

## A Selection from Bankei's Zen Dialogues

TRANSLATED BY NORMAN WADDELL

1. A layman said, "I've heard that because we have foolish thoughts we become Animals and go from one darkness to the next unable to become Buddhas.<sup>1</sup> Yet when our Animal mind knows no grief, we do as we like oblivious to suffering. Shouldn't that be a carefree existence after all?"

Bankei said, "Isn't it a grievous thing, though, being oblivious to the sorrow of turning your Buddha-mind and Buddha-body, the birthright of all men, into the sufferings of Hell? When someone beats a dog that stole a chicken the day before, it doesn't know its being beaten because of what it did yesterday. Nevertheless, when it is beaten it howls piteously in its pain. Being an Animal, it knows nothing of the workings of cause and effect and undergoes an endless train of suffering. As a human being, with indisputable intelligence, it's an easy matter to encounter the opportunity of meeting a good teacher and attaining Buddhahood. Isn't it a blessed thing to have the good fortune to be

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\* Selected from the *Bankei kōtai zenji hōgo* 佛智弘濟禪師法語, a compilation made by the priest Itsuzan Sojin 逸山祖仁, who was Bankei's attendant from 1688 until the master's death in 1693. The "Zen Sermons of Bankei Yōtaku," which appeared in previous issues of the *Eastern Buddhist* (Vols. VI, 2, VII, 1, and VII, 2), was a translation of a two-volume book of Bankei's sermons that was published in 1757. It consisted mostly of the talks Bankei gave at two large meetings during the last years of his life. The material in Itsuzan's shorter compilation covers a much wider period of Bankei's career and is made up mainly of his responses to questions from his Zen followers and from representatives of other Buddhist sects. The colophon of a manuscript copy of the work preserved in the Ryūmon-ji (the temple founded by Bankei) bears the date 1730, when Itsuzan was 75 years old. I have followed the text in the *Bankei zenji goroku*, edited by Suzuki Daisetz (Iwanami bunko 2782-84), with constant reference to the *Bankei zenji hōgo shū*, edited by Fujimoto Tsuchishige (Chikuma, 1971).

<sup>1</sup> See "The Zen Sermons of Bankei Yōtaku," *Eastern Buddhist*, VII, 2, p. 137.

born into a human body that can readily become a Buddha? The matter of prime importance is thus right at hand. Don't pass your time in vain!" (6, *Suzuki edition*)

2. A layman asked, "When I get rid of a thought that comes into my mind, another appears right afterwards, and this continues on repeatedly. What can I do to overcome it?"

Bankei said, "Cutting off occurring thoughts is like washing blood off in blood. The original blood might be washed off, but you're still defiled by the blood you washed in. You can wash it as much as you like, the bloodstains won't go away. You don't know that your mind is originally unborn and undying, that it is free of illusion, and you think that thoughts really exist, so you revolve in the cycle of birth and death. You must realize that thoughts are temporary, changing appearances, and neither seize on them or hate them, but just let them occur and cease of themselves. It's like the image reflected in a mirror. The mirror is clear and bright and reflects whatever is placed before it. But the image does not stay in the mirror. Your Buddha-mind is ten thousand times brighter than a mirror, and what's more it is an illuminating wisdom, so all thoughts disappear within its light without a trace." (7)

3. A farmer said, "I was born with a short temper and angry thoughts arise very easily,<sup>2</sup> which distracts me from my farmwork. I have great trouble being unborn. How can I attain the unborn mind?"

Bankei said, "Since the unborn Buddha-mind is something each person is born with, there's no way right now to attain it for the first time. Just going about your work as a farmer without any other thought is the practice of the unborn mind. When you swing your hoe, even if you do it at the same time you're speaking to someone, your conversation doesn't distract you and keep you from swinging your hoe, and your hoe-strokes don't divert you so that your speaking is hampered, either. You can swing your hoe while you're angry, too, but anger is an evil linking you to Hell, so your work becomes a difficult and arduous task. If you hoe with your mind undeluded by anger and other

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

things, your work is easy and pleasant. It is the practice of the Buddha-mind, so it is unborn, undying practice." (8)

4. A priest said, "Throughout the past, the patriarchal teachers penetrated great enlightenment through arduous practice. I have heard that you, in this present day, have also achieved the great Dharma through a great amount of difficult practice.<sup>3</sup> It couldn't be possible for people like me to come to any resolution without doing practice or attaining enlightenment, just by being as we are and realizing we're the unborn Buddha-mind."

