



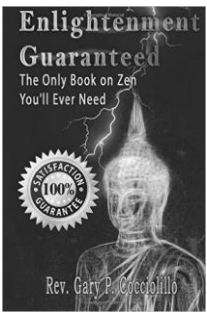
The Newsletter of the Original Mind Zen Sangha of the Five Mountain Zen Order

Princeton, New Jersey

originalmindzen.com

News

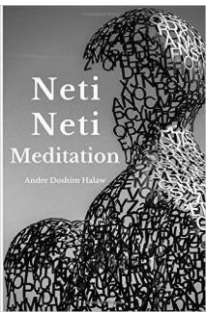
New Book: *Enlightenment Guaranteed*



Gary Cocciolillo, a monk of the Five Mountain Zen Order and a member of the Original Mind Zen Sangha, published his first book, *Enlightenment Guaranteed: The Only Book on Zen You'll Ever Need*. It is available in print and as an ebook through Amazon.

Cocciolillo offers a humorous and authentic introduction to the practice and living of Zen. He leaves out any discussion of Buddhist philosophy just for its own sake. When he does cover some philosophy, such as the Noble Eightfold Path, he emphasizes applying the ideas in our daily lives. It is in our daily lives that Gary places the heart of Zen practice. Of course, he gives a simple introduction to sitting meditation, but he also discusses practice while enduring a breakup and driving a car (But do not try his method at home!).

Revised Book: *Neti-Neti Meditation*



Andre Doshim Halow, the founder and guiding teacher of the Original Mind Zen Sangha, revised and expanded *Neti-Neti Meditation*. It is available in print and as an ebook through Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Halow offers the first systematic instruction on the Neti-Neti approach to meditation that I've seen in print. Writers often translate Neti-Neti from the Sanskrit as "not this, not that." This approach to meditation first appears in the Hindu Upanishads. Its approach is that of negation. We recognize that every part of us, including our thoughts and feeling, and everything we perceive are not the Absolute. As we negate each thing, we work our way towards a direct experience of that Absolute.

One-Day Meditation Retreat at Original Mind

The Original Mind Zen Sangha held its one-day summer retreat on Saturday, July 18 at the Fellowship in Prayer building in Princeton. We spent the day in sitting and walking meditation, interviews, koan practice, and enjoying a dharma talk. Look in future issues and the Original Mind website for announcements of upcoming retreats.

Due to space, our Regional Buddhist Directory does not appear in this issue. Please see the previous issue.

Greeting Visitors

Visiting any new group of strangers involves some discomfort or at least disorientation. This may be especially so when visiting a non-traditional religious group. Most Americans aren't going to know what to expect when they show up to a sangha for the first time. They're not going to know what's going to happen there. They're not going to know what they're supposed to do once they're there. And they won't know if the people are going to be freaks or not. So when a new visitor shows up, we should all remember our own first visits, recognize the potential discomfort of the visitor, and honor that person's courage for showing up at all. **Every member should take responsibility for welcoming visitors.**

What to do:

- Say hello and welcome the visitor.
- Introduce yourself and the other members.
- Perhaps ask the person what brought him or her or where they came from. Maybe there are other members from the same town or neighborhood.
- Be mindful of the visitor's interests. He or she might not wish to discuss the above. Maybe he or she wants to just observe discretely. Respect the visitor's space and comfort.
- Gary has responsibility for introducing visitors to our practice and etiquette. So make sure to introduce a visitor to him. If he isn't present, then do it yourself! You know what we do.
- Make sure the visitor understands that Andre is the guiding teacher and that he'll be upstairs for interviews most of the night. Otherwise, visitors might wonder who that weird bald guy is and why he keeps coming and going.
- Introduce the visitor to Andre.
- Let the visitor know that they're welcome to participate to the extent they wish. For example, they're welcome to just sit quietly during the chants.
- Make space. Make sure a visitor has a cushion if he or she wants to sit on the floor. Make sure he or she has a chair if that's where they're more comfortable sitting.
- At the end of the night, be sure to thank the visitor for coming, invite him or her back, and give them our etiquette handout and a copy of our most recent newsletter (copies are in the storage bin). That will help acquaint the visitor with us and help them decide whether or not to come back.
- Ask the visitor if he or she has any questions. Answer them or find someone who can.
- Remember that our purpose is not recruit new members, but to help visitors get what they need. If we can serve them best by directing them elsewhere, then we'll do so. If we can serve them best by simply sitting, then we'll do that.

