

# TRANSLATION

## Talks by Hakuin Introductory to Lectures On the Records of Old Sokkō (5) (*Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu*)

Translated by  
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IN THE THIRD section of the *Platform Sutra*, the one devoted to doubts and questions, the Sixth Patriarch makes the statement: “Considered as a manifestation in form, the Paradise in the West lies one hundred and eight thousand leagues from here, a distance created by the ten evils and eight false practices in ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

Shukō of Unsei, a Ming priest of recent times who lived in Hang-

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\* I wish to thank Tokiwa Gishin for helping me obtain a photocopy of a first edition of the *Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu*, annotated with marginalia in Hakuin's own hand, now in the library of Hanazono College. I have also been aided by Professor Tokiwa's recently published modern Japanese translation of the work (*Hakuin, Daijō butten* #27, Chūokōron-sha, Tokyo, 1988).

<sup>1</sup> The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (*Rokuso Daishi Hōbōdankyō* 六祖大師法寶壇經; Chin. *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching*) records the teachings of the Sixth Chinese Zen Patriarch Enō (慧能; Chin. Hui-neng, 638–713). Here Hakuin summarizes from a passage in which Enō answers a questioner who wants to know if invoking the name of Amida Buddha will enable the caller to be born in Amida Buddha's Pure Land in the West. T48. 2008.352a. The ten evils (*jū-aku* 十惡) are killing, stealing, adultery, lying, duplicity of speech, coarse language, filthy language, covetousness, anger, perverted views. The eight false practices (*hachi-ja* 八邪) are those in opposition to the eightfold holy path of right views, thoughts, speech, acts, living, effort, mindfulness, meditation.

chou during the Wan-li period (1573–1627), wrote in his commentary on the *Amida Sutra*:<sup>2</sup>

The *Platform Sutra* mistakenly identifies India with the Pure Land of Bliss. India and China are both part of this defiled world in which we live. If India were the Pure Land, what need would there be for people to aspire toward the eastern quarter or yearn toward the west? "Amida's Pure Land of Bliss lies west of here, many millions of Buddha lands distant from this world."<sup>3</sup>

What we know as the *Platform Sutra* consists of records compiled by disciples of the Sixth Patriarch. We have no assurance that what they have compiled is free from error. We must be very careful to keep such a work from beginning students. If it falls into the hands of those who lack the capacity to understand it, it will turn them into wild demons of destruction. How deplorable!

*Faugh!* Who was this Shukō anyway? Some hidebound Confucian? An apologist for the Lesser Vehicle? Maybe a Buddhist of Pure Land persuasion who cast groundless aspersions on this sacred work because he was blind to the profound truth contained in the *Meditation Sutra*,<sup>4</sup> because he was simply not equipped with the eye which would enable him to read sutras? Or maybe he was a cohort of Mara the Destroyer manifesting himself in the guise of a priest, shaven-headed, black-rob-

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<sup>2</sup> Unsei Shukō (Chin. Yun-ch'i Chu-hung 雲棲株宏; 1535–1615), also known by the courtesy title Butsu'e (Chin. Fo-hui; 佛慧) and honorific title Renchi (Chin. Lien-ch'ih; 蓮池). Though an eminent Ming priest, Shukō is a frequent target of criticism in Hakuin's writings for his Nembutsu Zen. His commentary on the *Amida Sutra*, *Amida-kyō Shosō*, (*A-mi-t'o ching su ch'ao*; *Zokuzōkyō* 33), 4 ch., is one of his most important works.

<sup>3</sup> Shukō's criticism of Enō's statement quoted above that the Pure Land is 108,000 leagues (*ri*, 里 *li*) from China is predicated on the assumption that Enō is equating the Pure Land with India, an assumption presumably based on a belief that the distance from the west gate of Ch'ang-an in China to the east gate of Kapilavastu in India was 108,000 *li*. Yanagida Seizan cites a Chinese source in *Zenke goroku* I, Chikuma shōbō, 1972, p. 101a. In two of the principal Pure Land sutras, the *Amida Sutra* and *Larger Sutra of Boundless Life* (*Daimuryōju-kyō*) the Pure Land is said to lie to the west distant by millions upon millions of Buddha-lands.

<sup>4</sup> The *Meditation Sutra* (*Kanmuryōju-kyō*), another primary scripture of the Pure Land tradition, states that the Pure Land is "not far from here."

ed, hiding beneath a mask of verbal prajñā, bent on destroying with his slander the wondrously subtle, hard-to-encounter words of a true Buddhist saint?

Such ascriptions would seem to fit him all too well. Yet someone took exception to them.<sup>5</sup> “There is no reason to wonder about Master Kō,”<sup>6</sup> he said. “Take a good look and you will see that he just lacked the eye of *kenshō*.<sup>7</sup> He didn’t have the strength that comes from realizing the Buddha’s truth. Not having the karma from previous existence to enable him to reach prajñā wisdom if he continued forward and being afraid to retreat because of the terrible samsaric retribution he knew awaited him in the next life, he turned to Pure Land faith. He began to devote himself exclusively to calling Amida’s Name, hoping that at his death he would see Amida and his attendant Bodhisattvas arriving to welcome him to birth in the Pure Land and thereby attain the fruit of Buddhahood.<sup>8</sup>

“So when he happened to open the *Platform Sutra* and read the golden utterances of the Sixth Patriarch expounding the authentic ‘direct pointing’ of the Zen school,<sup>9</sup> and he realized they were totally at odds with the aspirations he had been cherishing, it dashed all his hopes. Yet this also roused him into putting together the commentary we now see. It was his way of redeeming the worthless notions to which he had grown so attached.

