Essential Teachings on Transmitting the Mind by Chan Master Huangbo

Chan Master Huangbo

Contents

Collected Works of Pei Xiu of Hedong, Tang Dynasty, with Preface

Full Text

Collected Works of Pei Xiu of Hedong, Tang Dynasty, with Preface

There was a great Chan master whose Dharma name was Xiyun. He resided beneath Vulture Peak on Huangbo Mountain in Gao’an County, Hongzhou. He was the direct Dharma grandson of the Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi and the Dharma nephew of Xitang and Baizhang. He alone bore the seal of the supreme vehicle, beyond words and letters, transmitting only the One Mind and no other Dharma. The substance of mind is itself empty, and the myriad conditions are all quiescent. It is like the great orb of the sun rising in the empty sky: its radiance shines forth, pure and without the slightest speck of dust.

For those who realize it, there is neither new nor old, neither shallow nor deep. In expounding it, he established no conceptual interpretations, no doctrinal school, and opened no gateway or window: directly and immediately, this is it; to stir a thought is already to go astray. Only then is one the original Buddha. Therefore, his words were concise, his principle direct, his Way lofty, and his conduct solitary. Students from the four quarters hastened toward the mountain, awakened upon beholding his countenance, and the assembly of those who came and went often numbered more than a thousand.

In the second year of Huichang, while serving at Zhongling, I invited him from the mountain to the prefectural seat, where he rested at Longxing Monastery, and morning and evening I inquired into the Way. In the second year of Dazhong, while serving at Wanling, I again respectfully invited him to my jurisdiction and had him reside at Kaiyuan Monastery. Morning and evening I received his teachings; afterward, I recorded them, obtaining perhaps one or two parts out of ten, which I have kept as a mind-seal and have not dared to circulate. Now, fearing that these

subtle and essential meanings may not be heard in future times, I bring them forth and entrust them to my disciple, the monk Fajian of Taizhou, to return to Guangtang Monastery on the old mountain. I ask Elder Fajian and the Dharma assembly: how do they compare, in sameness and difference, with what you have customarily heard firsthand in former days?

Preface written on the eighth day of the tenth month, in the eleventh year of Dazhong of the Tang dynasty

Full Text

The Master said to Xiu: “All Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the One Mind; there is no other dharma.”

This mind has never been born and has never ceased since beginningless time. It is neither blue nor yellow, without form or appearance; it belongs neither to being nor nonbeing, is not reckoned as new or old, neither long nor short, neither large nor small. It transcends all limits, names, traces, and oppositions. It is simply this very thing; stir a thought, and you go astray. It is like empty space, without boundary and beyond measure.

This One Mind alone is Buddha. Buddha and sentient beings are no different. Yet sentient beings cling to appearances and seek outwardly; the more they seek, the further they stray. They use Buddha to seek Buddha and use mind to grasp mind. Though they exhaust kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, they will never attain it. They do not know that when thoughts and concerns cease, Buddha appears of itself before them.

This mind is Buddha, and Buddha is sentient beings. When it is sentient beings, this mind does not diminish; when it is the Buddhas, this mind does not increase. Even the six perfections, the myriad practices, and merit and virtue as numerous as the sands of the Ganges are inherently complete within it and need not be cultivated or added to. When conditions arise, it bestows; when conditions cease, it is quiescent. If one does not decisively trust that this is Buddha, but instead clings to appearances, cultivates practice, and seeks efficacy, all such efforts are deluded thoughts and contrary to the Way.

This mind is Buddha. There is no other Buddha, nor is there any other mind. This mind is bright and pure like empty space, without the slightest appearance. The moment one raises the mind or stirs a thought, one departs from the Dharma essence and clings to appearances. Since beginningless time, there has never been a Buddha who clings to appearances. To cultivate the six perfections and myriad practices in the hope of becoming a Buddha is to follow stages. Since beginningless

time, there has never been a Buddha attained by stages. Simply awaken to the One Mind: there is not even the slightest dharma to be obtained. This is the true Buddha.

Buddha and sentient beings are not different in the One Mind. It is like empty space, unmixed and indestructible. It is like the great sun shining upon the four continents: when the sun rises, light pervades the world, yet empty space has never become bright; when the sun sets, darkness pervades the world, yet empty space has never become dark. The realms of light and darkness contend with one another, but the nature of empty space remains vast and unchanged. So it is with the minds of Buddhas and sentient beings.

If one regards Buddha as having the appearance of purity, radiance, and liberation, and sentient beings as having the appearance of defilement, obscurity, birth, and death, then one will never attain bodhi even after kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. This is because of clinging to appearances. There is only this One Mind; not even a dharma the size of a mote of dust can be obtained. Mind itself is Buddha. Today's practitioners do not awaken to this essence of mind; instead, they give rise to mind upon mind, seek Buddha outwardly, and cultivate practice while clinging to appearances. All these are unwholesome dharmas, not the path of bodhi.

