



The Scripture of the
Founding Master

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Chapter Nine Sending on Spirits in Transition

1. The Founding Master said, “Ordinary people consider only their lives in the present to be important, but perceptive people recognize that how to die is important as well. This is simply because they know that only a person who dies well can have a good rebirth and a good life in the next and only a person who has a good birth and life in the present can have a good death; also because they know the principle that life is the root of death and death is the root of life. Therefore, even though there is no specific time for this, if a person is past forty, one must start packing one’s bags for one’s upcoming death, so that one will not have to rush as one is dying.”

2. The Founding Master said, “No matter who is born into this world, his moment of death will inevitably come. Thus, I will explain for you today how to behave like someone close to the person when sending on the spirit at the time of a person’s entering nirvana, as well as how the person whose spirit is about to depart should prepare for death. Listen closely to these instructions! With a person who dies unexpectedly due to sudden illness or some sort of accident, or is not amenable to guidance because he lacks faith, it will be difficult to apply all my dharmas. However, with a person who does not die suddenly and who has even a slight amount of faith, application of these instructions will make his final state of mind stronger and will be of great assistance in delivering his spirit. As a close acquaintance of a terminal patient, you must do the following. First, occasionally burn incense in the patient’s room and keep the room clean, for, if the room is messy, the patient’s spirit will not be clear. Second, always keep the premises quiet for the patient, for, if the premises are noisy, the patient’s spirit cannot focus. Third, tell him many stories of virtuous people, and if he performed good deeds in his life, console his mind by complimenting his actions. Those wholesome thoughts will then become imprinted on the patient’s spirit, readily turning them into the basic habits in his next life. Fourth, do not speak of unwholesome or treacherous things in front of the pa-

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tient, and forbid anyone from saying things that are lewd or debauched; for those unwholesome images will also become imprinted on the patient's spirit, readily turning them into the basic habits of his next life. Fifth, do not express any worries or act dejected about family property, family members, and the like; for that would provoke desire and attachment in the patient, thereby preventing his spirit from ever leaving that place; and should he finds no opportunity of being reborn into a human destiny at that site, he would easily fall into unwholesome destinies. Sixth, recite the Buddha's name, read scriptures, and offer dharma talks to the patient, as is appropriate, or if those sounds bother him, then minister to him with meditation. The patient's spirit then will come to rely on such support and will readily attain calmness. Seventh, when the patient is about to enter nirvana and gathers his last breath, never make a racket by crying, shaking his body, or calling out his name, and such. That would only confound the dying person's spirit and would be of no benefit to him. If your sadness is uncontrollable because of your affection for that person, then wait to express it until several hours after the person has passed away."

3. The Founding Master continued, "When a patient who is on his deathbed realizes that the moment of nirvana is near, one should let go of any thoughts about everything and collect and concentrate his spirit. If for unavoidable reasons he has to make a will, he should take care of it in advance and not think about it so that it does not become an obstacle to his concentration, for at this moment, there is nothing more crucial. Also, if on thinking back on your life, there are incidents where you have been holding a grudge or have become an enemy to someone, ask that person to come and do your best to eliminate those previous enmities. Should that person not be available, you ought to try hard if only by yourself to let go of your resentment. Unless you manage to resolve the resentment in your own mind, it will become a seed of an unwholesome cause and fruition in your next life. Also, if on thinking back on your life, you have been attached to certain cravings in your daily life and have not been able to sever those attachments, then try hard to let go of those thoughts even if you have to force yourself. If you do not sever that attachment, naturally you will not attain true nirvana, those attachments will forever be-

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come a cause for transmigration in unwholesome destinies. Let the departing spirit of the patient, after he has assiduously attended to all these provisions, leave at the final moment with an even purer spirit, utterly putting down all unrighteous thoughts and relying on meditation or recitation of the Buddha's name. This way, even persons who did not have clear understanding of the truth of birth and death will be able to avoid unwholesome destinies and return to wholesome destinies. However, this dharma is not just something one should observe and practice only when one is about to die. For people whose lives are already equipped with fundamental faith and practice, that dharma enjoins that they must try even harder in their final hours; for those lacking faith and practice, things will not work out well even if they tried at the moment of death. Thus, you must have a solemn understanding of this in advance and avoid having regrets about your failure at the decisive moment. Always bear every one of these provisions in mind so there will be no serious mistake in the comings and goings of the spirit. The matter of birth and death is so important that you cannot be too careful about it."