“So he was no Confucian, Taoist, or ally of Mara either. He was just a blind priest with a tolerable facility for the written word. We should not be surprised at him. Beginning from the time of the Sung dynasty, people like him have been as numerous as flax seed.”

If what this person says is in fact true, the course of action that Shukō took was extremely ill-advised. We are fortunate that we do have the compassionate instructions of the Sixth Patriarch. Shouldn’t

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<sup>5</sup> Probably Hakuin himself.

<sup>6</sup> “Master Kō” = [Shu]Kō.

<sup>7</sup> I.e., the wisdom attained upon seeing into one’s own nature (*kenshō*).

<sup>8</sup> The nineteenth of the 48 vows made by Amida Buddha as enumerated in the *Larger Sutra of Boundless Life* states that at the moment of death Amida Buddha will appear before all those who have heard his name and meditated upon him and conduct them to his Pure Land.

<sup>9</sup> Reference to the Zen motto, “Pointing directly to the mind of man, seeing into the self-nature, and attaining Buddhahood.”

we just read them with veneration, believe in them with reverence, and enter into their sacred precincts? What are we to make of a person who would use his minimal literary talent to endeavor to belittle the lofty wisdom and great religious spirit of a man of the Sixth Patriarch's stature? Even granting that to be permissible as long as he is deluding only himself, it is a sad day indeed when he commits his misconceptions to paper and publishes them as a book which can subvert the Zen teaching for untold numbers of future students.

We generally regard the utterances of a sage as being at odds with the notions held by ordinary people, and people who are at variance with such utterances we regard as unenlightened. Now if the words of a sage are no different from the ideas the unenlightened hold to be right and proper, are not those words themselves ignorant and unenlightened, and unworthy of our respect? If the ignorant are not at variance with the words of an enlightened sage, doesn't that make them enlightened men, and as such truly worthy of our reverence?

To begin with, Sōkei Daishi was a great master with an unsurpassed capacity for transmitting the Dharma.<sup>10</sup> None of the seven hundred pupils who studied with the Fifth Patriarch at Mount Huang-mei could even approach him.<sup>11</sup> His offspring cover the earth now from sea to sea, like the stones on a go board or the stars in the heavens. A common hedgerow monk like Shukō, whose arbitrary conjecture and wild surmise all comes from fossicking around in piles of old rubbish, does not even belong in the same category as Sōkei.

Are you not aware, Shukō, that Master Sōkei is a timeless old mirror in which the realms of heaven and hell and the lands of purity and impurity are all reflected equally? Don't you know that they are, as such, the single eye of the Zen monk?<sup>12</sup> A diamond hammer couldn't break

<sup>10</sup> Sōkei Daishi (Ts'ao-hsi Ta-shih 曹溪大師); an honorific title of the Sixth Patriarch.

<sup>11</sup> Enō received the Zen transmission from Gunin (弘忍; Chin. Hung-jen, 601–674), the Fifth Zen Patriarch, at the latter's temple on Huang-mei shan, Yellow Plum Mountain, in modern Hupeh.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Chōsa Keijin (Ch'ang-sha Ching-ts'ên 長沙景岑) said, "The world in all ten directions is the eye of the Zen monk. All the world in the ten directions is his entire body. All the world in the ten directions is the radiance of his self. All the world in the ten directions is contained in the radiance of the self. There is not a single person who is not this self. . ."

A monk asked, "What is the eye of the Zen monk?"

"Nothing can ever get free of it," said the master. *Keitoku Dentōroku (Ching-te*

it. The finest sword on earth couldn't penetrate it. This is a realm in which there is no coming and going, no birth and death.

The light emitted from the white hair between Amida Buddha's eyebrows, which contains five Sumerus, and his blue lotus eyes, which hold the four great oceans, as well as the trees of seven precious gems and pools of eight virtues that adorn his Pure Land, are all shining brilliantly in our minds right now—they are manifest with perfect clarity right before our eyes. The black cord hell, aggregate hell, shrieking hell, interminable hell and all the rest, are, as such, the entire body of the venerable Sage of Boundless Life (Amida) in all his golden radiance.<sup>13</sup>

Whether it is called the Shining Land of Lapis Lazuli in the East or the Immaculate Land of Purity in the South, it makes no difference—originally, it is all a single ocean of perfect, unsurpassed awakening, and, as such, it is also the intrinsic nature in every human being.<sup>14</sup>

Yet even while it is present in them all, the way each one of them views it is never the same, but varies according to the weight of individual karma and the amount of merit and good fortune they enjoy.

