

The Fourth Letter from Hakuin's *Orategama*

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Introduction

THE following translation is a sort of report from the translators, concerned with the Zen—in this case, the Tokugawa Japanese master Hakuin—view of Pure Land practice and attainment. For this purpose we have chosen the fourth letter of the *Orategama*¹ (and part of the *Sokkōroku kaien fusetsu*²) from Hakuin's writings.

Professor Philip Yampolsky's *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings* (Columbia University Press, 1971) came to our notice long after we had sent our translation to the *Eastern Buddhist*. His work contains translations of the complete *Orategama* text, as well as *Yabukōji* and *Hebiichigo* (1 & 2). As far as interpretation of the original text is concerned, there are some misunderstandings noticeable here and there, though the book generally displays an admirable attempt to present Hakuin's writings in English. Certainly in any translation of these difficult texts some mistakes are bound to appear, and we make no claim that our own translation is altogether devoid of error. Nowadays, few Japanese can correctly read even the simpler among Hakuin's writings. One thing is certain: such a translation must have assistance from various sources. In this regard, we have been more than fortunate to have had the aid of Professor Yanagida Seizan of Hanazono College in Kyoto, especially, in locating sources for various quotations.

¹ *Hakuin Osbō Zenshū* Vol. 5, pp.211–237.

² *Ibid.* Vol 2, pp. 375–443, the translation of which is not yet ready for publication.

Since the only other translation of Hakuin, R.D.M. Shaw's *The Embossed Tea Kettle* (George Allen & Unwin, 1963), does not include the fourth letter from the *Orategama*, we will refrain from comment upon it here.

Hakuin wrote the original text in 1750 at the age of 66. It was published the next year. He wrote it in answer to a question from the Lord of Nabeshima, Sesshū Province. This we know because in an article in *kambun* entitled "In Reply to a Guest's Fault-Finding Questions" written in 1751 by one of Hakuin's disciples who does not identify himself, Lord Nabeshima is said to have presented the question of superiority between *nembutsu* and *kōan* in a letter to Hakuin, who in turn exhaustively considered it by "criticizing both extremes." In the *Orategama IV* Hakuin just writes: "Let me present this to Your Highness."

According to Hakuin, no matter what kind of practice one may take up, one should be decisive enough to concentrate oneself upon one's True Self, which is No-Self, that the Original Nature may come to Self-Awareness. This is achievable not only through the *kōan* practice of Zen, but through the Pure Land practice of *nembutsu* as well. What the Pure Land faith-mind should realize is that there is no Pure Land attainment apart from the Original Nature coming to Self-Awareness. In contemplation, therefore, one should dwell on neither the defiled world nor the Pure Land, for this dwelling on neither should constitute the content of the True Self. *Kōan* practice will bring one to "abiding nowhere," whereas the Pure Land practice is likely to lead one to dwell on *something*. This is the reason it takes the Pure Land practitioner far longer to attain the Self's Awakening. Hakuin vividly describes how the *kōan* practitioner comes to *satori*. He recommends that one concentrate on Jōshū's *Mu* rather than on *nembutsu*.

Toward the end of the text, Hakuin's sharp criticism is directed against the tendency among Zen people since the Ming period, in China and Japan as well, to take up *nembutsu* at the sacrifice of their own Zen practice. Shukō (Chuhung) of Ming China was the one at whom Hakuin's severest criticism was directed. But this point is more extensively dealt with in the *Sokkōroku kaien fusetsu*.

ORATEGAMA IV

A letter in answer to the question: What of the comparative merits of the *nembutsu*¹ and the *kōan*?²

In your recent letter you write: “There are those who recommend that I use the *nembutsu* as an aid to the uninterrupted, continuing, and total effort to attain Right Mindedness. What about this? Do you think that the *nembutsu* is the same as Jōshū’s *Mu*³ or does it have its own special and unique particularity?”

This is a carefully considered inquiry on your part to which I respond thus: One may kill a man by means of a sword or a spear. Are they then identical with each other? Or are there any distinguishing particulars? What would you answer? Now the sword and spear as weapons are distinctly different; yet, as concerns the action of killing, *how* are they different from each other? Thus in former times Tadanobu⁴ picked up a *go*-board and drove away a foe with it; Shinozuka⁵ tore loose a boat-timber and beat a man with it; Queen Ryo,⁶ by

¹ Sanskrit, *buddha-anusmṛti*; literally, “the Awakened One exclusively recalled.” It refers to the Pure Land practice of directing the mind to Amitāyus Buddha, i.e., to the Self-Awareness of Life-Beyond-Measure.

² Lit., “a case,” i.e., a case of attaining Awakening.

³ Lit., the “No,” of Jōshū Jūshin (Chao-chou Ts’ung-shen, 778–897, T’ang China).

⁴ Satō T., 1161–86, a vassal of Minamoto Yoshitsune, a brother of the Lord of the Genji clan and founder of the Kamakura Shōgunate, M. Yoritomo. Tadanobu saved his lord Yoshitsune from assassins sent by Yoritomo.

⁵ S. Iga-no-kami Shigehiro, a valiant, mighty soldier of Nitta Yoshisada (1301–38). In 1340, when the lord of a castle in Iyo, which Shinozuka had defended with him, killed himself, Shinozuka went out of it, walked through the siege, repulsing every attack on the way, and reached the beach. In full armor he waded into the sea, as far away from the shore as one *ri*, where in the darkness of the night he climbed up into an enemy’s boat. Telling the crew his name and demanding he be sent to Oki Island, he raised and settled a tall mast of 14–5 *biro* by himself and lay for rest. In his sleep he snorted like thunder. The crew, terror-stricken, sailed the boat to the island. No one knew his whereabouts thereafter. (From the *Dainibon Jinmei Jiten*)

⁶ Lü Hou (Jap. “Ryokō”), -180 B.C., wife of Emperor Kao (256 or 247–195 B.C.) of the Han dynasty in China. Upon the emperor’s death her son succeeded him, but out of hatred for another woman whom the former emperor after his accession had taken as mistress, she poisoned the woman’s son Ju-i (Jap. “Nyo-i”), and murdered the woman as well.

giving him poisoned wine, killed Nyoi; Gembu,⁷ loosening a string from a *koto*, strangled his father's concubine; [General] Kan'u⁸ carried a dragon-sword while [General] Chōhi bore a serpent-cudgel. In like manner the sword and spear are two different things; but in reality the only distinction here is between the keenness and dullness, and the integrity and falsity of the men who wield them. So also is the way of knowing the True Self. Whether one sits in dhyanic meditation, chants sutras, repeats mantric incantations, or uses the *nembutsu*, working and working thus, one comes to where "before" and "after" are cut off. He tramples over and upsets the dark cavern of ignorance (*avidyā*), crushes the life out of the villainous five desires,⁹ shatters into fragments the great round mirror of wisdom¹⁰ and so, passing on through the formal attainment of the fourfold perfect wisdom,¹¹ achieves [ultimate] discrimination in the Matter of Supreme Importance.¹² How then, though there are differences of practice and discipline, can there be difference as regards attainment?

Suppose that there are two men of similar strength and physique. Each of them uses strong armor and sharp weapons for fighting the other. But one man is lacking in steadfast determination. And because he has doubts or is afraid, or because he wishes now to fight and now to flee, or because he is not fully resolute for life *or* for death, he cannot decide whether to advance or to

⁷ Yen Wu, 726-765, Chinese T'ang dyn. At eight, seeing his father make love to a concubine instead of his mother, he crushed the concubine's head with a hammer he had hidden in his sleeve.

⁸ Kuan Yü, -219, and Chang Fei (Jap., Chōhi), -221, together served Liu P'ei (J., Ryūbi) who became the king of Shu (J., Shoku) province in China.

⁹ Desires arising by means of sight, voice, scent, taste, and bodily contact.

¹⁰ A literal translation of *ādarśana-jñāna*, rejected here as that which is mistakenly attached to, and taken to be something with form.

¹¹ The basic Awareness of Self without form (*ādarśana-jñāna*), the Awareness of non-differentiation (*samatā-jñāna*), the Awareness at work in precise observation (*pratyavekṣaṇā-jñāna*), and the Awareness at work in performing what is to be done (*kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna*).

¹² The Matter of Supreme Importance refers to the fundamental solution (i.e. *nirvāṇa*) of the birth-death (*samsāra*) antinomy as the centrally urgent concern and problem of man. Cf. Skt. *kṛta-kṛtya* or *kṛta-karaṇīya*.

retreat, his eyes are continually shifting in uncertainty, his manner of walking and running is wrong, and thus he advances blunderingly.

Now the other man pays no heed to death and danger, disregards the matter of [comparative] strengths and weaknesses, and throws himself into the doomful situation. He fixes his eyes, clenches his teeth, rouses up his basic [spiritual] energies, and resolutely advances to the encounter. Which of the two men will win and which will lose can be seen as plainly as the palm of one's own hand. With this same sort of determination it is quite plain to see that even ten horsemen set against a thousand, or a hundred set against ten thousand will win a hundred victories in a hundred battles. Suppose then that two forces are set in battle array against each other. On the one side is a rabble of 100,000 mercenaries; on the other side are 1,000 picked troops, united in a spirit of comradeship, and trained and tempered in devoted loyalty. When these thousand horsemen are hurled at the 100,000 mercenaries, it is as though a fierce tiger were driving a herd of sheep [before it]. It cannot be otherwise! It is simply the result of the sagacity and of the incompetence of the [respective] commanders. How *could* it depend on the greatness or smallness of the forces, or upon the length or shortness of their weapons? This is also the case with respect to the exertion of one's total energies for attaining Right Mindedness. One man may constantly use for his practice the *Mu* of Jōshū while another regularly employs in *his* practice the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name.¹³ Now if the person who is concentrating on *Mu* does not have a pure single-minded intensity of effort and is not firm in his determination, even though he works at his discipline for the space of ten or twenty years, what benefit is there?

