The Platform Sūtra of Chan Master Huineng: An Exposition of Its Essential Meaning

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Preface to the Platform Sūtra

The wondrous Way is empty and mysterious, beyond conception and expression. By forgetting words, one attains its purport and may thereby awaken to clear

understanding. Thus the World-Honored One shared his seat before the Many Sons Stūpa and held up a flower at the assembly on Vulture Peak—like fire kindling fire, mind sealing mind. After twenty-eight transmissions in the West, it reached Bodhidharma, who came east to this land and directly pointed to the mind: seeing one's true nature, one becomes a Buddha.

There was Great Master Huike, who was the first to awaken upon hearing these words. In the end, after making three prostrations, he received the marrow and the robe, succeeded to the patriarchal lineage, and expounded the true tradition. After three further transmissions, it reached Huangmei. Among the seven hundred eminent monks in the assembly, only the layman who pounded rice received the robe through a single verse and became the Sixth Patriarch. He fled south for more than ten years. One day, the circumstance of "neither wind nor banner moving" opened Dharma Master Yinzong's true eye. The layman then shaved his head, ascended the ordination platform, fulfilled Buddhabhadra's prophecy, and opened the Dharma gate of East Mountain.

Governor Wei instructed Chan practitioner Hai to record his words and entitled it The Dharma Treasure Platform Sūtra. The Great Master began at Wuyang and ended at Caoqi, teaching the Dharma for thirty-seven years. Those who received the flavor of sweet dew, entered sagehood, and transcended the ordinary were beyond number. Among those who awakened to the Buddha's mind-school and whose practice and understanding accorded, becoming great spiritual teachers whose names are recorded in the Transmission of the Lamp, only Nanyue and Qingyuan attended him for the longest time and fully obtained what was without any trace of concealment.

Thus Ma-tsu and Shih-t'ou emerged, their skillful wisdom perfectly clear and the mysterious style greatly invigorated. Then the masters Linji, Weiyang, Caodong, Yunmen, and Fayan arose in majestic succession, surpassing all others in virtue, their schools lofty and formidable. They inspired gifted monastics to rouse their resolve and break through the barrier. Though they entered deeply through a single gate, the five schools shared one source. Having passed through every furnace and hammer, their scope became vast. Examining the essential principles of the five houses, all issue from the Platform Sūtra.

The Platform Sūtra is concise in language yet rich in meaning; its principle is clear and its practical matters complete. It contains the immeasurable Dharma gates of all Buddhas. Each Dharma gate contains immeasurable wondrous meanings, and each wondrous meaning expounds the immeasurable wondrous principles of all Buddhas. Whether within Maitreya's tower or within each pore of Samantabhadra, those who enter well are the same as Sudhana: in a single thought, they perfect their merit and virtue, becoming equal to Samantabhadra and equal to all Buddhas.

Alas! Later generations abridged the Platform Sūtra too severely, so that the complete purport of the Sixth Patriarch can no longer be seen. In his youth, Deyi once saw an ancient edition. For more than thirty years thereafter, he sought it everywhere. Recently, Venerable Tong found the complete text, and so it was published at Xiuxiu Chan Hermitage in Wuzhong, for shared benefit with all worthy people. May all who open this volume and raise their eyes enter directly into the great ocean of perfect enlightenment, continuing the wisdom-life of the Buddhas and patriarchs without end. Then my aspiration will be fulfilled.

Written by Bhikṣu Deyi of Guyun, on a mid-spring day in the gengyin year, the twenty-seventh year of the Zhiyuan era.

Postscript

The Dharma that the Sixth Patriarch customarily taught all embodied the meaning of the perfect and sudden teaching of the Mahāyāna; hence it was called a sūtra. Its words are simple, yet its meaning far-reaching; its language plain, yet its purport clear. Each reciter gains something from it. Master Song of Mingjiao often praised it, saying, “Those of keen capacity grasp its depth; those of duller capacity grasp its shallowness.” Truly, this is well said.

When I first entered the Way, I was moved by this. Later, seeing three different editions, each with its strengths and shortcomings, and finding their printing blocks already worn away, I collated their texts, corrected errors, amplified what was abbreviated, and added accounts of occasions on which disciples sought instruction, in the hope that students might fully apprehend the purport of Caoxi.

Commissioner Yun Conglong had deeply penetrated this Way. One day, when he visited my mountain dwelling and saw what I had compiled, he said that it provided a complete version of the Platform Sūtra. Deeply moved, he ordered craftsmen to carve printing blocks for it, specifically for wide circulation, so that the Caoxi lineage would not be cut off.

Someone asked, “Bodhidharma did not establish words and letters, but directly pointed to the human mind, so that one sees one’s nature and becomes a Buddha. Since the Patriarch Lu’s orthodox transmission has continued through six generations, why make use of these words and letters?” I replied, “This sūtra is not merely words and letters; it is the purport of Bodhidharma’s direct pointing, transmitted singly. The great elders of Nanyue and Qingyuan once clarified their minds through this purport, and then clarified the minds of such successors as Mazu and Shitou through it. The Chan school now spreads throughout the land, all founded upon this purport. From this time onward, could there not also be those who, through this purport, realize the mind and see their true nature?” The

questioner assented repeatedly, bowed twice, and thanked me, saying, “I am slow-witted. Please include this at the end of the sūtra, to instruct those who come after.”

Postscript by Śramaṇa Zongbao of Nanhai, summer of the Xinmao year of the Zhiyuan era.

An Exposition of the Essential Meaning of the Platform Sūtra of the Dharma Treasure of Chan Master Dajian

To state its purport is to state the essential teaching of this sūtra. To establish its purport correctly, one must first establish its name correctly; its name establishes the patriarchal rank within the lineage of the True Dharma. Once the patriarchal ranks and designations are settled, Buddhist practitioners everywhere will know where to take refuge in the True Dharma. The World-Honored One transmitted the mind-seal to Kāśyapa, personally appointing him the first patriarch. Thus he established the essential teaching for later students: the eye of the True Dharma, transmitted in succession from generation to generation, belongs to this one lineage alone.

All dharmas return to the same source; this alone is their essential purport. What are called Chan, Esoteric Buddhism, Pure Land, Vinaya, and even the Dharma Characteristics School all rely on prajñā and return to this principle; hence it is called the True Dharma. When the transmission reached the twenty-eighth patriarch, Bodhidharma, he first came to China and became the first patriarch in the Eastern Land.

The patriarch transmitted it to the twenty-ninth patriarch, Huike; Huike transmitted it to the thirtieth patriarch, Sengcan; Sengcan transmitted it to the thirty-first patriarch, Daoxin; Daoxin transmitted it to the thirty-second patriarch, Hongren; and Hongren transmitted it to the thirty-third patriarch, Huineng, the sixth patriarch in the Eastern Land—the one who expounded this Dharma treasure, the Platform Sūtra. After the Sixth Patriarch, the school flourished greatly. Because there were many of right faith, only the mind-seal was transmitted. One flower opened into five petals; the robe and bowl were no longer transmitted.

For more than three hundred years, this was the age in which the True Dharma flourished to its fullest. From the Song dynasty onward, its halls became desolate: those who clung to appearances were many, while those who understood the school were few. Now the various schools contend to arise, each merely preserving its own Dharma and failing to know how to return to the source. Some even disparage and reject the school, warning one another not to study it. The purport of

the flower held up and the lineage of the school's transmission have long been forgotten. This is to forget one's ancestors.

At present, only the Linji and Caodong schools still maintain the tradition of seated incense, preserving meditation and investigating huatou. The recorded sayings and other books still circulate, and through them the school's tradition has not fallen away. During the past ten years, practitioners have found what they practice too lacking in a handle to grasp and have gradually come to recognize the importance of returning to the source. Thus practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism and Pure Land alike have turned toward the school. Scriptural texts are circulating in ever greater numbers, and the Platform Sūtra is one of them.

The convergence of causes, conditions, and timing is certainly no accident. This school is not the private possession of the Chan tradition alone; Chan is simply the most immediate and accessible means of entry. Once one has returned to the source, the Dharma itself has no further use. Chan, Pure Land, and Esoteric Buddhism are like the parable of the raft. The ancient worthy said: "The Dharma is fundamentally not existent; do not adopt the view of nonexistence. The Dharma is fundamentally not nonexistent; do not adopt the view of existence." This means not clinging to the Dharma; it does not mean abandoning the Dharma.

Now we provisionally rely on dharmas to cultivate the true, so names certainly cannot be discarded. I have especially set forth the correct patriarchal lineage so that all may know whom to honor as their ancestors. Honoring the ancestors serves to clarify the Dharma, so that all may know that there is a True Dharma. Its importance is inconceivable. I fear that some may not understand the lineage of the thirty-three patriarchs and may therefore harbor doubts about the True Dharma. I have accordingly clarified it especially for the benefit of beginners.

As for the subtle and wondrous purport of this school, it depends entirely on one's own awakening; it cannot be reached through written words or language. Someone once asked: "What is the difference, after all, between Southern sudden awakening and Northern gradual cultivation?" I replied: "The South is the school; the North is Chan. The Southern school directly points to seeing one's nature and does not concern itself with meditative absorption. The Northern school must first take meditation as its method and then return to the source. It does not know that, without relinquishing the Dharma, the Dharma becomes mere teaching. Therefore it cannot inherit the school, and is not permitted to inherit it. The Buddhadharma allows no personal favoritism. This is the difference, and it is also the purpose of this statement."

Where there is a cause, its fruition must follow. A piece of wood has the cause for burning; when fire is applied to it, it attains the result of burning. Since people fully

possess Buddha-nature, and since this nature is inherently present, they should attain the fruition of realizing the mind and seeing their true nature. Why should they abandon themselves? The sūtras say, “All sentient beings are originally Buddhas.” Spoken from the Buddha’s own golden mouth, how could this deceive us?

Yet those who have not become Buddhas are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, because their causes and conditions differ. The foolish therefore doubt that sentient beings in the Dharma-ending age have any hope of becoming Buddhas. They do not know that this is only a matter of timing. Some have planted wholesome roots in the presence of one Buddha or two Buddhas; others have planted wholesome roots in the presence of tens of millions of Buddhas. Once the seed has been planted, it will certainly bear fruit.