Those who suffer the terrible agonies of hell see seething cauldrons and white-hot furnaces. Craving ghosts see raging fires and pools of pus and blood. Fighting demons see a violent battleground of deadly strife. The unenlightened see a defiled world of ignorance and suffering—all thorns and briars, stones and worthless shards—from which they turn in loathing to seek the Land of Purity. Inhabitants of the deva realms see a wonderful land of brilliant lapis lazuli and transparent crystal. Adherents of the two vehicles see a realm of transition on the path to final attainment. Bodhisattvas see a land of true recompense filled with glorious adornments. Buddhas see a land of eternally tranquil light.<sup>15</sup> How about you Zen monks. *What do you see?*

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*ch'uan-teng lu*), 10. Tokiwa, p. 255.

<sup>13</sup> These descriptions of Amida's features and the adornments of his Pure Land are based on passages in the three Pure Land sutras.

<sup>14</sup> Shining Land of Lapis Lazuli (*Rurikō-do* 琉璃光土) in the east is the Buddha-land presided over by Yakushi, the Healing Buddha (Skt. Bhaishajyaguru). The Immaculate Land of Purity (*Mukosekai* 無垢世界) in the south is the Buddha-land mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra* (Devadatta ch.), in which the daughter of the Dragon King appears to preach the Lotus Sutra upon her attainment of Buddhahood.

<sup>15</sup> These statements are based on a Tendai classification of the various lands mention-

You must be aware that the jewelled nets of the heavenly realms and the white-hot iron grates in the realms of hell are themselves thousand-layered robes of finest silk; that the exquisite repasts of the Pure Land paradise and the molten bronze served up to hell-dwellers are, as such, banquets replete with a hundred rare tastes. Nowhere in heaven or on earth will you find a second moon. Yet there is no way for those of ordinary or inferior capacity to know it.

Followers of the patriarch-teachers, you monks of superior capacity investigating the hidden depths, until you release your hold from the edge of the precipice to which you hang and perish into life anew, you can never enter this samadhi. But the moment you do, the distinction between Dharma principle and enlightened person disappears, differentiations between mind and environment vanish. This is what the coming of the old Buddha to welcome you to the Pure Land is really about. You are those superior religious seekers the sutra says are destined for "the highest rank of the highest rebirth in the Pure Land."<sup>16</sup>

Master Kō, if you do not once gain entrance into the Pure Land in this way, you could pass through millions upon millions of Buddha lands, undergo rebirth eight thousand times over, but it would all be a mere shadow in a dream, no different from the imagined land conjured up in Kantan's slumbering brain.<sup>17</sup>

The Zen master Sōkei stated unequivocally that the ten evils and eight false practices separate us from the Western Paradise. It is a perfectly justified, absolutely authentic teaching. Were the countless

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ed in the sutras. (1) The land of the enlightened and unenlightened, in which beings of the six lower worlds live together with saints of the four higher realms. (2) The land of transition (*hōbendo* 方便土), inhabited by practicers who have achieved a high level of attainment and by Bodhisattvas of the lower stages. (3) The land of true recompense (*jippōdo* 實報土), inhabited by Bodhisattvas of the higher stages. (4) The land of eternally tranquil light (*jakkōdo* 寂光土), inhabited by Buddhas. Cf. *Dict. of Buddhist Terms and Concepts*, Nichiren Shoshu Intern., Tokyo, pp. 118-9.

<sup>16</sup> The *Meditation Sutra* divides aspirants for birth in the Pure Land into nine ranks according to their capacities, beginning with those of the "highest rank of the highest birth" (*jōbon jōshō* 上品上生).

<sup>17</sup> Kantan (Handan 邯鄲) was a poor scholar who, while travelling to take the official examinations, dreamed that he passed them with flying colors and, after an illustrious government career, attained the post of prime minister, whereupon he woke up, realized that life is an empty dream, and returned home.

Tathagatas in the six directions all to manifest themselves in this world at one time, even they could not change a single syllable of it.

Furthermore, Master Kō, if I said to you, "The Western Paradise is eighteen leagues from here." "The Western Paradise is seven feet from here." "The Western Paradise is eighteen inches over there." those too would be perfectly justified, absolutely authentic teachings. How will you lay a hand, or foot, on them! When I make those statements, what village do you suppose I am referring to? And if you hesitate or stop to speculate for even a split second, a broken vermilion staff seven feet long stands ready against the wall.

Your resentment at finding the Sixth Patriarch's ideas different from your own led you to take a true teacher totally dedicated to the avowed Buddhist goal of universal salvation and represent him as a dunce who does not even know the difference between the Pure Land and India—do you think that is right?

We can only suppose that some preconception of the Sixth Patriarch which had formed in Shukō's mind led him to think: "It's really a shame that the Sixth Patriarch, with that profound enlightenment of his, was originally a woodcutter from the uncivilized south. Being illiterate, he couldn't read the Buddhist scriptures. He was rude, coarse, ignorant, in fact, he was no different from those countrymen who herd cows and catch fish or work as menials."<sup>18</sup>

But is it really possible that even such people wouldn't know the difference between the Pure Land and India? Even a tiny child of three believes in the Pure Land and worships it with a sense of reverence. And we are talking about a great Buddhist teacher—one of those "difficult-to-meet, hard-to-encounter" sages who rarely appears in the world. The venerable Sōkei Daishi was a veritable udumbara flower who blossomed auspiciously in answer to the prophecies of the Buddhist sages.<sup>19</sup>

This genuinely enlightened man, endowed with the ten superhuman powers of Buddhahood, appeared in the world riding upon the vehicle of the universal vow and revealed a secret of religious attainment never

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<sup>18</sup> According to traditional accounts, the Sixth Patriarch was a poor, illiterate peasant from the uncivilized southern part of the country.

