

# ZEN NOTES



Yours in fellowship following Buddha,

*Wright Llewellyn*

## DWIGHT GODDARD--THE YANKEE BUDDHIST

Excerpted from an article by David Starry

Dwight Goddard, born July 5, 1861, a native of Worcester, Massachusetts, was educated there, graduating with honors from the Worcester Polytechnical Institute. During the ten years following graduation he achieved eminence in the field of mechanical engineering. During this period he designed a mechanism which, during WWI, was sold to the U.S. Government for a sizeable fortune. At the height of this success, he suddenly turned his back on the business world to enter the Hartford Theological Seminary, from which he was graduated in 1894 and was almost immediately assigned to the Baptist Mission field in China... He gave up this post to become one of the pioneer exponents of Zen Buddhism in the United States.

In the summer of 1933 my interest in Dr. Goddard was stirred by a rash of newspaper speculation about a return to China. A feature article in the *Boston Globe* proclaimed "Vermonters Joins Monks of Thibet." In addition, there were rumors that he had gone to investigate the aggressive militance of the Japanese government in an effort to reconcile it with the peaceful tenets of Zen Buddhism. Others referred to him as a "mystery man" and that he would never return to the United States.

In 1934 he returned to a property in Thetford Hill, Vermont, which he would share during the summer months with his two sons and their families. I found him at home in the family dwelling at Thetford Hill. His brown-shingled residence stands on a rise above the village street diagonally across the road from the old Thetford Academy, and in addition to the temple room in the main house he kept for himself a small nearby cabin. Adjacent to the property lies the Thetford Hill State Forest, 265 acres of which was donated by Dr. Goddard. Across the street a wooden pavillion commanded an unobstructed view of the fields and woodlands sloping down to the Connecticut River and the New Hampshire hills beyond--a scenic look-out point which Dr. Goddard shared with his friends and neighbors.

In the simply furnished cabin where I talked with him, there was nothing to suggest that this was the study of an Oriental mystic, except what appeared to be a very old figurine of a Buddhist deity. This object was not referred to at the time, but I have come to believe that it must have been a representation of Kuan Yin, the popular goddess of mercy. When the first missionaries became established in the Orient, the Chinese did not hesitate to identify Kuan Yin with the Virgin Mary--a habit which exasperated the missionaries no end!

There was nothing exotic in Dwight Goddard's personal appearance or manner. To the casual observer he suggested nothing more than the shrewd, clean-shaven, sparsely-built New England Yankee that

he was. And in a situation where one might have expected volubility, he was somewhat shy and taciturn. There was none of the high-pressured hawking of his wares in the market place such as is often the case with those who have had a vision and insist on sharing it with everybody within shouting distance. His demeanor was entirely in character with the Buddhist belief that conversion cannot be forced, but rather should a situation be created whereby the seeds of understanding in each individual are created fertile pastures in which to develop of their own accord. In our conversations it is remarkable how little was actually said about Buddhist theology. In response to one of my numerous questions about the meaning of Buddhism, the only words of his that I recall verbatim are, "There's nothing that I can tell you-- you have to find out for yourself." A very pithy sermon, indeed! But I was quite young at the time, and perhaps he didn't want me to get out of my depth too soon!

Among the things that Dr. Goddard did speak of were his plans to organize at Santa Barbara, California, a highly integrated Buddhist community whose members would be willing to share a severe monastic life. There were to be no worldly ties to detract from the spiritual path. He went on to state that many organizations have sprung up through the years but most of them have disintegrated after their leaders' deaths. And true to his habit of talking of Buddhism with frequent references to Christianity, he observed that Jesus tried it but at his passing the small circle of disciples slowly drifted apart. Unfortunately, his plans for a permanent California retreat never developed as he had envisioned.

