinds of mental states: the “utmost sincere mind” (至誠心), the “deep mind” (深心), and the “mind that arouses the vow to direct merit” (廻向發願心). According to the *Treatise on Rebirth*, the performance of the five mindful practices is said to produce the faithful mind (信心). As we can see here, one of the ambiguities found in these descriptions of the mental state of the practitioner is whether these states of mind are the necessary accompaniments of practice or the products of practice.

Now, let us look closely at the specific language of the PL section of *Qixinlun* in the light of the pre-existing literature in order to illuminate the conception of Amida and his Pure Land and the understanding of faith and practice found in the text.

Next, when sentient beings first learn this teaching and desire to seek correct faith, their minds are timid and weak. Because they abide in this world of suffering, they fear they will not be able to always meet with the various buddhas and personally present offerings, and they are apprehensive that, the faithful mind being difficult to perfect, they will be liable to regress.<sup>20</sup>

The section begins by singling out those who learn this teaching for the first time and seek correct faith, and it describes their initial state of mind as being “timid and weak” (怯弱). Interestingly, this expression is also found in the “Phantom City” chapter (化城喻品) of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus Sutra*, where we are told “the Buddha knows the minds of living beings are timid, weak and lowly, and so using the power of expedient means, he preaches two nirvanas in order to provide a resting place along the road” (T. 262:26a).<sup>21</sup> The expression is also found in the *Shizhu piposha lun*, where it is used to admonish those who too readily desire an easy practice without generating a great aspiration.<sup>22</sup>

Curiously, Liebenthal argues that the term “*sahā* world” (娑婆世界), which designates the enduring world of suffering, was a term that the author did not know,<sup>23</sup> but this term is found in many of



Kumārajīva's translations, including his translation of the *Amida Sutra* (T. 366:348a). Because the initial practitioner resides in such a world, there is the fear that they will not be able to "always meet with the various buddhas and personally present offerings" (常直諸佛親承供養). It was commonly held in early Buddhism that encountering a buddha and making offerings was a necessary requirement for enlightenment and that after the *parinirvāṇa* of Śākyamuni this world system is devoid of a buddha. With the development of Mahāyāna literature, various sutras sought to fill this absence by proclaiming that buddhas, such as Akṣobhya and Amida, existed in other world-systems and were accessible through various forms of *samādhi*.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the notion of being able to meet or see various buddhas through meditation became widespread in Mahāyāna literature. Connected to the fear of not being able to meet with various buddhas and make offerings is the apprehension that without their presence, one would lose faith and fall back into lower stages of the path.

In the next passage, we are told of a form of meditation to allay these fears and protect faith from regression.

They should know that the *tathāgatas* have a superior expedient means to embrace and protect the faithful mind. That is to say, taking wholehearted thought and meditation on a buddha as a cause and condition, they will, in accordance with their vows, obtain birth in a buddha land of another region, always be seen by a buddha, and forever be separated from evil paths.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, this expedient means is described as being employed to "embrace and protect the faithful mind" (接護信心). While the verbal expression *shehu* is most often used to describe the Buddha's protective activity toward sentient beings (接護),<sup>26</sup> here the object of this protective activity is faith. The expedient device itself is wholehearted concentration (專意) and meditation on a buddha (念佛), which are taken as the cause and condition of one's birth in a buddha land. Although the exact phraseology found here is somewhat unique, these two components are similarly distinguished in the description of the lowest grade of aspirants to the Pure Land in the *Larger Sutra*, where it is said that they "wholeheartedly think (專意) even if for ten thought-moments and meditate on the Buddha of Infinite Life (念無量壽佛), wishing to be born in that land" (T. 360:272c).<sup>27</sup>

The passage above ends with the karmic result of this practice, which is birth in a buddha land and which is simply described as in

“another region” (他方). Notice, so far, the passage is non-specific about which buddha and which buddha land. Also, the Chinese expression “Pure Land” (淨土) is not used. In a manner similar to the practices described in the *Pratyupanna-sūtra* and the *Shizhu piposha lun*, I would suggest that the non-specific character of this passage suggests a generic view of meditation on a buddha, of which Amida is given as the foremost example.

In the next passage, a sutra (修多羅) is cited as evidence of this excellent expedient device and an explanation is given of its result.