4. The Founding Master had Yi Kongju and Sŏng Sŏngwon memorize the following verse, which has come to serve as a sacred incantation/mantra for sending on spirits in transition:

Eternally preserving long life over an eternity of heavens and earths,
It perpetually shines alone as everything passes into extinction over myriad ages.

Awakening to this Way of coming and going is an everlasting flower,
Every step and every thing is a great sacred scripture.

5. As a dharma instruction for sending on the spirits in transition, the Founding Master composed the "Dharma Talk on Guidance to the Path to the Next Life before and after Death." "Oh deceased so-and-so, focus your spirit and listen well to my words. Whatever you have received in this life, whether wholesome or unwholesome, is the result of what you did in your past lives, and whatever you have done in this life will be what you again will receive in your future lives. This is in fact the heavenly karma of all of nature. Because

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the buddhas and enlightened masters have awakened to what is original in their self-natures and have attained freedom of mind, they break through this natural karma and are able to enjoy as they please any of the six destinies and the four types of birth. However, ordinary humans and sentient beings have attained neither what is original in their self-natures nor freedom of mind; hence, being dragged about by natural karma, they end up receiving immeasurable suffering. Whether you become a buddha or an enlightened master, or are an ordinary human or a mere sentient being, whether you receive high or low status or blessings or punishments, whether you are long-lived or short-lived, this all is created by you and no one else. Oh so-and-so, are you now certain that it is you who have created all of these myriad events? Oh so-and-so, listen further. Whether it is a buddha, you, or all sentient beings, the principle of birth and death is the same for all and the realm of their natures also is all originally pure and clear, perfect and complete. The nature is like the moon in the sky: the real moon is by itself in the sky, but its reflection shines on a thousand rivers. Likewise, the root of this universe and the myriads of things are also originally that pure and clear realm of the nature: it has neither name nor form, neither coming nor going, neither birth nor death, neither buddhas and sentient beings nor empty nonexistence and calm extinction, there is not even the word 'not'; it is what is neither being nor nonbeing. However, that which exists in that realm arises naturally by manifesting itself through nonaction; the universe is transformed through formation, subsistence, decay, and emptiness; the myriad things transform amid the six destinies and the four types of birth by following the cycle of birth, old age, sickness, and death; and the sun and the moon change day to night as they move across the sky. In the same manner, the birth and death of your physical body is also a transformation, not a real birth and death. Oh so-and-so, are you listening? Now, have you definitely awakened to the realm of this nature? Listen again! When you discard your old body and receive a new one, you will receive it in accordance with what you are most attached to and what you have typically enjoyed. If in what you have most enjoyed the world of the buddhas and bodhisattvas is predominant, then you will receive a body from that world and obtain immeasurable happiness. On the other hand, if greed, hatred, and delusion were stronger, then you will

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receive a body from such a world and obtain endless suffering throughout infinite kalpas. Are you listening? Oh so-and-so, listen again! At this moment, fortify your mind even further. If you do not extinguish even a hair's breadth of attachment to desire and clinging, you will naturally fall into unwholesome destinies; and once you have fallen there, when will you ever receive a human body again to seek out the congregations of sages and saints, accomplish the grand enterprise, and receive immeasurable wisdom and blessings? Oh so-and-so, have you been listening well?"

6. The Founding Master, after seeing an advertisement for a fire insurance company at an exhibition in Seoul, said that he got this impression: "We always talk about liberating ourselves from birth and death, suffering and happiness, but liberation would not be easy if we do not understand the principle of birth and death. If a person does not believe in principle of rebirth after death, then how much greater will his reluctance and sorrow be when he is facing his death? It would be like a person who has not arranged a fire insurance policy and loses all of his property in a sudden fire. However, a person who understands this principle knows that the birth and death of a physical body is no different than changing an article of clothing. Even though our physical body that is subject to such changes might die one day, that unchanging, ever-bright, numinous consciousness lives forever and will again receive another body. Just as a fire insurance policy has the power to rebuild a structure destroyed by fire, that one point of numinous consciousness guarantees the eternal life of a human being. Therefore, those who understand this principle will be relaxed and calm about birth and death, but those who do not will be nervous and unsettled. Also, in all matters of all suffering and happiness, those who understand the principle regarding them will prepare for infinite happiness by accepting suffering and happiness as is appropriate, but those who do not understand that principle will have no such hope and make no such preparations and thus will have no promise of escaping from this vast sea of suffering. How could a perceptive person witnessing this situation not worry about such people and feel pity for them?"