At this point in our discussion I was curious to know what inner urge might have caused Dwight Goddard to originally forsake the world of engineering for the Baptist and, ultimately, the Buddhist mission field. But he did not speak of this and I did not press the question. Cannot we reasonably assume, however, that his actions were prompted by an inquiring scientific mind unequally balanced against a weightier sense of spiritual values? Or, as some writers have surmised, did the invention which played a vital part in America's military efforts prove to be a burden on the conscience of a man who so often wrote of peace and universal brotherhood? But whatever his basic motivation might have been, the immediate reasons for his espousal of the Buddhist road to salvation have been clearly expressed by Dr. Goddard himself.

During his initial years as a Baptist missionary in southern China he became increasingly frustrated at the failure of the Christian missions to accomplish their spiritual goals. He was convinced that although Christian religious propaganda had been successful in influencing educational and social conditions it had failed in its purely religious aspect. This feeling was shared by other leaders in the mission field, but none of them was prepared to implement his doubts

with decisive action.

About this time, also, there was a brief dialogue with the Christian Science Church in Boston during which they agreed that both the Divine Mind of Christian Science and the Ultimate Principle of Buddhism shared common ground. Dwight Goddard had hoped that the Christian Scientists might be willing to incorporate some of his translations of Buddhist scriptures into the *Science and Health* volume of Mrs. Eddy. But the Christian Scientists finally refused this plan on the grounds that it might compromise the teachings of Mrs. Eddy.

Thus it was that the idea crystallized which was to dominate the rest of his life. He had finally reached the conclusion that the Chinese and Japanese religious traditions had more to offer about the meaning of life than did the Christian mission field in its present form. In addition, he became convinced that Zen, the Japanese form of the old Chinese Ch'an, was the purest form of Buddhism and the closest to the original teachings of Guatama Buddha, its founder.

It was during these early years of spiritual turmoil that Dr. Goddard met and married his first wife. She was a physician active in the mission field and was to bear him two sons, both born in China, before the marriage ended in divorce. His second marriage was to a New York woman well-known and highly regarded in the Union Village area. Evidently both marriages were disrupted by Goddard's increasing involvement in Buddhism and the asceticism it demanded. It was after the failure of his second marriage that the need for a more secluded monastic life had prompted him to build the house and temple near Union Village.

As is obvious, when Dwight Goddard first became aware of what he considered the fundamental truths of Buddhism, it was not his idea to reject his Christian heritage. At that time he was optimistic enough to think he could establish a fellowship of the two religious traditions, since basically their fundamental tenets were the same. And it was out of this futile hope that he wrote two of his earliest works--a pamphlet entitled *A Vision of Christian and Buddhist Fellowship in the Search for Light and Truth*, published in 1924 in Los Gatos, California; and a book entitled *Was Jesus Influenced by Buddhism*, published in Thetford, Vermont. These efforts at an understanding between the two religions were welcomed by the Buddhists, but the Christian hierarchy could find no loophole in their dogma which would accommodate any such compromise.

Even though Dwight Goddard's oral responses to my queries about the meaning of Buddhism were apt to be minimal, his numerous commentaries and translations of Buddhist scriptures afford the seeking mind a chance to delve more deeply into the subject. Most of his books and pamphlets were printed at his own expense and distributed free of charge to anyone genuinely interested. His most significant

volume is his *Buddhist Bible* which was first published in 1932,has since been revised,and is still in print. At the time of its publication Henry James Forman said this about it in the New York TIMES Book Review:"Dwight Goddard has rendered a great service not only to students of religions but to the general reader who would have some idea of the essential teachings of Buddhism." And Aldous Huxley,the English novelist who later became interested in mysticism,refers to the *Buddhist Bible* as "Dwight Goddard's extremely valuable compilation." Indeed,many of the most authoritative Western writers in Buddhism usually list Dr. Goddard's works among their source material.