Bankei said, "Take, for example, the case of a group of travellers climbing through a stretch of high mountains devoid of water. They get thirsty, so one of them goes far down into a valley in search of water, which he does with considerable hardship. When he finally finds some and returns and gives all his companions a drink, don't those who drink without having exerted themselves quench their thirst just the same as the one who did? There wouldn't be any way to quench the thirst of a person who was suspicious and didn't drink the water.

"Because I didn't meet a clear-eyed master I mistakenly undertook great austerities. My ultimately discovering my own mind-Buddha and making each of you know about your inborn mind-Buddha, is just like those people drinking water and quenching their thirst without having to go in search of it. Thus to be able to use the Buddha-mind inherent in each person just as it is and achieve a tranquil, blissful mind without resorting to any illusory austerities—isn't that a Dharma teaching of inestimable worth!" (12)

5. A layman said, "I don't doubt that my thoughts are fundamentally without substance. Yet they keep popping endlessly into my head all the same, and I find it almost impossible to be the unborn, even for a short time."

Bankei said, "That's because although at the time you arrive in this world there's only your unborn Buddha-mind, as you grow up you become accustomed to seeing and hearing the manner in which ordinary people engage their minds, until, habituated to illusion over a long passage of time, the delusion of your own mind gets to be completely free and unrestrained. But your thoughts

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<sup>3</sup> *Bankei's Sermons*, Part II, *Eastern Buddhist* VII, 1, pp. 130-3.

are not inherent in you from the beginning, so if your mind trusts and affirms the unborn Buddha that it originally is, they will disappear.

“It’s like a man who loves sake but must abstain from it because of bad health. The thought that he wants to drink it still arises in his mind whenever he encounters a chance for a drink. Yet because he abstains from drinking it, he doesn’t get ill, and he doesn’t get drunk; he remains a non-drinker in spite of the thoughts of sake that arise in his mind, and ultimately he becomes a healthy man, cured of his illness. Illusory thoughts are like this. If you just let them arise and let them cease, and don’t put them to work or feel any aversion to them, then, before you know it, they will disappear into the unborn mind.” (12)

6. A priest said, “I have great difficulty subduing all the troubling worldly thoughts in my mind. How can I overcome them?”

Bankei answered, “The thought to subdue illusory thoughts is an illusory thought itself. These thoughts do not exist from the beginning. You produce them yourself by your discriminating.” (13)

7. A visiting priest said, “I found your instruction last night about all of us being born with a Buddha-mind highly salutary. And yet it would seem to me that if we are this Buddha-mind, illusory thoughts should not arise.”

Bankei said, “At the very instant you say that, what illusion is there!”

The priest bowed three times and left. (14)

8. A layman said, “I agree with what you say about seeing and hearing by means of the unborn. But while you’re asleep you don’t even know when someone is right next to you. Then the unborn’s virtue is lost.”

Bankei said, “What loss is there? There’s no loss. You’re just sleeping.” (15)

9. A priest from Sendai, Ōshū,<sup>4</sup> came and asked, “What mental attitude should we assume to conform to the original mind?”

Bankei said, “Apart from what is now seeking the answer to that question, there is no original mind. Your original mind is divorced from thought, and is clear and distinct throughout all things. As proof, couldn’t you answer me without any thought if I asked you something about Sendai?” (17)

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<sup>4</sup> The name of a former province in northern Honshū.

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10. A visiting priest said, "Having trusted in the unborn, after [you die] and the four constituent elements of your physical body have dispersed,<sup>5</sup> then, is that something born? Or is it unborn?"

Bankei said, "At the place of the unborn there isn't any distinction of born and unborn." (18)

11. A layman said, "Last year, when I was beset upon by confused and disordered thoughts and asked you how I could put an end to them, you told me to let the thoughts arise and cease without bothering about them. I accepted that. But later I found that it was almost impossible to do."