Making offerings to all Buddhas of the ten directions is not equal to making offerings to one practitioner without mind. Why? One without mind has no mind whatsoever. The essence of suchness is inwardly like wood or stone, unmoving and unshaken; outwardly it is like empty space, neither obstructed nor obstructing. There is neither subject nor object, neither direction nor place, neither appearance nor gain or loss. Those who approach do not dare enter this Dharma, fearing that they will fall into emptiness without a place to abide. Thus they withdraw from the precipice. For the most part, they seek knowledge and views extensively. Therefore, those who seek knowledge and views are as numerous as hairs, while those who awaken to the Way are as rare as horns.

Mañjuśrī represents principle, and Samantabhadra represents practice. Principle is the unobstructed principle of true emptiness; practice is the inexhaustible practice free from appearances. Avalokiteśvara represents great compassion, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta represents great wisdom. Vimalakīrti means "Pure Name." "Pure" is nature, and "name" is appearance; because nature and appearance are not different, he is called Pure Name. What all the great bodhisattvas represent is possessed by everyone and is not apart from the One Mind. To awaken to it is to realize it. Today's practitioners do not awaken within their own minds, but cling to appearances and grasp objects outside the mind. All this turns them away from the Way.

As for sands of the Ganges, the Buddha called them sands. When Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Śakra, Brahmā, and the various devas walk across them, the sands do not rejoice; when cattle, sheep, insects, and ants tread upon them, the sands do not become angry. The sands do not crave jewels and fragrant things, nor do they loathe excrement, urine, and filth.

This mind is the mind of no-mind, free from all appearances. Sentient beings and Buddhas are no different. If one can simply be without mind, that is ultimate. If practitioners do not directly become without mind, then even if they cultivate for kalpas they will never realize the Way. Bound and constrained by the practices and attainments of the three vehicles, they cannot attain liberation.

Yet realization of this mind may be swift or slow. Some, upon hearing the Dharma, become without mind in a single thought. Some do not become without mind until the ten faiths, ten abodes, ten practices, and ten dedications of merit; some not until the ten bhūmis. Once no-mind is attained, whether sooner or later, one abides there, with nothing further to cultivate or realize. In truth, there is nothing attained; this is real and not false. Whether attained in a single thought or at the tenth bhūmi, the efficacy is exactly equal, without depth or shallowness. The only difference is that one has vainly endured toil through kalpas.

Creating evil and creating good are both clinging to appearances. To create evil while clinging to appearances is vainly to undergo saṃsāra; to create good while clinging to appearances is vainly to undergo labor and hardship. Neither compares with directly recognizing this fundamental Dharma at the very word.

This Dharma is mind; outside mind there is no Dharma. This mind is Dharma; outside Dharma there is no mind. Mind itself is without mind, and there is no one who is without mind. If one uses mind to make mind without mind, mind thereby becomes something existent. It is only a silent accord, utterly beyond thought and discussion. Thus it is said, “The way of words is cut off; the activity of mind is extinguished.” This mind is the originally pure Buddha, possessed by all people. All beings that move and possess sentience are one essence with all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, without difference.

It is only because of deluded thoughts and discrimination that beings create various karmic fruits. In the original Buddha there is truly not a single thing: only empty clarity, quiescence, wondrous brightness, and ease. Awaken deeply and enter it for yourself; directly, it is so. It is perfectly complete, lacking nothing. Even if one diligently cultivates through three asaṃkhyeya kalpas and passes through all the stages, when realization occurs in a single thought, one merely realizes that one has always been Buddha. Nothing whatsoever is added beyond this. Looking back upon the efforts of kalpas, they have all been deluded activity in a dream. Therefore the

Tathāgata said: “In truth, I attained nothing in unsurpassed perfect awakening. Had I attained something, Dīpaṃkara Buddha would not have bestowed upon me the prediction.”

He also said: “This Dharma is equal, without high or low; this is called bodhi.” This originally pure mind is equal with sentient beings and Buddhas, worlds, mountains, rivers, appearances and non-appearances, pervading the realms of the ten directions. All are entirely equal, without the appearance of self and other.

This originally pure mind is always perfect, bright, and universally illuminating. Worldly people do not awaken to it; they merely take seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to be mind. Covered over by seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, they do not behold the essential substance of luminous clarity.

Simply become without mind directly, and the original substance will appear of itself, like the great sun rising into empty space and illuminating the ten directions without obstruction. Therefore, practitioners who recognize only seeing, hearing, awareness, knowing, action, and movement empty out seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, leaving no entrance into the path of mind. Instead, recognize the original mind precisely within seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing. Yet the original mind does not belong to seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, nor is it apart from them. Do not form views upon seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing,

nor stir thoughts upon seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing. Nor leave seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to seek mind, nor abandon seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to grasp Dharma. Neither identical with them nor separate from them, neither abiding nor clinging, one is freely at ease in every direction; nowhere is not a place of practice.

Worldly people hear that all Buddhas transmit the Dharma of mind and suppose that there is some separate dharma within mind that can be realized or grasped. They therefore use mind to seek Dharma, not knowing that mind itself is Dharma and Dharma itself is mind. One cannot use mind to seek mind again; though one passes through tens of millions of kalpas, one will never attain it.

