

TRANSLATION

Sokushin-ki

SHIDŌ MUNAN ZENJI¹

THE people in the three countries² are the same in appearance, but different in language. It is thanks to the teaching of Buddha that they can possess the same one mind.

The reason death is abhorred is because it is not known. Men themselves are the Buddha, yet they do not know it. If they know it, they are far from the Buddha-mind; if they do not know it, they are deluded. I have composed the following verses:

When you penetrate the fundamental origin
You go beyond all phenomena:
Who knows the realm beyond all words
Which the Buddhas and Patriarchs could not
transmit?

If men know birth-and-death, it will be the seed of (false) mind. Even though I may be censured for having done so, I leave these trifling words scattered here, in hope they may be of help to the young and to the uninitiated. An old verse

* *Sokushin-ki* 即心記; "Descriptions of This Mind." *This Mind* refers to the formulation, said to originate with the Tang Zen master Baso (Ma-tsu 馬祖 707-786), "This mind (or, This very mind) is the Buddha." The text used is found in *Shidō Munan Zenji Sō*, edited by Kōda Rentarō (Shunjūsha, Tokyo, 1956).

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¹ For particulars of Shidō Munan's life, see the translation of Tōrei Enji's "Biography of Shidō Munan Zenji," in *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. III No. 1, pp. 122-138 (June, 1970).

² India, China, and Japan.

says that the raindrops falling from the leaves of the mountain trees will become a deep pool.

The first month, 1675

Shidō Anju (seal)

The Dharma Way . . .
Not knowing it is illusion,
Knowing it is illusion—
Then what is the Buddha's Truth?

When you have insight into the true meaning of this *waka*, the Great Way will reveal itself to you.

I, whose eyes have been opened to Buddha, see that the Japanese people are near to Buddha; this is because they are little disposed to what is false. "False" means for one to think of his body, which is not his own and which is the source of illusion, as his possession. Nothing could be sillier or more regrettable. Man's body, as everyone knows, is mortal and destined to perish, to fall ill and to suffer poverty. All this indicates his body is by no means his own.

Born into this fleeting world, little does man consider that he is destined to undergo pain; he eagerly desires to live a long time. Yet very few do we see who have attained the age of seventy years.

An old man told me the following story, which I cannot relate without a sense of deep sympathy. He said, "These long autumn nights, I cannot sleep for thinking of things which will never come again, and for hoping for peace in a still uncertain future. Now all my friends have passed away, and the people today with whom I should like to be acquainted look on me as a vile old man. The young ones (finding it unpleasant to be with me) walk out of the room. How miserable is the world of transmigration, where I must move constantly

between the realms of hell, hungry spirits, beasts and fighting demons."³

Thus, being eager to follow the Way of Buddha, he came in tears to ask what he should do. I felt very sorry for him. I asked the name of the sect to which he belonged. "The Zen Sect" was his reply. "Since my youth," he continued, "I have been deeply interested in the Way of Buddha." "What is the Great Way?" I asked. Working a rosary in his hands as he repeated the words, he recited the Nembutsu with great sincerity. Then I asked, "From what sort of man did you seek to learn of the Way?" He replied, "I studied something of Buddhist doctrine in the past. But finally, fifteen years ago, I happened to reflect that however much I might study the doctrine, it would be a great mistake not to know what my destination would be were I to die that very moment. I asked a priest where I would go after I died. He told me that if I gained awakening, I would know the answer to my question. In order to be enlightened, he said I would have to exhaust my karma,⁴ and that in order to exhaust my karma I should chant sutras and recite the name of Buddha. That is why I am following these practices now."

"Tell me then," I asked, "if you died now, where do you think you would go, and what would happen to you?" "I shall go to the Land of Bliss⁵ and become a Buddha," he replied. "The priest told me that when my karma was exhausted, the Land of Bliss would reveal itself to me."

Again I asked. "What would happen if you died with your karma still unexhausted?" There was nothing he could say. Joining his hands together, he entreated me tearfully to give him instruction. I felt great pity for him. When I said, "Everything is produced by the mind," he replied, "I suppose that is so." When I asked, "And what is at the origin of mind?" he answered, "Nothing." "It is precisely that 'Nothing'," I said, "that is the Land of Bliss. It is the Buddha, and, indeed, it is Zen enlightenment as well. You should always keep it with you."