As for the practicer of the calling-extolling of the Name, if he forgets all else, fuses himself into one, solely calling-extolling the Name with pure simplicity—not dwelling in contemplation either on this defiled world or the

¹³ Jap. *shōmyō*. *Shō* means to weigh, to agree with, to extol, to call; *myō*, lit. "name" or "naming," means, in its radical sense, the Self Naming or Calling of Amitāyus Buddha. Ordinarily, however, *shōmyō* is taken to mean a stereotyped practice of just repeating the *nembutsu*, i.e., "Namu Amida Butsu" (Lit., "Return to Amitāyus Buddha"), vocally, thereby extolling the Original Calling of the Buddha. The "Name" in the text refers to the whole phrase "Namu Amida Butsu," not merely to "Amida Butsu."

Pure Land—and without retreating advances as with a single breath, he will not have to wait more than ten, or five, or even three days before *samādhi* (a calmness beyond agitation and cessation) breaks forth, the Buddha-wisdom comes to clear awareness, and in the very place where he is “standing” the Supremely Important Matter of the attainment of birth in the Pure Land is settled. Now what is this “Pure Land birth attainment?” After all is it not the final and decisive move into the awareness of True Self? In the sutra the Buddha-vow is stated thus:¹⁴ “If those who wish to be born in My Land should not be born in their ten times of calling-extolling My Name, then I vow that I will never attain the Right Awareness.” But what place is meant by “My Land”? Is it not our own Original Self-Nature which presents itself in direct immediacy? Except by the man in whom Original Nature is come to Self-Awareness,¹⁵ it cannot be readily seen.

If this is *not* the case, however, what of all of those many persons in many places who today are following the Jōdo practice, who daily chant the Name a thousand, ten thousand, or even one thousand times ten million thousand times—and yet not even one of them [literally, “not even half a man”] has settled the Matter of Supreme Importance? Will the Blessed One who is “Aware-of-Life-Beyond-Measure” (Amitāyus Buddha) now abandon his attainment of Right Awareness? I do not know. And in particular I am ignorant of this: If a *single* turning of the mind [to the Awareness-Beyond-Measure] results in attaining birth in the Realm of Utmost Blessedness, how then does

¹⁴ A shortened form of the quotation by Zendō (Shan-tao, 613–681, T’ang dyn.) with slight alteration from the original *Muryōjukyō* text of the eighteenth of the forty-eight vow-expressions. According to the sutra, the Awakening-being Dharmākara, in the fulfillment of this vow, attains Buddhahood, and is named Amitāyus Buddha. The original vow-expression goes as follows:

As to My attaining Awakening; if those sentient beings in the ten directions, who, in trueness of mind, out of faith and joy, and wishing birth in My Land, direct their minds (to this) up to ten times are not so born, there will be no attaining by Me of Right Awakening. (*Taishō Tripitaka* 12, p.268a.)

¹⁵ Hakuin’s often used Zen term for *satori*, *ken-sbō* (lit., “seeing nature”), has here been translated in the following slightly variant ways in accordance with various contexts as: “Original Nature come to Self-Awareness (or to Awareness of Itself)”; “Self-Awareness (or Self-Awakening) of Original Nature”; “Awaking of Original Self-Nature.”

it depend upon *ten* utterances of the Name? It is because of this that the Buddha proclaims:¹⁶ "For the courageous and resolute there is the attainment of Buddhahood with a single turning of Mind to Itself; whereas for the negligent and lazy the attainment of Nirvana will take three incalculable ages (*kalpas*)."¹⁷ Thus if anyone seeks to establish a difference between the *kōan Mu* and the calling-extolling of the Name you should understand that he and all like him belong to the tribe of evil disturbers and heretics.

Lamentably the situation these days is that Pure Land practitioners are often ignorant of the original intent of all the Buddhas. They hold only the belief that the Buddha exists in the Western Quarter and do not know that "the West" signifies their own underived Mind-Root. Thus depending on the merit of the *nembutsu* they only resolve to go toward "the West" after death, flying through the empty sky-space. But a whole lifetime of laboriously chanting the Name cannot attain the originally cherished hope for birth in the Pure Land. Particularly are they ignorant of this: "Throughout the Buddha Lands in all ten directions there is only one Dharma Vehicle."¹⁷

Concerning this matter it is said: "The Buddha-body fills the whole phenomenal world, disclosing itself universally to all sentient beings."¹⁸ Now if the Buddha is worshiped as only in "the West" there can be no such thing as his disclosure to all sentient beings. If on the other hand he is disclosed to all sentient beings he cannot be confined to "the West" alone. How grievous a thing it is! Although the Pure True Dharma-Body of the Tathāgata shines and glows in direct immediacy, as though visible in the palms of their hands, because of the blindness of the Wisdom-eye there is no seeing of this (Body).

But do we not have this saying: "The light illumines all of the worlds in the ten directions"?¹⁹ So then you should not take the "light" and the "world" to be different from each other. For when we come to Awareness,

¹⁶ An altered quotation from the *Daijō-kishin-ron* (Chin., *Ta-ch'eng ch'i-ssin lun*; A Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna), *Taishō T.* 32, p. 581ab. Cf. Prof. Yoshito S. Hakeda *The Awakening of Faith Attributed to Avaghosha*, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1967, pp.85-88.

¹⁷ From the *Lotus Sutra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka sūtra*), *TT.* 9, p.8a.

¹⁸ From the *Kegon-kyō* (*Avatamsaka sūtra*), *TT.* 9, p.408a.

¹⁹ From the *Kammuryōju-kyō* (Ch., *Kuan-wu-liang-sbou ching*), *TT.* 12, p.343b.

the whole universe extending in the ten directions with all of its trees, plants, and lands, is realized directly as none other than the Tathāgata's pure and luminous True Dharma-Body. But when one is still in illusion he mistakenly takes the Tathāgata's pure and luminous True Dharma-Body to be no better than the universe extending in the ten directions with its grass, trees, and lands. Thus it is said in the sutra: "If anyone perceives me as having form and seeks me through the sound of my voice, such a person, because he follows an evil way, is incapable of beholding the Tathāgata."²⁰

The *authentic* practitioner of the Jōdo discipline is not like this. Unheedful of both birth and death, with undistracted and unfaltering mind he continually calls-extols the Name and thus achieves the state of undisturbed single-mindedness. Then suddenly the Supremely Important Matter actualizes itself for him and the attainment of birth in the Pure Land settles itself. We point to such a man as one in whom Original Nature has become genuinely self-aware. For he himself is none other than Amitāyus Buddha, whose stature is [according to the sutra] 60 billion times 100 billion times the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River of yojanas in height.²¹ And the seven-jewel trees²² and the ponds filled with the water of the eightfold excellent qualities²³ are bright and clear to his mind and shine brilliantly before his eyes. With piercing [in-] sight he perceives the mountains and rivers, and the great earth's myriad forms standing like luxuriant forests, to be the rare and subtle forms of the Great Formless Ocean.²⁴

²⁰ From the *Diamond Sutra* (*Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*), *TT*, 8, p.752a.

²¹⁻²³ From the *Kammuryōju-kyō* (Sutra of Contemplation on the Amitāyus Buddha), *TT*, 12, pp.343c, 342b, 342c, respectively.

In the *Muryōju-kyō* (Sutra on Amitāyus Buddha; Skt. version, *Sukhāvativyūha*), mention is made of trees made up seven kinds of "jewels," i.e. gold, silver, cat's eye, crystal, amber, red pearl, and agate, as well as water of eight excellent qualities, i.e. sweetness, coolness, softness, lightness, cleanness, odorlessness, safety for the throat, and safety for the stomach. In this sutra, however, no description is found of the stature of the Buddha. Instead, it says that the Light and Life of the Buddha are beyond measure and thought.

²⁴ Lit., "sea of decoration." "Decoration," Skt. *alam-kāra* (making adequate, making ready, preparation) or *vyūha*, means expression in form of the Self without form. The "sea" or "ocean" means unity and plurality-transcendence.

THE FOURTH LETTER FROM HAKUIN'S ORATEGAMA

By "attainment," namely the \bar{O} of $\bar{O}j\bar{o}$, we mean the actuality of the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name, in which not one discrimination arises, in which the body is cast off and life forsaken. And what we call "birth," namely the $j\bar{o}$ of $\bar{O}j\bar{o}$, is precisely the arising and secure attainment of *samādbi*, the sheer immediacy of the true wisdom. And this Truth mentioned just above "gushes forth"²⁵ clear and calm on the spot, without a hair's breadth of separation [from that very place and time]. This we identify with the "Buddha's welcome" of the faithful to the Pure Land. Being welcomed to the Pure Land and attaining birth in the Pure Land are not a twoness but are the immediate presence of the very Self-awareness of Original Nature. About the time of the Genroku era (1688–1704) there were two practicers of Jōdo. One was called Enjo [perfect patience] and the other Engu [complete foolishness]. Since the two shared the same aspiration they never neglected the constant and exclusive chanting of the Name. Now Enjo was a man of the Yamashiro region (the present Kyoto area). Chanting and thinking on the Name with pure and concentrated intensity, as a natural result he reached a state of undisturbed concentration of mind. And then suddenly *samādbi* arose and the Supremely Important Matter of attaining birth in the Pure Land was settled.

Thereupon he journeyed to and climbed up Mt. Hatsu of Tōtōmi and talked with the aged master Dokutan.²⁶

[Doku-]tan asked: "From what place are you?"

[En-]jo said: "Yamashiro."

²⁵ The *Lotus Sutra* speaks of "gushing forth" from the ground of Gangā-sand-grain-numbers of Awakened Ones whom Śākyamuni has, in the eternity of time, helped to attain Awakening.