It is better to be without mind at once. This is the fundamental Dharma. It is like a strong man who has forgotten the jewel in his forehead and seeks it outside. Though he travels throughout the ten directions, he can never find it. When a wise person points it out, he immediately sees that his original jewel is just as it was. Thus practitioners who are deluded about their own original mind do not recognize it as Buddha. They seek outwardly, initiate practices and activities, and rely on stages of realization. Though they diligently seek for kalpas, they will never realize the Way. It is better to be without mind at once and decisively know that all dharmas

originally possess nothing and that there is nothing to attain: no reliance, no abiding, no subject, and no object. Do not stir deluded thoughts, and one realizes bodhi. When realization of the Way occurs, one merely realizes the Buddha of one's original mind. The efforts of kalpas have all been vain cultivation. It is like the strong man who, upon finding the jewel, merely finds the jewel that was always in his forehead; it has nothing to do with the effort of searching outside. Therefore the Buddha said: "In truth, I attained nothing in unsurpassed perfect awakening." Fearing that people would not believe, he cited what is seen by the five eyes and spoken by the five kinds of speech. It is true and not false; it is the ultimate truth.

Practitioners should not take the four great elements as the body. The four great elements have no self, and I likewise have no master; thus know that this body has neither self nor master. Take the five aggregates as mind: the five aggregates have no self and likewise have no master; thus know that this mind has neither self nor master. The coming together and arising and ceasing of the six sense faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses are likewise so. Since the eighteen realms are empty, all is empty. Only the original mind remains vast and pure.

There is food of consciousness and food of wisdom. The body of the four great elements is afflicted by hunger and sores; to provide it with nourishment as needed, without giving rise to craving or attachment, is called food of wisdom. To indulge one's desires for flavors, falsely give rise to discrimination, seek only what pleases the palate, and not give rise to revulsion and renunciation is called food of consciousness.

Śrāvakas awaken by means of sound and are therefore called hearers. Yet they do not understand their own mind. They form interpretations based on teachings of sound; whether through spiritual powers, auspicious signs, speech and movement, or hearing of bodhi and nirvāṇa, they believe that Buddhahood is attained through three asaṃkhyeya kalpas of cultivation. All this belongs to the path of the śrāvakas, and such are called śrāvaka Buddhas.

Only directly and suddenly realizing that one's own mind has originally been Buddha, with not a single dharma to be attained and not a single practice to cultivate—this is the unsurpassed Way; this is the Buddha of suchness. If practitioners fear that a single thought exists, they are separated from the Way. Thought after thought without appearance, thought after thought without contrivance—this is Buddha.

If practitioners wish to become Buddhas, they need not study all Buddhist teachings. They need only learn no seeking and no clinging. No seeking means that mind does not arise; no clinging means that mind does not cease. That which neither arises nor ceases is Buddha. The eighty-four thousand Dharma gates, corresponding to the

eighty-four thousand afflictions, are merely methods of teaching and guiding. Originally, there is not a single dharma. Separation itself is Dharma, and one who knows separation is Buddha. Simply separate from all afflictions: there is no dharma to be attained.

If practitioners wish to know the essential instruction, simply do not attach a single thing to the mind. To say that the true Dharma body of Buddha is like empty space is a metaphor: the Dharma body is empty space, and empty space is the Dharma body.

Ordinary people say that the Dharma body pervades every place in empty space, and that empty space contains the Dharma body. They do not know that the Dharma body is empty space and empty space is the Dharma body. If one definitively says that empty space exists, then empty space is not the Dharma body. If one definitively says that the Dharma body exists, then the Dharma body is not empty space. Simply do not form an understanding of empty space: empty space is the Dharma body. Do not form an understanding of the Dharma body: the Dharma body is empty space. Empty space and the Dharma body have no different appearance; Buddha and sentient beings have no different appearance; birth and death and nirvāṇa have no different appearance; afflictions and bodhi have no different appearance. To be free from all appearances is Buddha.

Ordinary beings grasp objects, while practitioners grasp mind. When both mind and objects are forgotten, this is the true Dharma. Forgetting objects is still easy; forgetting mind is extremely difficult. People do not dare forget mind, fearing that they will fall into emptiness with nothing to grasp. They do not know that emptiness is originally not empty; it is only the One True Dharma Realm.

This spiritually aware nature has endured as long as empty space since beginningless time. It has never been born or ceased, never existed or not existed, never been defiled or pure, never been noisy or still, never young or old. It has no direction or location, no inside or outside, no quantity or form, no color or sound. It cannot be sought or found, cannot be known by wisdom or consciousness, cannot be grasped by words, cannot be encountered through objects or conditions, and cannot be reached by effort. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas, together with all moving and sentient beings, share this nature of great nirvāṇa.

Nature is mind, mind is Buddha, and Buddha is Dharma. To depart from truth in a single thought is entirely deluded thought. One cannot use mind to seek mind again, use Buddha to seek Buddha again, or use Dharma to seek Dharma again. Therefore practitioners should directly become without mind; it is only a silent accord. To set up mind is already to err. Mind transmits mind; this is right view.