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7. The Founding Master said, “There are many Ways we must follow, but if you reduce them down, they are nothing more than the Way of life and the Way of death. While we are alive, if we do not understand the Way of life, we will not be able to actualize the value of living. And while we are dying, if we do not understand the Way of death, it will be difficult to avoid unwholesome destinies.”

8. The Founding Master said, “A human being’s birth and death is like opening and closing your eyes, inhaling and exhaling, or falling asleep and waking up: there might be differences in how long these take but the principle is the same. Birth and death are originally nondual; arising and ceasing originally do not exist. The enlightened understand it as transformation, but the unenlightened call it birth and death.”

9. The Founding Master said, “Just as that sun is setting in the west in the evening but will rise again tomorrow in the east, though all things may die in the present life, the numinous consciousnesses that depart at the time of death will receive new physical bodies and reappear in the world.”

10. The Founding Master said, “People generally call the world we live in ‘this world’ and the world where the dead go the ‘other world’ and presume that ‘this world’ and the ‘other world’ are separate realms. However, it is only the body and its location that change; these are not separate worlds.”

11. The Founding Master said, “When a person’s numinous consciousness departs from the physical body, it first follows its attachments, subsequently receives a body in accordance with its karma, and so continues to transmigrate in this boundless world. The only way to become free from this transmigration is to sunder all attachments and transcend karma.”

12. Chōng Ilsōng asked the Founding Master, “When my life is coming to an end, what final thought should I maintain?” The Founding Master said, “Rest in an impeccable state of mind.” Chōng asked again, “What is the road

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of death and rebirth like?” The Founding Master said, “It is like falling asleep and then waking up: falling asleep without any discernment, you feel as though IIsǒng has gone somewhere, but when you wake up, you are again that same IIsǒng. Wherever you go, the same being called IIsǒng is endlessly reborn and dies again according to his karma.”

13. A disciple asked the Founding Master, “I would like to know what processes and states are entailed when the numinous spirit discards this body and receives a new one.” The Founding Master said, “When the numinous spirit separates from the body, normally the spirit rises from the body after the breath of the physical body is completely extinguished; however, in some cases the spirit alone rises even though the breath still remains in the body. When the spirit rises from the body, it usually stays in an intermediate state for approximately forty-nine days before it plants itself in a womb. However, some spirits plant themselves in a womb right after rising and others float around like the breeze in the intermediate state for months and years. Ordinarily, a spirit moves about as if in a dream until it receives a new body, thinking that it still retains its previous physical body. Once it plants itself in a new womb, however, the previous consciousness is extinguished and the spirit recognizes the new body as its own.”

14. A disciple asked, “Because I still have not resolved this doubt about birth and death, my life feels like a mayfly’s and everything in this world seems futile. What shall I do?” The Founding Master answered, “In ancient writings it says, ‘Ordinarily, looking from the perspective of change, even heaven and earth do not stay the same for a single moment; looking from the perspective of the unchanging, all things and I are unending.’ Inquire often into the meaning of this passage.”

15. The Founding Master said, “Both sentient and insentient beings in this world all possess the element of life, and nothing is completely annihilated but merely goes through a change of form. For example, when a person’s corpse decomposes in the ground, it enriches the soil and makes the grass in the area

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verdant; when the grass is cut, made into compost, and used as fertilizer, the crops will grow and produce abundant grain; when the grains are eaten by people, they will turn into the flesh and blood of the person, helping him to sustain his life and remain active. If one looks at it from such a perspective, then nothing in the universe dies nor is extinguished for good. Even that single straw will manifest itself into a hundred million transformations and exhibit various kinds of creations and talents. Therefore, you must inquire deeply into such a principle and awaken to the truth that all things in the universe sustain endless lives through the principle of ‘neither arising nor ceasing.’”