Alas, what worldly people plant is nothing but delusion and karma; they have not planted the path of the sages. Therefore their causes and conditions do not accord, and it is difficult for their merit and virtue to come to fruition. Fortunately, the Buddha appeared in the world, followed by the patriarchs. Patriarch after patriarch transmitted only this one Dharma, called the mind Dharma; there is no second Dharma. The Platform Sūtra serves to draw forth people’s potential and directly point to seeing their true nature, thereby opening the function of prajñā.

When a person’s potential is nearly ripe, it is like wood meeting fire: a single touch sets it ablaze. If it is somewhat removed from the fire, it may still be warmed until it burns. But if it has long been soaked in water, even when placed in fire it may not immediately burn; this is because causes and conditions differ. Yet when viewed with equanimity, there is no second or different nature. One need not be arrogant toward others because of sharp faculties, nor abandon oneself because of dull faculties. As for whether one’s causes and conditions are compatible, one may ask oneself. If reading this has flavor for you, like meeting a friend for the first time who seems somehow familiar, then you are not far from it. Thus it is said: only one who drinks the water knows for oneself whether it is cold or warm.

The Platform Sūtra has circulated for more than thirteen hundred years and has been repeatedly copied by hand, so its wording must contain errors. One should rely on the meaning, not on the words. There is no need to cling to the wording and engage in much dispute; one need only seek coherence in its principles. Moreover, words are things within the realm of thought, whereas what they represent is precisely the inconceivable realm. This realm is not known even to a thousand sages, nor understood by bodhisattvas of the provisional vehicles; how then could words possibly expound it? Therefore, the original text of the sūtra has been left entirely as it was. Wherever a passage appears unclear or insufficiently accordant with the school’s essential purport, I have added brief supplements and noted them afterward, awaiting the judgment of the learned.

The Sixth Patriarch did not originally place emphasis on words. Later people recorded his teachings, yet they could not fully accord with the Patriarch's intent. The text seems to be a miscellaneous compilation, not the work of one hand; consequently, its depth and shallowness are inconsistent and reversed from beginning to end, and there is no way to correct it. Here I discuss only the text itself. Readers should cast their gaze beyond the words and naturally attain a transcendent state, thereby according with the potential of prajñā.

The meaning of the title Platform Sūtra also contains the metaphor of the field of mind. In former days, the World-Honored One sat upon the vajra platform and attained great bodhi. The platform spoken of here is likewise the vajra platform: without arising from sitting, one sees one's vajra self-nature and becomes a Buddha. Those who read the Platform Sūtra should understand this purport; only then can they accord with the Patriarch's intent. Moreover, each reader benefits from the sūtra differently. Without seeing one's original nature, studying dharmas is of no benefit.

Otherwise, although the Patriarch has given instruction, I will ultimately have no means of awakening and entering. Those of benevolent aspiration should not merely read this sūtra and then discard it; they should contemplate it constantly. After practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma in seated sessions for several hundred sessions, one will surely realize śamatha. Then, when bringing it into function, one should practice samāpatti; only then will one attain the wonder of this sūtra and know how to apply it in worldly dharmas. As the Sixth Patriarch said, "The Buddhadharma is within the world and is not apart from awakening within the world." Then one truly attains great capacity and great function.

Awakening is the beginning of becoming a Buddha. Through awakening, one knows where to return, and one suddenly crosses to the other shore. This Dharma is a gate of sudden awakening for entering the ground of the Tathāgata, but the potential for sudden entry must first be opened.

First comes drawing forth potential, causing that potential to stir. Next comes opening potential, inspiring it and bringing it near so that it connects with affairs. Next comes harmonizing with potential, bringing it into accord with function; this is already to understand the essentials of mind. Next comes transforming potential, causing its function to become fully mature and wondrously transformed. Then comes forgetting potential. At this point, there is no longer any so-called potential or function; it is as though present and forgotten at once. Here the way of words is cut off and the activity of mind ceases; there is no further potential or function that can be spoken of.

Transforming potential is beyond measure or prediction; here, there is nothing that can be measured or known. Yet the whole body is potential, and everywhere is function. This is what is called inconceivable. For annotations to this sūtra, one may consult those by the lay practitioner Ding Fubao. Here I merely point out its essential points and state its purport. The meanings alone are immeasurable; how could they be fully expounded by the view through a single aperture? Yet in returning to the original, they are one.

To point out its essential points is to draw forth potential; readers may awaken and enter, perhaps even beyond this. When the Buddha expounded the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment, he called it the pure eye of the twelve divisions of the scriptures. This sūtra directly expounds the eye within sentient beings' own nature. Therefore purity does not lie in the words, but only in the reader's own awakening and knowing. If one does not fix attention on the words, but directly sees the pure appearance of one's original nature, then one eye becomes a thousand eyes, and a thousand eyes become a thousand hands. It depends upon the reader.

Those who delight in reading this sūtra naturally have another understanding; they certainly do not merely take hold of its words. It is like a finger pointing at the moon: what matters is the moon, yet the finger cannot simply be discarded. I have now separately numbered the passages in the original text and compared them with the annotations, in order to clarify the essential points. If those of benevolent aspiration understand the meaning of what cannot be spoken or grasped, then not a single word has ever been set down, and what further purport could there be to state? This is called the dharma eye.

Chapter One: Author's Preface

At that time, the Master arrived at Baolin. Governor Wei Qu of Shaozhou, together with officials, entered the mountains to invite the Master to come forth. At the lecture hall of Daifan Temple in the city, he expounded the Dharma for the assembly.[1] When the Master ascended the seat, more than thirty officials, more than thirty Confucian scholars, and over a thousand monastics and laypeople all paid homage together, wishing to hear the essential teachings.[2]

The Master addressed the assembly: "Good friends, the intrinsic nature of bodhi is originally pure. Simply use this mind, and directly realize Buddhahood."[3]

"Good friends, listen now to the course of Huineng's life and the circumstances in which he received the Dharma. Huineng's late father was originally from Fanyang. He was demoted and exiled to Lingnan, where he became a resident of Xinzhou. Huineng was unfortunate from birth: his father died early, leaving behind his

widowed mother. They lived in the southern region, in hardship and poverty, and he sold firewood in the marketplace."

"Once, a customer bought firewood and told him to deliver it to an inn. After the customer had received it and Huineng had been paid, he went outside and saw someone reciting a sūtra. As soon as Huineng heard the words of the sūtra, his mind awakened.[4] He then asked the man, 'What sūtra are you reciting?' The man replied, 'The Diamond Sūtra.' Huineng further asked, 'Where did you come from, carrying this scripture?' The man said, 'I have come from Dongchan Temple in Huangmei County, Qizhou.'"

"At that temple, the Fifth Patriarch, Master Hongren, presides over the teaching. He has more than a thousand disciples. I went there to pay homage and hear this sūtra expounded. The Master constantly encourages monastics and laypeople alike: if they simply uphold the Diamond Sūtra, they will see their own nature and directly realize Buddhahood.' On hearing this, Huineng felt that he had had an affinity with it from a former time. A traveler then gave Huineng ten taels of silver,[5] to provide his aged mother with clothing and food, and urged him to go at once to Huangmei to pay homage to the Fifth Patriarch. After Huineng had settled his mother, he took leave. In a little over thirty days, he arrived at Huangmei and paid homage to the Fifth Patriarch."

The Patriarch asked, "Where are you from, and what do you seek?" Huineng replied, "This disciple is a resident of Xinzhou in Lingnan. I have come from afar to pay homage to the Master. I seek only to become a Buddha; I seek nothing else."

[6] The Patriarch said, "You are from Lingnan and are also a hunter of the Ge people. How could you possibly become a Buddha?" Huineng replied, "Though people are from the south or north, Buddha-nature itself has neither south nor north. My body as a hunter of the Ge people differs from the Master's, but what difference is there in Buddha-nature?" The Fifth Patriarch wished to speak with him further, but seeing that his disciples were all gathered around, he instructed him to join the others in their work.

Huineng said, "I venture to tell the Master that this disciple's own mind constantly gives rise to wisdom.[7] Not departing from one's own nature is itself the field of blessings. I do not know what work the Master wishes me to do." The Patriarch said, "This hunter of the Ge people has very sharp faculties. Say no more; go to the rice-milling shed."[8] Huineng withdrew to the rear courtyard, where a practitioner assigned him to split firewood and pound rice. More than eight months later, the Patriarch suddenly saw Huineng and said, "I have considered that your understanding may be of use, but I feared that evil people might harm you; therefore I did not speak with you. Do you understand?" Huineng replied, "This

disciple also understood the Master's intention. I did not dare go to the front hall, so that no one would notice me."

One day, the Patriarch summoned all his disciples and said: "I have told you that the matter of birth and death is of great importance for people in this world. Yet all day long you seek only fields of blessings and do not seek to escape the bitter sea of birth and death.[9] If your own nature is deluded, how can fields of blessings save you? Each of you, go and examine your own wisdom. Draw upon the prajñā-nature of your original mind, and each compose a verse to present to me. If you awaken to the essential meaning, I shall transmit to you the robe and Dharma, making you the Sixth Patriarch.[10] Go quickly, without delay. Deliberation will be of no use.[11] A person who sees the nature must see it at the very word.[12] If one is such a person, one can see it even while wielding a sword on the battlefield."

Having received these instructions, the assembly withdrew and said among themselves: "There is no need for all of us to clear our minds and exert ourselves in composing verses[13] to present to the Master. What benefit would there be in that? Senior monk Shenxiu is now the instructor; he will surely be the one to receive it. If we compose verses in vain, we shall merely waste our effort." Hearing this, everyone ceased to concern themselves with it. They all said, "From now on, we shall rely on Master Xiu. Why trouble ourselves to compose verses?"

Shenxiu reflected: "The others do not present verses because I serve as their instructor. I must compose a verse and present it to the Master. If I do not present a verse, how will the Master know the depth or shallowness of my understanding? If my purpose in presenting a verse is to seek the Dharma, that is good; but if it is to seek the patriarchate, that is wrong. It would be no different from an ordinary person trying to seize a sage's position. Yet if I do not present a verse, I shall never receive the Dharma. This is most difficult, most difficult."

Before the Fifth Patriarch's hall was a covered corridor of three bays. He intended to invite the court painter Lu Zhen to paint illustrations of transformations from the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra and a diagram of the Fifth Patriarch's Dharma lineage, for transmission and veneration. After Shenxiu had composed his verse, he wished several times to present it. But whenever he came before the hall, his mind became confused and his whole body broke into sweat. He was unable to present the verse. Over four days, he tried thirteen times without success. Shenxiu then thought, "It would be better to write it on the wall beneath the corridor and let the Master see it himself."