Bankei said, "It's difficult because you think there's a teaching that you should let thoughts arise and cease without bothering about them." (19)

12. Bankei spoke to an assembly of people, "Each of you must learn about your vitally functioning Buddha-mind. For hundreds of years now in both China and Japan the Zen Dharma has been misunderstood. People think enlightenment is attained by doing *zazen*, or they try to discover a 'master of seeing and hearing.'<sup>6</sup> They're seriously mistaken. *Zazen* is another name for the fundamental mind. It means peaceful sitting, peaceful mind. When you sit, it is just sitting, when you do *kinbin*, it is just *kinbin*.<sup>7</sup> The Buddhist Dharma could not be preached, even though you had all heaven and earth for a mouth. Men who preach the Buddhist Dharma, by and large, only blind other men. There is not a speck of illusion in the mind your mother imparted to you when she gave birth to you. To say because you're unaware of this, 'I'm deluded because I'm an ordinary unenlightened man.'—that's even unjust to your parents. Buddhas of the past and people of the present day are all of one body. There's nothing setting them apart. When you draw water from the ocean and pour it into different buckets, it will freeze solid in very cold weather, and

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<sup>5</sup> According to Buddhists, all things are composed of the Four elements (*shidai*, 四大), earth, water, fire, and air (or wind).

<sup>6</sup> *Kenmon no shū* 見聞の主. This seems to have been a widely used koan during this period of Japanese Zen. See below, number 20.

<sup>7</sup> To rise during *zazen* from the sitting position and walk about to relieve fatigue and drowsiness.

its shape will vary according to the shape of the bucket, large, small, square, or round, that it is in. But when it thaws, it is all the same ocean water.

“You are unaware that you’re a living, acting Buddha, and you think that by accumulating merit from religious practice and gaining enlightenment you become a Buddha. But that’s terribly mistaken, and you wander from darkness into darkness. Isn’t it a sad thing.

“As for me, I don’t preach about the Buddhist teaching. I only comment on the false notions you people have.” (20)

13. A visiting priest said, “I practice with the aim of being enlightened. What about that?”

Bankei said, “Enlightenment is something contrasted to illusion. Each person is a Buddha-body without a speck of illusion. So what is there for you to ‘enlighten out’?”<sup>8</sup>

The priest replied, “That would mean being a fool. In the past, Bodhidharma, and after him many Zen masters all attained the great Dharma in enlightenment.”

Bankei said, “As a fool, the Tathagata saves people from suffering; he neither comes nor goes, he is just as he was born and doesn’t obscure his mind. All the patriarchs throughout past generations were just like that.” (21)

14. Bankei spoke to an assembly, “It is a mistake to breed a mind in addition to the one you already have and try to *become* the unborn. You’re unborn from the very beginning. Everyone talks about the unborn’s ‘fundamental principle,’ but the unborn has no fundamental principle. If it had even so much as a fundamental principle, it wouldn’t be unborn. What’s more, there isn’t any need to become unborn. The true unborn has nothing to do with fundamental principles, and it’s beyond your becoming it, as well. It simply is as it is.” (22)

15. Once when Bankei was staying at the Kannon-dō in Kiyotani in the district of Kita, Iyo province,<sup>9</sup> Kantarō, the headman of a village named Utsu

<sup>8</sup> This is a literal translation of the Japanese verb “*satoridasu*.”

<sup>9</sup> Present Ehime prefecture.

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in that district, came to him regularly for Zen study. Kantarō searched and probed diligently but it was very difficult for him to approach the master's lofty heights. One day, while on his way to Kiyotani together with Yoshino Yojizaemon, Kantarō said to his companion: "Every time I go there the master says to me, 'Has Kantarō come?' And sure enough, today will be no different. This time, if he says, 'Has Kantarō come?' I'm going to say, 'Who says that?'" When the two men reached Kiyotani, Bankei came out and greeted Yoshino, but he said nothing to Kantarō. Finally, after a long pause, Kantarō said, "Well, how are you feeling?" Bankei said, "Who says that?" Not knowing what to do, Kantarō bowed penitently. (23)

16. [The priest] Jōzen<sup>10</sup> said, "I'm greatly troubled about death. That's why I'm always coming here to see you. I don't think there could be anything of greater importance for a person."

