

Kyōjukaimon and Commentary.

Giving and Receiving the Teaching of the Precepts.

Great Master Eihei Dogen
Commentary * by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett

Preceptor:—

“The Great Precepts of the Buddhas are kept carefully by the Buddhas; Buddhas give them to Buddhas, Ancestors give them to Ancestors. The Transmission of the Precepts is beyond the three existences of past, present and future; enlightenment ranges from time eternal and is even now. Shakyamuni Buddha, our Lord, Transmitted the Precepts to Makakashyo and he Transmitted them to Ananda; thus the Precepts have been Transmitted to me in the eighty-fourth generation. I am now going to give them to you, in order to show my gratitude for the compassion of the Buddhas, and thus make them the eyes of all sentient beings; this is the meaning of the Transmission of the Living Wisdom of the Buddhas. I am going to pray for the Buddha’s guidance and you should make confession and be given the Precepts. Please recite this verse after me:—

Preceptor followed by congregation:—

“All wrong actions, behaviour and karma, perpetrated by me from time immemorial, have been,

* The words of Great Master Dogen’s *Kyōjukaimon* have been enclosed in double quotation marks to distinguish them from Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett’s commentary. For this reason, within the commentary itself, single quotation marks have been used for material that normally would have been enclosed in double quotation marks.

and are, caused by greed, anger and delusion which have no beginning, born of my body, mouth and will; I now make full and open confession thereof.

Preceptor alone:—

“Now, by the guidance of the Buddhas and Ancestors, we can discard and purify all our karma of body, mouth and will and obtain great immaculacy; this is by the power of confession.

“You should now be converted to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. In the Three Treasures there are three merits; the first is the true source of the Three Treasures;”—there is an Unborn, Uncreated, Unformed, Undying, Indestructible, the Lord of the House, That which speaks in silence and in stillness, the ‘still, small voice.’

“The second merit is the presence in the past of Shakyamuni Buddha”—all Those Who have truly transmitted Buddhism throughout eternity.

“The third is His presence at the present time,”—all Those Who transmit the Truth, Who live by the Precepts and make them Their blood and bones, the Sangha, the embodiment of the Preceptual Truth of the Buddhas.

“The highest Truth is called the Buddha Treasure,”—the knowledge of That Which Is, the knowledge of the Unformed, Uncreated, Unborn, Undying, Indestructible; the certainty, without doubt, of Its existence, the knowledge of It within oneself, the Buddha living within oneself, the Lord of the House Who directs all things. If you study true Buddhism you will become as the water wherein the Dragon dwells; it is necessary to know the true Dragon; it is necessary to ask the Dragon, the Lord of the House, at all times to help and to teach. Only if you give all that is required of the price that the Dragon asks will He show you the jewel; you

must accept the jewel from the Dragon without doubting its value or querying the price.

“Immaculacy is called the Dharma Treasure,”—one must live with the roots of karma cut away. To do this we must indeed know the housebuilder of this house of ego, know all his tools, know all his building materials; there is no other way that we can know immaculacy. The housebuilder of the house of ego must be known absolutely, recognised at all times. It is not enough to have a kensho; one must go back to the source of the karmic stream; one must return to that source to find out what set it going. Kensho shows the slate is clean; to find the source of karma cuts its roots and, with constant training, keeps evil karma at a minimum but, since there is nothing from the first, there is nothing clean and nothing that is unclean—we cannot know this, however, until we have first tried to clean it. ‘Most houses can do with a thorough sweeping but even a million sweepings will not clear away the dust completely.’ Thus man remains in his body and accepts it, knowing that nothing matters, that he is immaculate, always was and always will be. This is the immaculacy of the Dharma Treasure; this makes the immaculacy and harmony of the Sangha Treasure possible. It is the knowledge of the True Kesa, that which is immaculate above all dust and dirt, the knowledge that the dust and dirt are indeed a figment of one’s own ego’s imagination as a result of past, accrued karma, that makes possible the Transmission of the Light from the far past to the now and the far future without words. The Scriptures show up blank pages; there is a Transmission that lies beyond them.

“Harmony is the Sangha Treasure”—this is brought about by the knowledge that, no matter what a member of the Sangha may do, he is immaculate from the very beginning; there is nothing from the first. ‘Thus shall ye think of all this fleeting world, a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a child’s laugh, a phantasm, a dream.’ Although this is true the

members of the Sangha, the Zen Masters, all beings are bound by the law of karma; they will pay the price of what they do. Thus is the mind of the Sangha Treasure.