Welcoming our visitors is important. They've come to us for a reason; if we can help them then let's do it - and let's do it right. What does it say about our practice if we're too mindless or unaware to pay attention to the needs of our visitors or fail to make them comfortable? **Welcoming visitors is our practice.**

Buddhism as an American Protestant Denomination Part III. The Protestant Transformation of Zen

By Jonson Miller

This is the third and final part of a three-part series in which I raise questions about the place of Buddhism in American religious history and practice. What might we see if we look at American Buddhism as part of or at least intertwined with the history of American Protestantism? This third part raises questions about how American Protestant culture has shaped the American practice of Zen, for good or ill.

The flip side of America's Protestant culture easing Americans' adoption of Buddhism is that it becomes easier for us to transform that Buddhism. This can go in at least two directions. 1) We can adapt Buddhism to our own culture, such that Buddhism is not alienating and, instead, becomes an organic part of American culture and even more authentic for us. 2) We can ignore those parts of Buddhism that might challenge our

prejudices and values, allowing us to miss out on essential insights and reinforce rather than challenge our existing values.

Skepticism of Spiritual Authority

American egalitarianism promotes autonomous sanghas, in which even lay members can exert significant or even total control over organization and practice.

Early American churches were local institutions, either by necessity – there was an ocean between them and the nearest Anglican bishop – or by choice – Puritans avoided the authority of those bishops. Even though many churches had learned clergy, the congregations or elite lay people often elected those clergymen. By the early nineteenth century, even American Catholic congregations began participating in the governance of their churches and dioceses. Local autonomy and lay authority is an American religious tradition.

In America, lay Buddhists may exert much control over their sanghas. In fact, there are many sanghas consisting entirely of lay people; they have no ordained teacher available to guide them. Like early American Anglican churches, this is partly a matter of necessity. America has a limited capacity to produce ordained clergy and sanghas are generally too small and poor to support a teacher brought from overseas.

While structural factors lead to autonomous, lay-centered sanghas in America, the egalitarian Protestant culture of America can also justify this situation as ideal. Since the Second Great Awakening, evangelical Protestantism has often questioned the value of elite or educated clergy. For them, spiritual authority came from the (unverifiable?) experience of being born again, not from academic knowledge of theology. This egalitarian impulse allowed for anyone to become a preacher; if you had an audience, you were a preacher. One result of this is that much American evangelicalism has become theologically barren, with some conservative evangelicals trading in their concern for salvation for a focus on secular politics. The evangelical example can be a warning to American Buddhists.

But of course there are some American Buddhist Clergymen. We even often refer to them as monks, despite the fact that almost none of them live as celibate, full-time religious professional. Instead they usually have jobs and are welcome to have families. It is unclear what actually makes them monks. Of course, many Japanese monks have families, but they, unlike American “monks,” are professionals. American clergy

look more like part-time preachers of many Protestant churches. Perhaps “priest” would be a better term for our clergy.

There are certainly many American Buddhists who place great emphasis on the authority and lineage of their teachers. There is even an American Zen Teachers Association that seems to try to regulate or certify clergy. At the same time, I have heard lay Buddhists denounce the very idea of having a guiding teacher. They claimed that we can pursue enlightenment on our own, without a teacher. Perhaps. But they took this position further to rejecting the need for a clergy at all.

Is the consequence of this disregard for clergy that American Buddhism is theologically barren? Buddhism has a long history of rich theology and competing schools, the mastery of which requires the equivalent of studying for a PhD – at a minimum – and often knowledge of several scriptural languages. How many American Buddhist clergy, let alone lay practitioners working on their own, possess such training? On the other hand, a focus on philosophy in institutionalized Buddhism could certainly pose the risk of derailing us from our primary purpose of saving all sentient beings. But even still, a lack of respect for spiritual authority and clergy can lead to low standards of knowledge and practice that, while suiting our egalitarianism, might hinder the saving of those sentient beings.

Not Family Friendly

American Zen certainly has institutions and groups, but it may tend nonetheless to atomize its practitioners. The way we practice and our place in a non-Buddhist culture tends to emphasize the isolated individual, despite membership in a sangha.

