



The Scripture of the
Founding Master

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Chapter Fifteen Entrusting

1. The Founding Master said to several of his disciples, “The reason I feel such deep affection for you is because, of all the people, only you ahead of so many others have found this special affinity, generated this special aspiration, and have come to seek this dharma. The reason I sometimes feel disappointed during our time together is because there are those among you whose dedication to cultivating the Way has diminished and who have aroused other selfish thoughts, and thus do not faithfully follow my guidance. If, in this way, you forget your original intents and disregard my purpose, then what will you do if I shake off all affinities and leave on a long journey of self-cultivation? At such a time, it will not be so easy to meet me, no matter how hard you try. Therefore, you must rededicate your spirits once again to make sure I don’t have such thoughts. The state of mind of a liberated person has aspects that cannot be fathomed with ordinary states of mind. When one is involved in any activity, no matter what it might be, it may seem as though one couldn’t stop even if it takes thousands of years. But once one decides to stop, all traces will instantly vanish into thin air.”

2. In January of the twenty-sixth year of the Won Era (1941), the Founding Master passed down his transmission verse and said, “The persons of the Way of old generally passed down their dharma transmission verses hurriedly at the time of their death, but I will give it to you in advance. They also transmitted it in secret to just a few disciples, but I am hereby giving it to all of you equally. Whether one receives the dharma completely or not, however, depends on one’s own practice. Thus, each of you must devote yourself to practice, so that you will have no regrets in the future.”

3. A year before his nirvana, the Founding Master often urged his disciples to complete the compilation of The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism, which was in progress. He often stayed up late into the night editing. When the

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manuscript was completed, he had it sent immediately to the printers, saying to his disciples, “Since time is short, the book may not be perfect at this point, but the broad essentials of my whole life’s aspiration and vision are for the most part expressed in this one volume. Hence, please receive and keep this book so that you may learn through its words, practice with your body, and realize with your mind. Let this dharma be transmitted forever throughout tens of thousands of later generations. In the future, people in the world will recognize this dharma and be greatly impressed, so that there will be countless numbers of people who will respect and revere it.”

4. A few months before his nirvana, the Founding Master often charged both the congregation and specific individuals, “I will soon be going to a remote place for self-cultivation. Reflect on whether you will regress or not even when I am gone, and fortify your minds anew. Nowadays is definitely a time of trial, so those with shallow faith will wilt, but those with firm faith will see good results. My dharma is transmitted so that anyone with faith and dedication and with public-spiritedness can receive it. Do not bemoan later that you failed to receive this dharma, but freely take this right dharma and make it your own flesh and blood.”

5. The Founding Master one day said to Song Kyu, “Ever since you met me, you have done everything as I instructed, never insisting on your own opinion. I know this is because you have such deep faith in me. But what would you do if I were suddenly to leave you for a long time? From now on, I want you to try also to express your opinions on all matters and to lead the congregation using your self-power.” Again, he said, “These days colonial officials’ surveillance of me is getting more and more intense, making it difficult for me to stay here for a long time. In the future, there will be some people who might occasionally harass the order, making those moments hard to bear. However, nothing serious will happen, so you needn’t worry.”

6. The Founding Master said, “If you continue to progress in your practice just as you did when you first aroused the aspiration to follow me, no one will

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not succeed. However, in cases where one is trying to rise from inferior spiritual capacity to middle spiritual capacity, or starts from middle spiritual capacity but is unable to get over the threshold, then one will be afflicted by all kinds of symptoms of disease and one will most likely fail to reach superior spiritual capacity. Thus, you must work especially hard to get over this perilous hill of middle capacity. The disease of middle capacity starts, first, with becoming bored with spiritual practice. The symptom of this disease is finding all things to be troublesome and tedious so that one's thoughts and words are sometimes inferior even to those of secular people. Second, being neither authentically enlightened nor utterly ignorant, one sometimes says or writes things that impress many people, who in turn admire and applaud one. Thus one assumes that one is superior to everyone else and, being overconfident, forgives all one's own faults. One recklessly criticizes senior teachers, casts skeptical doubts on the dharma and the truth, and becomes obstinate about one's own views. If one is not careful, these symptoms may even destroy all the merits one has been accumulating and ultimately may readily destroy the great enterprise involving an eternity of kalpas. Thus, the Buddha and the enlightened masters of the past warned about these symptoms of skeptical doubt and a lack of faith. Nowadays, there are quite a few among you who have caught this disease. Hence, it would be good if you would reflect on this yourselves and free yourselves from that state; but if you don't, you will not only destroy yourselves in the future but it will also become a major problem for the order. Therefore, you must arouse great zeal and focus your energies on the practice that will overcome this situation. The method of easily surmounting middle spiritual capacity involves devoting yourself without deception to a teacher who possesses the dharma, while at the same time reflecting on your own original vows and recollecting often the dangerous consequences of middle spiritual capacity. Once you overcome this situation, you will speed toward buddhahood as if flying in an airplane."