He was delighted, and put his hands together in thanks to me, saying that in him there was neither birth nor death, that not a single thing existed in the

³ These are the realms in which a deluded man will be reborn; called in Japanese *shikutsu* 四惡趣, the 4 bad destinations. A lengthy explanation of the realm of beasts is given in *Hōbōgiri*, fasc. IV, pp. 309-319.

⁴ Exhaust karma—to break free from karmic causation.

⁵ *Gokuraku* 極樂; the Pure Land.

world, not even the thought of thinking there is nothing. Perhaps this was the result of his constant earnestness in the pursuit of the Buddha Way.

Zen places awakening first. If you practice in accordance with this awakening, you will have peace day after day, night after night. You should never doubt this.

Teaching that you will reach enlightenment after you have exhausted your karma seems reasonable, but it is difficult to actualize. It is easier to first gain enlightenment and then to exhaust your karma. This is why I said before that the Japanese are a people who think little of their own selves, and are thus near to Buddha. The reason for this is, if one has no self, one is the Buddha.

There was a disciple of a certain Buddhist priest who said that he practiced zazen day and night; that there was no distinction between himself and others, and that there was no birth-and-death. I asked him of his satori, and although he was extremely apprehensive about answering, he said, "It is beyond someone like me."

To be a Buddhist master is by no means a trifling matter. Above all, the practice of the Way of Buddha is difficult without a master. Those who practice zazen suffer acutely from the awareness that zazen and their everyday life are not in harmony. They say that right now there is no distinction between the things before their eyes and themselves. But that is absurd. People hate to eat *miso* (bean paste) that stinks of *miso*.⁶

To my disciples I say, "If your practice of Zen cannot be accomplished successfully, you must return to lay life. Then your sin will not be so great. If you remain as a Buddhist priest while you still have a sensuous mind you will assuredly become a beast (in your next life). Our life in this world is indeed short.

⁶ When *miso* is freshly made, it has a strong odour. As it ages this odour becomes more and more refined, until it eventually disappears. The best *miso* is that which is longest aged and most matured. The same, Munan suggests, is true of a student of Zen.

While we live it, time passes quickly by. The result of an evil life lived by a layman cannot be compared with the result of such a life led by a priest.

There are two kinds of Nothingness. One, which is wrong, holds that man has no guilt when he commits an evil act. With the Dharma (nothingness) of Śakyamuni, good and evil, right and wrong, cannot affect you.

The Nembutsu is a sharp sword, good for cutting off one's karma. But you should never think of yourself as becoming Buddha, for not becoming Buddha is Buddha.

When one's karma is exhausted,
There is nothing at all.
This is what, for expediency,
We give the name 'Buddha'.

One's body equals 84,000 evil deeds, and thus is destined for the torments of fire and water. The very thought of it is terrifying.

Beings differ in the depth of their sinfulness. Fish are more sinful than insects. Birds are more sinful than fish. Beasts are more sinful than birds. Man is more sinful than beasts.

The teachings of Buddhism are greatly in error. How much more in error it is to learn them. See directly. Hear directly. In direct seeing there is no seer. In direct hearing there is no hearer.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

Why do you take
What does not see, nor hear,
Nor think, nor know,
As something apart,
And different from yourself?

In the province of Ise there was a monk who practiced *zazen* throughout his life, and who died while sitting in *zazen*. This is worthy of respect as far as his personal life is concerned. Of course, one who dies while sitting in *zazen* will never be unhappy. But it is nearly impossible to die in this manner if your body is suffering the pain of sickness. My own master⁷ said, "Your *zazen* for one sitting is a lifetime of *zazen*." How edifying these words of his are.

A man asked me about the degeneration of Buddhist priests. I said, "It is rather difficult to say. As I shave my hair, I must be called a Buddhist priest, though I feel I may not deserve to be called by this name. It is indeed a serious matter to be a Buddhist priest. Even though a man leaves his home, and lives simply with his three robes and a bowl on a rock under a tree, he still cannot be called a true Buddhist priest. Yet if he does wish earnestly to become a true priest, he will realize that he has many desires and is possessed of a body which is endowed with 84,000 evils, of which the cardinal five are sexual desire, cupidity, birth-and-death, jealousy and desire for fame. These evils are the way of the world. They are by no means easy to overcome. Day and night, by means of enlightenment, you should set yourself to eliminating them one after another, thus purifying yourself. Enlightenment means the original mind. You should discern the right and the wrong of things, remove what is wrong and keep what is right deep within, be always with the *Tatbagatā* in *zazen*, and by practicing koan in meditation eliminate evils. As a natural result of such practice the mind will be pacified without fail. As you practice more diligently