"If he should say it is good, I shall come forth, pay homage, and say that it was composed by Xiu. If he should say it is inadequate, then I have spent years in the mountains receiving people's homage in vain; what Way could I cultivate further?"

That night, in the third watch, without letting anyone know, he took up a lamp and wrote his verse on the wall of the southern corridor, presenting the understanding of his mind. The verse said:

The body is the bodhi tree; the mind is like a bright mirror stand,

At all times diligently wipe it clean; do not let dust alight upon it.[14]

After writing the verse, Shenxiu returned to his room, and no one knew of it. He reflected again: “If the Fifth Patriarch sees the verse tomorrow and is pleased, then I have an affinity with the Dharma. If he says it is inadequate, it is because I am deluded and my karmic obstacles from former lives are heavy; I am not fit to receive the Dharma. The sage’s intention is hard to fathom.” In his room, he thought anxiously, unable to sit or lie at ease, until the fifth watch.

The Patriarch already knew that Shenxiu had entered the gate but had not attained it, for he had not seen his own nature. At dawn, the Patriarch summoned the court painter Lu and told him to paint the images on the wall of the southern corridor. Suddenly seeing the verse, he said to the painter, “There is no need to paint after all; you have come from afar for nothing. The sūtra says, ‘All conditioned appearances are empty and false.’ Leave this verse here for people to recite and uphold. Those who cultivate in accordance with this verse will avoid falling into the evil realms, and those who cultivate in accordance with it will gain great benefit.”

He instructed the disciples to burn incense and pay reverence, and to recite this verse in full; then they would see their own nature.[15] When the disciples recited the verse, they all exclaimed, “Excellent!”

In the third watch, the Patriarch summoned Shenxiu into the hall and asked, “Was this verse composed by you?” Shenxiu said, “It was indeed composed by Xiu. I do not dare rashly seek the patriarchal seat; I only hope that the Master, in his compassion, will see whether this disciple has a little wisdom.” The Patriarch said, “In composing this verse, you have not seen your original nature. You have only reached the gate, but have not entered within. With such understanding, to seek unsurpassed bodhi[16] is utterly impossible.”

“To attain unsurpassed bodhi, one must, at the very word, recognize one’s own original mind and see one’s own original nature: neither arising nor ceasing. At all times, thought after thought, one sees for oneself that the myriad dharmas are without obstruction.[17] When one reality is true, all realities are true; the myriad states are naturally suchness. The mind of suchness is reality itself. To see in this way is the intrinsic nature of unsurpassed bodhi.”

“Go now. Reflect for a day or two, then compose another verse[18] and bring it for me to see. If your verse enters the gate, I shall transmit to you the robe and Dharma.” Shenxiu paid homage and departed. After several more days, he still could not compose a verse. His mind was confused and unsettled; as if in a dream, he found neither walking nor sitting pleasant.

Two days later, a boy passed by the rice-milling shed, chanting Shenxiu’s verse.

As soon as Huineng heard it, he knew that the verse had not seen the original nature. Although he had not yet received instruction, he had long understood the essential meaning. He therefore asked the boy, “What verse are you chanting?” The boy replied, “You hunter of the Ge people do not know. The Master said that the matter of birth and death is of great importance for people in this world. Wishing to transmit the robe and Dharma, he told his disciples to compose verses for him to see. Whoever awakens to the essential meaning will receive the robe and Dharma and become the Sixth Patriarch.”

“Senior monk Shenxiu wrote a verse of no appearances on the wall of the southern corridor. The Master has instructed everyone to recite it. Those who cultivate in accordance with this verse will avoid falling into the evil realms, and those who cultivate in accordance with it will gain great benefit.” Huineng said, “Venerable sir, I have been pounding rice here for more than eight months and have never gone to the front hall. I hope you will lead me to the verse so that I may pay homage before it.” The boy led him to the verse, and Huineng paid homage before it.

Huineng said, “Huineng cannot read. I ask the venerable sir to read it for me.” At that time, an assistant prefect from Jiangzhou, named Zhang Riyong, read it aloud. When Huineng had heard it, he said, “I too have a verse, and I hope the assistant prefect will write it for me.” The assistant prefect said, “You too can compose a verse? This is extraordinary.”

Huineng said to the assistant prefect, “If you wish to learn unsurpassed bodhi, you must not look lightly upon beginners. Those of the lowest station may possess the highest wisdom, while those of the highest station may possess wisdom that has sunk away.[19] If you look down on others, you commit immeasurable and boundless offenses.” The assistant prefect said, “Simply recite your verse, and I shall write it for you. If you receive the Dharma, you must first liberate me; do not forget these words.” Huineng’s verse said:

Bodhi originally has no tree; the bright mirror is not a stand,

Originally there is not a single thing—where could dust alight?[20]

After this verse was written, the entire assembly was astonished; none failed to marvel. They said to one another, “How extraordinary! One must not judge a person by appearance. How could we have made a flesh-and-blood bodhisattva work for us for so long?” When the Patriarch saw the crowd’s astonishment, fearing that people might harm him, he wiped away the verse with his shoe and said, “This too has not seen the nature.” The assembly took this to be so.

The next day, the Patriarch secretly went to the rice-milling shed. Seeing Huineng pounding rice with a stone tied around his waist, he said, “One who seeks the Way forgets the body for the sake of the Dharma. Should it not be so?”[21] He then asked, “Is the rice ready yet?” Huineng replied, “The rice has long been ready; it only lacks sifting.” The Patriarch struck the mortar three times with his staff and departed. Huineng immediately understood the Patriarch’s meaning and entered his room at the third watch. The Patriarch covered them with his robe so that no one could see.

He expounded the Diamond Sūtra for him. When he came to the words, “Give rise to this mind without abiding anywhere,” Huineng, at those very words, had a great awakening[22] and realized that all the myriad dharmas do not depart from intrinsic nature.[23] He then addressed the Patriarch: “Who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally pure;[24] who would have thought that intrinsic nature neither arises nor ceases; who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally complete in itself; who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally unmoving; who would have thought that intrinsic nature can give rise to the myriad dharmas.”[25]

The Patriarch knew that he had awakened to his original nature and said to Huineng, “If one does not recognize one’s original mind, studying the Dharma is of no benefit. If one recognizes one’s own original mind and sees one’s own original nature, one is called a great person, a teacher of humans and devas, a Buddha.” In the third watch he transmitted the Dharma, and no one knew. He then transmitted the sudden teaching and the robe and alms bowl, saying, “You are the Sixth Patriarch.[26] Guard and care for them well. Liberate sentient beings broadly, spread this teaching in the future, and do not let it be cut off. Listen to my verse:”

Sentient beings come and sow the seeds; from the causal ground, the fruit is born again.

The insentient have no seeds; without nature, there is no birth.[27]

The Patriarch further said, “When Master Bodhidharma first came to this land, people did not yet trust him. Therefore he transmitted this robe as the embodiment of faith, to be passed down generation after generation. The Dharma is transmitted by mind to mind, causing each person to awaken and realize for themselves. Since

ancient times, Buddha after Buddha has transmitted only the fundamental essence; master after master has secretly entrusted the original mind. The robe becomes a cause of contention, so let it stop with you and do not transmit it further. If you transmit this robe, your life will hang by a thread. You must leave quickly, for I fear people may harm you."

Huineng asked, "Where should I go?" The Patriarch said, "Stop when you encounter Huai; hide when you encounter Hui." In the third watch, Huineng received the robe and alms bowl, saying, "Huineng is originally a man of the south and has never known the mountain paths here. How can I reach the river crossing?" The Fifth Patriarch said, "You need not worry. I myself will see you off." The Patriarch accompanied him directly to the Jiujiang post station. He had Huineng board a boat, and the Fifth Patriarch himself took the oars and rowed."

Huineng said, "Please sit down, Venerable Monk; your disciple should take up the oars." The Patriarch said, "It is I who should ferry you across." Huineng said, "When one is deluded, the master ferries one across; once awakened, one ferries oneself across. Though the name 'ferrying across' is the same, its application differs. I, Huineng, was born in a frontier region, and my speech is not correct. Through my master's kindness, I received the Dharma; now that I have awakened, I need only ferry myself across by means of my own nature." [28] The Patriarch said, "So it is, so it is. Hereafter, the Buddhadharma will greatly flourish through you. Three years after you leave, I shall pass away. Go well now; strive diligently toward the south. Do not speak of this too soon, for the Buddhadharma is difficult to establish."

After taking leave of the Patriarch, Huineng set out southward. Within two months, he reached Dayu Ridge. When the Fifth Patriarch returned, he did not ascend the hall for several days. The assembly, concerned, went to ask, "Venerable Monk, are you suffering from any illness or distress?" He replied, "I have no illness, but the robe and Dharma have gone south." They asked, "To whom were they transmitted?" He said, "The capable one has obtained them." The assembly then understood, and several hundred people pursued Huineng, intending to seize the robe and bowl.

There was a monastic named Huiming, whose lay surname was Chen. He had formerly been a fourth-rank general, and his disposition and conduct were coarse and crude. He sought earnestly in his investigation, outstripping the others, and caught up with Huineng. Huineng threw down the robe and bowl on a stone and said, "This robe is a token of faith. Can it be contended for by force?" Huineng then hid among the grasses and brushwood.

When Huiming arrived, he could not lift them. [29] He therefore called out, "Lay practitioner, lay practitioner! I have come for the Dharma, not for the robe." Huineng then emerged and sat upon a rock. Huiming bowed and said, "I hope the lay

practitioner will teach me the Dharma." Huineng said, "Since you have come for the Dharma, calm the breath and set aside all conditions. Do not give rise to a single thought, and I will explain it to you." Huiming remained silent for a long while.

Huineng said, "Without thinking of good and without thinking of evil, at just this very moment, what is Elder Huiming's Original Face?" At these words, Huiming experienced great awakening. He then asked, "Apart from the secret words and secret meaning just spoken, is there any further secret meaning?" Huineng said, "What I have spoken to you is not secret. If you turn the light inward, the secret is right beside you." [30] Huiming said, "Although Huiming was at Huangmei, I had never truly recognized my own face."

"Now, having received your instruction, it is like a person drinking water: they alone know whether it is cold or warm. You, lay practitioner, are now Huiming's master." Huineng said, "If that is so, you and I share Huangmei as our master. Guard and uphold this well." [31] Huiming asked again, "Where should Huiming go from here?" Huineng said, "When you encounter Yuan, stop; when you encounter Meng, dwell."

