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Believing in Nothing

" In our everyday life our thinking is ninety-nine percent self-centered. Why do I have suffering ? Why do I have trouble ? "

I discovered that it is necessary, absolutely necessary to believe in nothing. That is, we have to believe in something which has no form, or no color, something which exists before all forms and colors appear. This is a very important point. No matter what god or doctrine you believe in, if you become attached to it, your belief will be based, more or less on a self-centered idea. You strive for a perfect faith in order to save yourself. But it will take time to attain such a perfect faith. You will be involved in an idealistic practice. In constantly seeking to actualize your ideal, you will have no time for composure. But if we are always prepared for accepting everything we see as something appearing from nothing, knowing that there is some reason why a phenomenal existence of such and such form ^{and color} appears, then at that moment we will have perfect composure.

When you have a headache, there is some reason why you have a headache. If you know why you have a headache, you will feel better. But if you don't know why, you may say, " Oh, I have a terrible headache ! Maybe it is because of my bad practice. If my meditation or zen practice were better I wouldn't have this kind of trouble " ! If you understand conditions in this way you will not have perfect faith in yourself, or in your practice

until you attain perfection. You will be so busy trying that I'm afraid you will have no time to attain perfect practice, so you may have to keep your headache all the time ! This is a rather silly kind of practice. This kind of practice will not work. But if you believe in something which exists before you had the headache, and if you know the reason why you had the headache, then you will feel better, naturally. To have a headache will be all right, because you are healthy enough to have a headache. If you have a stomach ache, your stomach is healthy enough to have pain. But if your stomach becomes accustomed to its poor condition, you will have no pain. That's awful ! You will be coming to the end of your life from your stomach trouble.

So it is absolutely necessary for everyone to believe in nothing! But I don't mean voidness. There is something, but that something is something which is always prepared for taking some particular form, and it has some rules, or theory, or truth in its activity. This is called Buddha nature, or Buddha himself. When we personify this existence we call it Buddha; when we understand it as the ultimate truth we call it Dharma; and when we accept the truth and act as a part of the Buddha, or according to the theory, we call ourselves Sangha. But even though there are three Buddha forms, it is one existence which has no form or color, and it is always ready for taking form and color. This is not just theory. This is not just the teaching of Buddhism. This is the absolutely necessary understanding of our life. Without this under-

standing our religion will not help us. We will be bound by our religion, and we will have more trouble because of it. If you become the victim of Buddhism, I may be very happy, but you will not be so happy. So this kind of understanding is very, very important.

While we were practicing zazen this morning we heard the rain dropping from the roof in the dark. I think soon we will see the wonderful mist coming through the big trees, and later when the people start to work, we will see the beautiful mountains. But some people will be annoyed if they hear the rain when they are lying in their beds in the morning, not knowing that later they will see the beautiful sun rising from the east. If our mind is concentrated on ourselves we will have this kind of worry. But if we accept ourselves as the embodiment of the truth or Buddha nature, we will have no worry. We will think, "Now it is raining, but we don't know what will happen in the next moment. By the time we go out it may be a beautiful day, or a stormy day. Since we don't know, let's appreciate the sound of the rain now." This kind of attitude is the right attitude. If you understand yourself as a temporal embodiment of the truth, you will have no difficulty whatsoever. You will appreciate your surroundings, and you will appreciate yourself as a wonderful part of Buddha's great activity, even in the midst of difficulties. This is our way of life.

Using the Buddhist terminology, we should begin with enlightenment, and proceed to practice, and then to thinking. Usually thinking is rather self-centered. In

our everyday life our thinking is ninety-nine percent self-centered: " Why do I have suffering, or why do I have trouble ? " This kind of thinking is ninety-nine percent of our thinking. For example, when we start to study science or read a difficult sutra, we very soon become sleepy or drowsy. But we are always wide awake and very much interested in our self-centered thinking ! But if enlightenment comes first, before thinking, before practice, your thinking and your practice will not be self-centered. By enlightenment I mean to believe in nothing, or to believe in something which has no form or no color, and is ready to take form or color. ^{This} Enlightenment is the immutable truth. And it is on this original truth that our activity, our thinking and our practice should be based.