⁷ Gudō Kokushi; see the "Biography of Shidō Munan Zenji."

in this way, you will come to eliminate the five desires. Then your awakening will be completed, and you will become free from the pain and suffering of the realms of hell, hungry demons, beasts and fighting devils. If you maintain your everyday life in this way, the fruit of this practice will ripen. Later, although you live in the everyday world of the ten thousand dharmas, you will live in nothingness itself, in freedom without obstacles.

He who has reached this stage after diligent effort in practice must encourage others. For those of superior capacity he must teach directly with the things they see before their eyes; for people of average capacity he must lead them to practice zazen; people of lesser capacity should be given hope for rebirth in the Pure Land by the use of the Nembutsu. Only the man who thus helps and saves others can be called a Buddhist priest. It is hardly possible for a foolish man to become a true Buddhist priest.”

When I was young a child, who was the attendant of a certain samurai, asked me one day to tell his master that he wished to become my disciple. I thought how amiable he was to make this request, and asked him, “Why do you want to become a Buddhist disciple?” His answer was this: “Being a priest seems to be an easy and pleasant way to make a living.” This reply astonished me. I thought if this child should actually become a priest, he would surely become a beast.

If from the very first resolve to enter the priesthood, one follows Buddhism itself without deviation, this is in itself the way of the Bodhisattva. If a person intended to use Buddhism to gain his livelihood he would assuredly become a beast.

To a certain person I said, “As for the Buddha Dharma, people today are perplexed, and seek Buddha outside of themselves. For example, in the term *myōbō*,⁸ *myō* is original nothingness, and *bō* is where nothingness moves or

⁸ *Myō-bō* 妙法; Dharma (法 *bō*) has many connotations, the meaning of existence being one of them. This is not mere existence, but existence out of nothingness, nothingness out of existence. This movement, beyond our intellection, is *myō*.

operates. Nothingness can never be manifested without being. Therefore the combining of the two to form *myō-bō* ("wondrous being or existence). A man is known according to the right or wrong of the Dharma by which he lives. When he has insight into his own nature in all his behavior in his everyday life, and uses his body in accordance with this nature, then we may speak of the Buddha Dharma.

People say that *kenshō*⁹ is difficult. It is neither difficult nor easy; no thing whatsoever can attach to it. It stands apart from the right and wrong of things, while at the same time corresponding to them. It lives in desires and it is apart from them; it dies and does not die; it lives and does not live; it sees and does not see; it hears and does not hear; it moves and does not move; it seeks things and does not seek them; it sins and does not sin. It is under the domination of causality, and it is not. Ordinary people cannot reach it, and even Bodhisattvas cannot actualize it. Therefore, it is called Buddha.

While one is deluded, one is used by one's body. When one gains awakening, one uses one's body.

The teaching of Buddha is after all Nothing, yet how foolish the mind of man is (to interpret it in various ways). There is nobody in the world who is not deluded by fame. It is understandable that men are lost in sexual desire or in gaining wealth, but if they become aware that even those things are in vain, what then is fame? If you single-mindedly follow the path of Buddha, other things will be settled one way or another. It is worthless to cling to fame.

Man's delusion by fame
Is the world's great foolery.

⁹ *Kenshō* 見性: Satori.

He should be as one
Who knows not even his own name.

Man usually sees others in the light of his own standards. The way a foolish person sees is very dangerous; because of his greediness he sees others as greedy. A sensual man sees others as sensuous. It is dangerous for anyone but a sage to judge others. Even if there were a man who followed the Great Way of Buddha, few would be able to recognize him correctly. As a consequence of this, the Great Way is degenerating.

A wise man handles others using keen insight into their natures, and makes what they have in their minds operate usefully, even though their natures are quite different from his. Then they will come to work properly. He who leads others should keep these things in mind.

It is easy to live consciously apart from worldly affairs. To live without consciousness apart from worldly affairs is difficult to achieve.