Unlike Asian Buddhists, American lay Buddhists emphasize formal, individual practice, which fits in with the goal-oriented character of at least northern Protestantism. We tend to meditate and chant, even if intermittently. Our congregations focus on the practice of group meditation. To a great extent, it may be that practice that defines an American as a Buddhist. After all, if you’re not practicing, then what makes you a Buddhist in a non-Buddhist society?

American Buddhism is not a family affair. There is little place for children in American Buddhism. In fact, there may not be much place for couples with children, since one of the parents might need to stay home to care for children while the other goes off to the sangha where young, possibly crying children are unwelcome. In Asia, on the other hand, Buddhism is an inextricable

part of everyday life for Buddhists. Children are raised Buddhist. Devotion, something that even children and non-practitioners can do, is a central part of Asian Buddhism. This devotion can be directed towards various Buddhist deities or towards clergy.

A temple in my town that serves primarily Tai immigrants makes acts of devotion and service towards the resident monks a central part of their religious experience. Through such service, the lay people acquire merit that resolves some of their karma and facilitates a more favorable next incarnation. American egalitarianism probably makes such devotion towards monks untenable for us. Even in the circumstances when an American is willing to pay to support residential monks, I find it hard to imagine that American being willing to offer food as an act of devotion to those monks. To do so would require the granting of extraordinary spiritual authority to the monk. That American might even whisper under his or her breath, "Get a job."

The history of American Protestantism might, however, offer us some hope that Buddhism could become a family-centered religion. Quakers, once one of the dominant denominations in America, gather weekly for, if not always silent, at least quiet "meetings." They do welcome children. And the children learn to maintain quietness and sit. I imagine the discipline of stillness their parents and community teach them contrib-

utes to the recognizable quietness and restraint of Quaker adults. They at least strive to create a Quaker culture in which to raise their children. So perhaps American Buddhists can and should start to welcome whole families, including crying babies.

Conclusions

I'm probably not entirely wrong to think that most Americans who practice Buddhism have some concerns about the state of American culture and find traditional American religions lacking. Moreover, most of us probably see something in Buddhism that might fill that lack and heal that culture. While I might be wrong about issues facing American Buddhism, I do think I'm right that at least the types of questions I'm asking are necessary if Buddhism is to be of any benefit. After all, Buddhism can't fulfill that role if we either 1) unconsciously allow it simply become just another Protestant denomination or 2) fail to sufficiently adapt it to an American soil. Self-awareness and self-criticism are necessary for both.

Then again, maybe I shouldn't be trying to change anything. Maybe that impulse says more about me than it does about Buddhism or America.

Jonson Miller is a member of the Original Mind Zen Sangha and the editor of this newsletter.

Not-Thou Shall Not

By Reverend Tom Eunsahn Citta Gartland

The following article is based on a pair of dharma talks on the precepts that Gartland gave on October 8 and 15 at the One Mind Zen Sangha near Northampton, Massachusetts.

In the Five Mountain Zen Order Precepts ceremony, we say, "Most religions have moral and ethical rules and commandments. In Buddhism there are Precepts, however the Buddhist Precepts are not a list of rules to follow, they are signposts meant to guide us on our path to awakening".

One thing I like about the Precepts as they are commonly given now, is that they not only tell you what not to do, they also spell out what to do instead. They affirm as much as they proscribe. It's a nice signpost to hear "don't be greedy, be generous". Sometimes that's a real head-slapping moment.

But... they are no more hard-and-fast than any other of the Buddha's teachings. The moment you think there is something firm on which you can put your foot, the Buddha swipes it away. And those of us who really are looking for something solid, for something predictable, something that's going to last, well, we're out of luck. They require us to pay attention to situation, relationship, and function. Since even the Precepts are subject to causes and conditions, always changing, changing, changing, we've got to be flexible and adaptable, just to keep up with the changing situations and relationships, if we want to respond according to the way our innate Buddha would respond with correct function.

These are the Five Lay precepts, first from the Five Mountain Zen Order, then another couple versions

from other sources (I believe the “disciple of the Buddha” versions are from the San Francisco Zen Center, but I’m not quite sure where the first alternate is from).