²⁶ Dokutan Shōei (Tu-chan Hsing-ying), d. 1706 at 79. He was born in Ming China, and went into the priesthood at 16. He saw Ingen Ryūki (Yin-yüan Lung-ch'i, 1592–1673) at Mt. Ōbaku (Huang-po), and also went to Mt. Ku to see Yōkaku Genken (Yung-chüeh Yüan-hsien, d. 1657 at 80). In 1654 he came from China together with Ingen and others. On Mt. Hatsu, in the present Shizuoka area, he built and presided over a temple named Hōrinji from 1663 to 1682, when he went to Ōbaku, Uji, to be the fourth presiding priest of the Mampukuji. At Uji, it is said, he devoted himself to the Pure Land practice and read the *Amida-kyō* (Ch., *A-mi-t'o ching*; Smaller Sutra on Amitāyus Buddha) forty-eight times a day.

Tan: "According to what sectarian discipline do you practice?"

Jo: "The Jōdo way."

Tan: "How old is Amida the Tathāgata?"

Jo: "Just as old as I am."

Tan: "And how old are you?"

Jo: "As many years old as Amida."

Tan: "What place are you in at this very moment?"

Jo just closed his left hand and raised it a little. In great wonder Tan said: "You are indeed a man of genuine and true Jōdo practice."

And so too not long after this *samādhi* arose in Engu and settled for him the Supremely Important Matter [of life and death].

Also at the beginning of the Genroku era there lived another practitioner of the Jōdo discipline, named Sokuō (immediate attainment) of Izu Province. He too, by virtue of the calling-extolling of the Name, achieved power great enough for the attainment of birth in the Pure Land. Some time ago I wrote down an account of these persons.²⁷ And I do not now have time to deal with them individually. But all this is a present proof of the great power for attainment in the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name.

What must be realized at all events is that *both* the *kōan* and calling-extolling the Name are, in general, instrumental causes of "Opening the Eye of Buddha-Wisdom."²⁸ As for the opening of the Eye of Buddha-Wisdom, this is the prime purpose of all the Buddhas in appearing in the world. After [these appearances] provisional means [for opening the Eye of Buddha-Wisdom] have been set up; one of them is known as attainment of birth in the Pure Land, and the other as the Self-awareness of Original Nature. How then can these two be different?

But now because he fails to see the significance of these means in a penetrating manner, a man of Zen, observing the practitioners of the Jōdo discipline, says: "They are ordinary people, stupid and completely ignorant, who know nothing of the Supremely Important Matter of the Self-awakening of Original Nature. Undiscriminatingly chanting the Name they hope to go to the Land

²⁷ Nothing is known about the account here mentioned.

²⁸ From the *Lotus Sutra*, TT. 9, p.233c.

of Utmost Blessedness, flying in broad daylight right on through 10,000 times 10,000,000 realms. It is as though a lame mud-turtle should patch up his body and try to fly to China! Especially are they ignorant of this: The distance through the 10,000 times 10,000,000 lands is that of the ten wrongs and the eight evil views;²⁹ and at the moment of the opening up of the Buddha-Wisdom, suddenly the ice of the ten wrongs and eight evil views melts away and this very world itself is then the land of Utmost Blessedness."

So saying they despise and make light of them.

The practicers of the Pure Land discipline looking at you practicers of the Zen way say: "You do not trust in the Great Vow of the Tathāgata in his Power-for-others,³⁰ but assert with haughty arrogance the superiority of Self-Power and seek to transcend birth and death by your great Self-Awareness. Do you not cut a ridiculous figure? Can such awareness be within our reach, we who are persons of inferior capacity living in a degenerate age? It is just as if a farmyard duck, intending to fly to Korea, should fix up his own wings to compete with a hawk's wings in strength."

Thus speaking they scornfully ridicule you.

²⁹ For this Hakuin follows the *Rokuso-daisbi-bōbōdan-gyō* (Ch., *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao-t'ang ching*; the Great Master Sixth Patriarch's Dharma-Treasure-Platform Sutra). In the third chapter of the sutra, the distance is quoted as 10 *man* (10 x 10,000) 8 *sen* (8 x 1,000) *ri*, and is identified with the 10 wrongs and 8 evils in one's own being. The *Platform Sutra* further says in exhortation that upon the removal of the ten wrongs one goes 100,000 *ri*, that with the removal of the eight evils one passes 8,000 *ri* and that, thus, at every moment the Original Nature is aware of Itself. (TT. 48, p.352a.)

The ten wrongs (Skt., *daśākusalāni*) are three wrong bodily deeds (killing, taking what is not given, and conduct misled by sensuality), four oral wrong deeds (lying, harsh language, slander, and idle talk), and three wrong mental deeds (desire, malice, and false view). They constitute the opposites of the "ten good deeds."

The eight evils (*aṣṭāṅga-amārgaḥ*) are the opposites of the eightfold path of *nirvāṇa* (i.e., right view, consideration, speech, action, living, exertion, calling to mind, and calmness).

³⁰ In Japanese, *tariki*, lit., "other-power," ordinarily translated as "Other's Power." Since this is *karuṇā* (Compassion) based on *prajñā* (Self-Awareness without form), the compound *ta-riki* could be read, in the manner of an interpretation, as "Power-for-others (or -otherness)."

And those who practice the discipline of the *Lotus Sutra* speak thus: "What is the use of the calling-extolling of the Name or of the practice of Zen when these people ignore the sweet-milk taste of such a marvelous sutra as this one of ours, which is the most direct path by which all of the Tathāgatas attained Buddhahood and [whose proclamation] is the fundamental purpose of all the Buddhas' appearances in the three worlds. What is more, when they see our priests skip-reading the Wondrous Sutra they say, glibly and abusively: "This does not give rise to the perfect realization that there is but the one and only vehicle, nor open the Wisdom-eye to the real form, i.e. Formlessness, of all forms (*dharmas*).³¹ They merely shout 'wa-wa' every day, just like clamoring frogs along the rice-paddy field ridges in the spring!"

Now those that so abuse us are fools who ignore the Golden Sentence: "[Those who despise the Buddha Dharma will have their own deserts, having their heads split into seven parts] just as [fruits of] the *arjaka* tree [split when they fall to the ground].³² Such are the practices of evil disturbers and heretics."

Now what such followers of the *Lotus Sutra* are quite ignorant of is this: The *Lotus Sutra*,³³ passing through the "gradual" stages of the four "tastes" of the [*Avatamsaka*], *Āgama*, *Vaipulya*, [and *Prajñāpāramitā*], proclaims the ultimate essence of the opening of the Buddha Wisdom-Eye. Thus it is said

³¹ According to the *Kusha-ron* (*Abhidharmakośabbāṣyam*; Chapter 1. *TT.* 29, p.16.), the term *dharmas* means that which has its own characteristic (or, holds self-form); in its ultimate sense it stands for *nirvāna* or the True Self that is without form. Thus the term *dharmas* points to the direct awareness in form of the Formless Self.

³² The *Lotus Sutra*, *TT.* 9, p.59b.

³³ Chih-i, 538–597, founder of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai school, classified Śākyamuni's lifetime teaching into five periods:

1. The *Avatamsaka* period, when he preached the *Keḡon-kyō*, which represents Sudden Attainment.
2. The *Āgama* period, when he taught Gradual Attainment in the *Āgama* scriptures.
3. The *Vaipulya* period, when he praised the Great Vehicle in such sutras as *Tuima-gyō* (*Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*) and *Shōman-gyō* (*Śrīmālā-devī-simha-nāda*).
4. The *Prajñā-pāramitā* period, when he did away with the distinction of Great and Small Vehicles.
5. The *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* and *Nirvāna Sūtra* period, when he taught ultimate truth.

THE FOURTH LETTER FROM HAKUIN'S ORATEGAMA

in this sutra itself: "For the purpose of opening the Buddha Wisdom-Eye do they appear in the world." Surely they ought to be aware that the prime purpose of the Buddhas' manifestations in the world is the bright shining forth of the perfect realization. And if this be so, then *both* Zen practice and the *nembutsu*, as well as the silent and vocal reading of the sutras, are all aids on the way to Awakening—just like the staff of a traveler.

Now as for staffs, there are goosefoot plant staffs and bamboo staffs. And even though we may speak of them as different articles made of bamboo and goosefoot plant, insofar as they both help one to make a journey they are identical. So one ought not to say: "The goosefoot-plant [staff] is good, the bamboo one is no good." For if the wayfarer is so discouraged in mind and exhausted in body that he cannot even stand up, what help can *either* goosefoot plant or bamboo staff provide him?

Zen practice also is like this. Essential is the Single-Mindedness of the practicer in his dauntless devotion and determination. Therefore never say: "The *kōan* is good, calling-extolling the Name is bad." For if the practicer lacks intense determination, will either *kōan* or calling-extolling the Name be of any more use to him than spectacles to a blind man or a stock of combs to a priest?

Suppose that there are some hundreds of persons who wish to go up to the capital city. Each one of them packs up his food supply and they all set forth. But since their leader is incompetent, they mistakenly stop in a wild and remote region abounding in wolves and tigers. Day after day they uselessly dispute about the shortness and length of staffs, argue about the suitability or unsuitability of travel attire, and estimate the amount of travel expenses. Some cry out only, "Staff, staff!" and others shout, "Travel expense, travel expense!" But in the end they do not know how to advance by so much as a single step. Thus they idly live out their days, and their bodies grow weary with their declining years. So it is that they fall prey to the wolves and tigers; and it is as if they had turned into the spirits and ghosts that haunt wildernesses and remote boundary regions. Consequently they are never able to reach the capital.

Now the real heart of the matter is this: Without choosing between staffs, or debating about travel-attire, we regard it to be the truly wise course to advance without retreating at all, and to speedily arrive at the capital.