For instance, fire burns things, and water makes them wet. But fire is not conscious of burning things, nor is water conscious of wetting them. The Buddha has compassion for all beings and is not conscious of his compassion.

A man with deep thought-attachment is no better than a beast. Those whose thought-attachment is less deep are ordinary men. He who has no such attachment is Buddha.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

How silly people are. When a Buddhist priest teaches them that by reciting the name of Buddha they will become Buddha, almost all agree to this and recite the name. But none of them inquires "What is Buddha like?"

If one's way of life falls into confusion, one will always be punished by heaven. The ruler of the world must consider the world as a house. The ruler of a country must consider his country as a house. Should something evil occur within the house, whether it be a trifling or a serious matter, the blame falls upon its owner. Unless a person can govern (the world, a country, or a house), he will gain the punishment of heaven.

Pure mind is beyond words. (Awakening in which) even the pureness itself is no longer there can only be known by one who has experienced it. While one is still aware of purity he is still far from true awakening. Pure mind is not knowing what goes beyond our knowing.

Satori means to exterminate consciousness. Our bodies are ruled by consciousness. If one gains satori, he possesses "no-body" while he is living.

The person who tries to enter the Great Way without having seen a true master will suffer from sexual desire and cupidity. He will be greatly in error. He who wishes to live in the Great Way should consider that the defilement which permeates all existence is produced wholly by his own body. He has to have a keen insight into what is common, not only to heaven and earth, but to the past, present and future as well. Having seen this, if he keeps the oneness of this in himself there is no doubt that he will be freed naturally from the karma of his body and will become pure.

Since you are born a man, you should diligently follow the Way of Buddha. You should not search for this Way outside of yourself. All the good you do is the doing of the Buddha within yourself.

A certain person asked me, "What is the way of the Great Vehicle (the Mahayana)?" I said, "In the Great Vehicle, you are upright, and there is nothing to observe."

"Then," it was asked, "what is the way of the Ultimate Vehicle?" I said, "In the Ultimate Vehicle, you do as you will, and there is nothing to observe. It is a wonderful thing, and it is very rare in this world."

I said to my disciples: "When you labor over¹⁰ koan, why do you indulge in so many difficult things? All things you do in your everyday life are Buddha; seeing directly, hearing directly.

Rinzai Zenji said, "There is a follower of the Way who listens to the Dharma and depends upon nothing . . . if you have awakened to this non-dependence, there is no Buddha to be obtained." Enō, the Sixth Patriarch, attained satori upon hearing the words of the *Diamond Sutra* which say, "Awaken the mind without fixing it anywhere."

Few realize the world has degenerated. The Dharma of Śakyamuni has been in existence for over twenty-six hundred years. It has been almost a thousand years since it was first introduced to Japan. It is now, without any doubt, in complete decline. The degeneration of all things is caused by the self-centered

¹⁰ *Kufū* 功夫.

intellect, and it is generally true that the more one is inclined to this intellect, the less faith one has. The foundation of all things is faith. The dying out of faith is due to this intellect. It is the root of all manner of decline. This is what is meant by the latter day of the Law.¹¹

The Great Way is strong when one reaches the state where there is constant practice yet no consciousness of that practice. Very few people practice the Way of the masters by taking their master's Way to themselves.

Someone (a samurai) said to me that those who practice the Great Way want to know as much as possible about all things. I said, "You need know only what the basis of everything is. Having realized this, you should then establish the rules of your house. Although I have said that a Buddhist priest need know nothing more than Buddha, there is no way for ignorant people (i.e. those that are unenlightened) to understand this. For example, your way of the samurai is a matter of family, but the common people find it very difficult to comprehend this. Although their ignorance is natural, it is still shameful."

To a woman I am unable to meet, I send the following words:

Man builds a house and dwells in it. Buddha makes his lodging in man's body. A house always has a definite place set aside for its master. Buddha lives in man's mind.

When your attitude toward all things becomes tender with compassion, your mind will become clear. When your mind becomes clear, Buddha will appear.

If you want to make your mind clear, you should practice *zazen* and draw close to the *Tatbagatā*.

By meditating on a koan you will through the light of the *Tatbagatā* cleanse the defilements which permeate you. If you are always diligent in practicing in this way, there is no doubt about your becoming Buddha.

¹¹ The last of the three time periods said to follow the death of the Buddha, during which the Buddhist teaching will decline and perish.