The First Precept: I vow to support all living creatures, and refrain from killing.

- Affirm life; Do not kill
- A disciple of Buddha does not kill but rather cultivates and encourages life

The Second Precept: I vow to respect the property of others, and refrain from stealing.

- Be giving; Do not steal
- A disciple of Buddha does not take what is not given but rather cultivates and encourages generosity.

The Third Precept: I vow to regard all beings with respect and dignity, and refrain from objectifying others.

- Honor the body; Do not misuse sexuality
- A disciple of Buddha does not misuse sexuality but rather cultivates and encourages open and honest relationships

The Fourth Precept: I vow to be truthful, and refrain from lying.

- Manifest truth; Do not lie
- A disciple of Buddha does not lie but rather cultivates and encourages truthful communication.

The Fifth Precept: I vow to maintain a clear mind and refrain from harming myself or others with intoxication.

- Proceed clearly; Do not cloud the mind.
- A disciple of Buddha does not intoxicate self or others but rather cultivates and encourages clarity.

There are a couple different approaches to the Precepts: Hinayana and Mahayana. And that’s not Hinayana as a pejorative term for any other form of Buddhist practice, it’s just Small Vehicle versus Great Vehicle, as Asvagosā referred to it in “Awakening of

Faith in the Mahayana.” Think of it as “Little T” versus “Big T,” if you like.

- The Hinayana level is the most literal: The first precept is to refrain from killing, So one doesn’t go out and kill. This corresponds to the relative—there’s a you, there’s a me, and I should not kill you.
- The Mahayana is the compassionate level—that of the Bodhisattva. We refrain from killing not because the Precept tells us not to do it, the Bodhisattva couldn’t conceive of taking a life by violent means without the thought of all beings.

That’s not a particularly bi-leveled set of interpretations and actions, either Hinayana *or* Mahayana. One can start out really literally just not killing other humans, then maybe moves on to not squashing bugs underfoot, then maybe moves on to some of the proscriptions from the Pali Canon. The Buddha said in those scriptures not to kill directly another being (hopefully not a human) for your own food, and also not to have someone else directly kill for your food. The lobster in the tank has nothing to fear from you at this point.

Then later on, maybe due to taking another set of precepts, or reading some of the Mahayana Sutras where it eating flesh is proscribed, you might move into vegetarianism or veganism. (This is probably also the point where arguments with other Buddhists ensue as to whether being an omnivore is against the Buddha’s teachings or not). Speaking facetiously, as much fun it is to argue that issue, it’s not really as simple as “Well the Sutras say this,” or “The precepts I took say...” Situation, relationship, and correct function comes into play. Much as we might want to have that black & white reliability of “Kill=Go to Hell,” it’s just not that way with the Precepts. It can be argued that it’s not that way in general, Buddhist or not, Precepts or no Precepts. But that’s another argument to have “fun” with some time. Some sort of karmic response to the intentional thought, speech, or action will come, but it depends....

Here’s a hypothetical situation for you, and unfortunately one that you might see in the news any day. And let’s say you identify yourself as a vegan Buddhist. You’re walking down the beach, and you encounter a starving, half-dead, extremely weakened Syrian child.

And there's a ham sandwich *just* out of his reach. You have choices of what to do next:

1. Because you're a *Vegan* Buddhist, you think about it, and decide not to give him the sandwich, but will go off and try to find a salad for him.
2. Because you're a *vegan Buddhist*, you think about it and decide that the Buddhist thing to do would be to show the kid some loving kindness, and give him the sandwich.
3. You're in turmoil because your two self-identification labels are confusing you as to what you should do, so you walk away, and hope that someone else will deal with it. Maybe you mutter something to the effect of "No birth/no death, the kid and the sandwich are made by mind alone. They're both just illusions."
4. You react to the situation at hand, see starving child, see sandwich, feed the sandwich to the starving child, without needing to contemplate it at all.