As a sutra expounds: “If someone wholeheartedly meditates on Amida Buddha of the world of Utmost Bliss in the West, if one directs the roots of goodness that one has cultivated and vows to be born in that world, then one obtains birth.” Because one always sees the Buddha, there will be no regression. If one contemplates that Buddha as suchness and as the *dharmakāya* and continually strives to cultivate this practice, one will ultimately obtain birth because one abides in correct *samādhi*.<sup>28</sup>

While there is no known Chinese sutra that exactly corresponds to this citation (and it is not at all clear where it begins and ends), similar language is found in many of the Pure Land sutras and treatises. Looking at this citation closely, we notice that there are three aspects to this practice: wholehearted meditation (專念), direction of the merit (廻向), and the vow or aspiration for birth (願求生). These three aspects are found in several passages in the *Larger Sutra*, particularly those describing the three grades of aspirants in the second part of the sutra. In the description of the upper grade, the sutra states: “Awakening the mind of enlightenment, they wholeheartedly meditate on the Buddha of Infinite Life, cultivate various virtues, and aspire for birth in that land” (T. 360:272b). Notice here, the two components mentioned earlier are combined in wholehearted meditation (專念). The transfer of merit is mentioned in the opening preface to three kinds of aspirants, which also explains that the result of these practices will be the attainment of birth and entrance into stage of non-retrogression (不退轉). The stage of non-retrogression (*avaivartika*) is mentioned as a benefit to those who are born in the Pure Land in both the *Larger Sutra* and the *Amida Sutra*. It is also discussed at length in *Shizhu piposha lun*, where it is said that the easy practice of reciting the names of the buddhas allows one to quickly enter the stage of non-retrogression. Although there are various interpretations of this stage, it is generally regarded

as the first stage in the bodhisattva path, the stage of joy (*pramuditā-bhūmi*) where one awakens to the undefiled wisdom (*anāśrava prajñā*) and gains partial insight into true suchness. Once this stage is attained and this wisdom is acquired, one will no longer fall back into lower stages.<sup>29</sup>

In the final lines of the PL section, the expedient means of meditating on a buddha such as Amida is further explained as ultimately the contemplation of suchness and the *dharmakāya* (真如法身). In this passage, this ultimate contemplation precedes birth, though it is not clear here whether “birth” refers to birth in the Pure Land or the birth of wisdom.<sup>30</sup> In the Pure Land sutras, it is unclear at what point this ultimate contemplation of suchness and the Buddha as *dharmakāya* occurs. According to the *Larger Sutra*, the bodhisattvas born in Amida’s Pure Land perceive all dharmas as empty and suchness and have practiced the *samādhis* of emptiness, non-form and non-desire, and non-arising and non-ceasing (*T. 360:274ab*), but this is after or upon birth. The only clue we get in the *Larger Sutra* as to how a practitioner is to view Amida’s body is given in the section on the three aspirants. In the highest grade, the aspirant directly sees Amida and his host at death. When the aspirant of the middling grade dies, Amida transforms and manifests his buddha-body adorned with the signs of a true buddha. In the lowest grade, the aspirant merely sees Amida in a dream. According to the *Contemplation Sutra*, those who see the wondrous adornments of the Pure Land will attain insight into the non-arising of all dharmas (*T. 365:341c*) and those who visualize the buddha-body of Amida simultaneously perceive the bodies of all buddhas and realize the buddha-mind (*T. 365:343bc*). In the chapter on the aids to the *samādhi* of meditation on a buddha of the *Shizhu piposha lun*, the bodhisattva is told to concentrate on the buddha’s *dharmakāya* and without attachment to either the physical body or the dharma-body of the buddhas realize that all dharmas are eternally quiescent like empty space (*T. 1521:86a*). Later treatises, such as the *Treatise on Rebirth* and Tanluan’s commentary, interpreted Amida and his Pure Land in terms of suchness and maintained that ultimately one should see Amida as the *dharmakāya*.