Following the fashion of the times, should one wish to attain to the Western Paradise after death, by depending during his lifetime upon the power of the Buddha, then *samādhi* will never manifest itself nor will birth in the Pure Land be definitely settled all his life long. And how much less will there arise the Supremely Important Matter of the Self-Awareness of Original Nature [for such a person]. As illustrative of this there is the verse of the master of Shinju'an:³⁴

More fleeting than writing letters in running water
Is the future destiny of the man
Who relies on the Buddha [for his salvation].

Even though I speak thus, however, I neither dislike the Jōdo practice nor am I making light of the calling-extolling of the Name. For if it would be of assistance to that uninterrupted, continual, totally intensive rightmindedness that completes the work of the Self-Awareness of Original Nature, then not only may you call-extol the Name but you may even sing a miller's song! But never, never relinquish the secret of how to become aware of Original Nature nor calculate how you may become a Buddha as your reward for the merit of exclusively chanting the Name.

Let me illustrate what I have just said: Suppose that there is a large ship of 10,000 *koku*³⁵ capacity. It is rigged as skillfully as possible; the sails are well-filled with a favorable wind; the voices [of the crew] are raised in a sailor's song; the oars are moving in time with the rhythmic beat of the song; all [of the oarsmen] are working in perfect harmony with the helmsman. But even though they [are fully prepared to] push on through waves a thousand fathoms high, and to row through the eight currents of the sea and to push forward cheerfully every day, if they actually fail to cut the hawser they will be unable to cross the wide expanse of waves. In vain will they expend their energies every day; they will but remain in the original harbor. For even though the hawser may be but a short metal strand, its power to halt the great ship is such that not even the exertions of 10,000 men can move it!

³⁴ Ikkyū Sōjun, 1394–1481. He entered Daitokuji in 1474 and built the subtemple Shinju'an. In the *Kokin-waka-sbū* (Collection of Japanese Songs Old and New; compiled after 905) 11, there is a verse on love: More fleeting than writing letters in running water is it/To love a person who never thinks of me.

³⁵ One *koku* is about 10 cubic feet.

THE FOURTH LETTER FROM HAKUIN'S ORATEGAMA

Again the attainment of Awakening is like *this*: Let us suppose that there is an individual who from early life has had a remarkably unyielding and ruggedly determined spirit, and has possessed the intellectual powers of a genius. Besides all this he has had Baso³⁶ and Hyakujō³⁶ as his Zen teachers and Nansen³⁶ and Chōsha³⁶ as his companions. He has cultivated intrepid courage as his preëminent spiritual quality, has become concentration itself as he has advanced, and [now] practices in pure undistracted unity of mind. Yet if he has not actually cut off the root-force of life, never, never can there be for him the joyous delight of that single victorious cry of “Ka!”³⁷

What do I mean by the “root-force of life”? It is that cast of the mind of ignorance which has come down through countless past ages. The formation of heavens and hells and defiled and pure lands out of nothing, the actualization of the three and six *karma*-produced levels of being,³⁸ are all of them dependent on that root-force. Even though as subtle as dream, mirage, and sky-flower, this cast of mind surpasses an army of a hundred or a thousand demons in its power of hindering the Supremely Important Matter of the Self-Awareness of Original Nature. Now it may be described as having a “sky-flower-like subtlety of thought”; it may be named “the birth-death life-root”; it may be called “disturbing illusion,” or even “the body-mind demon” (i.e. the *skandhas*).³⁹ It is but one reality with many names.

After careful observation we come in the end to this one term: “False view of self.” As a consequence of this phenomenal-self view there exist “birth and death” and the “going out from birth and death,” as well as “disturbing illusions” and “freedom from disturbing illusions.” For this reason it is said [in the sutra]:

³⁶ Baso Dōitsu (Ma-tsu Tao-i, 709–788), Hyakujō Ekai (Po-chang Huai-hai, 720–814), Nansen Fugan (Nan-ch’üan P’u-yüan, 748–835), and Chōsha Keijin (Ch’ang-sha Ching-ts’en, n.d.). Baso’s master’s master was Enō (Hui-neng); Hyakujō and Nansen were disciples of Baso.

³⁷ An exclamation unconsciously uttered at a time of strenuous effort, of the discovery of something lost, or of remembering what has been forgotten. Cf. the Sanskrit sound *ka*, which in its neutral form (*kaṃ*) means happiness, joy, pleasure.

³⁸ The six modes of existence (*gati*): hell, departed spirit, animal-born, demon, man, and heavenly being. The first three are the so-called three (evil) paths.

³⁹ Esp. the *vijñāna-skandha* or consciousness is meant here.

When mind appears there appear varieties of form;
When mind disappears the varieties of form disappear.⁴⁰

And again:

Wherever there is the thought of self, or of ordinary human individuality, or of average mass-man, there can be no awakening of True Self.⁴¹

[A sutra says]:⁴²

The Buddha asked the Bodhisattva Kāśyapa:

‘Virtuous sir, what kind of truth should one practice in order that he may adopt the one suited to the truth of Nirvana?’

Then the excellent Bodhisattva Kāśyapa answered, citing one after another, the Five Precepts,⁴³ the ten virtuous deeds,⁴⁴ the eighteen special merits [of the Buddhas],⁴⁵ the Six Perfections,⁴⁶ the tens of thousands of practices, the eight emancipations,⁴⁷ and the innumerable truth-gates (i.e. Buddha teachings). But the Buddha did not approve at all.

Then Kāśyapa asked the Buddha: “World-Honored One, then what kind

⁴⁰ From the *Daijō-kisbin-ron*. TT. 32, p.577b.

⁴¹ From the *Diamond Sutra* (“*ātma-*, *jīva* or *pudgala-*, and *sattva-* *saṃjñā*”), TT. 8, p.749a, et al.

⁴² The source is not located.

⁴³ Abstention from killing, from taking what is not given, from sensuality-led conduct, from lying, and from the drinking of intoxicating liquors. (*pañca-sīla*)

⁴⁴ Abstention from the ten wrong deeds. (*daśakuśalāni*)

⁴⁵ The (Buddha) Tathāgata is free from, 1. (the fault of) making a false step, 2. clamor, 3. memory-deprivation, 4. distracted mind, 5. plurality-thought, 6. unchecked impartiality, 7. diminution in desire, 8. diminution in energy, 9. diminution in memory, 10. diminution in Composure (*saṃādhi*), 11. diminution in Self-Awareness without form (*prajñā*), 12. diminution in Emancipation (*vimukti*); he has wisdom (*jñāna*) precede and succeed all his 13. bodily, 14. oral, and 15. mental activities; his detached, unobstructed wisdom-eye works for seeing 16. the past, 17. the future, and 18. the present. *aṣṭādaśāveṇika-buddhabharmāb*)

⁴⁶ Those six in and through which *nirvāṇa* is attained (*ṣaṭpāramitāb*): liberality, moral conduct, patience, energy, meditation, and Self-Awareness without form.

⁴⁷ 1. To see forms as formed. 2. To have no thought of form internally. 3. Directly, by one’s own existence, to intuit and abide in the splendid Emancipation. 4. Completely

of truth-gate *is* suited to the attainment of Nirvana?"

The Buddha answered: "The truth of No-Self alone is suited to the attainment of Nirvana."

However there are two kinds of "No-Self." Thus one person, having always been weak of body, timid in spirit, and fearful of other persons, "kills" his feelings and yields to all external conditions. Even when abused he does not become angry, and does not become upset even though he is beaten. This habitual fool and dull-wit who [really] experiences nothing, who does not grow in wisdom, believes thus: "As for me, I have fully attained this No-Self." He feels that this much is sufficient. Now this man is but a broken food-bag, a muddy wild boar getting overfat, [a case of] total ignorance and darkest folly. There is nothing here at all of the *genuine* No-Self.

And how much less is there [No-Self] in the case of one who is planning on going to the Pure Land, where he is to become a Buddha, by virtue of the power of the exclusive chanting of the Name! For, if it is not the Self, what *is* that which "goes," and what *is* that which "becomes"? Now do not say: "Such [a view as yours] is nothing other than an annihilationist view!" Is this "annihilation"? Is this "non-annihilation"? This is not something which is readily understood except by a superior man in whom Original Nature has been truly and rightly awakened.

Now if one wishes to achieve accord with the true and genuine No-Self in its purity, he must necessarily let go his hold on the steep precipice and then, after dying, come to life again. Only then will he directly experience the True and Real Self of the Four Nirvanic Excellences.⁴⁸

What then is this "letting go one's hold on the steep precipice"? Let us suppose that a person, mistaking his way, comes to a place with no signs of human habitation where he is looking directly down a bottomless precipice.

going beyond the thought of form, ceasing from the thought of hindrance, to attain to and abide in the abode of infinitude of space. 5. Going beyond this, to attain to and abide in the abode of infinitude of consciousness; 6. in the abode of nothingness; 7. in the abode of neither thought nor no-thought; 8. in the extinction of thought and senses. (*aṣṭa vimokṣāḥ*)

⁴⁸ From the *Nirvāna Sutra*, *TT*. 12, Nos. 374 & 375: constancy, ease, self, and purity.

The steep face of the cliff, covered with slippery moss, offers no place for a foothold. He can neither advance nor go back. Only one thing remains: death. For support he has but an ivy plant, which he grasps with his left hand, and an arrowroot runner to which he clings with his right hand. And there for a time his life continues to hang on a thread. Then if, of a sudden, he should let go with both hands there would be a dismembered body dashed to pieces, without so much as a dry bone remaining.