Bankei said, "That mind is the fundamental source of Buddhist practice. If you come to think like that and do not lose your determination, you'll soon conform to the Way."

Jōzen then asked, "Just what is meant when people speak of becoming a Buddha?"

Bankei answered, "Thoroughly affirm what I say, believe it without any doubt—that's becoming a Buddha." (24)

17. At Aboshi, a fellow named Hachirōbe said, "I belong to the Ikkō sect, and trust singlemindedly in Amida Nyorai. Knowing that Amida's salvation is assured, I say the Nembutsu in thanksgiving."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 常山. A disciple of Bankei. *Bankei zenji hōgo shū*, Fujimoto Tsuchishige ed. (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1971), p. 217.

<sup>11</sup> *Aboshi* is located near Himeji, present Hyōgo prefecture. *The Ikkō sect* is the Jōdo Shin sect. *The nembutsu in thanksgiving* (*bōsha no nembutsu* 報謝の念仏). The Shin sect teaches that the nembutsu ("Namu-amida-butsu") should not be recited with any purpose or end in mind but simply in thanks for Amida Nyorai's (Tathāgata) "favor," or "gift." Even a single recitation, if it is uttered in sincerity, assures the devotee of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land of Bliss. All other nembutsu callings are done in thanks for the unconditional "gift" of salvation given by Amida to all sentient beings.

Bankei told him, "To spend all your time gambling and commit evil in great variety, and then ask for salvation, is like deceiving Amida."

Since at that time Hachirōbe had in fact been gambling ardently, all the people present at the meeting were deeply impressed. (26)

18. At another time, Hachirōbe came and said, "Buddhist teachers of old possessed wonderful miracles of all kinds. Master, have you some miracle as well?"

Bankei said, "What sort of thing do you mean?"

Hachirōbe said, "In Echigo, the founder of the Ikkō sect had someone take a piece of paper across a river, and then he pointed a brush at it from the opposite side. The six characters of Amida's Name clearly appeared on the paper. It's now known as the Kawagoe Myōgō, and everyone holds it in great reverence."<sup>12</sup>

Bankei laughed. "Magicians can perform greater feats. To say anything at all about such people here at the place of the true Dharma would be like comparing dogs and cats with men." (27)

19. A party of several priests came to stay at the temple. After they had met with Bankei, each stated his understanding. There was one priest who said nothing at all. When Bankei said, "And you?" he said, "When I'm cold I put on more clothes. When I'm hungry I eat. When I'm thirsty I drink some hot water. Other than that, there's nothing at all."

"In that case," Bankei said, "can you see what the seeing of the others sitting here is like?"

"Indeed I can."

"How have you seen that of the people on your right and your left?"

The priest said, "Please, see me through what pertains to me, [not what pertains to others]."

"What we've been speaking about now all pertains to you," Bankei said. (18)

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<sup>12</sup> Shinran (1173-1262), the founder of the Jōdo Shin sect (previously also known as the Ikkō sect), spent over four years of exile in Echigo province (present Niigata prefecture). The six characters of Amida's Name or *Myōgō* are Na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu. Hence, *Kawagoe Myōgō* means literally "The River-Crossing Name of Amida Buddha."



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20. A visiting priest came forward and said, "This is neither being, non-being, or emptiness."

Bankei said, "Right now—where is that?"

Wordless, the priest left. (29)

21. A layman asked, "For many years I have devoted myself to the teachings of the ancient masters. I have sought singlemindedly to know, "Who is the master of seeing and hearing?" But to this day I have not been able to search him out. How should I practice so that I can find the master of seeing and hearing?"

Bankei said, "My school is the sect of the Buddha-mind. The 'master of seeing and hearing' and the person who searches for him are not two. If you look outside yourself you could go all over the globe but you would never find him. The one mind, unborn—that is the master in every man. When any of your six senses is exposed to a cause—your eyes seeing forms, your ears hearing sounds, and so on—he is fully revealed without any veil or obstruction in your seeing, hearing, and perceiving." (31)

22. A woman asked, "I have a fear of thunder which is far out of the ordinary. Whenever I hear it, immediately I feel sick and suffer great anxiety. Please, tell me how I can somehow put an end to this fearfulness."