“The person who has realised the Truth really is called the Buddha Treasure;”—he is the embodiment of the Truth, he is Nirvana, he is the Embodiment of Enlightenment, he is the Treasure of the Buddha for, in him, can be seen fully-digested, Preceptual Truth.

“The Truth that is realised by Buddha is called the Dharma Treasure,”—that is the knowledge of the Unborn, Uncreated, Unformed, Undying, Indestructible; the living with this knowledge without doubt, the trusting eternally of the Lord of the House, the certainty of the Treasure House within oneself at the gate of which sits the True Dragon Who is indeed the Lord of the House.

“The people who study that which lies within the Treasure House are called the Treasure of the Sangha,”—the Dharma and the Sangha are one and the same thing, being the embodiment each of the other, if fully-digested, Preceptual Truth is their rule of life. If you ask, ‘What is a monk?’ you know that it is his Kesa.

“He who teaches devas and humans is called the Buddha Treasure,”—he who gives true teaching, being beyond praise and blame, the holy and the unholy, right and wrong, without fear or favor, he who becomes ‘good’ for others.

“That which appears in the world in the Scriptures and is ‘good’ for others is called the Dharma Treasure,”—anything may teach. However infinitesimally small, however large, no matter what, all things may teach the Dharma when they live by fully-digested, Preceptual Truth, when they have cut away the roots of karma, when they know the housebuilder of the house of ego and are constantly keeping him from rebuilding again as a result of practising fully-digested Preceptual Truth.

“He who is released from all suffering and is beyond the world is called the Sangha Treasure;”—he for whom no longer desires burn, wherein wants and cravings no longer exist; he who gets up in the morning and goes to sleep at night, eats when he is hungry, sleeps when he is tired, is satisfied with that which he is given and does not ask for more than he can absolutely use in the immediate now. When someone is converted to the Three Treasures thus, he can have the Precepts of the Buddhas absolutely.

In this manner you should make the True Buddha your teacher and not follow wrong ways. The True Buddha that is your Teacher is indeed the Lord of the House, the True Dragon. Do not hold on to your tiny kensho; trust the Lord of the House, hold fast by Him no matter what state you may be in, whether you are well or sick, brightly alive or dying, hold fast by the Lord of the House.

The Three Pure Precepts

“Cease from evil.

This is the house of all the laws of Buddha; this is the source of all the laws of Buddha.” The law of karma is one of the five laws of the universe; it is absolute, it is inescapable. All are bound by the law of karma once it is set in motion. By accident someone made the course of karma; it is not intentionally set in motion; what happens, or happened, or will happen to you or to anyone else is caused by karma; by accident the wheel rolled the wrong way. Do not continue the rolling of the wheel in the wrong direction by dwelling on the past or fearing the future; live now without evil. Stop the wheel now by cutting the roots of karma, by knowing the housebuilder of the house of ego; if you do not, karma will go on endlessly. The only difference between you and another being is that

you have the opportunity of knowing the Lord of the House right now, having heard the teachings of the Buddha. Others may have less opportunity than you but, when they hear it, who knows which will be first at the gate of the Treasure House? ‘Cease from evil’ is absolute, in thought, in word, in deed, in body, in spirit. All are bound by the law of karma; do not doubt this. You will pay for everything you do if you do not cut the roots now and live by fully-digested, Preceptual Truth. Do not worry about the karma of others; each man his karma makes.

“Do only good.

The Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha’s Enlightenment is the Dharma of all existence.” Do not do anything unless it is ‘good;’ do not do anything unless you have first asked the Lord of the House if it is good for you to do it. Do nothing whatsoever in a hurry; do nothing whatsoever on the spur of the moment unless you know the certainty given by the Lord of the House; know that you must take the consequences of what you do if it is not a fully-digested act for you know What lies beyond good and evil, right and wrong; you know That which lies beyond morality; you know the Lord of the House. Ask the Lord of the House at all times before you do anything whatsoever. ‘Is it good? Is it Your will?’ If you do not ask the Lord of the House, the housebuilder of the house of ego will again pick up his tools and, before you know it, there will be a great structure from which you must again escape. If a thing is ‘good’ in this way it may be done; if it is not ‘good’ in this way it should not be done; I am not speaking here of good and evil; I am speaking of ‘good’ in the sense

of if it is right; this is beyond right and wrong; if it is good is beyond good and evil. This teaching is indeed the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment for there was not one of His acts that was not the result of fully-digested, Preceptual Truth. If you live thus, doing that only which is 'good' after you have asked the Lord of the House, after you know the true Lord of the House, then you can know the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment and know that His enlightenment and yours are identically the same; but this is only if you know who the Lord of the House is and do not suffer from the idea that you are the Lord of the House. Always you must ask the Lord of the House; always you must be humble in His presence. 'Please teach me that which it is good for me to do this day. Please show me that which it is good for me to teach this day. Please give me the certainty that I teach the Truth and know, indeed, that when the still, small voice within my mind and heart says "Yes," I must obey that teaching. When it says "No," I must not disobey that teaching.' When the Lord speaks, spring up joyfully to answer; then, indeed, it is good to do anything whatsoever He asks; know that the Lord will never break the Precepts.¹

“Do good for others.