This is also the way of Self-Awakening. Let a person take up a single *kōan* and single-mindedly penetrate into it. Then the “mind” will die and the “will” be extinguished. There results a vast emptiness, an infinite void, and it seems as though one were on the brink of a cliff ten thousand fathoms high with no support for either hand or foot. He is just one inch away from death. Within, his breast is in constant fiery agony. Then all at once, in harmony with his *kōan*, he loses both body and mind. This is called “the time when one loses his hold on the precipice.” Brought to life again, suddenly one experiences a great joy like that of drinking water and knowing in his own self its coldness or its warmth. To this we give the name “attaining birth in the Pure Land.” We call it “Original Nature come to Self-Awareness.”

The only thing that matters is that by relying on the help of this concentrated attention you should push on vigorously to pierce through to the root-source of Self-Nature. Never, never should you doubt the fact that without Self-Awareness of Original Nature there is no attaining Buddhahood; that apart from this awareness of Original Nature there is no such thing as the Pure Land. The World-Revered One, honored and adored as the Great Sage, peerless in the Triple World, Way-Shower to and Trainer of all sentient beings, endowed with the Ten Powers [of a Tathāgata],⁴⁹ even he, before he entered into the Himalayas where Original Nature [fully and] finally came to awareness of itself, was just the same as ordinary men who perpetually sink down [again and again] into the birth-and-death cycle and pass through many thousands of comings and goings. Only at the dawning of the Great Awakening, when Original Nature became aware of itself, was his eye of full and perfect Self-Awareness opened.

⁴⁹ All this refers to Śākyamuni.

On the other hand there are none more completely ignorant than those who hold the view that *apart* from the Self-Awareness of Original Nature there is an attainment of Buddhahood or the Pure Land.

So also with respect to that great master Bodhidharma who was the twenty-eighth patriarch and none other than an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara.⁵⁰ He is said to have braved a 10,000 *ri*⁵¹ expanse of huge billows to cross over to China, where there was certainly no lack of sutras and commentaries, to transmit the Buddha Mind-Seal⁵² which he had received directly from Śākyamuni. When the people heard about this (his coming) they washed their faces, adjusted their postures, and waited eagerly to honor and adore him, saying "What great matter can he be about to communicate?" But he transmitted to them one thing only: simply the Buddhahood of Original Nature becoming aware of itself. Although he provisionally set up six truth-gates⁵³ which include, "Form Broken Through" and "Original Nature Awakened," in the end they all reduce to the single matter of the Self-Awareness of Original Nature.

However, because sentient beings are innumerable, so too are the truth-gates innumerable. Among all of these truth-gates this one gate of attaining birth in the Pure Land was established provisionally in order to deliver Queen Vaidehī⁵⁴ from her tribulations while in prison. But if we suppose that the

⁵⁰ Jap., Kanzeon, Kanjizai, or Kannon (Ch., Kuan-yin); lit., "one powerful in observing the suffering world"; a deified personification of *karuṇā*-virtue.

⁵¹ One *ri* is in Japan 3.9273 kilometers and in China about 0.576 km.

⁵² This refers to the Zen manner of "Transmission from Mind to Mind" without recourse to scriptures or words (more precisely, without recourse to either words or no-words).

⁵³ The six short treatises attributed to Bodhidharma: 1. *Commentary in verse on the Hannyasbin-gyō (Prajñāpāramitābrdayas sūtra)*; 2. *Form Broken Through* (the other, and seemingly more appropriate, title of which is *Contemplation of the Mind*); 3. *Two Kinds of Entering* (into the Dharma); 4. *The Dharma Gate of Mind Stabilization*; 5. *Original Nature Awakened*; and 6. *Mind Transmission*.

⁵⁴ According to the *Kammuryōju-kyō*, Vaidehī, queen of King Bimbisāra of Magadha, India, who wanted to carry food to save her imprisoned husband's life, was also put into prison by her son Ajātaśatru, and out of her deep sorrow and suffering aspired to hear Śākyamuni's teaching. Whereupon, in response to this desire, Śākyamuni appeared before her and preached what constitutes the content of this sutra.

single matter of attaining birth in the Pure Land embodies the *essence* of the Buddha-Dharma, then it would have been sufficient for Bodhidharma to have written a letter of two or three lines and to have sent it to China saying: "Attain birth in the Pure Land by the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name." Why then did he cross over to China enduring many hardships, bitter buffetings of the winds and waves, and hanging suspended from the jaws of great whales?

The same is true also of Śākyamuni Buddha. He *might* have lived all his life in the palace of King Śuddhodana, fully satisfying his desires and enjoying his pleasures with Yaśodharā, Gopī, and the other royal consorts, ascending the throne as a king endowed with the ten virtues, and taking possession of the wealth of the five seals. At life's end he would have needed only to call and extol the Name and turn his mind to Amitāyus Buddha in order to attain birth in the Pure Land! With what purpose then did he cast aside the crown of the wheel-turning monarch and follow ascetic practices for six years? He was subjected to "tortures" by the hermit Ārāda Kālāma; afterward he went up into the Himalayas where, quite unconscious of the reeds and pampas grasses that were piercing his thighs, he entered so deeply into the great *dhyāna* that he did not even know when thunderbolts fell and killed cattle and horses right before his eyes. His body became so thin and weak that it was like a heap of tiles held together by threads; his skin cleaved directly to his bones. At last on the eighth night of the twelfth month, upon seeing the morning star, for the first time he attained to the Great Awakening of Original Self-Nature and he cried in a loud voice, "How marvelous! All sentient beings are possessed of the great wisdom, the supreme virtue of the Tathāgatas!" Then, having descended from the mountains, he proclaimed the Sudden and Gradual, the Basic and Fully-Developed Teachings⁵⁵—there was nothing lacking. It is because of this that he is revered as the Tathāgata who is fully accomplished in the tenfold perfection⁵⁶ and who has attained to the full fruition of the wondrous Awakening.

⁵⁵ From the *Hokkegengi* 10 (*TT*. 33, No. 1717) by Chih-i.

⁵⁶ The six *pāramitās* and the four: approach (*upāya*), vow-desire (*pranidhāna*), power (*bala*), and wisdom (*jñāna*).

Is not this what the great layman Zen'e⁵⁷ wrote: "Immediately awakening to the Mind-Source, opening the Dharma Treasure-House. . . ."? Now, even though it be the latter days of the decadent final age of the disappearance of the Dharma, is not this (Awakening) a fragrant footprint which ought to be revered and faithfully followed by those who wish to be the Buddha's children? For when we examine the secret of the transmission of the inner attainment achieved by means of the unremitting practice of all of the Buddhas who have manifested themselves in the world, and of the patriarchs who have transmitted the light of the tradition through successive ages, as well as that of all the wise saints and holy priests—all of them regarded the Dharma-gate of Self-Nature to be the very essence.

For example Rennyo Shōnin⁵⁸ is said to have taught the attainment of birth in the Pure Land in *this* life without waiting for a welcome by the Amida Buddha [to the Pure Land at death]. Does not this also refer to the Awakening of Original Self-Nature? And even Hōnen Shōnin,⁵⁹ who searched deeply into the profound depths of the ocean [of Buddhist Scriptures], who studied the more than five thousand volumes of the golden words [of the Buddha] as many as five times, and whom everyone from royalty to common people honored and revered as the living Tathāgata, is said to have lamented thus:⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Fukyū (Fu Hsi, 497-569), ordinarily called Fu Daishi. He wrote twelve lines of verse, "Returning to the Source," and others, but this quoted expression cannot be located in any of his writings. We find, instead, that the *Keitoku Dentōroku* (*Ching-te Ch'uan-teng lu*, Recorded Cases of Lamp Transmission, compiled in the Sung dyn.) records it as belonging to Nangaku Eshi (Nan-yüeh Huai-ssu, 515-577). In the *Dentōroku* the record of Nangaku Eshi comes next to that of Fukyū, and the above expression appears a few lines after the new beginning. Hakuin seems to have made a mistake in recollection.

⁵⁸ Rennyo "the Revered," 1414-99, the eighth chief abbot of Honganji, Jōdoshinshū (Pure Land True School), Japan. Here Hakuin quotes with some changes from the original. According to Rennyo (*Letters* I, 4), "In our ordinary life-time (we believe) Pure Land attainment is already worked out." "Attainment is determined in the faith-mind so that there is no need to expect the Buddha's welcome at death."

⁵⁹ Hōnen "the Revered," the posthumous and better known name of Genkū (1133-1212), founder of Jōdoshū (Pure Land School), Japan.

⁶⁰ According to Hōnen's biography (*Hōnen Shōnin Gyōjō Ezu* 5, in the *Hōnen Shōnin Zenshū*, Kyoto, Shūsuissha, 1911, p.818), Hōnen said, "Zen cannot and should not be understood from the viewpoint of Shingon *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*. Much less is this to be interpreted

It is not that I am totally ignorant of the truth that is in the scriptures. But because there is no teacher-leader to search out the 'gills' (i.e. deep truth) of the [Buddha-] Mind-Principle 'outside the scriptures,' I feel as though I were attempting to dip water out of a deep well with a short rope, or were unable to soar through the far distant sky because of wings that are too short.

Now what does he mean by the Mind Principle "outside the Teaching"? Is it not the Dharma-gate of Original Nature come to Self-Awareness? This particular statement by a man of [spiritual] attainments, who would not deceive in the slightest degree, must be especially honored and held in reverence. Even he, who was such a great man that the gods of heaven and earth and even the great demons of hell never ceased to respect and to admire him, thus deeply desired to attain to the Supremely Important Matter of the Awakening of Original Self-Nature. As for the slander and ridicule of people of the present day [against this Awakening], I feel it to be especially reprehensible. Yet, as I see it, it does not really constitute an offense because it probably is based on ignorance of the truth. Genshin Sōzu of Eshin Temple,⁶¹ who was resolved at the age of twenty-four to polish the great round mirror of Original Self-Nature, entered [Eshin Temple at] Yokawa. There he read the three volumes of the *Lotus Sutra* group during the day; during the night he gave voice to the *nembutsu* 60,000 times—and in the meantime never idled away a single moment. He said that he first achieved the realization—so I have heard—that he himself was *Shinnyo*⁶² [namely, Self without form] in his sixty-fourth year. How very worthy of honor and praise!

from the Hossō or the Sanron viewpoint, not to mention the other Hīnayāna standpoints." The biographer (not identified, but probably not very long after Hōnen) comments upon this: "This is far from words by a man of scriptures. Really one must say that with a short rope one can not reach the deep well, and that with feeble wings one can never soar through the vast vacancy of space. How can one wit shallow wisdom and dull mind reach the gate of the Principle (of Zen)? Thus, there has been preserved a Shōnin's own writing which deals with the central standpoint of Zen. Students of the latter days should have no doubt about this."