Everything has a time for ripeness. For instance, as a child, one learns *iroba*.¹² Then as an adult in the busy world, there is nothing one is unable to write about, even about things of China. This is the ripening of *iroba*. People who practice Buddhism will suffer pain while they are washing the defilements from their bodies; but after they have cleansed themselves and become Buddha, they no longer feel any suffering. So it is with compassion as well. While one is acting compassionately, one is aware of his compassion. When compassion has ripened, one is not aware of his compassion. When one is compassionate and unaware of it, he is Buddha.

Since all compassion
Is the work of Bodhisattvas,
How can misfortune
Be fall a Bodhisattva?

In following the Way there are two attitudes; one powerful, the other feeble. As a youth I took to the powerful attitude. One day I read the words of Confucius, which say that though you may be able to reject kingdoms, states, family, and all titles and rewards, to trample swords underfoot and to destroy all enemies however powerful, still you will not be capable of holding to the Mean. I was impressed with the truth of this. If one takes a feeble attitude in following the Great Way, how can he cleanse himself of all the defilements which permeate him.

To one who determined to retire to a mountain to live a Buddhist life, I said, "I am glad for your resolve, and urge you to diligence. But even were you to hide in the remotest mountain recess, you would still be a part of this floating world. And if your mind remained the same as before, your mountain life would be nothing but a change of residence."

¹² *Iroba*—The Japanese syllabary.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

You should enter not a mountain,
But your own mind—
Making your hiding place
In the unknown.

One day, accompanied by a friend, I walked past Kurodani towards Kiyomizu¹³. We followed a narrow path which led to the left and came upon a small dwelling surrounded by a fallen-down fence. Pushing open the brushwood gate, we peered inside. At the far end we could see a dust-covered floor, turned up from long disuse. Wisps of smoke, all that remained of a breakfast fire, curled in the air. An altar-shelf hung off at an angle, so there was no offering of flowers or incense. We saw what appeared to be a Buddha-image—although with its hands and feet missing it was difficult to distinguish—and a figure reciting the Nembutsu in a hoarse voice. He was a distinguished looking fellow, more than fifty years old, perhaps of a noble family that had come on bad times. He asked me where I had come from. I replied that, feeling something drawing me as I passed nearby, I dropped in at his hermitage. I commented that it must have been the work of profound causation. We talked much with each other; of people past and present, praising good things and censuring the bad. Although we had much to talk of, yet neither of us were attached to the world. He was so sorry when it came time for me to leave that he recited the name of Amida. As we listened to the sound of a temple bell tolling the end of day, he said that he felt one more day was now gone in the relentless passage of his life. Suddenly, I felt sad myself for him.

When we listen,
Freed from the thoughts of this world,
The sound of the bell tolling the evening hour
Is the sound of the wind
Blowing through the seaside pine trees.

¹³ Kiyomizu, Kurodani—places in the Higashiyama area of Kyoto.

There is nothing more ignorant than man. While walking, sitting or lying, man suffers from pain and sadness, mourns the past, fears the uncertain future, envys others, and considers things from his own point of view alone. Thus he is bound in sadness by the affairs of the world. His life in this world is spent in worthless pursuits. Yet in the worlds to come, no matter how he may suffer from pain in his successive lives, he will be unable to rid himself of them. Indeed, man is possessed of deep delusions.

The realms of hell, hungry demons,
Beasts, and fighting devils. . .
The invariable abodes
Of the ignorant of this world.

There are only two paths: thinking of one's body and not thinking of it. Take the teachings of Buddha as they are, and immediately cast off all things. Then you will become one of true suchness, and attain great peace. Although there are many who believe this teaching is quite true, very few are diligent in practicing it and in making it their own.

The evidence is there
That you have come to your original nature,
When your innate sin
No longer functions.

A priest is said to be one who possesses a solid appearance (having long practiced zazen). His external aspect and his inner being have become completely one. He is, after all, like a dead man revived. A dead man wants nothing; he needs neither flatter nor hate any person. Having attained the Great Way, he naturally sees the right and wrong in others, and is able to lead them to the Way of Buddha. This is a priest.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

People of the world customarily desire unusual things. He who practices the Great Way and lives his everyday life as it is, dislikes the diverse proficiencies of ordinary people.