16. The Founding Master addressed the congregation at a New Year’s Day ceremony, “There was nothing special about either yesterday or today, but everything through yesterday we call ‘last year’ and from today on we call it ‘this year.’ In the same way, it is the same spirit when we die as it is when we are alive, but we call its dwelling place the ‘other world’ when we die and ‘this world’ when we are alive. Our physical body that is composed of the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind has ‘this world’ and the ‘other world’ because it dies and is reborn. However, the spirit is eternally inextinguishable and thus is never subject to birth or death. Therefore, for the enlightened, birth, old age, sickness, and death are like the changing of the four seasons, and ‘this life’ and the ‘other life’ are like ‘last year’ and ‘this year.’”

17. The Founding Master said, “No matter how much a person might have accumulated grains and money throughout his life, he cannot take anything with him when he dies. How can we call that which we cannot take along with us our eternal possessions? If we want to create eternal possessions, then while we are alive we must work hard for others’ benefit in every possible way, but must do so without dwelling on any sign that benefit is conferred so that we may accumulate merit that is free from the outflows. Our true, eternal possession is the vow regarding the right dharma and the power of the mind that has cultivated it. By devoting ceaseless efforts to this vow and to mind practice, we will become a master of wisdom and merit in the infinite world.”

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18. The Founding Master addressed the congregation at a meditation hall, “Do you know what the kingdom of Yama and its messengers are? The kingdom of Yama is nowhere other than inside the wall of your own house; the messengers of Yama are none other than your family members. This is because ordinary people’s spirits, being entangled in deep affection toward their own family members in this life, do not rise far when the body dies, but instead fall right back toward their own previous home; if they do not meet there with an opportunity to be reborn as a human being, they may be reborn as the family’s domestic animal or as an insect. The buddhas and enlightened masters from ancient times emphasized the importance of departing without attachments and acting without attachments, because only in this way can one avoid falling into unwholesome destinies.”

19. The Founding Master said, “Everyday, people must frequently develop and cultivate the practice of nonattachment. For those with strong attachments to wealth, sex, fame, and profit, to spouse, children, and relatives, or to clothes, food, and shelter, their worries and suffering will be much greater than the average people when those things vanish before their eyes. This would be a real hell on earth. Even when they die, they will again be dragged around by their attachments, unable to free themselves, and would end up falling into the sea of transgressive karma. How could you not be cautious about this?”

20. The Founding Master said, “These days, people occasionally purchase in advance a lot that supposedly is good burial plot and are convinced that is where they want to be buried. The numinous consciousness of these people will go straight to that burial plot at the instant of their death. If in the vicinity there is not a path available to be reborn among humans, then they will fall unawares into unwholesome destinies, making it all but impossible for them to receive a human body. How could you not be cautious about this?”

21. A disciple defied the Founding Master’s instructions on a particular matter and tried to proceed stubbornly on his own. The Founding Master said, “If you are stubborn even about such minor matters, you will be stubborn in

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major matters as well. If you continue on in this way, you will handle all matters only in your own way, and ultimately, you will be unable to receive either my guidance or deliverance. When you are unable to receive my guidance or deliverance, I couldn't do anything for you even if I wanted to save you.”

22. The Founding Master addressed the assembly at a meditation hall, “If in this way you get rid of all your worldly attachments to desires and clinging, purify your spirit and gain power of absorption by listening to dharma talks each and every day, you will end up delivering not only yourself but also, through the dharma power that penetrates the dharma realm of empty space, you will deliver without being aware of it even the microbes and insects that live nearby. This is like the sun, whose rays have no intent of melting snow and ice, yet by shining on them involuntarily their warmth naturally melts them away. In the same manner, a person of the Way's dharma power, being free from selfish motives or delusions, melts away unawares ordinary sentient beings' karma.”

23. The Founding Master said, “Among human beings, there are heaven people and earth people. Heaven people are those whose desires are always simple and whose thoughts are lofty, so their pure energy rises upwards. Earth people are those whose desires are always burning and their thoughts base, and their turbid energy falls downwards. These are in fact the separate roads that lead to wholesome and unwholesome destinies. When each and every one of us reflects on our own minds, we will know which type of person we are and what will happen to us in the future.”