⁶¹ Genshin, 942–1017, author of the *Ōjō-yōshū* (Collection of Essential Sources of Pure Land Attainment). "Sōzu" in Japanese is a Buddhist priest ranking below a Sōjō or bishop.

⁶² Skt. *bbūtatathatā*; lit., "the true nature of reality."

THE FOURTH LETTER FROM HAKUI'S ORATEGAMA

For only when one is awakened to the Self without form, do mountains, rivers, the great earth and its myriad forms like those of luxuriant forests, the plants and grasses of all the lands, the sentient and the insentient, reveal themselves simultaneously as the unchanging Self without form. This we regard as the occasion of the immediate actualization of Cessation, of the thorough awakening of Original Self-Nature. Myōhen Sōjō of Mount Kōya,⁶³ when he was past fifty years of age, entered into a profound *nembutsu samādhi*. In that *samādhi* [he saw] the great master of Kōya (Kōbō Daishi)⁶⁴ conferring on him nothing less than a priestly stole sewn with lotus-root threads, along with a piece of paper containing golden words [of the Buddha]. This paper said in brief: "Pointing only toward the single direction of the West is expedient. With the exclusion of the other nine directions, distraction of mind is eliminated. If one calls-extols the Name up to the end of his life he will obtain the immense benefit of the immediate opening of the Mind-Eye." Now this "immediate opening of the Mind-Eye" is in truth the occasion of Original Nature's coming to Awareness. For even though the World-Honored One in his lifetime preached and expounded the wonderful teachings in some 5,000 volumes of golden words, some gradual and others sudden, some "secret" [to particular persons] and some general⁶⁵—after all nothing in all this goes beyond the Supremely Important Matter of the Self-Awakening of Original Nature.

Thus it is said in the sutra:⁶⁶

Only this single matter is true; the other two are false.

Therefore, in all of the three worlds from ancient times down to the present there has never been a Buddha-Patriarch who has not attained to the Self-Awareness of Original Nature. Nor has there ever been a case of a wise and holy man who has not also absolutely and conclusively attained to this Awareness

⁶³ 1142–1224. On his way from Mt. Kōya to Zenkōji, Shinano Province, he is said to have met Hōnen at Tennōji, Osaka, and naming himself Kūa, served Hōnen thereafter.

⁶⁴ Kūkai, 774–835. Founder of Japanese Shingon school.

⁶⁵ One of the T'ien-t'ai classification by Chih-i of Śākyamuni's lifetime teaching as regards outward forms.

⁶⁶ From the *Lotus Sutra*, TT. 9, p.306b.

of Original Nature. As for myself, from the age of seven or eight I was inclined toward the Buddhist truth. At fifteen I became a monk and at age nineteen became an itinerant priest. It was at the age of twenty-four that I first directly experienced the Supremely Important Matter of this Self-Awareness of Original Nature. Since then I have spent time in one Zen monastery after another sitting astride the threshold of many a master of deep insight, have looked through a wide variety of scriptures and commentaries, and have searched in the important texts of the Three Teachings⁶⁷ as well as various of the works of the Hundred Masters [of ancient China].⁶⁸ I vowed that if there should be even a single teaching that surpassed the Dharma-gate of Self-Nature, even were it in the teachings of Chuang-tzu, Lao-tzu, or Lieh-tzu, I would surely accept it in faith and spread it abroad. And now, finally arrived at age sixty-five, I have seen no other truth that surpasses the Supremely Important Matter of the Self-Awareness of Original Nature. Were this not so, why, without good reason, should I waste paper and ink in setting down in writing for your perusal some matter that I have never experienced for myself! Now only if it is really of benefit in helping you toward the Self-Awakening of Original Nature should you go ahead chanting [the Name] incessantly until you reach the stage of imperturbable single-mindedness. Then you will most certainly open your eyes widely in joyous delight. However, as for casting aside the *kōan Mu* and taking up the chanting of the Buddha-Name, this is good *only* if, by depending on the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name, you are able to penetrate into the pith and marrow of the Buddhas and Patriarchs through a direct and clear Awareness of Original Nature. But if your secret thought is: "Even though I do not attain a clear Self-Awareness of Original Nature by means of the calling-extolling of the Name, I will certainly be born into the Pure Land after death. Therefore this is an excellent plan, perfect in its production of two benefits by one action!"—then abandon the practice of calling-extolling the Name at once and unqualifiedly take up the practice of *Mu* as a *kōan*. There are reasons for this [advice]. For such is the evil custom which

⁶⁷ Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintoism (in China, Taoism).

⁶⁸ Nonconformist philosophers of China during the years of the civil wars (770-453 B.C.) and during the period of the warring states (475-221 B.C.), including Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, Lieh-tzu, Mo-tzu, Han Fei, Sun Wu, etc.

for the past two hundred years has ruined the Zen garden (i.e. monastic discipline) and corrupted its true spirit. This wrong view, both gross and base, has been embraced by the more slovenly and careless Zen followers. That Zen Principle [to which I have referred] must needs be one whose solitary loftiness is as lofty as loftiness can be, for the Zen discipline prizes an inaccessibility which is as inaccessible as possible.

Thus does Zen always seize hold of the one absolutely essential harbor and permits passage to neither "ordinary men" nor "saints."⁶⁹ At the moment of uttering the single [Zen] word [*Mu*], those in the three stages of wisdom [before bodhisattvahood]⁷⁰ will be disturbed in mind; and those in the four [Hīnayāna] states of attainment [before Nirvāna]⁷¹ will become dizzied. When this single word is uttered, the spirits that haunt uninhabited places will flee in terror, and the ghosts of the wild moors will weep in grief. This word splits open the heart of the "man of wood" and strikes clear to the marrow of the "woman of stone."⁷²

When Zen comes to the incomparable student of superior capabilities, it presents him with a *kōan* which is hard to penetrate, hard to understand, hard to believe in. It completely blinds his Right Dharma Treasure-Eye, and, penetrating to the Wondrous Nirvāna-Mind, takes it away.⁷³ As for this student, it is as though he were passing through a polluted village without receiving so much as a single drop of water from anyone. He gnaws at the *kōan* from end to end and works away at it, now from one side and then from

⁶⁹ The *Dentōroku* 16 (Taiwan edition p.124, I. 9) gives this expression as Rakuho's (Lo P'u, a disciple of Lin-chi) words (which begin with "blockade" in place of "seize hold of"). Babō's (Ma Fang) preface to the *Rinzairoku* (*Lin-chi lu*) says "seize...harbor."

⁷⁰ That is, before the ten stages of Bodhisattvahood.

⁷¹ That is, *srotāpanna*, *sakṛdāgāmin*, *anāgāmin*, and *arhat*; equivalent to the ten Bodhisattva (Awakening-being) stages.

⁷² Seemingly set phrases used in Zen and favored by Hakuin to express the radical situation of man in which one finds no abiding place, and in which one is urged to awake to the Original Self-nature that is without any form.

⁷³ The Right Dharma-Treasure Eye and the Wondrous Nirvāna-Mind, though both taken as something ultimate, cannot really be ultimate as long as they are concepts. The former is usually "the Right Dharma Eye."

the other. He breaks open the cave of his passion-determined discrimination and pulls apart the nest of his intellectual categories. His reason exhausts itself, he finds words of no use, his “mind” dies and his “will” vanishes. Then suddenly there springs forth a strangely wondrous, stupidly-blind man who, because he is neither an “ordinary” man nor a “saintly” one, nor a “Buddha” nor a “demon,” now responds to the genuine blessings of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.

Such a means as this (his *kōan*) we call “the teeth and claws of the Dharma cave” or “the death-dealing talisman.”⁷⁴ For those of the very highest capabilities, such means are of great efficacy; but those of middling and low-grade capacity are therein neglected and disregarded. Now *Jōdo* is quite the opposite of this; yet it is also a Dharma-gate that merits respect. It consists of the four ways of practice⁷⁵ and the three aspects of the faith-mind,⁷⁶ and is based on the forty-eight great Vows—in other words the exclusive practice of the means skillfully provided by the Great Compassion of the Buddha Amitāyus. And it is the way provided specifically for those of middling and low-grade capacities, for the benefit of the ignorant and stupid masses of men, and to save those sinful people who have committed the Ten Wrong Deeds and the Five Deadly Sins.⁷⁷ It makes central the golden word of the Buddha that he “receives everyone and rejects none.”⁷⁸ Thus *Jōdo* considers it necessary to be as low as lowness can be, and it prizes that easiness of the way that is as easy as easiness can be. Hence this remark: “Even though you may have thoroughly studied all the words of the Buddha (*Śākyamuni*) which he spoke in his lifetime, make yourself a stupid fool who does not know even one word and simply practice

⁷⁴ That is, the claws and teeth of the King Lion couched and ready for attack in his cave, and a mysterious charm of a ghost that deprives the bearer of his life. (The *Nirvāna Sutra* refers to the King Lion.)

⁷⁵ Originally from the *Kusha-ron* 7: exhaustive, long-time, incessant, and respectful practice. (*TT*. 29, p.141b.)