To one who asked me how to practice the Great Way in everyday life, I said, "Ordinary people are themselves Buddha. Buddha and ordinary people are originally one. Therefore, he who knows is an ordinary man, and he who knows not is Buddha."

To a person who asked me about a dream.

Dreaming while asleep, dreaming while awake;
Oh, this world of dreams.
When you make no distinction (between dream & reality),
Your dream is broken.

To one who employs many people.

Employ those under you
According to their individual talents,
And you will never go wrong.

To one who practices the Way of the Samurai.

You must remember,
Unless you break completely away
From birth-and-death,
The Samurai's Way
Is sure to go astray.

To one who suffers in making his way through life.

You should live
In this world
As though trying to catch
A catfish's tail
With a gourd.

To one who says that he is thankful for the Buddha Way.

Do not attach to any thing—
That is the Dharma teaching.
You are still clinging
To this very Dharma.

To one who is too eager to become a Buddha.

Even though you might fall
Heel over into hell;
Never think
To become a Buddha.

To one who inquires as to the origin of the Great Way.

When you do not think
You should not even be not-thinking.
When you think,
You should be completely one
With the thinking.

To one who knows of the Great Way but does not practice it.

Though man's mind may come to flower
By listening to a sermon on the Dharma,
Very few of these flowers
Are able to come to fruit.

To a Confucian.

The real faithfulness
Is loyalty to your lord,
And filiality to your parents,
With no consciousness of being so.

On direct seeing and direct hearing.


He who sees, hears,
Perceives and knows,
Without being conscious of it,
May be called a living Buddha.

To someone destined for training in Buddhism.

If your mind is conscious
Of the evils of your body,
There will be no release
From their retribution.


To someone who says he cannot get satori.

Though you read through
The entire *Tripitaka*,
Without satori
Your relation to Buddha is cut.




To someone who practices Nembutsu.

Unless you recite the Name,
There is neither you nor Buddha.
That is it—
Namu-amida-butsu.




To someone always so eager to seek Buddha that he feels, while dreaming or awake, as if in the presence of Buddha.

With a mind that enables you
To do whatever you will—
What a pity
You only desire a future life.



To someone who desires the Land of Bliss.

The jewelled lotus seat
Of the Land of Bliss,
Is no other than knowing
You have no body while you live.



To a priest who preaches the Dharma.

Kill. Kill. Kill your body.
When it has totally perished,
You are nothing but nothingness itself—
Then you may teach others.

Teaching the Way.

The man who pulls the strings
Moves the puppet;
There is nothing
That pulls the strings of man.

The essentials of zazen.


Not doing zazen,
Is no other than zazen itself;
When you know this,
You are not separate
From the Way of Buddha.

On mind (*kokoro*).

There are names,
Such as Buddha, God, or Heavenly Way;
But they all point to the mind
Which is nothingness.


Live always
With the mind of total nothingness,

And the evils which come to you
Will dissipate completely.




To a Nembutsu practitioner.

Who was the dolt,
Who began to call it Buddha,
Which is really nothingness?
Because of him
That name has caused delusion.




To a person too greedy for gain.

You ignorant people—
Don't be so greedy for gain.
Don't you know even your own body
Cannot become your own!



To a priest.

Only wear your robe
When you are one with emptiness.
Wear it while you are only a priest,
And you will surely be punished.



On the Buddhist life's abhorrence of knowledge.


You should remember,
Knowledge stems

From the various evils of others,
And your own evils as well.




On (a portrait of the *Zen* master) Rinzai.

You became a monk—
A commandment-breaker monk—
Because you killed the Buddhas
And the Patriarchs.




To a person who seeks a future life.

People imagine
There is Buddhahood after death,
Not knowing their body is not theirs
Even while they live.




That which hears—according to Rinzai.

The ears, the mind, the body,
Don't really hear.
You must know
What really hears. . .



To a person who is deeply deluded.

You who are not aware
Of your body's deluding you
Are the same fellow
Who fears foxes and badgers.



Grass, trees, land and state, all are to become Buddha.

There are no grasses or trees;
There is no land, no state;
Still more,
There is no Buddha.

To a person who is suffering for his sins.

Give your body to sin,
To do as it will;
Then cast it down
To the middle of hell.

On Śakyamuni's descent from the mountain.