It should be clear from this reading of the PL section that while it alludes to previous Pure Land literature, it presents a particular conception of Amida and the Pure Land and a particular understanding of faith and practice. It is interesting that there is no mention here of saying the name of Amida or any other buddha. The practice found

here is contemplation and *samādhi*, in keeping with the preceding sections. Also, no mention is made of the other power (他力) of the Buddha, a concept popularized in Tanluan's *Commentary on the Treatise of Rebirth*. Indeed, the practitioner is told to cultivate this meditative practice with diligence. A central concern expressed in the PL section is that one will not be able to meet and see a buddha and will lose faith. The expedient practice that it offers will allow one to continually be in the presence of a buddha and attain a non-retrogressive faith. Ultimately, the goal of the practice is not to merely see a buddha but to contemplate that buddha as suchness and *dharmakāya*, key notions discussed in the exposition on the One Mind found in the body of the *Qixinlun*.

### III. AN INTRA-TEXTUAL READING OF THE PL SECTION

Although some have argued that the PL section might have been an interpolation by a later figure that tampered with the “original,” a close reading of the text *that we have* reveals a close relation between the PL section and the text as a whole. If indeed the PL section was added to some earlier version of the text, the text as a whole was significantly altered as well to rationalize this addition. Let us look closely at the entirety of the text and how what precedes the PL section suggests and rationalizes the need for such an expedient device as wholehearted meditation on a buddha such as Amida.

Scholars such as Kashiwagi and Hakeda, while expressing their doubts about the PL section, have noted that the section is nevertheless suggested by the seventh item in the “reasons for writing” given at the beginning of the text.

The seventh reason is to explain to them the expedient means of wholehearted meditation so that they may be born in the presence of the Buddha and keep their minds fixed in an unretrogressive faith.<sup>31</sup>

The concerns to maintain non-retrogressive faith and cultivate the faithful mind are also mentioned in reasons three and four, and the need to reveal an expedient means to eliminate karma and protect the mind is listed as the fifth reason. All eight of the reasons for writing show a marked concern for the ordinary person (凡夫, *prthagjana*), who is prone to error and needs encouragement. In the question and answer section that follows the eight reasons, we are told that the need for an explanation of the teachings such as found in this treatise, while not necessary while the Tathāgata was present in the world,

is now necessary for those who seek to understand the vast and profound meaning of the Tathāgata, after his passing from the world. This concern for correct understanding and non-regressive faith in a world where the Buddha is *absent* naturally leads to a discourse and a practice that will enable one to be in the *presence* of a buddha.<sup>32</sup>

The main body of the *Qixinlun* is contained in part three, where we are given a systematic exposition of the true meaning of the One Mind in terms of its essence and its manifestation in the conditioned world of life and death. Here, we are told that all things are of the One Mind, which in its essence is suchness (真如) and in the conditioned world of life and death is the “womb of enlightenment” (如来藏, *tathāgatagarbha*) within all sentient beings. Throughout the rest of part three, the text alternates between the absolute and relative viewpoints, explaining how the mind is in its essence originally pure and enlightened but also how that same mind is characterized by deluded thoughts and ignorance and thus impure and unenlightened.

In answer to the question of how if all sentient beings are equally endowed with suchness and purity can there be so many kinds of believers and non-believers, the author of the treatise explains that the permeation of suchness operates through both a primary cause and a coordinating condition (因緣). It illustrates this with the example of the piece of wood. Although a piece of wood possesses the fire-nature within as the true cause of its burning, without someone who knows this and who can employ the skillful means to light it, the wood will not burn of its own accord. Enlightenment is explained in a similar fashion. As this passage is key to my overall argument, I quote it at length.

In the same way a man, though he is in possession of the correct primary cause, [Suchness with] permeating force, cannot put an end to his defilements by himself alone and enter nirvana unless he is provided with coordinating causes, i.e. his encounters with the buddhas, bodhisattvas, or good spiritual friends. Even though coordinating causes from without may be sufficiently provided, if the pure principle [i.e., Suchness] within is lacking in the force of permeation, then a man cannot ultimately loathe the suffering of *samsara* and seek bliss in nirvana. However, if both the primary and the coordinating causes are sufficiently provided, then because of his possession of the force of permeation [of Suchness from within] and the compassionate protection of the buddhas and bodhisattvas [from without], he is able to develop a loathing for suffering, to believe that nirvana is real, and to cultivate his capacity for goodness. And when his cultivation of the

capacity for goodness matures, he will as a result meet the buddhas and bodhisattvas and will be instructed, taught, benefited, and given joy, and then he will be able to advance on the path to nirvana.<sup>33</sup>

In this key passage, enlightenment is said to require both the true cause (正因) of the permeation of suchness within and the external condition (外緣) of meeting with a buddha, bodhisattva, or spiritual friend. Again, we see here a concern for the presence of a buddha or other spiritual being, which is stated here as a necessary condition for progress on the path.