Maybe another hypothetical situation, one from Zen Master Seung Sahn's *Compass of Zen* lectures. It's also something that you could encounter virtually any time you walk down the street lately. A gunman is in the midst of committing mass-murder at a school. You're a police officer. The side of your squad car even says, "To Protect and Serve." You're on-duty, and you have your weapon, the one you've never used before. And, for the sake of this being hypothetical, let's say you are a Buddhist and have taken the Five Precepts. Again, you have a choice to make:

1. You can say, "The First Precept says not to take life, so I'll try to reason with him." And then maybe he's "unreasonable," and continues shooting away.
2. You can say, "Oh, I'm a police officer, so maybe I should try to do something about this." And then maybe he continues shooting away.
3. Or, before thought, you can react to the situation at hand, and proceed with whatever the correct function is, as it presents itself at that moment.

Bodhidharma states in the Breakthrough Sermon, and Huineng echoes him—Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom—that these are the practices that matter. The Three Pure Precepts—vowing to "Put an end to Evil," "Cultivate Virtues," and "Liberate all beings" combat the Three Poisons of Greed, Anger, and Delusion. First we stop being greedy, angry, and ignorant. Then we move on to practicing Generosity, Lovingkindness, and Wisdom. We save all beings by allowing them to express their own Awakened "Big T," we allow ourselves to do the same.

All the precepts are to be taken seriously...but carried lightly. As Wonhyo is reported to have said, "Even hell-beings need saving." If saving requires a Precept or two to be broken, break them. But do it skillfully, and with proper motive. Breaking one because it's simply more convenient is not Bodhisattva action.

And unfortunately for those of us who'd really like to take the easy way, sorry. The Precepts are "Not-Thou Shall Not."

Reverend Tom Eunsahn Citta Gartland is a monk of the Five Mountain Zen Order, founder and guiding teacher of the One Mind Zen Sangha, and former member and abbot of the Original Mind Zen Sangha. OneMindZen.org

Announcements and Events

Original Mind Zen Sangha

Sundays, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

Princeton, New Jersey

The Original Mind Zen Sangha meets every Sunday from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the Fellowship in Prayer building at 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, New Jersey.

Please join us for sitting and walking meditation and a dharma talk. We provide cushions and mats.

Please dress comfortably.

Newcomers should come fifteen minutes early for basic instruction and an introduction to the sangha.

For new visitors: The **first Sunday of each month**, we replace one meditation session with a **Q&A session**. This is an opportunity to find out what were about and to get started in your practice.

For more information, see originalmindzen.com.

Letters to the Editor

To submit letters:

1. (Preferred). Email your letter to the editor at [jwmiller \[at\] mail.com](mailto:jwmiller[at]mail.com). Title your subject line "Original Mind: Letter to the Editor." Include your letter in the body of your message, rather than as an attachment.
2. You may mail your letter to the editor. If so, be sure to provide explicit permission if you wish us to publish your letter. Mail your letter to:

Jonson Miller
Original Mind Newsletter
559 Florence Avenue
Langhorne, PA 19047

We limit letters to 250 words. If you have more to say than that, then consider writing an article for us.

About *Original Mind*

Original Mind is the newsletter of the Original Mind Zen Sangha based in Princeton, New Jersey. We are members of the Five Mountain Zen Order.

This newsletter serves several audiences and several purposes:

1. Spread the dharma and save all sentient beings.
2. Alert members of the sangha and our local community about upcoming events at our sangha or in the region.
3. Show new or prospective visitors what we're about so they can better decide if they'd like to join us.
4. Connect sangha members to the broader order by providing news about order events, publications, institutions, leaders, and fellow sanghas.

5. Connect sangha members with the broader Buddhist community in our region through announcements of and articles about relevant events and groups.
6. Support one another in our practice.

You can learn more about our sangha and our order at the following websites:

www.originalmindzen.com
www.fmzo.org

Contact the editor at [jwmiller \[at\] mail.com](mailto:jwmiller[at]mail.com).

Submission Information

Original Mind welcomes original articles and interviews on any topic related to Zen, broadly conceived. We also want book and film reviews, announcements about events of the Five Mountain Order, and announcements of or articles about local retreats and lectures.

If you would like us to consider your writing for publication, email your submission to [jwmiller \[at\] mail.com](mailto:jwmiller[at]mail.com).

Authors retain ownership of their works and are free to publish them elsewhere. By submitting your writing, you are claiming authorship of it and are stating that you did not submit the work of others.

We may edit your work for clarity, consistent formatting, or length.

Subscription Information

We publish *Original Mind* on whatever time frame is practical and whenever sufficient material or news warrants a new issue.

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