Huiming bowed in farewell and returned to the foot of the ridge. He told the pursuers, "I climbed toward the lofty heights, but found no trace at all. We should search by another route." The pursuers all accepted this. Huiming later changed his name to Daoming, avoiding the first character of his master's name. Later Huineng arrived at Caoxi, but was again pursued by evil men. He therefore took refuge among a band of hunters at Sihui, avoiding danger there for a full fifteen years. [32] From time to time, he taught the Dharma to the hunters according to their capacities. The hunters often had him watch the nets, and whenever he saw living creatures, he released them all. At mealtimes, he would put vegetables into the pot in which meat was cooked. If anyone asked, he replied, "I only eat the vegetables beside the meat." [33]

One day he reflected, "The time has come to spread the Dharma; I cannot remain hidden forever." [34] He therefore went to Faxing Monastery in Guangzhou, where Dharma Master Yinzong was lecturing on the Nirvāṇa Sūtra. Two monks were debating the meaning of wind and banner. One said, "The wind is moving," while the other said, "The banner is moving," and their dispute did not cease. Huineng stepped forward and said, "It is not the wind that moves, nor is it the banner that moves. Your minds are moving."

[35] The entire assembly was astonished. Yinzong invited him to the seat of honor and questioned him closely on profound meanings. Seeing that Huineng's words were concise and his reasoning sound, and that he did not rely on written words, Yinzong said, "You are certainly no ordinary person. I have long heard that the robe and Dharma of Huangmei had come south. Could you be that lay practitioner?"

Huineng replied, “I dare not claim it.” Yinzong then bowed and requested that the transmitted robe and bowl be brought forth and shown to the assembly.

Yinzong further asked, “What instructions did Huangmei give at the transmission?” Huineng said, “There were no instructions; he only discussed seeing one’s true nature, not meditation or liberation.” [36] Yinzong said, “Why did he not discuss meditation and liberation?” Huineng said, “Because these are dual dharmas, not the Buddhadharma. The Buddhadharma is the Dharma of nonduality.”

Yinzong again asked, “What is the Buddhadharma’s Dharma of nonduality?” Huineng said, “Dharma Master, in lecturing on the Nirvāṇa Sūtra, you elucidate buddha-nature. This is the Buddhadharma’s Dharma of nonduality. For example, Bodhisattva King of Noble Virtue asked the Buddha, ‘Those who violate the four grave precepts, commit the five heinous offenses, or are icchantikas—[37] do they cut off their wholesome roots and buddha-nature?’ The Buddha said, ‘Wholesome roots are of two kinds: one is permanent, and the other impermanent.’”

“Buddha-nature is neither permanent nor impermanent; therefore it is not cut off. This is called nonduality. One is wholesome and the other unwholesome; buddha-nature is neither wholesome nor unwholesome. This is called nonduality. As for the aggregates and the realms, ordinary beings see two; the wise clearly understand that their nature is not two. This nondual nature is buddha-nature.”

On hearing this, Yinzong joyfully joined his palms and said, “When I lecture on the sūtras, it is like tiles and pebbles; when you expound the meaning, it is like true gold.” He then shaved Huineng’s head and wished to serve him as his master. Huineng thereupon opened the Dharma Gate of the Eastern Mountain beneath a bodhi tree. Huineng had received the Dharma at Eastern Mountain, [38] endured every hardship, and his life had hung by a thread.

“Today, that I may join with the governor and his officials, monastics and laypeople, in this single assembly is surely due to affinities accumulated over countless kalpas. In past lives, we must have made offerings to all Buddhas and together planted wholesome roots; only thus can we hear of the causes and conditions by which this sudden teaching and Dharma transmission were received. This teaching was transmitted by the sages of old; it is not Huineng’s own wisdom. May all who wish to hear the teachings of the sages of old purify their minds. Having heard them, let each resolve their own doubts, no different from the sages of former generations.” When the entire assembly heard the Dharma, they joyfully bowed and withdrew.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the essential purport.)

1 Since ancient times, Buddhas have transmitted the teaching from Buddha to Buddha, using mind to seal mind. Those who share the same essential purport are

called Buddhas; the robe and bowl merely serve as tokens of trust and have no essential connection with it. The First Patriarch, Mahākāśyapa, transmitted the Buddha's Mind-Seal. From the single flower came five petals, and down to the present, lamp has been transmitted to lamp, no different from a single flame. How could the flame differ? Therefore, what the Sixth Patriarch taught differs in no way from the Buddha's teaching. To call it a sūtra is not at all excessive.

It is regrettable that the disciples' records at that time did not fully preserve its meaning. The Sixth Patriarch gave instruction according to the capacities of his listeners, so its depth varied from before to after. For those who have not seen their true nature, it is like reading koans: if they seek awakening in words and letters, they only become more remote from it. This is the third time this sūtra has been expounded, but only its essential purport is being set forth; readers must still awaken for themselves. If one can truly awaken and see one's original nature, one naturally obtains the Mind-Seal. What need is there to seek so much? If one has not understood the essential point of mind, what benefit is there in studying Dharma? Those who seek in words instead obscure the root.

2 Before reading this sūtra, one must first understand the Buddha's essential purport, namely, the essential Dharma. Those of the highest vehicle see their true nature upon hearing the words and thereby become Buddhas. Those of superior capacities must rely on a method, such as investigating Chan or practicing Esoteric Buddhism, and thereby see their true nature and become Buddhas.

Those of middling capacities cling to methods and do not dare to undertake this directly. They merely plant wholesome roots in this life, hoping to attain accomplishment in a future life. Yet so long as they do not depart from the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate, the day will eventually come when they emerge. Those below this do not know what Buddha means or what becoming a Buddha entails, much less anything beyond that. Since ancient times, Buddhas and patriarchs have liberated sentient beings by responding according to their capacities. The standpoint of this school is simply direct and forthright.

The essential point of mind is indicated directly: seeing means seeing it at once, and awakening means awakening at the very word. This is the purport of the sudden-awakening Dharma Gate by which one enters the Tathāgata's ground. The Sixth Patriarch began by saying, "The bodhi self-nature is originally pure. Simply use this mind, and directly realize Buddhahood." These four lines encompass the Tripiṭaka and twelve divisions of scripture, the full purport of forty-nine years of teaching. Once one understands, why wait for the raising of a flower? Even without a smile, the Mind-Seal has already been imparted. For whom, then, were the ten chapters of the Platform Sūtra spoken?

3 “The bodhi self-nature is originally pure. Simply use this mind, and directly realize Buddhahood.” These four lines are the outline of the entire sūtra. All Buddhas and patriarchs of the three times speak with one voice from the same aperture. “Simply” means that apart from this there is no other Dharma. The first two lines speak of essence; the third speaks of function. The words “directly realize” indicate entry into the unity of essence and function. To become a Buddha is to realize bodhi.

Sentient beings’ self-nature is originally pure. Only because it is obscured by emotional attachments and views do they lose what is original. Simply use this wondrous mind of prajñā, and one can naturally return to the original. Yet to use this mind is still not to be free from a method. “Directly realize” means that even the method of simply using this mind is realized and let go. When there is nothing left to realize, all dharmas are empty and pure, and one then realizes bodhi.

For forty-nine years the Buddha taught Dharma, opening immeasurable Dharma gates, yet he spoke only these sixteen characters. Moreover, bodhi is self-nature, and self-nature is bodhi; they are not two things. Purity is the original characteristic of self-nature. By “purity” is not meant a term of opposition; it is the Original Face itself. Bodhi does not increase because of purity or diminish because of afflictions. This is called purity; hence it is said to be undefiled.

But for those who have not understood the original and do not know why this is so, cultivation and realization are necessary. These are expedient teachings. Thus it is said that cultivation and realization are not absent. But how are cultivation and realization attained? The answer is: one still relies on the images and appearances that arise from this bodhi self-nature.

This is called mind. With the illusory mind that flows forth from self-nature, one creates all manner of illusory karma. Now, by skillfully using this illusory mind to turn back and see the original, one awakens to and sees one’s self-nature, directly undertakes it, and understands it without remainder. This is direct realization.

At the very moment of direct realization, even the mind that directly realizes cannot be found. At that time there is silent, lucid stillness—what else could it be but Buddhahood? And within the pure self-nature, unstained by a single speck of dust, what dualistic views of good and evil, right and wrong, success and failure, Buddha and non-Buddha could remain? Once even such traces have vanished, one simply uses this mind and directly realizes it. This is what is meant by “in the snap of the fingers, the eighty thousand Dharma gates are brought to perfect completion.” Its swiftness is like lightning; its clarity is like a mirror. There are no further stages, oppositions, or other dharmas in between. Only then does one know that the

teachings of three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas are expedient teachings given because conditions differ.

4 One uses a finger to point at the moon; the moon stands apart from us and is therefore easy to see. But if one is within the moon, if one is oneself the moon, from where could there be any pointing or instruction? Those without the eye of wisdom cannot awaken to this by themselves. Bodhisattvas before the grounds all seek the Way like blind people: they know only that there is a road ahead, but cannot distinguish east from west. The Sixth Patriarch was one who had returned to this world; the roots from his former lives had already matured, and upon hearing words from a sūtra, his mind immediately opened in awakening.

One may ask: what was it that he awakened to? If he had awakened to the sūtra, why, after awakening, did he again ask the guest further questions, including where he had come from? This shows that it was not the sūtra to which he awakened, but his own mind. When mind and sūtra seal each other, it is self-sealing. Let this seal enter the pure essence of bodhi, abide there constantly, and never be lost. It is like a boat crossing the sea in darkness: having obtained this compass and keeping it close at hand, one will never again lose the way or retreat.

5 The Sixth Patriarch lost his father early and endured hardship and poverty. To speak of the supramundane Dharma, one must possess very great blessings. People today wish first to secure their livelihood and only then study Buddhism, but this cannot be done; they may as well cease such deluded dreaming. Nevertheless, provisions for seeking the Way cannot be lacking. If one does not have even ten taels with which to support one's mother, it is difficult to pursue the Way. Therefore, give generously and form wholesome affinities; plant roots of virtue in advance. Giving both material support and Dharma is true merit and virtue.

6 What is it for a person to value aspiration? Even in worldly affairs one should establish an aspiration; how much more so in becoming a Buddha! The Sixth Patriarch sought nothing else, only to become a Buddha. Since his causal ground was correct, his fruition naturally became complete. His very first words were extraordinary. Yet he was not free of pride, so the Fifth Patriarch deliberately humbled him and further tested the state of his mind. He did not expect the Sixth Patriarch to remain resolutely unmoved.