In the following section, these external coordinating causes are further distinguished into two categories: particular (差別緣) and universal coordinating conditions (平等緣). Under the particular coordinating conditions, it is said that from the moment a particular individual aspires to seek enlightenment one sees or meditates on buddhas and bodhisattvas, who sometimes appear as family, friends, and enemies and whose great compassion allows for the force of permeation. In the case of the general coordinating causes, it is said that every buddha and bodhisattva vows to save all sentient beings and that the power of their wisdom naturally perfumes (自然薰習) sentient beings and allows them to universally see the various buddhas through *samādhi*. In these two types of external conditions, seeing a buddha or bodhisattva is both the cause and the result of the functioning of the permeation of suchness.

But if the One Mind is ultimately without distinctions and undifferentiated, how can there be talk of internal causes and external conditions? How can there be talk of “this” influencing “that”? In discussing the influences/function of suchness (真如用), *Qixinlun* explains that the buddhas made great vows to liberate all sentient beings because they knew that ultimately there was no distinction between themselves and others. Because the buddhas are identical with the *dharmakāya* and all-pervasive suchness, their spontaneous activities are incomprehensible and without any mark of influence. Nevertheless, “because of the fact that sentient beings receive benefit through seeing or hearing them, their influences [i.e., of suchness] can be spoken of [in relative terms].”<sup>34</sup>

The *Qixinlun* further elaborates by distinguishing between two different conceptions of the influences of suchness. First, there is the mind of the ordinary man and of the two vehicles (the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*) that can only comprehend the influence of

suchness as the outer influence of a physical form, a “corresponding-body” (應身, *nirmāṇakāya*). Second, there is the mind of the bodhisattva from the initial stages until the final stages that realizes that the external world is unreal and perceives the influence of suchness as a “recompense body” (報身, *sambhogakāya*). This “recompense body” is described as having infinite corporeal forms and the major and minor marks of a buddha, and “the land of its abode has innumerable adornments.”<sup>35</sup> Although Amida and his Pure Land are not mentioned here, the reference to a “recompense-body” buddha residing in a land with innumerable adornments is clearly suggestive of a buddha like Amida and a land like Sukhāvātī. It is interesting to note here that the vision of such a buddha who resides in a land of adornment is found not in the ordinary believer but rather in the bodhisattva. The text continues by noting that while these bodhisattvas know that these marks and adornments do not come from without and are of the mind, their conception of the functioning of suchness is still incomplete, as it is not free of dualistic thinking. When the bodhisattva leaves the last stage of bodhisattvahood, he or she will be free of dualistic thinking and will see (or enter into) the ultimate, the *dharmakāya*. As we saw in the final words of the PL section, the ultimate goal of the practice is to contemplate “that Buddha as suchness and as the *dharmakāya*.”

In the discussion of the aspiration for enlightenment through the perfection of faith in chapter three of part three, the *Qixinlun* distinguishes between those of higher capacity and those of slight capacity. In case of the former, it is said that “having been able to meet with the buddhas, they serve them, honor them, and practice the faith.”<sup>36</sup> The language here closely resembles the language of the PL section. The only difference is that in the PL section beginning practitioners are said to fear that they will not be able to perfect their faith because they are unable to meet and honor the buddhas. At the end of this section on the perfection of faith, we find that “after the aspiration for enlightenment has been aroused by the bodhisattva, they are forever separated from timidity and weakness (怯弱) and do not fear descending into the stage of the two vehicles.”<sup>37</sup> Here again, we see language quite similar to the PL section, though it is expressed here not as the fear of the beginning practitioner but as the accomplishment of the bodhisattva.