Do not heedlessly pursue external objects and take them to be the mind; that is to mistake a thief for one's own son. Because there are greed, anger, and ignorance, the precepts, samādhi, and wisdom are established. Originally there are no afflictions; how could there be bodhi? Therefore, the patriarch said: "The Buddha taught all dharmas to eliminate all minds; since I have no mind at all, what use have I for all dharmas?" Upon the Buddha of the originally pure source, do not attach a single thing.

It is like empty space: though adorned with immeasurable precious treasures, they ultimately cannot remain there. Buddha-nature is likewise like empty space: though adorned with immeasurable merit and virtue and wisdom, these ultimately cannot remain. It is only because one is deluded about one's original nature that one turns away and does not see it.

What is called the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate means that all phenomena are established in dependence on this mind: when circumstances arise, they exist; when circumstances are absent, they do not exist. One must not turn this pure nature into an interpretation in terms of objects. Statements such as "the illuminating function of samādhi and wisdom is vividly clear," "quiet yet lucid," and "seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing" are all interpretations made in relation to objects. They may temporarily be taught to those of middling or lesser capacities, but if one wishes for direct realization, one must not hold such views. They all belong to the realm in which object-dharmas arise and perish, and are submerged in existence. Simply do not form views of existence or nonexistence regarding any dharma; then one sees the Dharma.

On the first day of the ninth month, the Master said to Xiu: "Since Master Bodhidharma came to China, he has taught only the One Mind and transmitted only one Dharma. Buddha is transmitted by Buddha, without speaking of any other Buddha; Dharma is transmitted by Dharma, without speaking of any other Dharma. The Dharma is the inexpressible Dharma, and the Buddha is the ungraspable Buddha: this is the originally pure mind at the source. Only this is the one true reality; the other two are not true. Prajñā means wisdom, and this wisdom is the formless original mind."

Ordinary beings do not turn toward the Way; they merely indulge the six sense objects and thereby proceed through the six realms.

If a practitioner gives rise to a single thought calculating birth and death, that person falls into the path of Māra. If a single thought gives rise to various views, that person falls into a non-Buddhist path. Seeing that there is birth and seeking its cessation, one falls into the śrāvaka path. Not seeing that there is birth, but seeing only cessation, one falls into the pratyekabuddha path. Dharmas are originally unborn

and now also without cessation. Give rise to neither of these two views; neither reject nor delight in anything. When all dharmas are seen as only the One Mind, this is the Buddha vehicle.

Ordinary beings all give rise to mind in pursuit of circumstances, and the mind then delights in or rejects them. If you wish to be without circumstances, forget your mind. When the mind is forgotten, circumstances are empty; when circumstances are empty, the mind ceases. If you do not forget the mind but merely try to eliminate circumstances, circumstances cannot be eliminated and the disturbance only increases. Therefore, all phenomena are mind-only, and mind itself cannot be obtained. What further is there to seek? Those who study prajñā do not see a single dharma that can be obtained. They cut off all intention toward the three vehicles and recognize only the one reality, which cannot be realized as something attained. Those who say, “I can realize it; I can attain it,” are people of arrogant pride. Those who shook out their robes and departed from the Lotus assembly were all of this sort. Therefore, the Buddha said, “In truth, I have attained nothing with regard to bodhi; there is only silent accord.”

When an ordinary person is about to die, simply contemplate that the five aggregates are all empty, that the four great elements are without self, and that the true mind is formless, neither going nor coming. At birth, the nature does not come; at death, the nature does not go. Serene and perfectly quiescent, mind and objects are suchlike. If one can directly and suddenly realize this, without being bound by the three divisions of time, one is a person beyond the world. One must absolutely not have the slightest inclination toward anything. If auspicious signs appear, with various Buddhas coming to welcome one, do not let the mind follow them away. If various evil signs appear, do not let the mind be afraid. Simply forget the mind and become one with the dharma realm; then one attains freedom. This is the essential point.

On the eighth day of the tenth month, the Master said to Xiu: “The phantom city refers to the two vehicles, the ten bhūmis, equal enlightenment, and wondrous enlightenment. These are all provisional teachings established to guide beings, and all are phantom cities.”

The treasure land is the treasure of the true mind, the Buddha-nature itself. This treasure does not belong to conceptual measure and cannot be established. There is no Buddha, no sentient being, no subject, and no object; where could there be a city? If one asks, “If this is a phantom city, where is the treasure land?”—the treasure land cannot be pointed out. To point it out is to give it a location, and that would not be the true treasure land. Thus it is said to be only nearby; it cannot be defined or measured. One need only realize and accord with it directly.

Icchantikas are those whose faith is incomplete. All sentient beings in the six realms, even those of the two vehicles, who do not believe that Buddhahood can be attained are called icchantikas who have cut off their wholesome roots. Bodhisattvas deeply believe in the Buddha-Dharma and do not see a Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna. Seeing Buddha and sentient beings as of one dharma-nature, they are called icchantikas of wholesome roots.