At this time, the Sixth Patriarch's awakening was not yet thorough: the external realm was empty, but the mind was not yet empty; he still abided in dharmas. His saying that "Buddha-nature has neither north nor south" opened this gate of equality for all seekers of the Way, enabling them suddenly to transcend one asaṃkhyeya kalpa. How universal is the benefit of such words from a benevolent person!

[7] The mind is originally unborn; how could wisdom arise from it? If it is changed to the character ju (, “possess”), its meaning is more complete.

[8] The Fifth Patriarch said, “Do not speak further.” Alas! What sort of matter is this that can be expressed in words? “Go to the rice-hulling shed”—was this not a place for applying oneself? Treading the pestle and pounding rice, rice still remains rice. Because the grain is still there, it must be pounded. Once awakened, however, it is already ripe without waiting to be pounded; why wait until the eighth month? Those who seek the Way should see the Way everywhere. Should it not be so? Moreover, the common failing of students lies solely in excessive speech. Speech is the result of a stirred mind. If they would investigate once before the mind is stirred, they would see the original. One must know that there is nowhere that is not a method of practice; it is not something that can be taught.

[9] The Fifth Patriarch said, “All day long, you seek only fields of merit. What can fields of merit save?” When I first read this passage, I could not help breaking out in a cold sweat. Seeking fields of merit and transcending birth and death are two opposed matters. At the very critical juncture of birth and death, one leads in and the other leads out; one misstep brings regret for a thousand ages.

You gentlemen seek the Dharma of the supreme vehicle; how can you make one mistake after another? This also shows how difficult it was at that time to transmit the robe and bowl: not one person had yet entered the Fifth Patriarch’s eye. The Fifth Patriarch said, “I think your understanding may be of use.” You gentlemen, look: what kind of understanding was this? Was this understanding birth and death or not? Now, in addition, he set up an understanding and told them to compose a verse. He had evidently foreseen that contention would arise, and wished them to examine themselves once and bring it to an end. Did not the words “seeking only fields of merit” almost plainly foretell the later dispute over the robe and bowl? It is painful indeed.

[10] “Each of you compose a verse and bring it for me to see. If you awaken to the great meaning, I shall transmit to you the robe and Dharma, and you will become the sixth patriarch.” The Fifth Patriarch was testing each person’s strength. He deliberately used the robe, Dharma, and patriarchal seat to entice them; it was no small trap for people to fall into. This was a method of liberating through both favorable and adverse means, and also a great act of compassion. Consequently, the assembly became confused and indecisive. Some did not dare to hope for the patriarchal seat; others gave rise to notions of superiority and inferiority, fear, and the like. All were covered over by emotional views, and were unable even to compose a verse. Though the Fifth Patriarch repeatedly pointed them toward the prajñā-nature of their own minds, they were all utterly bewildered.

[11] Deliberation is of no use. One who has seen one's nature must see it at the very word spoken; even when brandishing a sword on the battlefield, one can see it. This is the meaning of the Sixth Patriarch's direct realization of Buddhahood. In general, one who has already seen one's nature is like a person who does not forget one's own name. Even amid confusion and turmoil, one never loses it. Yet does a person constantly hold on to one's own name? Like a shadow following its form, it does not depart even for an instant. If one has not seen one's nature, however urgently one rushes about, one will not see it. You gentlemen, do you see it?

[12] To see one's nature is to recognize one's own intrinsic nature, to recognize its features. These features are unborn and unceasing, unstained, and unmoving; they merely display the illusory appearances of arising and ceasing, defilement, coming, and going. Yet they never turn along with these illusory appearances, and are ultimately pure. This is what is meant by saying that one's own mind always possesses wisdom and does not depart from intrinsic nature. Wisdom manifests in response to human affairs. Since there is nowhere that wisdom is absent, whatever work one does with others, how could it not be the Way? Therefore, even when brandishing a sword on the battlefield, one remains unmoved. This is one who has truly seen one's nature.

[13] The assembly did not understand the meaning of not yielding when one ought to act, but relied upon Senior Monk Shenxiu. This was truly lacking in spirit. They thought themselves excluded from the patriarchal seat and, influenced by personal considerations, did not wish to compete with Shenxiu. They did not seek to advance further. In their minds they valued only a robe and bowl; the great matter of birth and death had long been forgotten. Alas!

To say that Shenxiu was dazed and uneasy may be an exaggeration by the recorder. Yet this is not the Sixth Patriarch slighting Shenxiu. Before one has clarified the essential point of mind, one is filled with views of personal feeling, gain, and loss, and has many reservations; such states naturally arise. But this is not enough to burden a worthy person. Shenxiu's error was that the issue of the patriarchal seat gave rise to concerns about impropriety, leaving him at a loss. One should realize that there are no personal considerations in Buddhadharma; one should know only that birth and death is the great matter, and exert oneself fully to shoulder unsurpassed bodhi. A verse should flow from intrinsic nature. Its flaw lay in trying to clarify the mind through deliberate effort, and thus it became obstructed and could not flow freely.

[14] The four lines beginning "The body is the bodhi tree" are indeed the words of one who has not seen one's nature; they are indeed the words of one who practices rigidly. You gentlemen should know that the sickness lies in placing excessive emphasis on dust: believing that, once ignorance is completely eliminated, one

naturally becomes a Buddha. They do not know that this is abandoning the root and pursuing the branch, an inverted and confused approach. The more they wipe away illusory dust, the more it increases; the more they do so, the less they can manage it. Why? Because they take ignorance to be actual dust and grime upon the mirror's surface, not knowing it to be an illusory image within the mirror.

Even if one does not acknowledge actual dust and grime, one may still cling to an illusory mirror. Since one neither recognizes intrinsic nature nor sees the illusory mind, at best one avoids falling into the evil realms; one can never transcend birth and death. Thus one remains outside the gate.

[15] Northerners value actual cultivation, and thus cling to the belief that there is practice, attainment, and realization. They do not know that the intrinsic nature of bodhi is originally complete and perfect: it may be inwardly realized, but cannot be forcibly sought. Shenxiu clung to the efficacy of rigid cultivation and inclined toward form. If one abandons evil and turns toward good, this naturally brings benefit; one may avoid the evil realms, yet birth and death remain difficult to transcend.

This is not the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye; it remains far from seeing one's nature. Moreover, he directly took dust to be truly existent; ignorance and bodhi thus became two separate things. With self and other set in opposition, how could this be called seeing one's nature? The Fifth Patriarch said, "All appearances are illusory." He said this not only to Attendant Lu, but also to Shenxiu, for nowhere in this verse is an appearance not established. Yet the capacities of the disciples were not fit to receive the great teaching, so this was all that could be done. He instructed them to bow reverently, saying that one who sees one's nature does not mean that reciting these four lines enables one to see one's nature; they could only use them as a means of drawing near. As for the words the Fifth Patriarch personally addressed to Shenxiu, he did not acknowledge that Shenxiu had seen his nature.

[16] "Unsurpassed bodhi, when sought, cannot be obtained": the word "sought" may be deleted. Bodhi is inherently present, not acquired from outside. What thing, then, could be sought?

[17] "At all times, in every thought, see for oneself": these are words spoken after seeing one's nature, and also words that earnestly address practitioners. Let one not lose this from thought to thought, yet without deliberately attending to it; let it be alive and fluid, like not forgetting one's own name. Then there is naturally no obstruction. This is what is meant by "neither erring nor forgetting, following the old norms"; it is the method of safeguarding realization in daily life.

If one has not seen one's nature but forcibly tries to display it, the bondage of dharmas will certainly become still tighter, and one will fail throughout kalpas. Moreover, the thought of not daring rashly to seek the patriarchal seat may still

remain. Now, to see for oneself in every thought, with the myriad dharmas unobstructed—do you gentlemen see this within every thought? “Unobstructed” means encountering all dharmas without being defiled by them. How does defilement occur? By grasping and refusing to let go.

How does one refuse to let go? By firmly establishing a view of self, so that there is no way to liberation. If one knows that things are originally empty, then grasping and relinquishing are unobstructed; the myriad circumstances are suchness, and the myriad dharmas are likewise suchness. Suchness neither moves nor shifts: this is what is meant by being unobstructed. Such wondrous functioning is not apart from any place; therefore it is said, “In every thought, see for oneself.” Because thought after thought does not depart from the myriad dharmas and yet thought after thought remains non-abiding, thought after thought is unobstructed. This is the true mark of non-abiding. If even the slightest view is retained, one becomes obstructed by dharmas; the true face is then concealed, and intrinsic nature cannot see itself.

[18] “Compose another verse” was the Fifth Patriarch’s explicit instruction. Its meaning was: turn one more phrase. If there could be a turn toward emptiness, one would not be far from seeing one’s nature. Thus the wondrous functioning of prajñā lies in non-abiding. Non-abiding is detached and flexible, able to transform thought; therefore he told them to reflect. In truth, how could seeing one’s nature be attained through reflection? The Fifth Patriarch was truly left with no alternative.

[19] To slight beginners is for the mind to lack equanimity. The world’s suffering, distress, and inversion do not go beyond comparative views of high and low. How could such inferior views exist within the pure nature of unsurpassed bodhi? Therefore, to slight others is to have a self; where there is a self, there are immeasurable offenses. Assistant Magistrate Zhang said that he himself must first be liberated; this directly struck at this illness.

How could one know that every person possesses an independent, supreme, unsurpassed Buddha-nature, requiring not the slightest external aid? As Yangshan said, “Even Buddha is not established.” This is indeed the bearing and breadth of heart of a great person. All sentient beings are equally, equally so. Now the Patriarch says, “To slight others is to incur immeasurable and boundless offenses.”

These are true words, actual words. Nothing is more self-degrading than slighting others; it obstructs one’s own gate of entering the Way. Is this not the most degrading thing? Moreover, regardless of whether people are noble or lowly, worthy or foolish, each certainly has some excellence beyond one’s reach. Even one who lies about sleeping lazily all day possesses something in which I am inferior; how could I slight such a person? Therefore all dharmas are equal, and there is no obstruction.

Those who discriminate well do not fail to distinguish noble from lowly; rather, they discriminate without attachment. If one does not depart from the fundamental substance of one's intrinsic nature in any place, one accords with the Way.