⁷⁶ From the *Kammurōju-kyō*: the sincere mind, the deep (faith-) mind, and the mind that desires Pure Land attainment. (*TT*. 12, p.344c.)

⁷⁷ Killing one’s mother; killing an *arhat* (one worthy of receiving offerings); killing one’s father; causing a schism in the brotherhood (*saṃgha*); and shedding a Tathāgata’s blood (*pañcānantarīyāni*).

⁷⁸ From the *Kammurōju-kyō*: “Amitāyus Buddha. . . receives every sentient being and rejects none that directs his mind to the Buddha.” *TT*. 12, p.343 b.

the *nembutsu* exclusively.”⁷⁹ Intended for this remote region replete with myriad disorders and the five moral pollutions of the decadent latter ages,⁸⁰ this is a marvellously adapted way of salvation which one should not neglect for even a single day.

The Zen Dharma-gate is comparable to having two wrestlers compete against each other in terms of height: The taller one is considered to be the winner. And Jōdo is comparable to having two dwarfs pitted against each other in terms of their *lack* of height: The shorter one is considered the victor. Thus, if one detests the “height” of the Zen way and abandons it, the true spirit of “going-beyond-itself” of the Buddha-Mind [Principle] will be blown away and completely lost. And, if one despises the lowness of the Jōdo way and discards *it*, then foolish and ignorant people will not be able to escape from their evil ways.

The Buddha may be likened to the Supreme Physician. By providing 84,000 kinds of medicine he prescribes for the 84,000 causes of disease. So what we call “Zen” (i.e. teaching outside the scriptures), what we call “teaching within the scriptures,” “Precept Buddhism,” and “Pure Land Buddhism,” is each a type of prescription which is suited to a particular disease.

In other words it is something like this: There are four classes of people in the world: swordsmen (*samurai*), farmers, artisans, and merchants. The samurai is possessed of both wisdom and benevolence. He has skill in both tactics and strategy, guards the imperial throne, subdues rebels, maintains the ruling power in peace and security throughout the whole land, makes the emperor a veritable “Gyō-Shun” ruler⁸¹ and makes of the people “Gyō-Shun” subjects. Even when he manifests no anger, the people stand more in awe of him than of his battle axe. The more dignified he is the more esteemed he is and his keen abilities are greatly respected.

The merchant is considered to be a good merchant when he operates a big shop, trades in commodities such as embroidered brocades, figured cloth,

⁷⁹ From Hōnen's *Ichimai-Kishōmon* (A Letter on a Single Sheet of Paper for Nembutsu Exhortation).

⁸⁰ Defiled time, views, passions, people, and lives.

⁸¹ Yao and Shun, legendary ancient Chinese rulers admired by Confucius as ideal emperors.

silks and cottons, as well as millet, rice, sugarcane, fruit, and fish. He suitably supplies all the needs of priests and laymen, young and old, high and low, alike. Now suppose that the samurai, envying the extensive trade of the merchant and coveting his profits, takes up trade and acts like a merchant. He gives up the practice of archery and horsemanship, and forgets his skill as a swordsman. Thus he brings upon himself the ridiculing smiles of his fellow samurai. And his lord becomes angry and dismisses him. Once again, should the merchant, envying the samurai his disciplined dignity, arm himself with swords, mount a saddled horse, assume the warrior's mien, and go dashing about indiscriminately in all directions, he would be greatly ridiculed and of course give up his hereditary profession.

I have already spoken of this in saying: "Not attaining to Zen Awakening one will instead attain birth in the Pure Land after death." Now the man who plays a double game will get neither fish nor bear's paw.⁸² On the contrary, thus nourishing the karmic root of birth and death, not even in a fantastic dream can he succeed in cutting off the life-force root or ever give that single "Ka" shout of glad delight!

I have stated that there is no difference between the *Mu* and the calling-ex-tolling of the Name. However this does *not* mean that there are not some small differences in the speed of acquiring the power for attainment, and the depth of the awakening which is attained. For those of superior capabilities, who by means of the way of discrimination seek the profoundest truth, there is nothing that surpasses *Mu* for obstructing and cutting off the out-flowing expression of the deceptively discriminative mind and tearing away the membrane of illusion [from the eye of wisdom]. Hence the verse of Hōyen:⁸³

Jōshū's sword blade is disclosed [in the *Mu*]
 Frosty-cold and fiery-bright.
 If you seek to question 'How?'
 It will cut your body in two.

⁸² The inner part of a bear's paw seems to have been considered a delicacy ever since ancient times in China. Cf. *Mencius* 6A, 10: "Fish is my wish; bear's paw is also my wish. When I cannot get the two wishes at once, I will take bear's paw."

⁸³ Fa Yen, 1024?-1104 (Sung dyn.) of Mount Wu Tsu (i. e. "Mountain of the Fifth Patriarch"), teacher of Yüan-wu (Jap., Engo; see below).

THE FOURTH LETTER FROM HAKUIN'S ORATEGAMA

Generally speaking, the materializing of the Doubt-Body is essential for the attainment of Awakening. Thus it is said:

Upon the Great Doubt depends the Great Awakening.⁸⁴

Where there is complete doubt there is complete satori.⁸⁵

And the Venerable Bukka⁸⁶ says: "Not to doubt the kōan is a serious disease."

If the Great Doubt somehow actualizes itself in its immediacy in those who seek the profoundest truth, without any exceptions whether in a hundred or even a thousand persons, there cannot but be an opening up [of the Self-Awareness of Original Nature]. When the Great Doubt actualizes itself in a man in its immediacy there is a sweeping, infinite expanse of emptiness, and a boundless void in all directions. It is neither life nor is it death. It is as though one were incased within layers of ice that extend tens of thousands of *ri* wide. It is like being seated in a translucent flask of glass, where it is very cool and refreshing, very pure, white, and shining. In foolish bewilderment such a one forgets to stand if he be sitting and to sit if he be standing. In his heart there is not the smallest grain of the deceptive discriminating mind, there is only the single character *Mu*. It is like standing in infinite emptiness.

If, in such a moment, there is no arousing of fear nor any adding of intellectual knowing, and he advances as with a single breath without turning back, then suddenly—as though the sheets of ice were struck and shattered, and the tower of glass were brought crashing down—he will experience such great joy as he has never known nor even heard of in all his forty years (i.e. a full life-time). When one confronts such a moment as this, "birth-and-death (*samsāra*) and emancipation from them (*Nirvāna*) are like last night's dream"⁸⁷ and "the three thousand worlds are as foam upon the ocean. All of the wise

⁸⁴ A remark by Ta-hui Tsung-kao (J., Daie Sōkō, 1089-1163) in the *Ta-hui yü-lu* 18 (J., *Daie-goroku*, TT. 47, p. 886a).

⁸⁵ Words by Kao-feng Hsüan-miao (J., Kōhō Gemmyō, 1238-95, Yüan dyn.), *Zoku Zōkyō* 2, 27, p. 356b.

⁸⁶ That is, Yüan-wu K'o-ch'in (J., Engo Kokugon, 1063-1135), disciple of Fa Yen, and compiler of the *Pi-yen lu*. "Zen Master Fo-kuo" (J., Bukka) was the title given to him by the Emperor.

⁸⁷ From the *Engaku-kyō* (*Tüan-chüeb ching*), TT. 17, p. 915a.

men and saints are but flashes of lightning.”⁸⁸ This is called the time of the great, piercing, marvelous Awakening, the occasion of the single shout of “Ka.”

It may be likened to one's awareness in his very own self of the warmth or coolness of the water he drinks. The ten directions dissolve right before his eyes; in one instant [of awareness] he pierces through the three worlds, past, present, and future. Between the heavens of the gods above and the world of men below what delight is comparable to this? As for the power of attainment, if the truth-seeker diligently pushes forward, he will acquire it without fail in as little as three to five days. You may ask: “How then is the actualized immediacy of the Great Doubt to come about?” I answer: If without becoming attached to quiet places, or avoiding scenes of activity, one questions: “What is the significance of ‘this sea of vitality about my navel all being Jōshū's *Mu*?’” and with all discriminative thinking cast away, he is completely single-minded in his questioning, there is not even half a man (i.e., *no* man) for whom the Great Doubt will not be actualized in its immediacy. Now having just heard how the Great Doubt works in its actualized immediacy, how free from complexity its forms you may perhaps think it to be something mysterious and fearsome. But when one tramples underfoot the barriers of birth-and-death which have existed through endless past ages (*kalpas*), and pierces through to the inner attainment of the original Awakening of the Tathāgatas, this is a matter for great congratulation. And for such an attainment you must be resolved that there will of necessity be some small hardship and trouble.

After careful consideration we know that those who have penetratingly worked with *Mu*, in whom the Great Doubt has actualized itself in its immediacy, who have died the Great Death once and for all, and who have attained the Great Joy, are innumerable. But I have not heard of more than two or three of those who, by calling-extolling the Name, have gained even some small power for the attainment of Awakening.

Thus if the head priest of Eshin-in⁸⁹ had penetrated into *Mu*, or some such

⁸⁸ From the *Shōdōka* (*Cheng-tao ko*, Song of Actualizing Bodhi) by Yōka Genkaku (Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh, 675-713, a disciple of Hui-neng), quoted by Hakuin with a single change in expression, i. e. 三 (three) in place of 大 (large).

⁸⁹ That is, Genshin.

kōan as "Three chin of flax,"⁹⁰ in view of his virtuous wisdom and the power of his faith-mind he would most certainly have clearly realized that he himself was the body of Ultimate Reality. This he would have done in one or two months or in half a year or a year at most. But in fact he must have used up the vitality of a full forty years by relying on the results and virtue of calling-extolling the Name and reading the scriptures!