'Buddha' is what we call
What remains alive,
After the body
Has thoroughly died.

To a priest who preaches the Dharma without knowing what it is.

A priest who preaches the Dharma,
Unaware of his own defilements,
Brings an animal incarnation
To himself and to his listeners.


To one who is supposed to become a Buddhist teacher.

How foolish to consider,
When you and nothingness are one,
That you are beyond all sinfulness
In whatever you may do.




To a person who asks about the demons that dwell in his mind.

When sins are committed,
Though known by no other,
Your own mind
Will punish you.




To one who thinks with pride that he alone has compassion for others.

He who is conscious
Of his compassionate acts for others,
Will reap the results,
And suffer for his compassion.



To a priest.

When your mind is bound by your body
And cannot yet gain release,
Even though you attain satori
You are still an ignorant man.



On the enemy of the Great Way.

Your only foe

In this world,
Is to think
Your body's your foe.

To a person suffering from life's troubles.

Consider everything you do
As the practice of the Buddha Way,
And your sufferings will disappear.

On teaching the Way.

Do not be deluded
By the word 'Way';
Know it is but the acts
You perform day and night.

To one who seeks the Great Way.

The true body fills the universe,
Fills and overflows it;
But rain cannot wet it,
The sun's rays cannot reach it.

To one groping in confusion for the Way.

You seek the Dharma Way
Deluded by many teachings.
When free from these

You can become one
With the origin of the Way.

To someone who asks about my everyday life.

While the moon and the flowers
Are the same moon and flowers of old,
When I see them
They become my moon and flowers.

To one who asks about birth-and-death.

I know without doubt
That which truly lives;
Though I laugh or cry,
There is nothing in it.

I have realized clearly
What comes after death;
Merely nothingness. . .
And then . . . no nothingness!


“Awaken the mind without fixing it anywhere.”¹⁴

No fixed abode
Is the touchstone of the mind—
So let the mind go
As it goes!

¹⁴ From the *Diamond Sutra*.

Birth-and-death itself is *nirvana*.


We know not birth-and-death
Yet we give it names.
We call it *nirvana*—
Merely a name.



To one who seeks the Buddha.


What a pity
Man's mind is so;
Seeking for a Buddha
Nowhere to be found.

What to do!
I don't know either.
No words to use
For telling others.



On Bodhidharma.

What could have brought him
To speak such a lie,
In face of the fact
That real satori is not satori.



To a Nembutsu practitioner.

Though Amida's Vow¹⁵
Is a net of limitless width,

¹⁵ *I. e.*, to save all sentient beings.

It is we ourselves who fall from it.
How pitiful it is.

My body is Amida Buddha; my mind is the Pure Land.

Reciting Namu-amida-butsu
With a singleness of mind,
I see no Buddha,
I have no body of my own.

A monk asked Jōshū, "Does a dog have the Buddha-nature, or not?" Jōshū replied, "*Mu*".¹⁶

Even though he says '*Mu*'
He throws up a word-barrier;
Lose consciousness of *Mu*,
And you become one with *Mu*.

Though Jōshū said '*Mu*',
It is still far away;
No matter what the approach,
To know it is impossible.

"The cypress tree in the garden."¹⁷

Grass, tree, land and state,
Are equally the Way of Dharma;

¹⁶ See *Mumokan* (Case 1), trans. by R.H. Blyth (Tokyo: Hokusendo Press, 1966).

¹⁷ This is the T'ang master Jōshū's answer to a monk's question, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" *Mumokan*, Case 37.

Truly this is a teaching
For which all should be thankful.

—
“Three pounds of flax.”¹⁸

‘What is the Buddha?’
‘Three pounds of flax.’
Is there anything in the universe
Not deserving of the Buddha’s name?

—
To someone sincerely seeking the Way.

Originally it cannot be taught or learned;
When you do not know it
It is unknown;
When you know it
It is still unknown.

—
A person asks the Way.

Patch the wind in the pines
To your hempen robes;
Use the moon as a pillow,
The ocean waves as your sheet.

Men are all perplexed
When asked what Buddha is;
No one knows
It is his own mind.

¹⁸ The T’ang master Tozan’s answer to the question, “What is the Buddha?” *Mumokan*, Case 18.

Those who seek the Dharma
In the depths,
Are those who leave it
Behind in the shallows.

(to be continued)

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