Be beyond both the holy and the unholy. Let us rescue ourselves and others.” Do not set up a chain of causation that will cause others to do wrong; do not do that which will cause another to grieve; do not do that which will result in your creating karma for another being; do not accidentally set the wheel of karma in motion. Do not let yourself hear the words, ‘What demon allowed you to become a priest? From what demon did you learn

Buddhism?’ To be beyond both the holy and the unholy, to be beyond praise and blame, to act only from what the Lord of the House teaches without worrying whatsoever what the world may think is indeed to have understood the Three Pure Precepts. Before any act is performed you must ask yourself, ‘Am I ceasing from evil in doing this act? Is it good in the sight of the Lord of the House? Shall I cause another being to do harm either to himself or to others? I cannot stop him doing harm, for each man his karma makes and must carry for himself, but I can do that about myself which will prevent me from accidentally starting the course of karma. I must think carefully of my every act. I may not cause another to make a mistake in Buddhism.’ By so doing we rescue both ourselves and others for, in cutting the roots of karma for ourselves, we help to cut the roots of karma for others also.

“These three are called the Three Pure Precepts.” Without them one cannot live the Buddhist life.

The Ten Great Precepts

“Do not kill.

No life can be cut off for the Life of Buddha is increasing. Continue the Life of Buddha and do not kill Buddha.” Above all, do not turn your face away from Buddha, the Lord of the House, for this is indeed to commit spiritual suicide; to kill Buddha is to turn away from Buddha. ‘Man stands in his own shadow and wonders why it is dark and only he can turn round.’ To turn away from Buddha is to say, ‘My ego is greater than the Lord of the House; my opinions are more right; my wishes are more important.’ It is you whom you

kill. If you do not listen to the Lord of the House in this life, in what life will you listen to the Lord of the House? Will you for eternity attempt to commit real suicide? If you always face the Buddha you will always know Buddha; if you always listen to the Lord of the House there is no possibility of your ever killing anything.

“Do not steal.

The mind and its object are one. The gateway to enlightenment stands open wide.” There is nothing whatsoever that can be stolen. ‘Preserve well for you now have,’ says the Scripture; each of us possesses the Treasure House. All we have to do is ask the Dragon for permission to enter, ask the Dragon if we may see the jewel and it will be given to us. He who tries to rob himself, he who tries to steal from the Treasure House can never have the Treasure; erudition is as this; taking drugs is as this. All you have to do is ask the Lord of the House and you may know and possess all things. The gateway to enlightenment does indeed stand open wide for the true mind of the Buddha and the jewel are one and the same; ask the Lord of the House at all times. Remember that ‘he who counts another’s treasure can never have his own;’ he who steals can only ever rob himself.

“Do not covet.

The doer, the doing and that which has the doing done to it are immaculate therefore there is no desire. It is the same doing as that of the Buddhas.” Thus there is nothing to be coveted and no one that covets. ‘Preserve well for you now have,’ says the Scripture. Since there is nothing from the first, how can there be anything to

preserve well? ‘The white snow falls upon the silver plate; the snowy heron in the bright moon hides; resembles each the other yet these two are not the same.’ Thus we think there is a difference; thus we think there is an ability to covet and something to covet; thus man makes mistakes. Indeed there is nothing from the first.

“Do not say that which is not true.

The Wheel of the Dharma rolls constantly and lacks for nothing yet needs something.” The Dharma is Truth itself but it needs expression. He who lies does not allow the Dharma to show itself, he does not allow the Dharma to be expressed, he does not allow the world to see the Dharma Wheel in action. And still the sweet dew covers the whole world, including those who lie, and within that dew lies the Truth.

“Do not sell the wine of delusion.

There is nothing to be deluded about. If we realise this we are enlightenment itself.” ‘Thus shall ye think of all this fleeting world, a star at dawn, a bubble in a stream, a child’s laugh, a phantasm, a dream.’ If you hold on to nothing whatsoever there can be no delusion nor can there be enlightenment; then there are no opposites. Thus, indeed, we are enlightenment itself—yet always we will have the form and figure of old monks.