As stated earlier, the PL section is found at the end of part four, which is devoted to faith and practice. After describing the four kinds



of faith in the *ultimate source*, the excellent qualities of the Buddha, the great benefits of the dharma and the sangha, the *Qixinlun* lists the five practices of charity, observance of the precepts, patience, zeal, and cessation and contemplation. Although cessation and contemplation are discussed in turn, it is important to note that they are listed as one practice. The process of the practice of cessation is described as stopping the mind and realizing that all things are of the mind. Once one is absorbed in the concentration of suchness, one's faith is strengthened and one attains a state of non-retrogression. Ultimately, one attains the "*samādhi* of one movement" (一行三昧) in which one realizes the one aspect of the *dharmadhātu* and the non-duality of the *dharmakāya* and all sentient beings. In order not to get absorbed in this state and keep from performing compassionate deeds, one must also practice contemplation, in which one recognizes that all things are produced by primary causes and coordinating conditions. Through cessation, it is said that one severs one's attachments to the world and abandons the "timid and weak" views of the lesser two vehicles. By practicing contemplation, one arouses the great mind of compassion and cultivates good roots.

What follows next is of course the PL section. It should now be clear that this section follows naturally from what precedes it. Let us quote the PL section again in full to make our conclusions clear.

Next, when sentient beings first learn this teaching and desire to seek correct faith, their minds are timid and weak. Because they abide in this world of suffering, they fear they will not be able to always meet with the various buddhas and personally present offerings, and they are apprehensive that, the faithful mind being difficult to perfect, they will be liable to fall back. They should know that the *tathāgatas* have a superior expedient means to embrace and protect the faithful mind. That is to say, taking wholehearted concentration and meditation on a buddha as a cause and condition, they will, in accordance with their vows, obtain birth in a buddha land of another region, always be seen by a buddha, and forever be separated from evil paths. As a sutra expounds: "If someone whole-heartedly meditates on Amida Buddha of the world of Utmost Bliss in the West, if one directs the roots of goodness that one has cultivated and vows to be born in that world, then they will obtain birth." Because one always sees the Buddha, there will be no regression. If one contemplates that Buddha as suchness and *dharmakāya* and continually strives to cultivate this practice, one will ultimately obtain birth, because one abides in correct *samādhi*.

In the final words of the section, meditation on Amida is described as contemplation of suchness and *dharmakāya*. The attainment of birth, which is either birth in the Pure Land or birth of undefiled wisdom, is also said to be a result of correct *samādhi*, or cessation. Thus, this section defines meditation on a buddha such as Amida in terms of the twofold meditative practices of cessation and clear observation discussed in the preceding passages. Moreover, the PL section follows its usual course of extending its discussion to the case of the ordinary practitioner. Understanding the PL section based on the different conceptions of the influence of suchness mentioned in part three, we find that the section itself moves from the initial stage of the beginner, to the resplendent vision of a buddha like Amida as a *sambhogakāya*, and finally to the ultimate goal of the practice, the contemplation of suchness and the *dharmakāya*.

As we can now see, the PL section clearly fits within the *Qixinlun* as a whole. In terms of its language, the PL section resonates with many of the preceding passages. For example, the phrase “correct faith” (正心), which Liebenthal maintains the author could not have known, is used five times (T. 1666:575b [1x], 577c [1x], 581a [1x], 583a [2x]). The phrase “timid and weak” is used a total of seven times in the *Qixinlun* (T. 1666:581a [2x], 581b [1x], 582a [1x], 583a [3x]). The phrase “meet with the various buddhas” is used three times (T. 1666:578c [1x], 580b [1x], 583a [1x]). The phrase “faithful mind” is used fifteen times (T. 1666:575b [1x], 575c [2x], 580b [3x], 581c [4x], 582a [2x], 583a [3x]).

In terms of the issue of perfecting faith and attaining a state of non-retrogression, this concern is announced in the reasons for writing at the beginning of the treatise, explained in the body of the text, and given an expedient practice to reach this goal in the PL section. Underlying the fear that one will not be able to maintain a faithful mind is the concern for the absence of a buddha in a post-*parinirvāṇa* world. The *Qixinlun* provides an answer to this problem by revealing the presence of the Buddha in the world as the all-pervasive suchness, the indivisible *dharmadhātu*. It also answers this concern by offering an expedient practice that provides a way to be in the presence of a buddha. Here, we have the primary cause of permeation of suchness within and the coordinating condition of the compassionate protection of a buddha from without.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

While there have been some doubts about whether the PL section was a part of an original text of the *Awakening of Faith*, there can be little doubt now that it is integral part of the text we have. Rather than understand this practice of meditating on Amida in terms of later Pure Land developments, I have chosen to read this section in terms of pre-existing literature and within the text as a whole. What we find is an understanding of such a practice that, while sharing some similarities with that found in pre-existing literature, is fully situated within the doctrinal and practice-related concerns of the treatise itself.