Bankei said, "When you were born you had no mind to fear things, only the unborn Buddha-mind. The illusion of fear for something is a figment of thought that was produced after you came into the world. Thunder benefits man by bringing rain to the world. It doesn't harm him. Your growing afraid because you contend with the thunder is the work of that figment of thought; it doesn't come from outside yourself. When you hear the sound of thunder, trust singlemindedly in your own mind and Buddhahood." (32)

23. A visiting priest said, "Is there merit in doing zazen?"

Bankei said, "You shouldn't dislike doing zazen. You shouldn't have a dislike for chanting sutras, for bowing, or anything like that.<sup>13</sup> Tokusan wielded his staff, Rinzai gave out his Katz, Gutei held up one finger, Bodhidharma

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<sup>13</sup> See *Bankei's Sermons, Eastern Buddhist*, VI, 2, pp. 146-7.

sat facing a wall. These are different, yet they are all measures used in response to an occasion present at a certain time, the expedient means of good masters. There is originally no definitely established Dharma. When you give a fixed interpretation to the Dharma, you blind your own eye. If you just believe straightforwardly in what I tell you and stay only with what you were born with without making distinctions about before and after, just like a mirror reflecting things, then you cannot help but be fully and clearly conversant with all the many things in the world. Do not doubt this." (34)

24. A Zen monk from Tamba said,<sup>14</sup> "My only desire at this time is to attain Buddhahood for certain and become an utterly good person. Please give me your instruction."

Bankei said, "You have come from far away, and your aspirations are admirable, but they are all illusions. The original mind has absolutely no illusions, no desires or aspirations whatever. Because of the virtue of original being's illuminating wisdom, all things are in perfect harmony, without any desires or hopes. The idea of wanting to hasten to Buddhahood is troublesome too. When you realize that all your hopes and aspirations are produced by you yourself, don't get caught up in anything, and just be as you are when you were born, then your original being's own nature will manifest itself." (35)

25. A layman asked, "Where do you go after you become a Buddha?"

Bankei said, "When you have become a Buddha there isn't any place for you to go, because you're everywhere, overflowing even beyond the endless universe. [On the other hand,] if you become something else [instead of living in the Buddha-mind], there are a great many places for you to go." (36)

26. Once Bankei said, "In my Dharma, you don't set up a goal and realize something or give comments on koan as they do everywhere else. It does not rely on Buddha's words or patriarchs' words. Since it is 'direct pointing'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Tamba province: located in present Kyoto prefecture, to the west of the city of Kyoto.

<sup>15</sup> Allusion to the Zen maxim, "direct pointing to man's (Buddha) mind," *jikisbi nimbun*.

only, there is nowhere it can be grasped, so no one easily affirms it. First of all, people with intelligence and learning are obstructed by their knowing and deliberating, and have real difficulty in affirming it. On the contrary, illiterate people, ordinary women for example, since they are devoid of ability, they aren't pushed forward and made into Zen masters, yet many of them penetrate to unquestionable belief and do not look back in hesitation."

He further said, "Although there is no one who can affirm my Dharma completely, it is like a packet of gold pieces broken up and scattered out—one piece of brightness for those who obtain one piece, two pieces of brightness for those who get two pieces. One measure or two measures, there is always benefit in proportion to the amount you get." (37)

27. A layman said, "Master, I've heard that you can see right into people's minds. Right now, what am I thinking?"

Bankei said, "You're thinking that." (38)

28. Kanrei Zogen said, "The Pure Land sects preach that we attain birth in the Pure Land a hundred billion *kotis* of Buddha-lands away, but they also teach that it is not far away. Both were distinctly preached by the Buddha.<sup>16</sup> Which is the true teaching? This is a doubt common among lay believers."

Bankei said, "With this difference, the fundamental meaning is made plain and clear."

Zogen said, "Is the hundred billion *kotis* of Buddha-lands an expedient teaching (*upāya*)?"

Bankei said, "It is not."

Zogen said, "Why is that?"

Bankei said, "When small children are in bad humour and cry, we help them out of it using an empty hand—a direct preaching for a small child." (39)

29. A woman said, "I have heard that women have great difficulty attaining Buddhahood because they have such deep karma. Is that true?"