<sup>19</sup> These prophecies are found in a document appended to the *Platform Sutra*. See Tokiwa, pp. 256–7.

preached by any Buddha-patriarch before him. It was like the Dragon god entering the world-encompassing ocean, turning its salt water to fresh and working with perfectly unobstructed freedom to make it fall over all the earth as pure, sweet manna, reviving parched wastelands from the ravages of great drought. It was like a rich man entering an immense treasure house, emerging with many articles rarely seen in the world and distributing them to the cold and hungry, giving them new life by relieving their need and suffering. Such activities have nothing to do with speculation or conjecture. They cannot be approached by ordinary human understanding.

Priests of today who have woven themselves into complicated webs of words and letters, who, after sucking and gnawing on this literary sewage until their mouths suppurate, proceed to spew out a tissue of irresponsible nonsense—should not even be mentioned in the same breath as the Sixth Patriarch.

Shakyamuni Buddha tells us that the Pure Land lies many millions of Buddha-lands distant from here. The Zen patriarch Enō says the distance is one hundred and eight thousand leagues. Both utterances come from men whose power—strength derived from great wisdom—is awesomely vast. Their words reverberate like the earth-shaking stomp of the elephant king, resound like the roar of the lion monarch, bursting the brains of any jackal or other scavenger who stops to ponder them or shows so much as the slightest hesitation.

Yet Shukō glibly delivers the judgment that the “*Platform Sutra* mistakenly regards India as the Pure Land of Bliss.” “What we know as the *Platform Sutra*,” he says, “consists of records compiled by disciples of the Sixth Patriarch. We have no assurance that what they have compiled is free from error.” Now maybe that sounds like he is trying to be helpful, but what he is really doing is disparaging the Sixth Patriarch.

In the *Rokusodankyō Kōkan*, a commentary on the *Platform Sutra*,<sup>20</sup> the author writes: “According to gazeteers and geographical works I have consulted, the distance from the west gate of Chang-an to the east gate of Kapilavastu in India is one hundred thousand leagues,

<sup>20</sup> *Hobō dankyō kōkan* 青巖, 5 ch., Kyoto, 1697, by Eikijun, Midori-no-rōjin (益津・緑巖老人), about whom nothing else is known.



so Shukō's criticism of the *Platform Sutra* for mistaking India for the Pure Land may well have a solid basis in fact."

Now that isn't even good rubbish. But even supposing (alas!) that the author's penchant for poking into old books is justified, I want him to tell me: What gazeteer or geography since the time of the Great Yü<sup>21</sup> ever stated that India is distant from China by ten evils and eight wrong practices? It's a great shame, really. Instead of wasting his time nosing through reference books, why didn't he just read the *Platform Sutra* with care and respect, and devote himself attentively to investigating Shakyamuni Buddha's true meaning? If he had continued to contemplate it—both coming and going—he would suddenly have broken through and grasped that meaning. Then he would have that "solid basis" of his. He would be clapping his hands joyfully, howling with laughter—he couldn't have helped himself. *How about those great roars of laughter? What would they mean?*

It is absurd for someone in Master Kō's advanced state of spiritual myopia to be going around delivering wild judgments on the golden utterances of a genuine sage like the Sixth Patriarch. The author of the *Rokusodankyō Kōkan* is another of those like Master Kō who spends his entire life entangled in a jungle of vines down inside a dark cave. They are like a midget in a crowded theatre trying to watch a play. Since he can't see anything, he jumps up and down and applauds when everyone else does. They also remind you of a troupe of blind Persians who stumble upon a parchment leaf inscribed with Sanskrit words; they wander off into the middle of nowhere and secretly pool their knowledge trying to decipher the meaning of the text. But as they haven't the faintest idea what it says, they fail to get even a single word right, and they turn themselves into laughing stocks in the bargain.

Actually, such people do not even merit our attention, and yet since I am afraid of the harm they can do misleading even a few sincere seekers, I find it necessary to lay down a few entangling vines of my own like this.

"The greatest care must be taken to keep such a work from beginning students," says Shukō's commentary. "If it does chance to fall into the hands of those who lack the capacity to understand it, it will turn them into wild demons of destruction. How deplorable!"

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<sup>21</sup> Legendary founder of an ancient Chinese dynasty.

My answer to the gross irresponsibility of such a statement is: we must take the greatest care not to pass stupid, misinformed judgments on a work like the *Platform Sutra*. When people with unenlightened views judge such a work on the basis of their own ignorance, they immediately transform themselves into wild demons of destruction. It is that which I find deplorable.

To begin with, Tathagatas appear in the world one after another for the sole purpose of opening up paths to Buddha-wisdom for sentient beings. That has always been their primary aim in manifesting themselves. Although the sutras and commentaries contain a variety of Dharma “gates”—abrupt and gradual teachings, verbal and pre-verbal teachings, exoteric and esoteric teachings, first and last teachings—in the end they all come down to one teaching and one teaching alone: the fundamental self-nature inherent in each and every person.