### NOTES

1. A word on my method of listing titles of sutras and treatises: If a Sanskrit original exists and I am referring to that text, I will give the Sanskrit title. If only a Chinese text exists, I will give the Chinese title, English translation, and *Taishō* number in quotes. References to specific passages in the *Taishō* canon are given by page number and block.
2. Generally, I have used Amida Buddha throughout the paper to refer to Amitābha (Buddha of Infinite Light) and Amitāyus (Buddha of Infinite Life) unless otherwise stated. In much of the Pure Land literature, these two are conflated.
3. Even before the production of the *Qixinlun* in the sixth century, similar such questions were asked by Chinese Buddhists such as Daosheng (d. 434), who argued that since buddha-nature is within us, there is no need to go to a pure land beyond. The idea of a pure land is merely the artifice of the Buddha.
4. For example, Kashiwagi lists a number of doctrinal concepts, such as, suchness as both empty and non-empty, the various attributes concerning *tathāgatagarbha*, connection between *tathāgatagarbha* and *ālayavijñāna*, etc., that represent late developments in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. KASHIWAGI Hiroo, *Daijō kishinron no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1981), 177.
5. Ryuichi Abe, introduction to *The Awakening of Faith*, trans. Yoshihito Hakeda, 2<sup>nd</sup> repr. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 25.
6. Kashiwagi believes that Paramārtha or someone of his circle may have played a role in the production of the text that we have. Kashiwagi, *Daijō kishinron no kenkyū*, 181.
7. Walter Liebenthal, "New Light on the *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda śāstra*," *T'oung Pao* 46 (1958): 187.
8. *Ibid.*, 187. The earlier section he is referring to is T. 1666:582b.

9. Ibid., 189. Concerning this incongruity, Liebethal finds: “In the first part of the *Śāstra* the Buddha is cosmic mind, manifesting himself in different ways, but completely beyond human reach. The Chinese Sage, indeed, was never approached like a god by way of offerings and prayer. Amitābha, on the contrary, is a god in heaven who can be induced to favour by good deeds setting in motion the mechanism of *karman*. Both concepts do not fit together.” Same page.

10. Yoshihito Hakeda, *The Awakening of Faith*, attributed to Aśvagoṣa, 2<sup>nd</sup> repr. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 102.

11. Kashiwagi, *Daijō kishinron no kenkyū*, 379–380.

12. Ibid., 380–381.

13. This is a brief survey of Buddhist literature with references to Amitābha and is obviously very cursory. According to FUJITA Kōtatsu, the number of extant Sanskrit texts number of texts that refer to Amitābha and his Pure Land is 31 and the number of Chinese Buddhist texts of Indian origin is 290. FUJITA Kōtatsu, *Genshi jōdo shisō kenkyū* (A Study of Early Pure Land Buddhism), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 141–161.

14. The last translation listed is the most widely used version in Pure Land Buddhism and is traditionally attributed to the third-century monk Saṅghavarman in medieval catalogues. This attribution has been questioned, and many scholars believe that this translation was actually made by Buddhahadra and Baoyun in the early fifth century. For the problems concerning the *Larger Sutra*, see Fujita, *Genshi jōdo shisō kenkyū*.

15. For a discussion of the textual origins of this text, see FUJITA Kōtatsu, “The Textual Origins of the Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching: A Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism,” trans. Kenneth Tanaka, in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990). Fujita takes a compromise position on the text, agreeing with both those who argue for its Central Asian origin and those who argue that the present text shows evidence of Chinese (re-)composition. Also, see Julian Pas, “The Kuan-wu-liang-shou Fo-ching: Its Origin and Literary Criticism,” in *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilizations*, ed. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott (Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1977).