Bankei said, "From what time was it you became a woman?" (40)

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<sup>16</sup> These statements appear in the Pure Land sutras; the first in the *Amida Sutra* and the second in the *Meditation Sutra*.

30. A woman said, "As women are beings with deep karma, they aren't allowed to climb venerable mountains such as Mount Kōya and Mount Hiei. Their precincts are closed to women."

Bankei said, "There's a nunnery in Kamakura. It's closed to men."<sup>17</sup> (41)

31. A layman said, "I'm sometimes startled by unexpected noises or the clap of thunder. Perhaps it's because I'm not tranquil normally. How can I keep on guard so that nothing at all startles me?"

Bankei said, "When you are startled, you should stay just the way you are. If you guard against it, you become two." (43)

32. A priest said, "Tokusan had his staff. Rinzai had his Katz. Worthy Zen masters of the past all exercised the jurisdiction of staff and Katz. Still, you employ neither. Why?"

Bankei said, "Tokusan was able to use the staff and Rinzai was able to use the Katz. As for me, I'm able to use my tongue." (44)

33. A priest said, "Priests such as Engo and Daie gave koan for the instruction of their students.<sup>18</sup> Why is it you never use any?"

Bankei said, "Did Zen teachers prior to Engo and Daie also instruct their students with koan?" (45)

34. A priest said, "A Zen master of the past said that great enlightenment comes from great doubt. Yet you don't make use of the great doubt in practitioners. Why?"

Bankei said, "You speak of a great doubt. Long ago, when Nangaku went to the Sixth Patriarch and the latter asked him, 'What is this that thus comes?' he was totally bewildered and for eight years had doubts about it. Then he gave the reply, 'The moment you say it is "this" you miss the mark.'<sup>19</sup> That

<sup>17</sup> The Tōkei-ji; the so-called divorce temple, adjacent to the Engaku-ji.

<sup>18</sup> Engo Kokugon (1083-1135) Yüan-wu K'o-ch'in; and Daie Sokō (1089-1163) Ta-hui Tsung-kaō. Great Rinzai masters of the Sung period when the koan system of Zen, with which their names are connected, developed. Engo was the compiler and part author of the *Pi-yen lu* (*Hekiganroku*). See footnote 23.

<sup>19</sup> This story is found in the *Goto egen* 五燈會元 *Wu-seng hui-yüan*, 3. For a different version, see page 97, footnote 5.

is really great doubt and great enlightenment. If you lost your only surplice that you received when you became a priest and were unable to find it no matter how hard you looked for it, you would continue to search and search and would be unable to stop even for an instant. That's real doubt. People nowadays say that they must have a doubt because people in the past did, and so they cultivate a doubt. That's merely an imitation of a doubt, not a real doubt. Thus the day never comes when they arrive at a real resolution. It's as if you were to go off searching for something you hadn't really lost pretending that you had." (46)

35. Someone asked about zazen. Bankei replied by saying, "The *zen* of zazen is conforming to the marvelous inborn wisdom (*prajñā*) that is prior to the introduction of thought discriminations; *za* means being free of all other environments. Simply sitting with eyelids dropped cannot be called zazen. I esteem only zazen that conforms to marvelous wisdom. Your illusions all make use of thought, and that's why you tumble into the cycle of transmigration. When a thought of anger appears, you become a Fighting Demon; passion makes you an Animal; regretting and choosing makes you a Hungry Ghost. When you die without having freed yourself of these thoughts you pass eternally through the wheel of transmigration, undergoing various different changes of form in transmigratory birth and death. When you are freed from thought you have no illusions, so there is no karmic cause and effect. When there is no cause and effect there is no transmigration. As long as there is thought, when you do good there is good cause and effect and when you do evil there is evil cause and effect. Once you have been freed from thought and are in conformity with marvelous *prajñā* wisdom there is no birth and death, no cause and effect. All this might sound like an idea of negation or nothingness where there is nothing at all. But it is not. That's because while I'm saying this all of you are able to hear me. You make no mental discrimination that you want to hear me, and yet because the fundamental wisdom that each one of you originally got at birth is marvelously illuminating, you hear and understand me perfectly well. When your body comes in contact with fire or your hand touches water, you can tell it is hot or cold though none of you has to be taught this. Since this is thought-free activity, it can't very well be called nothingness even though thought has disappeared. This marvelous

wisdom of your fundamental being is free of the dualistic ideas of being and nothingness, and it never fails to penetrate and communicate all things. It is like a bright mirror illuminating and distinguishing objects. With things like this, what use could there be for discrimination? Discriminations are present because illusion exists. When you attain to non-discriminating wisdom your illuminating and distinguishing things is prior to intellectual discrimination and there is no illusion present. That's why I prize non-discriminating wisdom, and that's also why I say the zazen of unborn, marvelous wisdom is the supreme practice.