7. In January of the twenty-eighth year of the Won Era (1943), the Founding Master released the newly designed doctrinal chart and said, "The quintessence of my teachings and dharma lies herein; but how many of you can

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understand my true intention? It seems that only a few of you in this congregation today can receive it fully. This is due to your lack of one-minded concentration because, first, your spirits tend toward wealth and sex and, secondly, you are inclined toward reputation and vanity. This being the case, you must decide which to leave behind and which to seek. You will find success only by making a big decision and taking just a single road.”



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8. The Founding Master asked the congregation in the meditation hall, “Throughout this whole wide world, from the past up through the present, who had the greatest talent and became the vessel that delivered sentient beings from the sea of suffering, and through what means was this accomplished? Also, what kind of talent do you seek to attain by coming here to practice?” After several disciples gave their answers, Song Tosŏng replied, “The people who attained the greatest talent and became the vessels for delivering all sentient beings are all the buddhas of the three time-periods. The practice that we are most anxious to attain is that practice which will allow us to attain the talent of the buddhas. Hence, our minds will be unshaken by perverse Ways or trivial practices not only in this current lifetime, but even over several thousands of kalpas in the future. By gaining the buddhas’ knowledge and conduct, we will resolve old age, sickness, and death and will work hard to deliver sentient beings from the sea of suffering.” The Founding Master said, “However, among current practitioners, there are some people who admire extraneous studies even after discovering our dharma-gate, or who occasionally reject our own gate of the Way to seek extraneous knowledge. How is this not regrettable? Therefore, in order to reaffirm your own original vow, each of you must re-submit your vow so as to continue this practice through till the end.” Receiving his command, the congregation of the meditation hall rewrote their vows and continued on with their practice.

9. The Founding Master said, “In the twenty-eight years since I founded this order, my sermons on the dharma have been overly interpretive; though I’m not concerned about those of superior spiritual capacity, I worry that those who are of middle and inferior spiritual capacities presume the dharma is easy and, having become like the legendary nine-tailed foxes, will find it difficult to attain the true Way. This is a real concern. From now on, do not become generally engrossed only in interpretations of the dharma, but work hard to progress in concert through the Threefold Study.”

10. The Founding Master said, “I have founded many religious orders over many lifetimes and kalpas, but this order is the largest in scope. Along with the

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first nine disciples at the founding, there will be innumerable zealous devotees in the future who will dedicate their lives to this order.”

11. The Founding Master said, “I have been teaching you for a long time, but there are three things I regret. First, many of you talk about the arcane, sublime truth with your mouths, but rare are those whose conduct and realization have reached an authentic state. Second, although you see with your physical eyes, rare are those who perceive with their mind’s eye. Third, many of you have seen the transformation body of the Buddha (Nirmānakāya), but rare are those who have clearly seen the Dharmakāya Buddha.”

12. The Founding Master said, “There are three difficulties facing this religious order. One is the difficulty in understanding the absolute realm of Il-Won. Two is the difficulty in incorporating the truth of Il-Won into one’s conduct, so that one will practice with one suchness in action and rest. Three is the difficulty in teaching the truth of Il-Won concisely and clearly to the general public. Nevertheless, the most difficult task becomes easy if a practitioner firmly makes up one’s mind and devotes oneself to attaining it. On the other hand, for those who are not willing to pursue it or who give up midway, even the easiest task becomes difficult.”

