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Chapter 6: “Soteriology: is “Salvation by Grace Through Faith” Unique to Christianity?”

### Summary

This chapter starts out with the discourse happening within Hinduism between two branches of Vaishnava Hinduism called the Vadagalais and the Tengalais and how they differ in the role of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. This introduced the question this chapter focuses on, which is “Is “salvation by grace through faith” unique to Christianity?” Tennent explains why this question is important to think about, because there is a growth in Christianity in the Eastern World, which means more Christians with backgrounds of other religions and different ideas of grace. Tennent opens up this topic with Shinran Shonin as Japan’s “Martin Luther” and how there are parallels between the Protestant Christianity and Reformed Buddhism, along with Martin Luther and Shinran Shonin. Tennent then starts to introduce Buddhism and how “Shin Buddhism” is tied into the overall history of Buddhism. Then, Tennent goes into the similarities and the discontinuity of Shinran Shonin and Martin Luther which he introduces with the growing discourse of comparative religions. Next, Tennent goes into the discourse of doctrine of grace between Shin Buddhism and Christianity. After, he goes deeper into the comparison of Christian faith and Pure Land Shinjin. The conclusion is that though the idea of grace is very similar, salvation in Christianity can only come from the One and Only Jesus Christ.

### Key Learning/ Questions

- Pure Land Buddhism is the most dominant stream of Mahayana Buddhism.
- Pure Land Buddhism focuses on nembutsu and trusts in Amida Buddha for salvation.
- When Shinran was exiled from the capital, he was stuck in the between of not priest nor layperson. He started to realize his own wickedness and see how difficult it was to be Buddhist and also live a normal life.
- Four Key Elements in the teaching of Shinran
  - Turning through the three vows to embrace “other power”
  - Single repetition of the nembutsu
  - The only way to salvation is through trusting in Amida Buddha
  - Grace means unmerited grace, or it is no grace at all.
- How do we, as Christians, evangelize to these Buddhists? How would we persuade these Buddhists that we agree that there is only one way to salvation, but the “Only Way” is Jesus?
- How are Shin Buddhists converting to Christianity today?
- Does “spiritual rebirth” grant them status of deity?
- Is the Amida Buddha the Buddhist equivalent to Jesus Christ?
  - Because this is what I’m lead to assume when it comes to being saved by grace through faith. But, for Shin Buddhism, it seems it’s “saved by grace, through trust.”
- What are they trusting in when they put their trust in the Amida Buddha?
  - Would it be the fact that this person had reached Nirvana and has become “Other Power?”
- Down to the number of children, there were many parallels between Shinran and Luther.
- Four phrases to summarize the theology of Luther
  - Sola gratia
  - Sola Fide

- Sola Scriptura
- Solo Christo

### **Mission Implications**

Heaven is greater than reaching Nirvana. How do we persuade Buddhists of this specific group, that it's not the Amida Buddha, but Jesus Christ that we receive salvation by grace through faith? Someone could assume that it would be easy to evangelize to these Shin Buddhists, because of all the parallels between the two religions. However, just ask in the Muslim religion, where Jesus Himself is visiting people in their dreams, I have a feeling only through the revelation of Jesus Christ Himself would lead people to conversion. Genuine, courageous, and love-filled conversations with these Buddhists might be all that we can do as missionaries. Asking them where the power of the name of the Amida Buddha comes from. Or we could talk to them and ask for and talk about evidence of reincarnation.