In general, those who awaken through verbal teachings are called śrāvakas, and those who awaken by contemplating causes and conditions are called pratyekabuddhas. If one does not awaken within one's own mind, then even upon becoming a Buddha one is still called a śrāvaka Buddha. Many practitioners awaken through doctrinal teachings rather than through the Dharma of mind. Though they cultivate for kalpas, they ultimately are not the original Buddha.

If one does not awaken in mind, but awakens only through doctrinal teachings, one takes mind lightly and teachings heavily. One then becomes like a person chasing after a clod, forgetting the original mind. Therefore, simply accord with the original mind; there is no need to seek Dharma. Mind itself is Dharma.

Ordinary people are often obstructed by circumstances in their minds and obstructed by affairs in their understanding of principle. They constantly wish to escape circumstances in order to settle the mind and to set aside affairs in order to preserve principle. They do not know that it is the mind that obstructs circumstances and principle that obstructs affairs. Simply let the mind be empty, and circumstances will be empty of themselves; simply let principle be quiescent, and affairs will be quiescent of themselves. Do not use the mind backward. Most people are unwilling to empty their minds, fearing that they will fall into emptiness, not knowing that their own minds are originally empty.

Foolish people eliminate affairs but do not eliminate mind; wise people eliminate mind but do not eliminate affairs. The mind of a bodhisattva is like empty space: relinquishing everything, it does not greedily cling to any merit and virtue it performs.

There are, however, three levels of relinquishment. To relinquish inwardly and outwardly, body and mind, everything whatsoever, like empty space grasping at nothing, and then to respond to things according to circumstances while forgetting both subject and object—this is great relinquishment. To practice the Way and bestow virtue on the one hand, while immediately relinquishing it on the other, with no mind of expectation—this is middling relinquishment. To cultivate extensively all wholesome deeds while holding some expectation, then to hear the Dharma, understand emptiness, and consequently become unattached—this is lesser relinquishment.

Great relinquishment is like a lamp burning before one: there is no further delusion or awakening. Middling relinquishment is like a lamp burning beside one: at times bright, at times dark. Lesser relinquishment is like a lamp burning behind one: one does not see pits or wells. Therefore, the mind of a bodhisattva is like empty space, relinquishing everything. The past mind cannot be obtained: this is relinquishing the past. The present mind cannot be obtained: this is relinquishing the present. The future mind cannot be obtained: this is relinquishing the future. This is what is meant by relinquishing all three divisions of time.

Since the Tathāgata transmitted the Dharma to Kāśyapa, mind has been sealed by mind, and mind after mind has not differed. If the seal is pressed upon empty space, no imprint can be made; if it is pressed upon an object, it cannot seal the Dharma. Therefore, mind seals mind, and mind after mind does not differ. Both that which seals and that which is sealed are difficult to realize; thus those who attain this are few. Yet mind is no-mind, and attainment is no-attainment.

The Buddha has three bodies: the dharmakāya teaches the Dharma of the empty and unobstructed self-nature; the sambhogakāya teaches all pure dharmas; and the nirmāṇakāya teaches the Dharma of the six perfections and myriad practices. The dharmakāya's teaching cannot be sought through words, sounds, forms, or written characters. There is nothing taught and nothing realized; it is merely the empty and unobstructed self-nature. Therefore it is said: "There is no Dharma that can be taught; this is called teaching the Dharma."

The sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya both manifest in response to beings' capacities and conditions. The Dharma they teach likewise responds to circumstances and faculties in order to guide and transform. None of these is the true Dharma. Therefore: "The sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya are not the true Buddha, nor are they the one who teaches the Dharma." What is spoken of as one pure luminosity divides into the six harmonizing faculties. The one pure luminosity is the One Mind; the six harmonizing faculties are the six sense faculties.

Each of these six sense faculties combines with its object: the eye with forms, the ear with sounds, the nose with odors, the tongue with tastes, the body with tangibles, and the mind faculty with dharmas.

Between them arise the six consciousnesses, making the eighteen realms. If one realizes that the eighteen realms have nothing whatsoever, one gathers the six harmonizing faculties into the one pure luminosity. The one pure luminosity is mind. All practitioners know this, yet they cannot avoid interpreting it as one pure luminosity and six harmonizing faculties. Thus they are bound by dharmas and do not accord with the original mind. When the Tathāgata was in the world, if he wished

to teach the true Dharma of the One Vehicle, sentient beings would not believe it; they would arouse slander and sink into the sea of suffering.

If he said nothing at all, he would fall into miserliness and greed, failing sentient beings and withholding the wondrous Way. Thus he provisionally taught that there are three vehicles. The vehicles have greater and lesser forms, and attainments have shallow and deep levels, but none is the fundamental Dharma. Therefore it is said: "There is only the One Vehicle Way; the other two are not true." Yet the Dharma of the One Mind could not ultimately be made manifest. Thus he summoned Kāśyapa to share the Dharma seat and separately entrusted him with the Dharma of the One Mind, beyond words and speech. This single branch of Dharma was made to proceed separately. Those who can accord with and awaken to it reach the Buddha ground.

Question: What is the Way? How does one practice?

The Master said: "What thing is the Way? You wish to practice?"