Many of Dr. Goddard's translations from the Chinese were in collaboration with the Chinese Bhikshu,or Monk,Wai-tao who studied English at an American Missionary Academy and later graduated from the Imperial University in Peking. Goddard spent a great deal of time during the 1930's working with Wai-tao at a hermitage in the mountains of Chekiang,and with him made pilgrimages to various monasteries in the vicinity of the sacred Tien-tai mountains.

During his years in China and Japan,Dwight Goddard had indeed studied with some of the world's most eminent teachers in the field of Buddhism and Zen in particular. Among them was Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki,then a professor at Japan's Otani University;and Taiko Yamazaki,a Roshi,or Abbot,at So-Ko-Ku Monastery. Dr. Suzuki has written prefaces to several of Dr. Goddard's translations.

Dr. Goddard died in Randolph,Vermont,on his birthday,July 5th, 1939,at the age of 78.

*We always like to know something about our contributors,so we asked David Starry to give us a few words about himself.*

Most of my life has been spent in travel. After attending Penn State and Gettysburg College,I spent several years with various University Extension Divisions presenting programs devoted to West Indian folklore--particulary voodoo in Haiti. Following this I was Cruise Director on Alcoa ships sailing out of New Orleans. Most recently I spent ten years with Swedish American Line as a member of the Cruise Staff where my job was editor of the CRUISE NEWS (and sometimes dancing with rich widows!!!) Since Swedish American went out of the cruise business,I have settled down to some writing--mainly occasional feature articles for the Harrisburg PATRIOT-NEWS. In view of all this,is it not odd that I started my schooling with the intention of becoming a botanist!

My travels with Swedish American,incidentally,gave me a lot of opportunities to visit Buddhist temples and monasteries throughout the Far East--Japan,Malaysia,Ceylon,China,etc. And I always made a point of visiting local bookshops in search of Buddhist books not ordinarily seen in the United States.

More on solitaire.

One of the members is always sneering at my playing solitaire. The other evening, I was playing and he came by, watched for a while, and then said, "shouldn't you put this card on that one?" He was into it.

Most people think of this particular game in terms of winning--it is a game with, shall we say, "eternity" on the *other* side. Some think there is a rival, an opponent, on the other side--someone that must be defeated. Is it father? Mother? What is the person fighting--can you see it?

The question of winning or getting a perfect score or doing something better than anybody else is vivid in some people. So when I get an opportunity I point it out to them.

I don't care whether I *win* or not. That doesn't appeal to me. What I like is working out the "given", the starting with the cards in an order--they are laid out in a certain kind of order--then, with your combination of chance and skill, you play off what you've got. The part that is pleasurable to me--I don't mind if I can't *play* anything because the setting them out is pleasurable also--is the bringing of order. Someone said that one way to help neurotics is to give them some order--any order, right or wrong is not the point--but give them a structure to climb on or clear up. Just seeing the form may help them. The form in itself matters not at all.

I never had a taste for conventional life, so it was never a problem for me. I suppose it is more difficult for people who have been successfully raised in a conventional way to see their own way. People are luckier if they have not been raised to see only one kind of life-style as possible. That is to say, if they have any individuality at all. I watch certain families and their children and how they are raised. Some pretty conventional children spend a lot of time rebelling against their family's style. Of course, their rebelling is recognition of the power of conventional life. To prove their individuality, they think they have to do certain things that flout their parents' ideas and values.

Few people grow up with the idea that there is a desirable way of living for them. Many children get into negative attitudes from looking at their families and they must find models somewhere else. Or they spend too much energy trying to get away from what they don't want to do. A life of protest against the "going" order is true slavery to it.

If you think in a plain way, like "I want to make money" or you can see your way clear to do what you really *want* to do, then that's OK.

The only person I remember in my immediate family or close who impressed me was my grandmother. She was completely selfish and always did pretty much what she wanted and was successful at it. She lived into her middle eighties and was not disappointed in her life. She was able to sustain the rigors of old age because she had done what she wanted. I guess the best thing you can do for people is to get them going their own way. Of course, people don't know what they want. They get all mixed up with the "shoulds". There's no way you can please everyone.