It is no different in Sōkei Daishi's case. While the *Platform Sutra* which contains his teaching has chapters devoted to his religious career, to his answers to questioners' doubts, to meditation and wisdom, to repentance, and so on—they are in the end none other than the one teaching of *kenshō* (seeing into the true self-nature). Wise sages for twenty-eight generations in India and six generations in China, as well as the venerable Zen teachers of the Five Houses and Seven Schools who descended from them, have every one of them transmitted this Dharma of *kenshō* as they strove to lead people to awakening in Shakyamuni's place, devoting themselves singlemindedly to achieving the fundamental aim for which all Buddhas appear in the world. None of them ever uttered one word about the Western Paradise, nor preached a single syllable about birth in the Pure Land. When the students who came after them began their study of the Way and took it upon themselves to read the *Platform Sutra*, none of them was ever reduced to becoming a wild demon. On the contrary, it matured their attainment and enabled them to grow into great Dharma vessels. So please, Master Kō, stop whining about the *Platform Sutra*.

It is because of misguided men like you that Nankai Sōhō of the Yuan wrote:<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Nankai Sōhō (Nan-hai Tsung-pao, 南海宗寶) was a priest who edited a Yuan dynasty text of the *Platform Sutra* (published 1291). This passage comes from his postface. T48, 364c-365a. Tokiwa, p. 259.

The *Platform Sutra* is not mere words. It is the principle of Bodhidharma's 'direct pointing' that has been transmitted from patriarch to patriarch. It is thanks to it that great, venerable masters in the past like Nangaku and Seigen cleared their minds. After them, it cleared the minds of their disciples Baso and Sekitō.<sup>23</sup> The spread of the Zen school today throughout the world is also firmly rooted in this same principle of direct pointing. Indeed, is it possible that anyone in the future could clear his mind and see into his own nature without recourse to this same direct pointing?

These words of Nankai Sōhō represent the accepted norm in Zen temples and monasteries everywhere. Yet there is Master Kō, ensconced in some remote temple, giving forth with those partisan hunches of his. The one is as different from the other as cloud from mud.

Since some people are naturally perceptive and some are not, and some have great ability while others have little, there is a correspondingly great variety in the teachings which Buddhas impart to them. Buddhas work in the same way that skilled physicians do. A physician does not set out when he examines patients with just one medical prescription already fixed in his mind; since the ailments from which they suffer vary greatly, he must be able to prescribe a wide variety of remedies for them.

Take, for example, the desire for rebirth found among followers of the Pure Land school. Shakyamuni, the Great Physician King who relieves the suffering of sentient beings, in order to save Queen Vaidehi from the misery of a cruel imprisonment, converted her to firm belief in the Pure Land of her own intrinsic mind-nature by using good and skillful means which he devised for her particular situation. It was a specific remedy prescribed for the occasion and imparted to Queen Vaidehi alone.<sup>24</sup>

Men like Shukō, not having attained the truth of the Buddha's

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<sup>23</sup> Nangaku Ejō (Nan-yüeh Huai-jang) and Seigen Gyōshi (Ch'ing-yuan Hsing-ssu), two disciples of the Sixth Patriarch, are regarded as founders of the two main branches of Chinese Zen. Baso Dōitsu (Ma-tsu Tao-i) and Sekitō Kisen (Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien) were their disciples.

<sup>24</sup> The story of Queen Vaidehi's imprisonment and her rescue by the Buddha forms the basis of the *Meditation Sutra*. T12.

wonderful skillful means, cling mulishly to the deluded notion of a Pure Land and Buddhas which exist separately apart from the mind. They are incapable of truly grasping that there is no such thing as a Buddha with his own Buddha land, that the village right in front of them and the village behind them and everywhere else—it is all Buddha land. There is no such thing as a Buddha body either. South and north, east and west, all is the Buddha body in its entirety. Being incapable of truly grasping such truths, when Shukō heard a genuine Buddhist teaching which said, “you are separated from the Western Paradise by the ten evils and eight false practices in yourself,” he was appalled because it did not agree with the conception of the Pure Land which he had erected in his own mind. He hoped that by roundly condemning it he could keep others from hearing or reading about it.

If we let Shukō have his way and keep beginners from reading the *Platform Sutra* on the grounds that it is unsuitable for them, then the *Kegon Sutra*, and the *Lotus, Nirvana*, and other Mahayana sutras in which the Buddha reveals the substance of his enlightenment, are not suitable for them either. I say this because the great master Enō, having penetrated the profoundest subtleties of the Buddha-mind, having broken decisively through the deep ground whence the ocean of Buddhist teaching finds its source, spoke with the same tongue, sang from the same mouth, as all the other Buddhas.