[20] The Sixth Patriarch's four-line verse also does not express seeing one's nature, for there was seeing but not thorough seeing. Bodhi cannot be compared to any thing, yet there is no thing to which it cannot provisionally be compared. To provisionally call it a bright mirror and temporarily name it a tree—what harm is there? The flaw lies in "originally there is not a single thing," which inclines toward emptiness. Later students who follow it unconsciously enter annihilationist view, not knowing that it must be understood in its ultimate sense. The root nature cannot be defiled; why fear that dust may cling to it?

This was only to counter Shenxiu's attachment to existence, so that the preceding verse did not become a faulty expression. Or perhaps the recorder at that time did not understand the Patriarch's meaning, and the wording did not accord with the intent; this too cannot be known. As for making bodhi a tree, this is a metaphor for nature; making the bright mirror a stand is a metaphor for mind. Mind is indeed not existent, but nature is not nonexistent. It is originally neither empty nor existent; how then could one one-sidedly say, "Originally there is not a single thing"?

The next line, "Where could dust alight?" is even more plainly substantial and is especially at odds with the nature-substance. Therefore it does not express seeing one's nature; it inclines toward emptiness. To say, "Originally there is not a single thing," falls into annihilationist view. Dust is not inherently a substantial entity, yet it now appears before us—what can one do about illusory existence?

The preceding verse clings to existence; the latter verse inclines toward emptiness. Bodhi does not cling to the two extremes or establish a middle way. Amid what is neither real nor unreal, it neither grasps nirvāṇa nor establishes birth and death. Whether there is dust or no dust is not calculated at all. If one thoroughly awakens to the original, one knows that dust also does not depart from intrinsic-nature bodhi; whether it clings or does not cling depends only on awakening or non-awakening.

This verse was spoken in this way to counter Shenxiu's one-sided attachment to existence; judging from the Sixth Patriarch's intent, it may not necessarily have been so. Later he said, "First of all, do not attach to emptiness," and thus his original understanding may be known. Therefore this does not detract from the Sixth Patriarch. When we discuss meaning on the basis of the text, we should know what to choose. I previously composed a verse:

Bodhi is provisionally named a tree; the bright mirror is temporarily made a stand.

Originally there is no defilement; to speak of dust clinging is itself dust.

Practitioners should know that dust is used to represent ignorance. Ignorance has no substantial entity, yet people commonly cling to it as existent and insist on eliminating it completely. Thus, the deeper their practice becomes, the farther they stray from the point. In my earlier explanation of the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment, I compared ignorance to the reflection within a pearl, not to grime upon the pearl, because reflections and grime cannot be made clean by wiping. Dust and grime belong to the realm of appearances; set against the pearl, they make two things. Now we know that ignorance and bodhi are nondual: their substance is the same, while their functions differ.

[21] Those who seek the Way should be thus! To say that the work consists only in not forgetting the original nature does not mean that emptying the mind and guarding stillness constitutes the ultimate. When one pounds rice with a stone tied at the waist, what is that if not practice? Those who cling to principle and neglect phenomena gradually fall into biased emptiness.

[22] There is no fixed rule as to what causes and conditions bring about awakening; why must one wait for the Diamond Sūtra? When the First Patriarch came from the West, he transmitted the essential teaching of the Laṅkāvatāra; that was the circumstance of the time. Five hundred years later, it had instead become a book of names and characteristics. As the First Patriarch said, you should know that all who read sūtra passages without returning to their own nature are dealing only in names and characteristics.

From the Tang dynasty onward to the present, the Diamond Sūtra has been widely practiced; this is the reason. Yet this sūtra is extremely difficult to explain, and it is not as readily accessible as the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment. What the Fifth Patriarch taught was certainly not an interpretation based on the words. He corrected the error concerning those four lines of verse; only when he came to the two clauses, “should give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere,” did awakening begin—realizing that essence and function are one, and not taking biased emptiness as ultimate. Thus came great awakening. It may be seen that the four lines beginning “Bodhi originally has no tree” are words spoken after awakening, but not after thorough awakening.

[23] The myriad dharmas do not depart from intrinsic nature. Thus one may know that intrinsic nature fully contains all dharmas. This is called the dharma-nature body. From intrinsic nature arise all illusory minds; since mind cannot be apprehended, good and evil, right and wrong, formation and decay, afflictions and bodhi likewise are altogether unobtainable. This is what is meant by: one thing is illusory, and all things are illusory.

Yet the myriad dharmas do not go beyond the fundamental essence of suchness; thus good and evil, right and wrong, formation and decay, afflictions and bodhi may provisionally be regarded as real. This is what is meant by: one thing is real, and all things are real. To speak further of illusion and reality is still to remain within dharmas. Since all dharmas are empty and quiescent, good and evil, right and wrong, formation and decay, afflictions and bodhi are all merely illusory dharmas standing in contrast to one another; ultimately, they share this same empty quiescence. This is what is meant by equality and nonduality.

Because they are originally equal and nondual, they are called pure. Those who fully comprehend this meaning behold the original aspect of bodhi. Thus, when one contemplates all the good and evil in the world, there is nothing that is not the essence of suchness, nothing that is not bodhi. What joy, anger, sorrow, or pleasure could then be established? And why need one fail to distinguish joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure?

[24] The two words “how unexpected” are wondrous beyond words. Long ago, when the World-Honored One saw the morning star, he exclaimed, “How marvelous! How marvelous!”—this was precisely the meaning. The five statements spoken by the Patriarch express the direct realization of true reality: because it neither arises nor ceases, it is said to be complete; because it is originally pure and unmoving, although it gives rise to the myriad dharmas, arising itself is non-arising, and it is ultimately never defiled. Hence it is called the pure fundamental essence. Once its meaning is complete, one’s insight is thorough. This passage is of the utmost importance: it provides the discerning eye for people throughout the world in later generations. Do not hesitate any longer. No spiritual powers or wondrous functions are greater than this.

[25] Upon hearing, “Give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere,” he suddenly attained great awakening. You gentlemen, consider this: before the Sixth Patriarch’s great awakening, where was his affliction? Can you still recognize it? I previously said that when the Sixth Patriarch first met the Fifth Patriarch, he recognized his capacity, but his functioning was not yet complete; therefore, he was not yet wholly perfect and pure.

Non-abiding is essence, while giving rise to mind is function. Mind fundamentally does not arise; what arises is illusory presence. Originally there is non-abiding, which has nothing to do with whether mind arises or does not arise. Once one understands the essence of non-abiding, what could obstruct any wondrous function? Thus, amid non-arising and non-ceasing, amid unmovingness, one can give rise to the myriad dharmas. Essence and function are one; this is called completeness.

Although the myriad dharmas arise, they ultimately do not obstruct the fundamental essence in the slightest; hence it is called unmoving. Thereupon the pure original aspect of bodhi is revealed. The wonder of this passage lies in the two words “originally.” At this point, the Sixth Patriarch truly penetrated the original nature completely. As for Shenxiu’s four-line verse, the Fifth Patriarch still instructed his disciples to burn incense and pay homage to it. Why? Because he respected the Dharma. One should know that to reach even this point is not easy—how much less to truly see one’s nature! This matter is inherently earthshaking; no great worldly undertaking can compare with even one ten-thousandth of it.

[26] The Fifth Patriarch said: “If one recognizes one’s own original nature, one is called a great person, a teacher of humans and devas, a Buddha.” This was a definitive statement for seekers of the Way throughout the world in later generations. Yet people today lack the good fortune themselves: some do not dare to assume this responsibility; some claim realization without having realized it; some doubt people and doubt the Dharma. All of this is inverted delusion and self-deception. Alas!

[27] By this point, the robe and bowl were already of no use. Mind is transmitted to mind; this is so from Buddha to Buddha. Apart from this, there is no such thing as Buddhadharma. Sentient beings may come only so that auspicious affinities may be formed with them and seeds planted for them. Yet they are not a field of stones; unlike insentient wood and stone, the causal ground still gives rise to fruition. But one must not cling to the sentient being who receives the seed, or to oneself as the one who plants it, for nature is empty and the fundamental essence is unborn. The four occurrences of “no” merely urge him not to become attached.

[28] Once awakened, one must liberate oneself. This shows that after awakening one is not entirely without affairs; one must exert oneself to liberate oneself. There still remained the experience of feeling as though one had lost one’s parents, and the fifteen years spent among hunters were nothing but the use of this practice.

[29] When Huiming saw the robe and bowl on the rock, why could he not lift them? Was it because the Patriarch possessed spiritual powers? Do not understand it in this way, lest you fall into wrong views. Those who contended for the robe and bowl were not contending merely for the robe and bowl, but also for the Dharma.

Once the robe and Dharma had gone south, Dharma centers in the north would thereafter lose this token of trust and would be very difficult to sustain. Thus the contention arose from necessity. Yet he also clearly knew that this was not something that could be won by force. Now, suddenly seeing the robe and bowl on the rock was as though seeing the Patriarch himself. He immediately felt ashamed and uneasy, and no longer had any thought of contention.

Moreover, Huiming's causes and conditions for great awakening had ripened precisely at that time. He had come for the Dharma, not for the robe; his sincerity was genuine. Therefore, he paid homage and requested instruction. This itself was spiritual power. It was the response evoked by majestic virtue: from the Buddha down to the Sixth Patriarch, the power of their successive transmission and guidance is inconceivable. This passage concerns the causes and conditions by which Huiming attained the Way; it has nothing to do with the robe and bowl, and there is nothing strange about it.

[30] "Screen off all conditions and do not give rise to a single thought": this was precisely the time when Huiming's true realm of quiescent light manifested directly. The dividing point between sage and ordinary being lies here; indeed, the dividing point between human and animal also lies here. Persons of sharp faculties receive the message right here. It is truly wondrous beyond conception. Yet at this time one often falls into empty quiescence; if one does not thoroughly recognize the original nature, one may easily turn toward annihilationism.

The Patriarch further guided him, saying: "Do not think of good; do not think of evil. At precisely this moment, what is your Original Face?"

That "what" is where the way of words and speech is cut off, yet there remains clear, ever-present awareness. Do you gentlemen see that thing? The long pause was precisely the opportunity for quietness and inward contemplation. Those of keen intelligence understand at once; having had a foundation and some prior awakening, they then suddenly attain great awakening.