Question: How is it that lineage masters in various places transmit the practice of investigating Chan and studying the Way?

The Master said: "These are words for guiding people of dull faculties; they cannot be relied upon."

He said: "Since these are words for guiding people of dull faculties, what Dharma is taught to guide those of superior faculties?"

The Master said: "If they are people of superior faculties, why would they turn to another person? They cannot even find themselves; how much less could there be some other Dharma that accords with their minds? Have you not seen it said in the teachings: 'What form do dharmas upon dharmas have?'"

He said: "If so, then one should not seek anything at all."

The Master said: "If that is so, you save effort of mind!"

He said: "If so, everything becomes utterly cut off. Surely it is not nothing?"

The Master said: "Who taught it to be nothing? Whose is it? Do you intend to seek it?"

He said: "Since seeking is not permitted, why do you also say not to cut it off?"

The Master said: "If you do not seek, then simply rest. Who taught you to cut it off? When you see the empty space before your eyes, how could you cut it off?"

He said: "Can this Dharma be obtained in the same way as empty space?"

The Master said: “When has empty space ever told you that there is sameness or difference? I merely speak this way provisionally, and you immediately form an interpretation from it.”

He said: “Then should one not allow people to form interpretations from this?”

The Master said: “I have never obstructed you, but interpretation belongs to conceptual feeling; when conceptual feeling arises, wisdom is blocked.”

He said: “Then should one not give rise to conceptual feeling here?”

The Master said: “If you do not give rise to conceptual feeling, who says that this is so?”

Question: “As soon as one speaks before the Master, why do you immediately say that one’s words have fallen into error?”

The Master said: “You yourself are a person who does not understand speech. What error or fault is there?”

Question: “All the many words spoken earlier were merely opposing words; you have never given people instruction in the true Dharma.”

The Master said: “The true Dharma is free of inversion. In the very place where you now ask, inversion arises of itself. What true Dharma are you seeking?”

He said: “Since inversion arises from the very place of questioning, how is it at the place where the Master answers?”

The Master said: “Just take an object and look at your own face; do not concern yourself with others.” He also said: “You are just like a foolish dog! Whenever it sees something move, it barks; even when wind blows through grass and trees, it cannot distinguish.”

He also said: “In my Chan school, as transmitted from the beginning, we have never taught people to seek knowledge or understanding. To speak of ‘studying the Way’ is already only a phrase for guiding beings. Yet the Way cannot be studied. When the feeling of learning and understanding remains, it becomes confusion about the Way. The Way has no location; it is called the Mahāyāna mind. This mind is not inside, outside, or in between; in truth it has no location. Above all, do not make intellectual interpretations. I merely say that the point where your present conceptual measures are exhausted is the Way.”

When conceptual measures are exhausted, mind has no location. This Way is naturally so and originally has no name. It is only because worldly people do not

recognize it and are deluded within conceptual feeling that the Buddhas appear in the world to make this matter clear. Fearing that you would not understand, they provisionally established the name “Way.” Do not cling to the name and form interpretations. Therefore it is said, “Having caught the fish, forget the trap.” When body and mind are natural, one comprehends the Way and recognizes the mind. Because one comprehends the original source, one is called a śramaṇa.

The fruit of the śramaṇa is attained by putting an end to discriminating thought; it cannot be acquired through study. You now use mind to seek mind, running about to other people’s houses, intending only to learn and acquire something. When will you ever attain it? People of old had sharp faculties: as soon as they heard a single word, they immediately put an end to learning. Therefore they were called “a carefree person of the Way, beyond learning and contrivance.”

People nowadays merely wish to gain much knowledge and many interpretations. They seek extensively among texts and their meanings and call this practice. They do not know that much knowledge and many interpretations instead become obstructions. They know only to feed children curds and milk, without knowing whether they can digest them. Students of all three vehicles are like this; they are all called those who cannot digest what they eat.

What is called knowledge and interpretation that cannot be digested is all poison. It is all grasped from within arising and ceasing; in suchness there is no such thing. Thus it is said, “Within my royal treasury there is no such sword.” All previous understandings must be set aside and emptied, leaving no further discrimination. This is the empty treasury of the Tathāgata.

As for the treasury of the Tathāgata, not even the finest mote of dust can exist within it. This is the appearance in the world of the Dharma King who destroys attachment to existence. It is also said, “At the place of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I did not obtain even the slightest dharma.” These words are solely to empty your conceptual measures and interpretations. When all inner and outer emotional attachments have been melted away and there is no reliance or clinging, one is a person of no affairs.

The doctrinal net of the three vehicles is merely medicine prescribed in response to different capacities. It is taught as appropriate and provisionally established for the moment; each teaching differs. But if you can understand this, you will not be deluded by it. Above all, do not cling to the words of a particular teaching for a particular capacity and make interpretations from them. Why is this so? In truth, there is no fixed dharma that the Tathāgata can teach. In our school we do not discuss such matters. Simply know that when the mind rests, that is enough; there is no need to think of what came before or worry about what comes after.

Question: Above, it has all been said that mind itself is Buddha. But precisely which mind is Buddha?