Furthermore, the *Kegon Gōron* states that “aspirants belonging to the first class recognize the Buddha’s great power, observe his precepts, and by utilizing the power of the vow working in themselves, gain birth in his Pure Land. That Pure Land is a provisional manifestation, not a real Pure Land. The reason aspirants seek it is because they have not seen into their own true nature and hence do not know that ignorance is in itself the fundamental wisdom of the Tathagatas—and they are thus still subject to the working of causation. The preaching of a scripture such as the *Amida Sutra* is based upon such a principle.”<sup>25</sup>

We may be sure if Shukō had seen this passage, he would have grab-

<sup>25</sup> *Kegon-kyō Gōron (Hua-yen ching Ho-lun, 華嚴經合論)*, 4 ch., *Zokuzō-kyō*, 20, by Ri Tsūgen (Li Tsung-yuan, 李通玄, 635-730). The author enumerates six “vehicles” corresponding to the capabilities of sentient beings, by which they can attain “the mind of the Mahayana.” The first two lead to rebirth in the Pure Land; the sixth and highest vehicle brings about instantaneous attainment of Buddhahood. The passage Hakuin quotes here is more or less similar to the *Gōron*’s explanation of the first two vehicles.

bed his brush and dashed off some lines about the *Kegon Gōron* being unfit for beginners. The *Kegon Gōron* is fortunate indeed to have avoided the blind-eyed gaze of the “Great Teacher of the Lotus Pond.”<sup>26</sup> It saves us having to listen to warnings about “giving it to people of small capacity,” and “turning them into wild demons.” Sōhaku Daishi,<sup>27</sup> dwelling within the stillness of eternal samadhi, should be delighted at this stroke of good fortune.

Seen by the light of the true Dharma eye, all people—the old and the young, the high and the low, priest and laymen, wise and otherwise—are endowed with the wonderful virtue of Buddha wisdom. It is present without any lack in them all. Not one among them—or even half of one—is to be cast aside and rejected because he is a beginner.

Nonetheless, since when students first set out on the Way they do not know what is beneficial to their practice and what is not, and they can't distinguish immediate needs from less urgent ones, we refer to them for the time being as beginners. At that point, they read the sacred Buddhist writings and entrust themselves to the guidance of a good teacher and friend. Upon bringing the Great Matter to completion and fully maturing into great Dharma vessels, they will acquire a wonderful ability for expressing their attainment and, using that ability, will strive to impart the great Dharma-gift to others, holding Buddha-wisdom up like a sun to illuminate the eternal darkness, keeping its vital pulse alive through the degenerate age of the latter day. It is these we can call true descendents of the Buddhas, those whose debt of gratitude to their predecessors has been repaid in full.

But if they are compelled to practice the Nembutsu along with all other students of whatever kind and capacity on the grounds that they are beginners, we will have all the redoubtable members of the younger generation—those Bodhidharma praised as being “native born to the Mahayana in this land,” people gifted with outstanding talent, who have it in them to become great Dharma pillars worthy to stand in the future with Tokusan, Rinzai, Baso, and Sekitō—traipsing along after half-dead old duffers, sitting in the shade next to the pond with listless

<sup>26</sup> One of Shukō's titles.

<sup>27</sup> Sōhaku Daishi 叢柏大師; name given to the author of the *Kegon-kyō Gōron*. *Dasoku* 27v. Actually, Shukō did see the *Kegon Gōron*; he refers to it in his commentary on the *Amida Sutra*. Tokiwa, p. 263.

old grannies, dropping their heads and closing their eyes in broad daylight and intoning endless choruses of Nembutsu. If that happens, whose children are we going to find to carry on the vital pulse of Buddha-wisdom? Who will become the cool, refreshing shade trees to provide refuge for those in the latter day? All the true customs and traditions of the Zen school will fall right to earth. The seeds of Buddhahood will wither, die, and disappear forever.

I want these great and stalwart men to choose the right path. If, at a time like this, the golden words in the Tripitaka, all the Mahayana sutras which were compiled in the Pippali cave for beginners to use in after ages,<sup>28</sup> if everything except the three Pure Land sutras is relegated to the back shelves of the bookcase and left there untouched, it will end up as bug-fodder, buried uselessly in the bellies of bookworms, no different from stacks of fake burial money left forgotten in an old shrine deep in the mountains—of absolutely no use to anyone. How deplorable!

Those people mentioned before whom the *Meditation Sutra* says are destined for the highest rank of the highest rebirth in the Pure Land, those suited to read the Mahayana sutras, have now bitten the dust as well—they no longer exist. Shukō's commentary, in slanderously rejecting anything counter to his own notions, may be compared to the infamous Ch'in emperor's book-burning pit.<sup>29</sup> The Ch'in emperor's tyrannical policies were totally at odds with the teachings in the Confucian classics and other Confucian writings. Resenting this, he had his Confucians buried alive and all their books consigned to the flames. What Shukō has done represents a catastrophe of similar proportions.

The three Wu emperors undertook openly to suppress Buddhism.<sup>30</sup> Shukō attempted to do the same thing surreptitiously. The former went about it publicly, the latter did it on the sly—yet the crime is one. But Shukō is not really to blame for his transgressions. He did what he did because he never encountered an authentic master to guide him and was unable to attain the eye that would have enabled him to see

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<sup>28</sup> Pippali (Jap. Hippara); the cave near Rajagṛha where the first collection of Buddhist sutras was compiled.

<sup>29</sup> Shih Huang Ti, 259–210 B.C. who ordered the burning of all books in 212 B.C.

<sup>30</sup> Reference to imperial proscriptions of Buddhism decreed during the Northern Wei, 444–446, Northern Chou, 574–577, and T'ang, 843–845.

through into the secret depths. He did not possess the wonderful spiritual power that comes from *kenshō*.