He further asked, "Is this all, or is there still more?" The Patriarch said, "This is it. There is nothing more secret. If you turn the light back upon yourself, the secret remains with you." This means that apart from this there is no other Dharma. Huiming then said, "Although I was at Huangmei, I saw but did not awaken; or perhaps I awakened but was not certain. Now I know for myself, as one knows warmth and coldness. Though I know it, there is nothing that can be said." This is called correct knowing and true knowing. Test this one Dharma in contemplation: everyone can originally enter awakening through it. But how can they do so without urgent earnestness? How can they do so without the right causes and conditions? How can they do so if they make no progress?

[31] "If you are thus, then you and I have the same teacher at Huangmei." You gentlemen, close the book and reflect: what did Huiming and the Sixth Patriarch awaken to, and what did they see? Was there any difference? Press the inquiry further: what you awaken to and what you see—does it differ from that of the Patriarch? Advance it still further: does it differ from being sealed in accord with the Buddha? Therefore, before awakening, diligently seek and investigate; once you

have seen, exert all your strength to assume responsibility for it and preserve it. Do not again delay out of empty politeness and thereby mislead yourself.

[32] Whenever a great Dharma is propagated, it cannot flourish without passing through demonic adversity. For the powers of Māra and Buddha are equal. Māra is bodhi: it is a transformation within the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Being opposed to it, its force must expand, for its benefit lies in delusion and agitation. Yet the unmoving and unchanging Buddha-nature is also realized through it. Therefore, great awakening is unmoved and unshaken, for its benefit lies in clarity and stability.

A proverb says: “If one sees the strange without regarding it as strange, its strangeness vanishes of itself.” If, upon encountering circumstances, one becomes deluded, one first creates Māra within oneself. Externally there are doubts and slander; internally there is disturbance and disorder. Even manifest illnesses, hardships, calamities of water and fire, and the like are also created by people. The reason it was said that this should not be spoken too quickly is that the causes and conditions may not yet have ripened; to oppose them would instead intensify their force. Thus demonic adversity need not be feared; what should be feared is first fearing it oneself. Moreover, petty people are always anxious, and anxiety gives rise to demonic adversity. All affairs under heaven have their definite causes and conditions; excessive worry and concern are truly pointless.

[33] Meat beside vegetables, vegetables beside meat—how are they different? In any case, one must not become attached to appearances. If one personally clings to such a view, one’s mind has already become impure; what vegetarianism can there be to speak of? The subtlety lies in the two words “simply eat.” To be able, like the Sixth Patriarch, simply to eat does not mean being unaware of meat and vegetables. It means not reckoning right and wrong in terms of meat and vegetables; then it is acceptable.

Can the world’s praise and blame save us from birth and death? Even so, there are people who use this as a pretext for killing living beings. I once wrote an article, “The Question of Killing,” to discourage killing. As for food, onions and garlic are called pungent foods; fish and meat are called flesh foods; vegetables are called produce; and adapting expediently to circumstances is called vegetarianism. Only when one can, like the Sixth Patriarch, remain unattached to appearances may one be called truly vegetarian. In this, one should be strict with oneself and not demand of others. Do not continue to quarrel and dispute, forgetting the great matter of one’s own birth and death.

[34] One day he reflected that the time had come to propagate the Dharma; this was the season of causes and conditions. Those who do not recognize the time labor in vain and gain no benefit.

[35] It is not the wind moving, nor is it the banner moving. But if mind were not moving, how could one know that they were not moving? If one truly knows movement and nonmovement, then all is pure, and there would be no need for arguments to arise like wind.

[36] There is no instruction to be given; one speaks only of seeing one's nature. I say: instruction is empty, whereas seeing one's nature is real. Without instruction, there is ultimately no way to enter the Way. Entering the Way refers to expedient methods before seeing one's nature. But at the time of actual seeing, everything depends on one's own awakening and has nothing to do with instruction; hence it is said that instruction is absent.

The two words "only speaks of" also convey the meaning of instruction. Of this, three parts in ten depend on the teacher and seven parts in ten depend on oneself. Seeing one's nature means seeing it for oneself. Dhyāna, samādhi, and liberation are taught for those of dull faculties, for those who have fallen into attachment to dharmas and have not seen the Buddha.

Buddhadharma is the Dharma of no dharma: there is no dharma that is not Dharma. Since dharmas are empty and quiescent, Buddha too does not exist. As there is originally nothing bound, why speak of liberation? Since there is neither liberation nor bondage, why speak of dhyāna and samādhi? Buddha-nature is inherently pure. Permanence and impermanence, good and not-good, and every kind of dualistic view are unobtainable. To provisionally establish these as dharmas has nothing to do with Buddha-nature. Within Buddha-nature nothing whatsoever is established; how could there be any distinction between tiles and pebbles and true gold? This is not something the Sixth Patriarch could explain; practitioners can only realize it for themselves. Hence, one speaks only of seeing one's nature.

[37] The four pārājika offenses are called the four grave prohibitions. According to Esoteric Buddhism, there are four kinds of offenses: first, abandoning the true Dharma—thus, departing from the Mind-Ground Dharma is itself an offense; second, abandoning bodhicitta; third, begrudging the supreme Dharma; fourth, troubling and harming sentient beings. Among the five heinous offenses, the gravest is to disturb a Dharma center and disrupt the Dharma affairs of a harmonious saṅgha. If practitioners harbor doubts concerning the sudden teaching described above, it is like binding themselves and entering prison; they must guard carefully against this.

[38] The Sixth Patriarch received the Dharma at Huangmei and became the sixth patriarch. When he later expounded the Dharma to Huiming and confirmed his realization, Huiming served him as his teacher. When he again expounded the Dharma to Yinzong, he was still a lay practitioner. Since one may receive the position

of patriarch while a lay practitioner, it is evident that the Buddhadharma lies in the mind, not in outward appearances. Of the preceding twenty-eight patriarchs, most received the Dharma while still lay practitioners.

Those in the world who have not realized the essential mind can scarcely be told of the ultimate Way. This section recounts the Sixth Patriarch's own account of the causes and conditions through which he received the Dharma. As the wholesome roots from his past lives had matured, he encountered this greatest of causes and conditions and attained this unsurpassed merit and virtue. Yet he underwent eighteen years of wandering and hardship, thereby nurturing the Way.

Who am I, that I should not endure hardship, undergo demonic trials, and suffer slander and abuse, but instead vainly hope to gain an easy advantage and attain realization without exertion? If one has such an inferior thought, one is creating one's own hell. A practitioner need not deliberately wear poor clothing or eat poor food, but I feel ashamed to enjoy them and uneasy to accept them.

If one receives people's reverence and offerings without repaying them with the true Dharma, when can this debt ever be settled? How much more so when one continues to incur further debts without end! In setting forth these causes and conditions of receiving the Dharma, the Sixth Patriarch was precisely establishing the guiding principle for seekers of the Way throughout the world and for later generations, opening the dharma eye, and ensuring that the true Dharma does not fall into decline. All depends on this.

As for Chan Master Shenxiu, in order to maintain the school, he reluctantly accepted the acclaim of his fellow practitioners. Yet he ultimately did not dare call himself the Sixth Patriarch. He knew that the Buddhadharma makes no concessions to personal sentiment; one must never judge it by worldly views. Moreover, to be literate is to understand the meaning of written characters. If one understands their meaning, that is equivalent to being literate. Do not be deceived by the Sixth Patriarch. The Sixth Patriarch said, "It was not Huineng's own wisdom." Yet why could others not do so, while the Patriarch alone could? This shows that relying on the sages of old is of no use.

Chapter Two: Prajñā

The next day, Prefect Wei came to seek instruction. The Master ascended the seat and addressed the assembly: "Gather and purify your thoughts: [1] mahāprajñāpāramitā." He further said, "Good friends, the wisdom of bodhi and prajñā is inherently possessed by people of the world. [2] It is only because their minds are deluded that they cannot awaken by themselves; they must rely on a great good friend to point out and guide them to see their true nature. [3] You

should know that the Buddha-nature of the foolish and the wise is originally without distinction. It is only because delusion and awakening differ that there are foolish and wise. I will now expound the Dharma of mahāprajñāpāramitā, so that each of you may attain wisdom. [4] Listen attentively and single-mindedly; I shall explain it to you."

"Good friends, people of the world recite prajñā with their mouths all day long, yet do not recognize the prajñā of their own nature. [5] It is like speaking of food without being satisfied. They merely speak of emptiness; though they do so for myriads of kalpas, they will not see their true nature and will ultimately gain no benefit. Good friends, mahāprajñāpāramitā is a Sanskrit word; in Chinese it means 'great wisdom reaching the other shore.' This must be practiced in the mind; it does not lie in verbal recitation. To recite with the mouth while not practicing in the mind is like an illusion, a magical transformation, dew, or lightning. When mouth and mind both practice, mind and mouth correspond. One's intrinsic nature is Buddha; apart from this nature, there is no other Buddha. [6]"

"What is meant by mahā? Mahā means great. The capacity of mind is vast, like empty space: [7] it has no boundaries, neither square nor round, neither large nor small; it is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; it has neither above nor below, neither long nor short; it has neither anger nor joy, neither right nor wrong, neither good nor evil, neither beginning nor end. The Buddha lands are all like empty space. The wondrous nature of people in the world is originally empty; not a single dharma can be obtained."

"The true emptiness of self-nature is likewise so. Good friends, do not hear me speak of emptiness and then become attached to emptiness. Above all, do not become attached to emptiness. [8] If you sit quietly with an empty mind, you become attached to the emptiness of blank indifference. Good friends, the empty space of the world can contain the forms and images of all things."

[9] "The sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, great earth, springs, streams, grasses, trees, forests, evil people and good people, evil dharmas and good dharmas, heavens and hells, all great seas, and Mount Sumeru and all other mountains are altogether within empty space. The emptiness of people's nature is likewise so. Good friends, the self-nature's capacity to contain all dharmas is what is meant by great."

"All dharmas are within the nature of every person. If, upon seeing the evil and good in all people, one neither grasps nor rejects them, nor becomes tainted or attached, and one's mind is like empty space, this is called great; therefore it is called mahā. Good friends, deluded people speak with their mouths, while wise people practice in their minds. There are also deluded people who sit quietly with empty minds,

thinking of nothing at all, [10] and call themselves great. Such people cannot be spoken with, for they hold wrong views."