"Men of Zen have no use for marshalling words and reasoning to argue matters of secondary or tertiary interest. For this reason Buddhism is sometimes unjustly censured as being heedless of practical matters, contrary to the five cardinal Confucian virtues and lacking in loyalty and filial piety.<sup>20</sup> That's because the people who say such things don't understand the Buddha Way's fundamental principle. As for "loyalty" and "filial piety," it's just because thoughts of non-loyalty and non-filial piety exist that people establish and promote such ideas. When you arrive at the ground that is free of illusion, how could there then be any lack of loyalty or filial piety! They occur because there is illusion. Illusion is discriminatory thinking. What disloyalty or unfiliality could there be in someone who is free of discriminative thought?" (51)

36. A layman said, "I'm a metal caster. When I cast metal pots, eight out of ten of them turn out flawed. I mend them and then sell them as perfectly cast articles, but it weighs on my mind. Do you think I am blameable?"

Bankei said, "Are you the only one who does this?"

"No," said the man, "everyone does the same thing."

"Do you sell them at night?"

"In broad daylight."

Bankei said, "Your customers have eyes to see and buy your wares. If you

<sup>20</sup> The five cardinal virtues: benevolence, uprightness of mind, propriety, knowledge, and good faith. This was a period when Confucianism was flourishing. Frequent reference to it appears in the works of other Zen masters of the period, for example, Shidō Munan and Hakuin. Bankei's view of Confucian concepts such as loyalty and filial piety is found elsewhere in his discourses; e.g., *Eastern Buddhist*, VII, 2, p. 98; VI, 2, pp. 150-1.

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told them an imperfectly cast pot was perfectly cast and sold it at night, you would be blameable. But in the full light of day, customers probably wouldn't buy them if they knew them to be imperfect. It isn't something to trouble yourself too much about." (54)

37. One winter, when Bankei went to preach during a retreat at the Sanyū-ji in Bizen province, laymen and priests from Bizen and Bitchū assembled in great numbers to hear him.<sup>21</sup> At Niwase in Bitchū there was a large temple of the Hokke (Nichiren) Sect, whose head priest was a highly learned cleric much respected by his congregation. At that time Bankei's Zen teaching inspired great reverence all around, and so the Nichiren priest's congregation all came to hear him. Resenting this, the priest told them, "I've heard that Bankei is an ignorant priest. If I go there and question him, I'll stop him with a single word." So saying, one day he went to attend a meeting. He stood at the rear of the assembly and in the middle of Bankei's talk, said in a very loud voice, "All the people here listen and accept your sermon. They believe in it. But someone like myself could hardly accept the essential point of your teaching. How can you save me when I don't accept it?"

Bankei raised up his fan and said, "Would you move forward a little?"

The priest moved forward.

Then Bankei said, "Please come forward a little more."

The priest advanced again.

"Look!" Bankei said. "How well you accept it!"

The priest withdrew stupidly without saying a word. (57)

38. During a conversation we were having while drinking some tea, Bankei said, "One day years ago when I was among the group of followers studying under Dōsha Zenji,<sup>22</sup> his attendant Zentei and several other monks had come together and were discussing the Dharma. Zentei cited words from the

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<sup>21</sup> Bizen and Bitchū were neighboring provinces on the Inland Sea coast of Honshū; included in present Okayama prefecture.

<sup>22</sup> Dōsha 道者: the Japanese way of reading Tao-che, the name of the Chinese Zen master Bankei studied with in Nagasaki. See *Eastern Buddhist*, VII, 2, pp. 129-130.