24. The Founding Master said, “Up in the sky, the bright moon will appear and shine on all things in the universe only when the dark clouds are swept away. Only when the clouds of greed are dispelled in the mind-sky of practitioners of the Way will the moon of wisdom rise and become a mirror that shines on ten thousand generations of sentient beings, so that one will become a great dharma teacher who delivers sentient beings from unwholesome destinies.”

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25. The Founding Master said, “One morning I was looking from Yōnggwang toward the Pyōnsan area of Puan and saw a pure aura that had formed high up in the sky. Afterwards, I went over there and saw that an assembly of practitioners had gathered at Wolmyōng hermitage to start Sōn meditation. Ultimately, when you collect your spirit and clear your mind, turbid energy gradually subsides, and numinous, pure energy ascends into the highest heaven, so that the triple worlds in the ten directions will manifest amid that clear and all-encompassing energy, and the six destinies and the four types of birth will be enwrapped in that pure dharma energy, all receiving guidance and deliverance.”

26. The Founding Master attended an evening dharma meeting and, observing each participant in the congregation one by one under the light of a lantern, said, “The energy that rises from each of you is different. There are those among you who have accumulated much spiritual cultivation, whose turbid energy has completely subsided and who have only perfectly pure energy rising; there are those who have more pure energy and less turbid energy, those who have equal amounts of pure and turbid energy, those who have more turbid and less pure energy, and those who only have turbid energy.” He continued, “The greedier a person is, the more turbid is his energy, which prevents it from rising high. When such a person completes his life, he will be unable to receive a human body again but instead may be reborn among the animals or insects. On the other hand, if a person, though not having much greed, concentrates on knowledge while ignoring inner spiritual cultivation and outward creation of merit and good affinities, his energy, being light, rises easily, but since it lacks weight, he may be reborn among the asuras or birds. Therefore, if a practitioner awakens to and knows his mind, and, after knowing it, fosters the mind purely and practices correctly by discriminating the upright from the perverse, then finally the numinous elixir will form and he will not be swept into the wheel of the six destinies and will be able freely to choose his next body; or he will attain the ability to concentrate on cultivation alone, sloughing off his physical body and traveling throughout the dharma realm of empty space via that numi-

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nous elixir alone.”

27. The Founding Master said, “If one exerts oneself with utmost dedication in order always to keep the mind-ground free from disturbance, delusion, and wrongdoing, then with that power one will acquire the ability to deliver even the sentient beings in hell. Creating even just once an affinity with the right dharma of the buddhas will become a wholesome seed for attaining buddhahood during infinite kalpas.”

28. When Kim Kwangsŏn entered nirvana, the Founding Master, shedding tears, addressed the congregation, “P’alsan and I formed an indescribable affection for one another while sharing joy and suffering together for over twenty years. Though his dharma body is not subject to arising or ceasing, flourishing or decay, we will never again be able to see his countenance as far as his physical body is concerned. Isn’t this regrettable? For P’alsan’s spirit, I will now expound the dharma on birth and death, coming and going, and on the extinction of karmic retribution. In the spirit of comforting P’alsan, listen to this dharma even more intently. If, after hearing my teaching, you awaken, this will be beneficial not only to you but also to P’alsan.

“In the teachings of the Buddha of the past, he says that, if one attains the great Way that is free from birth and death, coming and going, and practices accordingly, the karmic retributions accumulated over many lives will be extinguished. The method of extinguishing them is as follows. If someone causes you suffering or loss, do not resent or hate that person deep in your heart. Instead, consider it a repayment of your past debt to that person, settle your mind, and do not confront him. When it becomes your turn to take revenge, yield to him, and then that karma will come at rest. Also, by knowing that realm in which birth and death, coming and going, as well as suffering and happiness, are all empty, let your mind rest there. In that realm, there will be neither birth and death nor karmic retributions. When you arrive at that state, you may say that the karmic retributions of birth and death are completely extinguished.”