The master said: How many minds do you have?

He said: Is the ordinary mind Buddha, or is the sacred mind Buddha?

The master said: Where do you have an ordinary mind or a sacred mind?

He said: The three vehicles explicitly speak of ordinary and sacred. How can the reverend say that there are none?

The master said: The three vehicles plainly tell you that the minds of ordinary and sacred beings are delusory. Yet you do not understand and instead cling to them as existing, taking emptiness for reality. Is this not delusion? Because of delusion, you lose sight of mind. Simply eliminate ordinary feelings and sacred states; outside mind there is no other Buddha. When the patriarch came from the West, he directly pointed out that every person in their entirety is Buddha. Yet you do not recognize this. Clinging to the ordinary and clinging to the sacred, you race about externally and thereby delude your own mind. Therefore I tell you that mind itself is Buddha. The moment a single thought of emotional attachment arises, you fall into a different course. From beginningless time until now, there has been no difference and no different dharma; therefore this is called perfect, complete awakening.

He said: What is the principle of the word “itself” in the master’s statement?

The master said: What principle are you seeking? As soon as there is a principle, mind and the “itself” are divided.

He said: Earlier you said that from beginningless time until today there has been no difference. What is the principle of this?

The master said: It is only because you seek that you make yourself different from it. If you did not seek, where would there be any difference?

He said: Since there is no difference, why speak further of “itself”?

The master said: If you did not recognize ordinary and sacred, to whom could one speak of “itself”? If “itself” were not itself, mind too would not be mind. When both mind and “itself” are forgotten, where would you still intend to seek?

Question: Delusion can obstruct one’s own mind. By what means should one now dispel delusion?

The master said: To arouse delusion in order to dispel delusion is also to create delusion. Delusion originally has no root; it exists only because of discrimination.

Simply let emotional attachment to both the ordinary and the sacred come to an end, and delusion will naturally be absent. Why would you then consider how to dispel it? Do not retain the slightest reliance or clinging. This is called giving up both arms and surely attaining Buddhahood.

He said: If there is no reliance or clinging, what is transmitted?

The master said: Mind is transmitted by mind.

He said: If mind is transmitted by mind, how can it be said that mind too is nonexistent?

The master said: Obtaining not a single dharma is called transmitting mind. If you understand this mind, then there is no mind and no dharma.

He said: If there is no mind and no dharma, how can it be called transmission?

The master said: You hear of transmitting mind and suppose that there is something to be obtained. Therefore the patriarch said: “When you recognize the nature of mind, it may be called inconceivable. Clearly, nothing is obtained; when one obtains it, one does not say one knows.” If this matter could be made understandable to you, what would be difficult about it?

Question: Take the empty space before us: is it not an object? Can one not point to an object and see mind?

The master said: What mind could you have that would allow you to see it in objects? Even if you saw it, it would merely be a mind that illuminates objects. It is like someone using a mirror to look at their face: though the eyebrows and eyes may be seen distinctly, they are originally only images. What does this have to do with you?

He said: If one does not rely on illumination, when will one see?

The master said: If you become involved with causes, you must always depend on things. When will there be an end? Have you not seen what was said to you: “When you let go, like you, there is not a single thing; vainly you labor to speak of thousands of kinds.”

He said: If one has recognized it, is there nothing even in illumination?

The master said: If there is nothing, what need is there for illumination? Do not talk in your sleep with your eyes open!

The master ascended the hall and said: A hundred kinds of extensive knowledge do not equal nonseeking, which is supreme. A person of the Way is one without affairs.

In truth, there are not so many kinds of mind, nor is there any principle to be discussed. Having nothing to do, disperse!

Question: What is conventional truth?

The master said: Why speak such entangling words? Originally there is purity; why depend on words, speech, questions, and answers? Simply have no mind whatsoever, and this is called undefiled wisdom. In all your daily walking, standing, sitting, and reclining, and in all speech, do not cling to conditioned dharmas. When you speak or blink your eyes, all is equally undefiled.

Now, as the Dharma-ending age proceeds, most people who study Chan and the Way cling to all sounds and forms. Why not let your mind be mind, alike as empty as space? Be like withered wood or a stone, like cold ashes and an extinguished fire; only then will there be a small degree of accord. If you are not thus, one day Old Yama will have you under interrogation! Simply leave behind all dharmas of existence and nonexistence. Let your mind, like the sun's disk, always remain in empty space: its light naturally shines without shining. Is this not a labor-saving matter? When you reach this point, there is nowhere to abide. This is practicing the practices of all Buddhas; it is precisely giving rise to the mind that abides nowhere. This is your pure dharmakāya, called anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.

If you do not understand this meaning, then even if you acquire extensive knowledge, practice diligently and arduously, wear grass garments, and eat the food of trees, yet fail to recognize your own mind, all this is called wrong practice. You will surely become part of the retinue of heavenly demons. What benefit can there be in such practice? Master Zhigong said: "The Buddha is originally made by one's own mind; how can one seek it in written words?" Even if you mastered the three worthy stages, the four fruits, and the ten bhūmis throughout your mind, you would still be sitting within the categories of ordinary and sacred.