In such a case everything depends upon the presence or absence of the materialization of the Doubt-Body. What you must by all means realize is that the Doubt serves as wings for advancement along the way to Awakening. Thus when we consider such a morally virtuous, humane, and just man as Hōnen Shōnin—an assiduous and dauntless man who, it is said, was able to read the Holy Scriptures in the dark by the light of his own eyes⁹¹—he surely could have *immediately* brought the Supremely Important Matter to a final conclusion and have settled the attainment of birth in the Pure Land if he had had but a small materialization of the Doubt. Why else was it that he lamented that the rope was too short to dip water from the deep well?

Therefore, even though there are 100,000 times 10 millions of kinds of Name-callings and as many more *dhāraṇī*—so that there was no deficiency of means that could have been called upon and used in Dharma-teaching—the great Zen masters Yōgi, Ōryō, Shinjō, Sokkō, Bukkan, and Myōki⁹² gave their disciples only this *Mu* to take up and work with. How then can it be lacking any strong points? To me it seems that the materialization of the Doubt occurs readily by means of the *Mu kōan* while it arises with difficulty by the calling-extolling of the Name.

And at the same time, in the early days when the Zen Garden was not withered and dying, and when the true Zen spirit had not yet completely

⁹⁰ An answer given by Tung-shan Shou-ch'in (J., Tōzan Shusho, 910-990) to the question "What is the Buddha?" *Pi-yen lu* 12; *Wu-men-kuan* 18.

⁹¹ The above quoted biography of Hōnen (*HSGE* 8, in *HSZ*, p. 828) states that Hōnen, after attaining *nembutsu samādhi*, in a dark night without any artificial light, could read scriptures and look in and out the room, emitting light out of the corners of his eyes.

⁹² Yang-ch'i Fang-hui, 992-1049; Huang-lung Hui-nan, 1002-69; Chen-ching (1025-1102), a disciple of Huang-lung; Hsi-keng, literary name of Hsü-t'ang Chih-yü, 1185-1269; Fo-chien, title of Wu-chun Shin-fan, 1177-1249; and Miao-hsi, title of Ta-hui Tsung-kao, 1089-1163.

disappeared, there was no such thing in Zen as the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name with the secret hope of being born in the Pure Land. For the twenty-eight patriarchs of India, the six of China, and such transmitters of the Dharma-lamp as Nangaku, Seigen, Baso, Sekitō, Hyakujō, Ōbaku, Nansen, Chōsha, Rinzai, Kōke, Nan'in, Fuketsu, Shuzan, Funyō, Jimyō,⁹³ Ōryō, and Shinjō, as well as Maidō,⁹⁴ Sokkō, Myōki and the other great masters of the Five Houses and Seven Schools all during the Six (Liang, Ch'en, T'ang, Sui, Sung, and Yüan) Dynasties—each and every one of them established the spirit of the Zen Principle in its sublimity and independence. Each of them bound the life-destroying amulet to his arm and noisily chewed with the “teeth and claws” of the Dharma-Cave. Fearing only the collapse of the spirit of the Zen Principle they whipped themselves onward—being themselves the wheel of the Bodhisattva Vow—day and night, inaccessible and alert. And never, even in insulting remarks, did they ever discuss birth in the Pure Land!

But now, alas! What times, and what an age! “The great refined music” dies away, and worldly music wells up “within the mulberry groves.” The old tunes are silenced and “the countries of Cheng and Wei vibrate in time with the new music.”⁹⁵ This tendency having continued on to the end of the Ming Dynasty, there appeared a person named Shukō⁹⁶ of Mt. Unsei. He lacked the power of entering into profundity and, his wisdom-eye being darkened, he lacked the joy of Cessation (i.e. Nirvana) for this advancement, and in his retreating had all of the fears of birth-and-death. Finding it difficult to suppress his chagrin and sorrow [at his failure] and being attracted to the remnants

⁹³ Nan-yüeh Huai-jang, 677-744; Ch'ing-yüan Hsing-ssu, d. 740; Ma-tsu Tao-i, 709-788; Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien, 700-90; Po-chang Huai-hai, 720-814; Huang-po Hsi-yün, d. ca. 850; Nan-ch'üan P'u-yüan, 748-835; Ch'ang-sha Ching-ts'en, n. d.; Lin-chi I-hsüan, d. 866; Hsing-hua Ts'ung-chiang, 830-88; Nan-yüan Hui-yung, d. 930; Feng-hsüeh Yen-chao, 896-973; Shou-shan Shen-nien, 926-93; Fen-yang Shan-chao, 947-1024; and Tz'u-ming (or Shih-shuang), Ch'u-yüan, 986-1039.

⁹⁴ Hui-t'ang Tsu-hsin, disciple of Huang-lung, n. d.

⁹⁵ Phrases from the *Raiki* (*Li-chi*, ancient Chinese text on ritual).

⁹⁶ Chu-hung, 1535-1615, compiler of *Zenkan Sakushin* (*Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin*; Zen Barrier Broken Through by Whipping one's Mount), the *Ōjō-shū* (*Wang-sheng chi*; Collection of Records of Pure Land Attainment), and author of the *Amidakyō-sōshō* (*A-mi-t'o-ching shu-ch'ao*; Commentary on the *Amida Sutra*), and other books.

of the traditional elegance of Master Eon's⁹⁷ White Lotus Society, he finally abandoned the sublime and solitary Truth-practice of the Garden of Zen Patriarchs. Calling himself the Great Sage of the Lotus Pond he wrote commentaries on the *Amida Sutra* and by vigorously advocating the Pure Land Practice attracted many latter-day Way-seekers.

The master Genken Yōkaku,⁹⁸ in the writing of his *Jinzu Tōgo*,⁹⁹ was in time and tune with Unsei, thus aiding and abetting him. Resultingly [the Pure Land penetration of Zen] spread widely through China and overflowed into Japan so that in the end the situation has become irremediable. And even if such venerable masters as Rinzai, Tokusan,¹⁰⁰ Funyō, Jimyō, Ōryō, Shinjō, Sokkō, and Myōki were alive at this very moment and should tuck up their sleeves, grit their teeth, spit on their hands, and strive to repel it, they could not roll back this raging tide. In saying this I am not in any way scorning the Pure Land Principle of practice nor despising the exclusive calling-extolling of the Name. I am referring to those who, though in the *Zen* way, do not work at *Zen* meditation, are too lazy for *sanzēn* (i.e. *Zen* work with a master), are indolent in intention and uncertain in their practice, and have but little power for the *Zen* discipline. Thus, having passed all their years in vagueness and indecision, the declining sun of their lives approaches its setting and they become fearful of the eternally revolving wheel of suffering in *kalpas* of future lives. Then all at once they begin to devote themselves to the Pure Land practice that has birth in the Pure Land as its desired end.

In the presence of ignorant laymen and laywomen, while solemnly fingering long strings of beads and loudly giving voice to the *nembutsu*, these men who are bald of head and sparse of tooth, who are inclined to weeping as though it were praiseworthy, blink their tearful eyes and keep on entreating the laymen with such words as these: "To people like ourselves, who are of lowest ability and are living in the last degenerate ages, nothing is so well suited as the exclusive practice of the *nembutsu* for the despising and leaving of this defiled world."

⁹⁷ Hui-yüan of Mt. Lu, 334-416.

⁹⁸ Yüan-hsien, "the Great Master Yung Chüeh," d. at 80, 1657.

⁹⁹ *Ching-rz'u yao-yü*; "(Collection of) Essential Words on the Pure (Land Practice and) Compassion," *Zoku Zōkyō* 2, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Te-shan Hsüan-chien, 780/2-865.

Though all this may seem to be genuine, how can a Zen discipline which has never once been practiced work any miracles?

Fellows of this sort, even though they are in the Zen school, are disparaging it. They are like boring insect larvae which, though they are born in a pillar, nevertheless cut it to pieces. This situation needs careful examination. The indolence and neglect during the prime of life has now in old age become all the more grievous, troublesome, and lamentable. But the grief and lamentation of old age should not be condemned; one does not blame the past. It is rather the indolence and negligence in the prime of life that must be feared. During and ever since the Ming Dynasty there have been many such fellows—all of them of mediocre talents, a weak and lazy set of Zen followers.

It is said that thirty years ago a certain old Zen master lamented thus: “Alas, how sadly decayed we are become! Three hundred years from now, in all the Gardens of Zen (i.e. meditation halls) throughout the world, there will be the [two] gongs suspended on string frames, the setting up of wooden sounding boards,¹⁰¹ and such a loud six-fold daily worshipful chanting of the Name that all those in the four directions will be startled.” So saying he wept, it is said. In truth this *is* something to be dreaded!

Now there is one last and decisive act of kindness from this old monk. And let me present this to Your Highness even at the cost of losing my eyebrows!¹⁰² Do not make this act a matter of intellectual understanding any more than one does the single “*katz*”¹⁰³ [of the master] or a *dbāramī*.¹⁰⁴ Still less should you swallow it like a jujube in its wholeness¹⁰⁵ (i.e. without tasting it). What then is this “one decisive phrase of kindness”? A monk asks Jōshū: “Does a dog have the Buddha Nature or does it not?” Jōshū says: “*Mu*.”

Respectfully yours,

¹⁰¹ Both are used in the Jōdo school and the Ōbaku (Zen) school. The latter school was introduced from China by Ingen Ryūki.

¹⁰² Preaching the *dbarma*, not minding if one’s eyebrows drop off when he transgresses the precept against the abuse of the *dbarma*. (From the *Pi-yen lu* 7)

¹⁰³ A scolding shout by a Zen monk, a dynamic expression of Zen. Rinzai is well-known for his “*katz*.”

¹⁰⁴ A mystical verse or charm used as a kind of prayer to assuage pain, etc.

¹⁰⁵ From the *Pi-yen lu* 39.