16. The exact dates of this commentary are unknown. According to Daoxuan’s biography, Tanluan died in 542, though some evidence suggests a later date. The temporal proximity to the *Qixinlun* and his alleged connections to the members of the Di-lun school suggest the possibility of a relationship between Tanluan and the *Qixinlun*.

17. Paul Harrison, trans., introduction to *Pratyupanna Samādhi Sūtra*, BDK English Tripitaka 25-II (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and

Research, 1998), 3.

18. Although Amida is commonly regarded as a *sambhogakāya*, neither the *Treatise on Rebirth* nor Tanluan's commentary make this identification clearly. It is Daochuo (562–645) who clearly identifies Amida as a *sambhogakāya* in the *Anle ji* (The Collection of Peace and Bliss, T. 1958).

19. I am following the interpretation of this text given by Richard Payne, who convincingly argues that the five gates of contemplation form a single visualization practice or *sādhana*. Richard Payne, “The Five Contemplative Gates of Vasubandhu's Rebirth Treatise as a Ritualized Visualization Practice,” in *The Pure Land: History and Development*, eds. James Foard, Michael Solomon, and Richard Payne (Berkeley: Regents of the University of California, 1996), 233–266.

20. T. 1666:583a 12–15. The translation of the PL section is my own. In addition to Hakeda's English translation, I made reference to Takemura's study and Japanese translation: TAKEMURA Makio, *Daijō kishinron dokushaku* (Tokyo: Sankibō, 1993).

21. *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 103. T. 262:26a.

22. Hisao Inagaki, trans., *Nāgārjuna's Discourse on the Ten Stages (Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā): A Study and Translation from Chinese of Verses and Chapter 9* (Kyoto: Ryukoku gakkai, 1998), 138–139.

23. It is unclear why Liebethal thinks that this term, as well as *nienfo*, *wangsheng*, and *zhengxin*, would be unknown to the author. Many of the texts that he cites have these terms, and it is difficult to believe that the producer of the *Qixinlun* would be unaware of Kumārajīva's translations.

24. See Jan Nattier, “The Indian Roots of Pure Land Buddhism: Insights from the Oldest Chinese Versions of the Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha,” *Pacific World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 5 (2003): 179–201. In this article, she has argued convincingly that in the earlier Pure Land literature, such as the translation of *Akṣobhyavyūha-sūtra* (T. 313) and the earlier translations of the *Sukhāvātī* sutras, the “one buddha per world” principle was still operating.

25. T. 1666:583a15–17.

26. For examples of the latter, see Bodhiruci's translation of the *Mahāsatyanirgrantha-sūtra* (*Dasazhe niganzi suoshuo jing*, T. 272:330a) and Narendrayāśas's translation of the *Mahākaruṇā-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*Dabeijing*, T. 380:971a).

27. T. 360:272c. In the description of the upper and middle grades, the language used is “wholehearted concentration on the Buddha of Limitless Life” (一向專念無量壽佛).

28. T. 1666:17–21.

29. Hisao Inagaki, trans., *Nāgārjuna's Discourse on the Ten Stages*, 139n1, 160.
30. Finding the final sentence of the PL section contrary to expectations, Takemura argues that birth here refers to the birth of Buddha wisdom. Takemura, *Daijō kishinron dokushaku*, 504.
31. Hakeda, trans., *Awakening of Faith*, 34. T. 1666:575c. For part three of this paper, I have sometimes relied on Hakeda's translation rather than re-translate all the significant passages.
32. Recently, in the work of Gregory Schopen, John Strong, and Malcolm Eckel, the dialectic between presence and absence has become a popular hermeneutical device in analyzing images, relics, and material signs of the Buddha. In a similar fashion, I would argue as well that Pure Land Buddhism, with its methods of visualizing a buddha and being born in their Pure Land, arose out of the need to be in the presence of a buddha in a post-*parinirvāṇa* world that was marked by absence.
33. Hakeda, trans, *Awakening of Faith*, 63. Bracketed material is Hakeda's. T. 1666:578c.
34. *Ibid.* 69. T. 1666:579b.
35. *Ibid.*, 70. T. 1666:579b. Hakeda's translation here is a little free. Strictly speaking, there is no mention of a "land," the text merely says the "place where they abide."
36. *Ibid.*, 79. T. 1666:580b.
37. T. 1666:581a.