Yet Shukō is given as “an example for good teachers past, present, and future.” People praise him as “foremost among the great priests of the Zen, Teaching, and Precepts schools.”<sup>31</sup> Can they be in their right minds!

The Zen forests of today will be found upon inspection to be thickly infested with a race of bonzes just like Shukō. You find them everywhere, fastened with grips of death to the “silent tranquillity” of their “withered-tree” sitting—and imagining that to be the true practice of the Buddha’s Way. They don’t take kindly to views which are not in agreement with their own. The Buddha’s sutras they regard as they would a mortal enemy and forbid students to read them. They fear them as an evil spirit fears a sacred amulet.

Being foolishly wedded to ordinary perception and experience in the belief that it is Zen, they take offense at anything which differs from their own convictions. They view the records of the Zen masters as they would a deadly adversary and refuse to let students near them. They avoid them like the lame hare avoids the hungry tiger.

When we have adherents of the Pure Land shunning and disparaging the sacred writings of the Buddhas, and followers of Zen out to slander them into disrepute, the danger to the Buddhist Way must be said to have reached a critical stage.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not urging students to become masters of the classics and histories, to spend all their time exploring ancient writings, or to lose themselves in the pleasures of poetry and letters; I am not telling them to compete in these fields against others and win fame for themselves by proving their superiority. They could attain an eloquence equal to that of the Great Purna, possess knowledge so great they surpassed Shariputra,<sup>32</sup> but if they are lacking in the basic stuff of enlightenment, if they do not have the right eye of *kenshō*, false views bred of arrogance will inevitably find their way deep into their spiritual vitals, blasting the life from the seed of Buddhahood, and turning

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<sup>31</sup> These words of praise appear in a biography of Shukō in the *Zoku keiko-ryaku* (*Hsū chi-ku lüeh* 續稽古略), ch. 3. *Dasoku* p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> Purna and Shariputra, two of the Buddha’s ten great disciples, the former known for eloquence, the latter for intellectual brilliance.

them into sentient beings destined for permanent residency in hell.

It is not like this with true followers of the Way. They must as an essential first step see their own original nature as clearly as if they are looking at the palm of their hand. When from time to time they take and read through the writings that contain the words and teachings of the Buddha-patriarchs, they will illuminate those ancient teachings with their own minds. They will visit authentic teachers for guidance. They will pledge themselves with firm determination to work their way through the final koans of the patriarchal teachers and, before they die, to produce from their forge a descendent—one person or at least half a person—as a way of repaying their deep debt of thanks to their predecessors. It is such people who are worthy to be called “progeny of the house of Zen.”

I respectfully submit to the ‘Great Teacher of the Lotus Pond’: “If you wish to plant yourself in some hinterland where you are free to finger your lotus-bead rosary, droop your head, drop your eyelids, and intone the Buddha’s Name because you want to be born in the Land of Lotus Flowers, that is no business of mine. It is entirely up to you. But when you start gazing elsewhere with that myopic look in your eyes and decide to divert yourself by writing commentaries that pass belittling judgment on a great saint and matchless Dharma-transmitter like the Sixth Patriarch, then I must ask you to take the words you have written and shelve them away, far out of sight, where no one will ever lay eyes on them. Why do I say that? I say it because the great Dragon King, who controls the clouds in the heavens and the rains that fall over the earth, cannot be known or fathomed by a mud snail or a clam.”

One of the teachers of the past said:<sup>33</sup>

The ‘western quarter’ refers to the original mind of sentient beings. ‘Passing beyond millions and millions of Buddha-lands [to attain rebirth in the Pure Land]’ signifies sentient beings terminating the ten evil thoughts and abruptly transcending the ten stages of Bodhisattvahood. ‘Amida,’ signi-

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<sup>33</sup> In his annotated copy of the *Sokkō-roku kaien fusetsu*, Hakuin identifies this quotation as coming from the *Enzan Wadeigasui-shū* (塩山和泥合水集), a work in Japanese by the Rinzai priest Bassui Tokushō (1327–87). Hakuin here translates the passage into *kambun*. *Chūsei Zenke no shisō* (Iwanami, 1972), pp. 215–6.



fyng immeasurable life, stands for the Buddha-nature in sentient beings. 'Kannon,' 'Seishi,' and Amida's other attendant Bodhisattvas<sup>34</sup> represent the incomprehensible working of the original self-nature. 'Sentient being' is ignorance and the many thoughts, fears, discernments, and discriminations that result from it. 'When life ends' refers to the time when discriminations and emotions cease to arise. 'Cessation of intellection and discrimination' is the purifying of the original mind-ground and indicates the Pure Land in the West.

It is to the west that sun, moon, and stars all return. In the same way, it is to the one universal mind that all the thoughts, fears, and discriminations of sentient beings return. It is thus one single mind, calm and undisturbed. And because Amida Buddha exists here, when you awaken to your self-nature the 84,000 evil passions transform instantly into 84,000 marvelous virtues. To the incomprehensible working which brings this about we give the names Kannon, Seishi, and so on. The uneasy mind you have while you are in a state of illusion is called the defiled land. When you awaken and your mind is clear and free of defilement, that is called the Pure Land.