Have you not heard it said: "All conditioned activities are impermanent; they are dharmas of arising and ceasing. When their force is exhausted, the arrow falls again, bringing an unsatisfactory rebirth." How could this compare with the gate of the unconditioned true reality, in which one leap brings direct entry into the ground of the Tathāgata? Because you are not such a person, you must establish provisional teaching gates from the ancients and broadly study knowledge and interpretations. Master Zhigong said: "If one does not encounter an enlightened teacher who has appeared in the world, one takes the medicine of the Mahāyāna Dharma in vain."

Now, at all times—in walking, standing, sitting, and reclining—simply learn no-mind. Over time you will surely attain it in reality. Because your strength is slight, you cannot transcend at once. But after three years, five years, or perhaps ten years, you will surely gain an entry point and naturally understand.

Because you cannot do this, you must use mind to study Chan and study the Way. What connection does that have with the Buddhadharma? Therefore it is said: “All that the Tathāgata taught was for the sake of transforming people, like using yellow leaves as gold to stop a child from crying; it is certainly not real.”

If there is anything truly attained, you are not a student of my school. What connection would that have with your original nature? Therefore the sūtra says: “In truth, not even the slightest dharma is obtained; this is called anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi.” If you understand this meaning, then you know that both the Buddha way and the demon way are mistaken. Originally, there is lucid purity: no forms of square or round, large or small, long or short; no defilement and no contrivance; no delusion and no awakening. In clear seeing, there is not a single thing—no person and no Buddha. The great thousandfold world is a bubble in the sea; all sages and worthies are like flashes of lightning. Nothing is as real as mind.

The dharmakāya, from ancient times until now, is no different from the Buddhas and patriarchs. Where could it lack even a single hair? Having understood this meaning, you must strive with great effort. Exhaust this present life, for the outgoing breath does not guarantee the incoming breath!

Question: The Sixth Patriarch did not understand scriptures or treatises. How could he receive the robe and become patriarch? Elder Shenxiu was the chief seat among five hundred people, a teacher of instruction who had expounded thirty-two scriptures and treatises. Why was the robe not transmitted to him?

The master said: Because he had a mind; this is conditioned dharma. He took what he practiced and realized to be true. Therefore the Fifth Patriarch entrusted the Sixth Patriarch with it. At that time, the Sixth Patriarch merely silently accorded with it. He secretly received the Tathāgata’s profound meaning, and so the Dharma was transmitted to him.

Have you not heard it said: “The Dharma originally is no dharma; the no-dharma Dharma is also a dharma. Now, when the no-dharma is transmitted, how could dharmas ever be dharmas?” If you understand this meaning, only then may you be called one who has left home, and only then are you fit to practice. If you do not believe this, why did Elder Ming pursue the Sixth Patriarch to the summit of Dayu Ridge? The Sixth Patriarch then asked him: “What do you seek in coming here? Do you seek the robe, or do you seek the Dharma?” Elder Ming said: “I did not come for the robe; I came only for the Dharma.”

The Sixth Patriarch said: “For the moment, gather in your thoughts. Do not think of good or evil.” Ming then received these words. The Sixth Patriarch said: “When you are thinking neither of good nor evil, return to me the original face of Elder Ming before your parents were born!” At these words, Ming suddenly entered silent

accord. He then bowed and said: “It is like a person drinking water: they alone know whether it is cold or warm.”

I wasted thirty years of effort in the Fifth Patriarch’s assembly; only today do I realize my former errors. The Sixth Patriarch said: “Just so!” Only at this point does one know that when the patriarch came from the West, he directly pointed to the human mind so that one sees one’s nature and becomes Buddha; it does not lie in words and speech.

Have you not seen how Ānanda asked Kāśyapa: “Apart from the golden robe transmitted by the World-Honored One, what else was separately transmitted?” Kāśyapa called, “Ānanda!” Ānanda replied, “Yes!” Kāśyapa said, “Take down the flagstaff before the gate!” This is the hallmark of the patriarchs. Though Ānanda served as an attendant for thirty years and possessed profound learning and wisdom, the Buddha rebuked him, saying: “A thousand days studying wisdom do not equal one day studying the Way. If you do not study the Way, even a drop of water is hard to digest.”

Question: How can one avoid falling into stages and ranks?

The master said: All day long one eats, yet has never bitten a single grain of rice; all day long one walks, yet has never trodden upon a single piece of ground. At such a time, there are no marks of self or others. All day long one does not leave any activity, yet is not deluded by any circumstances. Only then is one called a free person. Moreover, at every moment, do not see any appearances. Do not recognize the three divisions of time: the past does not depart, the present does not abide, and the future does not come. Sit peacefully and upright, allowing things to function naturally without constraint. Only then is this called liberation.

Strive! Strive! In this gate, among a thousand or ten thousand people, only three or five attain it. If you do not treat it as a serious matter, the day when you suffer calamity will surely come. Therefore it is said: “Strive in this life and bring it to completion; who can endure the remaining calamities through countless kalpas?”