“Do not speak against others.”

Do not speak against the Lord of the House. Every person, every being is the Temple of the Lord wherein the Lord dwells, the still water wherein the Dragon lives. If you speak against others you speak against the Lord of the House. Do not try to

divide the Lord of the House; do not try to cause war within the Lord; do not try to make the Lord make war upon Himself. “In Buddhism, the Truth and everything are the same; the same law, the same enlightenment and the same behaviour. Do not allow any one to speak of another’s faults.” Do not find fault with the Lord of the House. “Do not allow any one to make a mistake in Buddhism.” To speak against the Lord of the House is the gravest mistake of which I know.

“Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others.”

It is enough for me to know the Lord of the House, to know that He dwells within all things. How can there be devaluation of others if they are the Temple of the Lord? How can there be pride if all possess equally within the Lord? “Every Buddha and every Ancestor realises that he is the same as the limitless sky and as great as the universe. When they realise their true body there is nothing within or without; when they realise their true body they are nowhere more upon the earth.” There is nothing to be proud of and nothing to be devalued.

“Do not be mean in giving either Dharma or wealth.”

Since all possess the Lord, there is nothing to be given and nothing to be taken away, and still all things must be given, all things offered at all times and in all places. “One phrase, one verse, the hundred grasses,”—all contain the Lord, all express the Lord—each in its own way and each perfectly. “One Dharma, one enlightenment, every Buddha, every Ancestor.” No difference, nothing greater, nothing smaller; nothing truer, nothing less true. When all is within the Lord, all stand straight

together, a million Buddhas stand in one straight line. Out of gratitude to the Buddhas and Ancestors we give Dharma, we give wealth, we give life itself—strength, youth, beauty, wealth, everything that we have and, even then, we cannot give thanks enough for one second of their true training; we can never repay their kindness to us. Only by our own true training is this possible and then, again, there is no repayment; it is just the work of a Buddha.

“Do not be angry.

There is no retiring, no going, no Truth, no lie; there is a brilliant sea of clouds, there is a dignified sea of clouds.” Just there is that going on which causes us to see unclearly; but if we truly look, if we look with care, we will see that the true and beautiful sky is shining behind the clouds; we may see the Lord of the House. No matter how angry the person is who is with us, we may see in him, too, the Lord if we are truly looking, if our own ego is out of the way and, in seeing the Lord in him, he can see the Lord in us. The depth of the ocean is still even when there is a great storm upon its surface; thus should we be when there is anger, knowing that nothing whatsoever can touch the Truth.

“Do not defame the Three Treasures.

To do something by ourselves, without copying others, is to become an example to the world and the merit of doing such a thing becomes the source of all wisdom. Do not criticise but accept everything.” The Lord of the House does not always do things in the normally accepted ways, nor do the Buddhas and Ancestors; they are not individual

and they are not the same as each other. Each expresses the Truth in his own way as do all things; they do that which they do in their way and express the Lord within it. Do not criticise the way of another, do not call it into question; look within it and see the Lord. Look with the mind of a Buddha and you will see the heart of a Buddha. To criticise is to defame the Lord of the House. Love the Lord of the House at all times—know Him, talk to Him; never let a day go by when you do not consult with Him even on the slightest matter. Then you will never, as long as you live, defame the Three Treasures.

“These sixteen Precepts are thus.

Be obedient to the teaching and its giving; accept it with bows.”

Note.

1. When one ‘asks the Lord’, one should know that the Lord will never tell you to break the Precepts—any of them; if you hear to the contrary, the voice you are hearing is the voice of self and not the voice of the Lord. The teaching given in this paragraph must not be taken out of context and either made into a quick and easy substitute for full Preceptual inquiry or applied to trivial things. There are brief periods in training when a Preceptual review of every action is advisable in order to deepen one’s understanding of the Precepts; at such times the teaching of this chapter is applied to every act one does. At all other times it is important that one be willing to apply it to all things and at the same time be both practical and spiritually mature in reserving this type of inquiry for truly important matters, while accepting the responsibility for using the Ten Precepts and one’s wise discernment to guide one’s behaviour in everyday matters.

Whenever one does ‘ask the Lord’, one must also do all of the other aspects mentioned in this chapter, including carefully considering the likely consequences of one’s proposed actions, comparing those actions to the Ten Precepts and other Scriptures and, especially, consulting and following the advice of the Sangha. To do only part of this is to fail to take Refuge in the Three Treasures; such a course of action is contrary to Buddhist teaching. Be warned: there are no shortcuts to Buddhist training and all people, including full Zen Masters, will reap the karma of their actions. [JK]