*Hekiganroku*, 'Prince Chang is clearly revealed on paper, but you can raise your voice and call out to him with all your effort, there will be no answer.' Then he said each monk should try to answer in place of Prince Chang.<sup>23</sup> I was sitting close to him, and he motioned to me. "Try to give an answer for Prince Chang," he said. Before the words had even left his lips I struck him a blow with my hand. He said, 'Anyone could do that. But try to give an answer with your mouth.' 'Yah! You're lucky I didn't give an answer with my foot,' I exclaimed. He didn't know what to do." (58)

39. I [Itsuzan]<sup>24</sup> once asked, "Does it help students to look through the Buddhist sutras and records of the Zen masters?"

Bankei said, "There's a time for reading the Zen records. If you read the sutras and Zen records when you're still after the meaning contained in them, you'll only blind yourself. When you read them having transcended that meaning, then they become proof for you." (62)

40. Once I [Itsuzan] said, "Master, I have studied under you for a long while. I have in addition had the honor of being your attendant for several years. As for the essentials of the Dharma, I have not the slightest doubt. But being by your side and seeing you like this you are still a wonder to me; 'the deeper I

<sup>23</sup> The *Hekiganroku*, compiled and partly authored by Engo Kokugon, is one of the most important Zen koan "textbooks." Soon after it was first printed, however, Engo's celebrated successor Daie Sōkō tried to stop its dissemination. Feeling that its influence would be detrimental to true Zen attainment, he destroyed copies of the work and had the woodblocks from which it was printed burned. More than 150 years later the text was recompiled and reprinted. The words Zentei quotes here are not found in the *Hekiganroku* proper but in one of its prefaces, written by one Sankyō rōjin 三教老人 (San-chiao Lao-jen). Sankyō writes of the reasons for Daie's action, of the risk that in republishing the work readers will "take the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself." Then he says, "In a poem written on a portrait of a man of the past [Prince Chang], it is written that 'Prince Chang is clearly revealed on the paper, but you can raise your voice and call out to him with all your effort, there will be no answer.' Anyone who wants to contemplate this book must first penetrate these words."

<sup>24</sup> Itsuzan Sojin. The compiler of this work. See asterisked footnote at the beginning of the translation.



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penetrate the firmer it is, the more I seek the higher it gets.<sup>25</sup> All I can ever do is heave a heavy sigh. Your great freedom in responding to those who come to see you seems to have no limit. It's like being on a ladder unable to reach the sun and moon. How can one arrive at that complete attainment?"

The master said, "On the whole, Zen students can reach to seven or eight out of a total ten, but there are two or three they cannot get past."

I said, "How can one get past them?"

The master said, "There is no way."

I said, "Someone hasn't reached complete attainment and there is no way he can—where is his fault?"

The master was silent for a moment and then said, "It's because, after all, their aspiration in the great Dharma is weak." (66)

41. A priest said, "I've been working on the 'Have no illusions!' koan for thirty years."<sup>26</sup>

Bankei said, "Say something about 'Have no illusions!' as it is right now!"

"Yesterday was rain," said the priest.

Bankei coughed.

"Today is clear," the priest said.

Bankei struck him.

(10, *supplement*).

<sup>25</sup> Yen Hui said with a deep sigh, "The more I aspire to it, the higher it soars. The deeper I penetrate, the harder it becomes. I see it in front; but suddenly it is behind. Step by step the Master [Confucius] skilfully lures one on . . . . Even if I wanted to stop, I could not. Just when I feel that I have exhausted every resource, something seems to rise up, standing out sharp and clear. Yet though I long to pursue it, I can find no way of getting to it at all." *Confucian Analects* IX, 10. Adapted from Waley's translation.

<sup>26</sup> "Have no illusions!" *makumōzō* 莫妄想. A Zen expression that figures in a number of stories and dialogues in Zen literature. It is unclear which of these the priest is referring to. The T'ang master Mugō 無業 (Wu-yeh) is said to have responded with these words whenever students asked him questions. *Keitokudenōroku* 8 (*Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*). Also, in a dialogue between Ch'ang-sha and the Minister Chu, the Minister says, "An earthworm is cut in two. Both parts move. Which one contains the Buddha-nature?" Ch'ang-sha replied, "Have no illusions!" *Ibid.*, 10.