29. Pak Chebong asked, “What benefit accrues to the spirit of the deceased

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from holding deliverance services for seven seven-day periods or a memorial service commemorating his nirvana?” The Founding Master said, “In heaven and earth, there are principles of sublime, reciprocal response. When we plant seeds and give them fertilizer, the amount of crops harvested will be different even though the ground is insentient, seeds are insentient, and the fertilizer is insentient. If even insentient crops are responsive, how can human beings, who are the most perspicacious of all, not respond to sincere devotion? If everyone singlemindedly engages in mental affirmation, offers supplications, makes donations for the spirit of the deceased, and has a spiritual mentor give a dharma discourse, then there will occur the mutual transmission of mind to mind and the mutual response of energy to energy, and the spirit of the deceased would immediately be able to receive deliverance; or in case it has fallen into an unwholesome destiny, it may gradually advance. Also, if one died after accumulating heavy debts during one’s life, these may be repaid by utilizing the donations and carrying out works for public welfare in the deceased’s name. For those who were not in debt, too, blessings could also be accumulated impalpably. To put this principle of reciprocal response differently, it is like electrical currents flowing one into one another.”

30. A disciple asked, “Since long ago, offspring, relatives, or friends have donated offerings to the buddha image, invited spiritual mentors to give a dharma discourse or recite Buddhist scriptures on behalf of the spirit of their deceased associates. What effect would result from these practices; and would there be any difference in their effect when they are performed by people with differing degrees of sincerity and power of the Way?” The Founding Master said, “To offer supplication and offer donations on behalf of the deceased spirit indicate one’s sincerity. They say ‘sincerity can move heaven,’ and the effect of the supplication will be made manifest according to the extent of one’s sincerity. Also, the potent effect of delivering dharma discourses or reciting Buddhist scriptures will vary according to the degree of the spiritual mentor’s power of the Way. As a result, some spirits return unawares to wholesome destinies only after undergoing all the unwholesome karma they had accumulated in their past lives; some are relieved of their karmic obstacles and return di-

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rectly to wholesome destinies; some, in the intermediate state where the road ahead is unclear, at first can't find the road to their future life but discover it later on; some temporarily remain bound by their attachments, but are able to let go of them and become free to enter the realms of the heavens or human beings, thereby enjoying blessings and happiness. However, if an offspring's sincerity is not outstanding or the spiritual mentor's power of the Way is deficient, the means so applied may not have much effect on the numinous capacity of the spirit. This is because without utmost sincerity, the true potency will not be made manifest, just as in farming there will not be much crop to harvest without the farmer's full dedication and ability."

31. Sō Taewon asked, "Can a spirit that receives deliverance really understand the dharma instruction of sending on the spirit?" The Founding Master said, "Some spirits understand and some don't. However, rather than the deceased spirit understanding the sermon as it is given and then attaining awakening, what occurs more commonly is that the meritorious energy expended on behalf of that spirit becomes the cause of deliverance without the spirit even knowing it. It is like a fly that cannot travel a thousand li, but if it attaches itself to a horse that can gallop a thousand li, it will go that far without even knowing it. In the same way, through those causes and conditions, the spirit will gradually discover an affinity with dharma."

32. Kim Taegō asked, "Today, we held a forty-ninth day deliverance service for a deceased two-year-old child. When it is difficult even for deceased adults to understand all the details of the service in order to be sent on, how can a young spirit understand them and be sent on?" The Founding Master said, "In their spirits, there is no distinction between adult and child. The principle of deliverance is like fertilizing vegetation or like metal being attracted to a magnet. All animals plant the roots of their spirits in the realm of empty space. Thus, to offer a service to truth via this realm of empty space will automatically become fertilizer for the root of their spirits and produce the intended effect."

33. Taegō asked again, "If we offer up a service in such a way, can each per-

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son's transgressive karma accumulated over a lifetime, whether it is light or heavy, be extinguished all at once so that he is able to receive deliverance?" The Founding Master said, "In accordance with each individual's light or heavy karma, the sincerity of those who have prepared the service, and the power of the Way of the dharma teacher, one's karma may either melt at once like the sun melting the ice, or it may take a while. However, the merit derived from offering up a service will never be in vain and will definitely help the spirit connect up with good affinities."