13. The Founding Master said, “Foolish people do not understand the merit that rain and dew bring to heaven and earth; ordinary people do not understand the merit that sages bring to the world. Therefore, only after a drought will everyone appreciate the rain; only after sages have departed will everyone realize the gracious merits of their dharma.”

14. On May 16, 1943, the Founding Master gave a dharma talk to the congregation at a regular dharma meeting, “On my way to this Great Enlightenment Hall just now, I saw several children playing in the woods beside the road. Seeing me, one of the children called out a signal, and they all stood up and bowed. They seemed quite orderly, evidence that those children were gradually maturing. When people are very young, they don’t fully under-

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stand the particulars of their parents and siblings or their relationship to them, and are even more ignorant about their proper duties toward them. As they mature, however, they come to understand their particulars, relationship, and duties. Likewise, when practitioners are ignorant, they do not understand the particulars of how one becomes a buddha, bodhisattva, or ordinary sentient being, the relationships between themselves and heaven, earth, and the myriad living things, or each person's path between death and rebirth. As their practice gradually matures, however, they come to understand all about the particulars, relationships, and duties. Therefore, we come to understand the Way in the same manner that an immature child gradually becoming an adult. Thus a child grows up and becomes an adult, an ordinary being awakens and becomes a buddha, or a disciple learns and becomes a master. Therefore, you must acquire more and more real ability and become teachers of the younger generation, while each of you becomes a great pioneer in the great task of delivering all sentient beings and curing the world. It is said in the Yin-fu ching (Dark Amulet Scripture), 'Birth is the root of death; death is the root of birth.' Birth and death are like the cycle of the four seasons or the recurrence of day and night; that is, it is the law that operates the myriad living things in the universe and the universal truth that makes heaven and earth circulate. The only difference is that buddhas and bodhisattvas are not deluded regarding such comings and goings and are thus free, while ordinary sentient beings are so deluded, and thus are not free. However, the births and deaths of the physical bodies of buddhas and bodhisattvas or ordinary sentient beings are all the same. Thus, believe not in the person alone but in the dharma, and work hard to acquire the ability to be free and undeluded regarding birth and death, coming and going. The fact that we hold regular dharma meetings in this manner is like a merchant coming to a marketplace: having come to shop, he will feel it worthwhile only if he will receive assistance in his living by selling his own goods as well as buying others' according to his needs. Therefore, relate such opinions as might be beneficial to others, each according to one's knowledge, while revealing one's doubts and learning from others, and taking their words as a precious mirror. Be especially careful not to come and go in vain. Because the matter of birth and death is great and change occurs so rapidly, it is not something to take

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lightly.”

15. The Founding Master said, “The three goals of our enterprise are edification, education, and charity. In the future, we must always promote these three in tandem if our enterprise is to be flawless.”

16. The Founding Master said, “In my teachings and dharma, the Threefold Study, the Eight Articles, and the Fourfold Grace, which are the fundamental principles of this doctrine that has the Il-Won as its cardinal tenet, cannot be altered regardless of the era or the country. The remaining items or systems may be revised to fit a particular era or country.”

17. The Founding Master said, “In the past, religious orders, governments, or private organizations each relied on laws specifying disparities in order to regulate people. In the coming era, however, laws that are biased in any situation will not be able to exert their virtue to edify the masses equally. Therefore, in our order, if any person of the Way appears who has had a great enlightenment, that person should be honored with the status of the tathāgatas, whether lay or ordained, male or female, old or young. Also, in birthday and memorial ceremonies, or in any other events, rather than holding an event on behalf of a single individual, we should see to it that everyone should rejoice or mourn on the same day in those cases involving a founder of this order.”

18. The Founding Master said, “It is crucial that you transmit my dharma to posterity by writing it down and explaining it orally. However, it is even more important to ensure that, by practicing it with your bodies and realizing it with your minds, this dharma lineage is never severed. If you do so, the merit will be incalculable.”

19. The Founding Master said, “The tasks of a master founding a new dharma, of his disciples receiving his dharma and transmitting it to posterity, and of the congregation in later generations willingly receiving that dharma and putting it into practice form a trinity; their merits, too, are identical.”

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