### SPRING ENCOUNTER

Noted by MF

Joshu Sasaki Roshi was in the office one morning when Vanessa Coward and I came down from our Wednesday hula, tai-chi and reggae practice in 3A. He stood up and came forward to greet Vanessa, and mentioned how much he liked the place her great-niece Tessa and her husband David had brought into being at Beech Hill Pond, and added that she should come up to Cornell to see what was going on at the Seminar, for which David was largely responsible.

Vanessa said, "Did you know one of our grandfathers was a founder of Cornell? My sister was looking up the family history and saw it mentioned somewhere."

No, he didn't. Then, looking at V herself, he saw how she was standing there glowing with color and vitality, and she said something about just coming from dancing.

"Oh, dancing..." he said. And he opened his arms and swept V off for a few steps. Their smiling faces illuminated the dimness of our basement room. All those present were delighted and refreshed.

### FROM THE RECORD OF BANKEI

Translated by Haskel

Someone asked me: "You say that when the marvelously illuminating Buddha Mind abides in the Unborn, then you won't get an gry, even when you're slandered, and won't rejoice, even when you're praised. That seems to me like the false view of 'non-existence'."

However, you're *not* non-existent; so, when someone touches you with a flame, you know it's hot, when someone splashes you with water, you know it's cool. If there *were* someone claiming to be completely "non-existent", that person would just be creating delusions without realizing the dynamic function of the Buddha Mind, so it would be a perverted view. Since he'd fail to realize the preciousness of Buddha Mind, he'd give rise to delusion in regard to even the smallest matters, and so remain an unenlightened being.

poem

Not angry when abused,not happy when praised  
A great blockhead of the universe!  
Going along as circumstances carry me--north,south,east,west  
Without hiding my ugliness or clumsiness between heaven and earth

From THE GREAT NATURAL WAY by Venerable Hozen Seki

In the time of Gautama Buddha,there were no precepts. After the formation of the Sangha,some disciples drank liquors,and this behavior disturbed others. The Buddha heard of this and made a rule:in Sangha there should be no drinking of liquors. In this way,one precept appeared. However,one of the Buddha's disciples became very ill due to obedience to the rule. When the Buddha heard of this,he permitted this disciple to take a little liquor. The Buddha established this Middle Way to accommodate his disciples' physical and mental health.

After Gautama Buddha passed away,there appeared many rules: finally,some disciples thought "Through precepts we will attain enlightenment." The same was true when Shinran Shonin lived in this world--after he passed away,some took to precepts,saying that without precepts,enlightenment could not be attained:"In believing the teaching of the Amida Buddha,people should obey precepts and rules." This is a combination of Absolute Salvation and the social code. Such thinking is not true to the teaching of the Amida Buddha.

This embrace is beyond our good or evil,beyond precepts. The true religious mind is completely in the mind of Amida Buddha,beyond bad or good. Someone thought that "this Absolute Salvation is very dangerous,because one may think that bad behavior is the purpose of the embrace of Amida Buddha." This,however,is a very wrong view. So Rennyō Shonin taught that we are like birds with two wings in flight. One is Absolute Salvation,beyond this world,good,and bad. But to harmonize in this world,we need the other wing of precepts. We then fly with these two wings of salvation and precept.

Take the first precept--not to kill. According to some,we must completely obey this precept,and when conformity is secured,then we receive Amida Buddha's embrace. But how can this be? Without killing we cannot live in this world. Each day we are killing others. Of course we may not be killing humans--but mentally and religiously,we are doing so. We are killing so many sentient beings. Vegetables have their own life;when we eat one leaf of lettuce,we kill the lettuce;and so with chickens,cows,insects.We cannot eat or drink without killing. Nor do we live without stealing. Let us look deeply,and we will see that this is so. Through the precept we will not obtain enlightenment.

*gan notes*

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