34. Taegŏ asked again, "How was it decided to hold the deliverance service on the forty-ninth day after a person's death?" The Founding Master said, "When people die, they generally stay in the intermediate state for forty-nine days before they receive a new body in accordance with their karmic affinities. Thus, in order to guide them to collect the pure and clear one-pointedness once again, we decided to offer the deliverance invocation on that day in accordance with the teachings of the Ancient Buddha. However, there are plenty of spirits who receive a new body in accordance with their attached minds as soon as they die."

35. Taegŏ asked again, "In the Nirvana Sūtra it says, 'If one wishes to know about one's past life, that is what one has received in the present life. If one wishes to know about one's future life, that is what one makes in the present life.' When I observe people receiving blessings or punishments in the present life, there are those who deserve to receive punishments for the way they use their minds but live instead a pleasurable life in a rich and distinguished family, while those whose minds are good and so should certainly receive blessings instead receive miserable suffering in a poor family. Can we still say that the principle of cause and effect is precise?" The Founding Master said, "That is why all the buddhas and enlightened masters warn us to hold the final thought pure and clear. Those whose minds are unwholesome but live a wealthy life in the present are those who, in their past lives, accumulated merit by doing good deeds when they were young, but at the end of their lives fell into unwholesome thoughts by thinking there was no point in performing good. Those whose

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minds are good but are living a miserable life in the present are those who performed unwholesome deeds unintentionally as youths in their past lives but repented late in their lives and returned to the good. In this way, the final thought in the present life becomes the initial thought in the future life.”

36. Taegŏ asked again, “Once people die, they dwell in a different place from the present world. Can their numinous consciousnesses still come and go between the two worlds at will as if they had not died?” The Founding Master said, “The conscious mind is not different before one’s birth or after one’s death, but there is a difference in the goings and comings of a spirit that is bound by greed, hatred, and delusion and a spirit that has subjugated them. The spirit that is bound by greed, hatred, and delusion will be bound to its attached mind at the time of death, and thus will not be able to come and go freely. Cloaked by the karmic power of ignorance, the spirit only finds light where its mind is attached and ends up being dragged to that place. When it receives a new body, its vision is all perverted so that animals and insects appear beautiful. Consequently, it plants itself in the womb of an animal or insect through sexual attraction and becomes conceived there without being aware of it, as if in a dream. Or, even should it choose parents who will give it birth in the destiny of human beings, it is planted in the womb through sexual attraction. Or, if one has made a vow for a specific karmic reward but fails to receive a human body, the spirit receives in the realm of animals and insects something similar to the reward so resolved upon. Thus, it is not free in birth or death, and receives immeasurable suffering from being reincarnated without respite among the six destinies by being dragged into the twelvefold chain of causal conditioning. On the other hand, because the spirit that has subjugated greed, hatred, and delusion is not bound to its attachments at the time of its death, it is able to come and go freely, to see and think correctly, and, since it distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate places, it is not bound by its karma. When it receives a new body, this occurs as is appropriate, with perfect composure. Also, when it enters the womb, it plants itself in consideration of its grateful love for its new parents. Whatever vows one has made will be realized in both great and small matters as the karmic rewards of one’s resolution. Thus, the spirit is free

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in birth and death, and, it moves about without ever being dragged around by transmigration within the six destinies, turning at will the twelvefold chain of causal conditioning.”

37. Taegŏ asked again, “What prompts one to form close affinities with others?” The Founding Master said, “Sentient beings ordinarily form close affinities through either the wholesome affinity of friendliness and affection or the unwholesome affinity of hatred. Buddhas and bodhisattvas form close affinities through loving-kindness and compassion in order to deliver sentient beings.”

38. Taegŏ asked again, “Can people’s spirits be sent on only after death?” The Founding Master said, “As far as sending on the spirit is concerned, there is no difference between birth and death. Thus, rather than someone else sending on your spirit after your death, it is more effective if you send on your own spirit while you are alive. Thus, discipline your mind every day to be bright, well-kept, and upright to the extent that, when the six consciousnesses are in contact with the six sense objects, they do not become either tainted or adulterated. Then, not only will you attain the great ability to deliver others, but it may also be said that you have completed your own deliverance while you are alive. However, there are few such people. That is why practitioners throughout the three time-periods have all busily cultivated the Way.”