

## NOTES

all enlightened Buddhist laymen. He is widely recognized as the savior of Buddhism in general and Zen in particular during the Meiji era. Tesshū restored and founded scores of temples, supported dozens of priests (as well as an army of beggars, down-and-out samurai, invalids, and stray dogs and cats), protected Buddhist art treasures from vandals, and waged a single-handed battle against anti-Buddhist Shintoists and Christian missionaries. When Tesshū died, virtually every Buddhist abbot in the country attended his funeral and he was declared by one and all to be a reincarnation of Vimalakīrti. (Although I didn't mention it in the book, Tesshū was also indirectly responsible for the introduction of Zen to the United States. Tesshū was an early patron of Shaku Sōen, who presented Zen Buddhism at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, and the First Zen Society of America was a branch of the Ryōbō-kai, founded by Tesshū and several other laymen.)

I must also protest Aitken's attempt to speak *ex cathedra* as a "Zen teacher." His lack of experience with two of the three disciplines involved in the book and his personal prejudice against a practice that does not fit in with his preconceived notion of what Zen is renders his review invalid. Furthermore, to imply, as Aitken does in the last paragraph, that his own brand of one-dimensional, plodding, fussy Zen is somehow superior to that of Tesshū's "live completely, die completely" Zen is an insult to the good judgment of all of his predecessors. Aitken's run-of-the-mill approach may be suitable for timid souls but, compared to that of Tesshū, it is certainly less inspiring, much duller, and surely less rewarding.

JOHN STEVENS

Robert Aitken replies:

I found errors in my review of John Stevens' *The Sword of No Sword* and sought to revise it, but was advised by the editors that the piece was already set up in type, and that I could submit a correction for the next issue. I did so, but now this letter will run in its place.

The main error was my misinterpretation of Tung-shan's fourth gāthā in his Five Ranks. The verse, as translated by William F. Powell, runs as follows:

Two crossed swords, neither permitting retreat:  
Dextrously wielded, like lotus amidst fire.

Similarly, there is a natural determination to ascend the heavens.<sup>1</sup>

I suggested that this can be interpreted as the tension between the universal and the particular. While this interpretation is true for the Five Ranks generally, each of the Ranks is a particular aspect of the tension, and this fourth gāthā refers to the tension between particular and particular: between the one aspiring for enlightenment and the many beings of the world.

I regret this mistake. Another obvious error in my review relates to the monk who stood before the train at Engaku-ji. He could not have been a student of Imakita Kōsen Rōshi, as the railroad line was not yet built in his time. If the story is not apocryphal, it can probably be traced to the time of Shaku Sōen Zenji.

Yamaoka Tesshū was indeed a fine calligrapher. Miyamoto Musashi was a fine painter. Great creative talents don't always go hand in hand with religious understanding. As to whether or not Yamaoka Tesshū was more enlightened than Dōgen Kigen, whether or not he was too literal in his examination of the Fourth Rank, whether or not his manner and his realization poem showed that he had a sound experience, whether or not he was an alcoholic, or whether or not Robert Aitken is fussy and one-dimensional—well, I'll leave these questions to your readers. I do agree that it is important to apply Zen practice and understanding to daily life.

I gather from the tone of Mr. Stevens' letter that I have alienated him. I regret this very much. He is a scholar, a martial artist, a family man, and a priest whom I respect.

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<sup>1</sup> William F. Powell, trans., *The Record of Tung-shan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 62.