Hence the *Kechimyaku-ron* says that "the Nembutsu practiced by Buddhist saints in the past was not directed toward an external Buddha; their Nembutsu practice was oriented solely toward the internal Buddha in their own minds. . . . If you want to discover Buddha, first you must see into your own true nature. Unless you have seen into your own nature, what good can come from doing Nembutsu or reciting sutras?"<sup>35</sup>

"Buddha" means "one who is awakened." Once you have awakened, your own mind is itself Buddha. By seeking outside yourself for a Buddha invested with form, you are proclaiming yourself a foolish

<sup>34</sup> Kannon, the embodiment of great compassion, and Seishi, the embodiment of great wisdom, are Bodhisattva-attendants of Amida Buddha.

<sup>35</sup> This quotation and the following five paragraphs are loose paraphrases based more or less on passages in several works attributed to Bodhidharma which are included in the *Shōshitsu rokumon* (少室六門), T48, of which one is the *Kechimyaku-ron* (*Hsüeh-mo lun* 血脉論). See Tokiwa, pp. 269-71.

man. It is like a person who wants to catch a fish. He must start by looking in the water, because fish live in the water and are not found apart from it. If a person wants to find Buddha, he must look into his own mind, because it is there and nowhere else that Buddha exists.

Question: "In that case, what can I do to become thoroughly awakened to my own mind?"

What is that which asks such a question? Is it your mind? Is it your original nature? Is it some kind of spirit or demon? Is it inside you? Outside you? Is it somewhere intermediate? Is it blue, yellow, red, or white? This is something you must investigate and clarify for yourself. You must investigate it whether you are standing or sitting, when you are eating your rice or drinking your tea, when you are speaking and when you are silent. You must keep at it with total, singleminded devotion. And never, whatever you do, look in sutras or in commentaries for an answer, or seek it in the words you hear a teacher speak.

When all the effort you can muster has been exhausted, when you have reached a total impasse, and you have become like the cat at the rathole, like the mother hen warming her egg, it will suddenly come to you and you will break free. The phoenix will be through the golden net, the crane will fly clear of the cage.

But even if no breakthrough occurs until your dying day and you spend twenty or thirty years in vain without ever seeing into your true nature, I want your solemn pledge that you will never turn for spiritual support to those tales that you hear the down-and-out old men and washed-out old women peddling everywhere today. If you do, they will stick to your hide, they will cling to your bones, you will never be free of them. And as for your chances with the patriarchs' difficult-to-pass koans, the less said about them the better, because they will then be totally beyond your grasp.

Hence a priest of former times said,<sup>36</sup> "A person who commits himself to the practice of Zen must be equipped with three essentials. A great root of faith. A great ball of doubt. A great tenacity of purpose. Lacking any one of them, he is like a tripod with only two legs."

By "great root of faith" is meant the belief that each and every per-

<sup>36</sup> The Yuan Rinzai priest Kōhō Gemmyō (Kao-feng Yuan-miao 高峯原妙, 1238-95). Hakuin's own annotation gives the source of this as the *Zenke kikan* 禪家龜鑑, a 16th century Korean work widely read in Japan.

son has an essential self-nature which he can see into; and the belief in a principle by which this self-nature can be fully penetrated. Even though you attain this belief, you cannot break through and penetrate to total awakening unless fundamental doubts arise as you tackle the difficult-to-pass koans. And even if these doubts crystallize so that you yourself become a great ball of doubt, you will still be unable to break it apart unless you constantly engage those koans with great burning tenacity of purpose.

Thus it has been said that it takes three long kalpas for lazy and inattentive sentient beings to attain nirvana, while for the fearless and stout-hearted, Buddhahood comes in a single instant of thought.<sup>37</sup> What you must do is to concentrate all your effort on bringing your fundamental potential into full play. The practice of Zen is like making a fire by friction. The essential thing as you rub wood against stone is to apply continuous, all-out effort. If you stop when you see the first trace of smoke, you will never get even a flicker of fire, even though you might rub away for three long kalpas.

Only a few hundred yards from here is a beach. Suppose that someone is bothered because he has never experienced the taste of sea water and decides to sample it for himself. He sets out for the beach but before he has gone a hundred paces he stops and comes back; then he starts out again but this time he returns after he has taken only ten steps. He will never know the taste of sea water that way, will he? But if he keeps going straight ahead without turning back, it doesn't even matter if he lives far inland in a landlocked province such as Shinano, Kai, Hida, or Mino, he will still eventually reach the sea. Then, by dipping his finger in the water and tasting it, he will know in an instant what sea water tastes like the world over, because it is of course the same everywhere, in India, China, the great southern sea or the great northern sea.

Those Dharma patricians who explore the secret depths are like this too. They go straight forward, boring into their own minds with unbroken effort, never letting up or retreating. Then the breakthrough suddenly comes, and with that they penetrate their own nature, the natures of others, the nature of sentient beings, the nature of the evil

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<sup>37</sup> *Rinkan-roku (Lin-men lu 林間錄)*. *Dasoku* 29v.

## WADDELL

passions and of enlightenment, the nature of the Buddha nature, the god nature, the Bodhisattva nature, the sentient being nature, the non-sentient being nature, the craving ghost nature, the contentious spirit nature, the beast nature—they are all of them seen in a single instant of thought. The great matter of their religious quest is thus completely and utterly resolved. There is nothing left. They are free of birth and death. What a thrilling moment it is!