"Good friends, the capacity of mind is vast and pervades the dharma realm. When it functions, it is distinctly clear; in responding to circumstances, it knows everything. All is one, and one is all. [11] Coming and going freely, the substance of mind is without obstruction: this is prajñā. Good friends, all prajñā wisdom arises from self-nature [12] and does not enter from outside. Do not mistakenly direct your thoughts outward; this is called the true nature's own functioning. When one is true, all is true. In this great matter of mind-capacity, do not practice the lesser path. Do not speak of emptiness all day long while failing to cultivate this practice in your mind. That is like an ordinary person calling himself a king: it can never be so. Such a person is not my disciple."

"Good friends, what is prajñā? Prajñā, in Chinese, means wisdom. At every place and at all times, thought after thought, do not be foolish; constantly practice wisdom—this is prajñā practice. When one thought is foolish, prajñā is cut off; when one thought is wise, prajñā arises. [13] People of the world are foolish and deluded and do not see prajñā. They speak of prajñā, but their minds are constantly foolish. They always say, 'I cultivate prajñā,' and speak of emptiness thought after thought, yet do not recognize true emptiness. Prajñā has no form or appearance; it is the mind of wisdom itself. To understand in this way is called prajñā wisdom."

"What is pāramitā? This is a word from the languages of the Western Regions; in Chinese it means 'reaching the other shore.' Its meaning is freedom from arising and ceasing. Attachment to objects gives rise to arising and ceasing; [14] it is like water having waves, and this is the near shore. Free from objects, there is no arising or ceasing; it is like water constantly flowing on, [15] and this is called the other shore. Therefore it is named pāramitā."

"Good friends, deluded people recite with their mouths; while reciting, they harbor falsity and error. If one practices thought after thought, this is called true nature. One who realizes this Dharma practices the Dharma of prajñā; one who cultivates this practice practices prajñā. Without cultivation one is an ordinary being; with cultivation in a single thought, one's very self is equal to Buddha. Good friends, ordinary beings are Buddha, and afflictions are bodhi."

[16] "A preceding thought of delusion makes one an ordinary being; a following thought of awakening makes one a Buddha. A preceding thought attached to objects is affliction; a following thought free from objects is bodhi. Good friends, mahāprajñāpāramitā is the most honored, supreme, and foremost. It neither abides, nor comes, nor goes. The Buddhas of the three times emerge from it. You should use great wisdom to break through the afflictions and worldly toils of the five

aggregates. [17] Cultivating in this way, you will surely accomplish Buddhahood and transform the three poisons into precepts, samādhi, and wisdom."

"Good friends, from this Dharma gate, a single prajñā gives rise to eighty-four thousand kinds of wisdom. [18] Why is this? Because people of the world have eighty-four thousand worldly toils. If there were no worldly toils, wisdom would always be manifest [19] and would not depart from self-nature. One who realizes this Dharma is without thought: without recollection, without attachment, and without giving rise to falsehood."

"Use your own true suchness nature and contemplate with wisdom. Toward all dharmas, neither grasp nor reject: this is seeing one's true nature and accomplishing the Buddha Way. Good friends, if you wish to enter the profound dharma realm and the samādhi of prajñā, you must cultivate prajñā practice and recite and uphold the Diamond Sūtra of Prajñā. [20] Then you will see your true nature. You should know that the merit and virtue of this sūtra are immeasurable and boundless; it is clearly praised in the sūtra, though it cannot be fully described."

"This Dharma gate is of the Supreme Vehicle, spoken for people of great wisdom and people of superior faculties. When people of lesser faculties and lesser wisdom hear it, disbelief arises in their minds. Why is this? It is like a heavenly dragon sending rain upon Jambudvīpa: cities, towns, and villages are all swept away, as grass and leaves are swept along. But when rain falls upon the great ocean, it neither increases nor decreases. When people of the Great Vehicle or the Supreme Vehicle hear the Diamond Sūtra expounded, their minds open and they awaken to its meaning."

"Therefore, know that self-nature inherently possesses prajñā wisdom. By using this wisdom and constantly contemplating, there is no need to rely on written words. [21] It is like rainwater: it does not originate in the sky, but is originally produced by dragons, which cause all sentient beings, all grasses and trees, sentient and insentient alike, to receive its moisture. The hundred rivers and myriad streams then flow back into the great ocean and unite as one body. The prajñā wisdom of the intrinsic nature of sentient beings is likewise so."

"Good friends, when people of lesser faculties hear this sudden teaching, [22] they are like grasses and trees whose roots and capacities are weak: when struck by a great rain, they all fall over and cannot grow. People of lesser faculties are likewise so. They originally possess prajñā wisdom, no different from people of great wisdom."

"Why, then, do they not awaken by themselves when they hear the Dharma? Because the obstruction of wrong views is heavy and the roots of affliction are deep. It is like a great cloud covering the sun: unless wind blows it away, the sunlight does

not appear. Prajñā wisdom itself has neither greater nor lesser measure; the difference lies in whether the minds of sentient beings are deluded or awakened. Those who, with deluded minds, seek outwardly and cultivate practice in search of Buddha, without awakening to their own nature, are people of lesser faculties."

"If one awakens to the sudden teaching, does not cling to outward cultivation, and constantly gives rise to right view within one's own mind, afflictions and worldly toils can never taint one. This is seeing one's true nature. Good friends, when one neither abides inwardly nor outwardly, comes and goes freely, removes the grasping mind, and penetrates without obstruction, one who can cultivate this practice is no different from the Prajñā Sūtra."

"Good friends, all sūtras and all writings, the greater and lesser vehicles, and the twelve divisions of scripture, are established because of people. [23] They can be established only through the nature of wisdom. If there were no people in the world, all dharmas would originally not exist. Therefore, know that all dharmas are originally brought forth by people, and all scriptures are said to exist because of people. Among people there are foolish and wise: the foolish are lesser persons, and the wise are great persons."

"The foolish ask the wise, and the wise explain the Dharma to the foolish. When the foolish suddenly awaken and their minds open, they are no different from the wise. Good friends, without awakening, Buddha is a sentient being; at the moment of awakening, a sentient being is Buddha. Therefore, know that all dharmas are entirely within one's own mind."

"Why not, from within your own mind, suddenly see the true suchness of your intrinsic nature? The Bodhisattva Precept Sūtra says: 'My original self-nature is inherently pure. If one recognizes one's own mind and sees one's true nature, all accomplish the Buddha Way.' The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: 'Immediately, he suddenly awakened and regained his original mind.' Good friends, when I was with Master Ren, upon hearing a single statement I immediately awakened and suddenly saw the true suchness of my intrinsic nature."

"Therefore I spread this teaching, enabling those who study the Way to awaken suddenly to bodhi, each to contemplate their own mind and see their own intrinsic nature. If they do not awaken by themselves, they must seek a great good friend who understands the Dharma of the Supreme Vehicle and can directly point out the right path. Such a good friend has great causes and conditions: that is, through instruction and guidance, one is enabled to see one's true nature. All wholesome dharmas can arise because of good friends."

"The Buddhas of the three times and the twelve divisions of scripture [24] are originally and inherently present within human nature. If one cannot awaken by

oneself, one must seek a good friend's guidance in order to see. If one awakens by oneself, there is no need to seek outwardly. If one stubbornly insists that liberation can be attained only by relying on another good friend, there is no such possibility. Why is this? Within one's own mind is the knowledge by which one awakens oneself."

"If wrong delusion arises and false thoughts become inverted, then even if outward good friends offer instruction, one cannot be saved. If true prajñā contemplation arises, in a single kṣaṇa all false thoughts are extinguished. If one recognizes one's self-nature, with one awakening one reaches the Buddha ground. [25] Good friends, through wisdom contemplation, one is inwardly and outwardly bright and clear and recognizes one's own original mind."

"If one recognizes the original mind, that itself is liberation. [26] If one attains liberation, that is the samādhi of prajñā; the samādhi of prajñā is without thought. What is without thought? When one sees all dharmas and the mind is not tainted or attached, this is without thought. In functioning, it pervades every place, yet it is not attached anywhere."

"Simply purify the original mind, so that the six consciousnesses go out through the six gates and, amid the six sense objects, remain unstained and unmixed. Coming and going freely, their functioning is unobstructed: this is the samādhi of prajñā, free and liberated, and it is called the practice of no-thought. If one thinks of no things at all and causes thought to cease, this is bondage by Dharma and is called an extreme view. Good friends, those who awaken to the Dharma of no-thought [27] penetrate all dharmas; those who awaken to the Dharma of no-thought see the realm of all Buddhas; those who awaken to the Dharma of no-thought reach the Buddha ground."

"Good friends, those in later generations who receive my Dharma should take up this Dharma gate of sudden teaching among those who share the same view and practice. They should make vows to uphold it as though serving the Buddha; if they do not retreat throughout their lives, they will surely enter the stage of the noble ones. Yet it must be transmitted and conferred according to the silent transmission handed down from ancient times; the true Dharma must not be concealed. If people do not share the same view and practice [28] but follow other teachings, it must not be transmitted to them, for it would harm those earlier teachers and ultimately bring no benefit."

"I fear that foolish people may not understand and may slander this Dharma gate, thereby cutting off the Buddha-seed nature for hundreds of kalpas and thousands of lives. Good friends, I have a verse of no-marks. Each of you should memorize and recite it. Lay practitioners and monastics alike should cultivate in accordance with it.

If you do not practice it yourselves but merely memorize my words, there will likewise be no benefit. Listen to my verse:"

"When doctrinal understanding and mind-understanding [29] are both penetrated, they are like the sun abiding in empty space."

"Transmit only the Dharma of seeing one's true nature, the supramundane teaching that destroys erroneous doctrines."

"The Dharma itself has no suddenness or gradualness; delusion and awakening have their slowness and swiftness."

"This gate of seeing one's true nature alone cannot be fully understood by foolish people."

"Though its explanations may be of ten thousand kinds, when they accord with principle, they return to one."

"Within the dark house of afflictions, one must constantly bring forth the sun of wisdom. [30]"

"When what is erroneous comes, afflictions arise; when what is right comes, afflictions are removed."

Put aside both wrong and right; [31] purity reaches the point where nothing remains.

Bodhi is inherent in one's own nature; the very arising of a thought is delusion. [32]

The pure mind is amid delusion; simply remain upright, and the three obstacles will be absent.

If people in the world cultivate the Way, nothing whatsoever will obstruct them. [33]

Always see your own faults, and you will accord with the Way.

Each kind of form has its own way and does not hinder or trouble the others. [34]

If, apart from the Way, you seek another Way, [35] you will never see the Way throughout your life.

You drift through life in ceaseless haste; in the end, you will only regret it yourself.

If you wish to see the true Way, right conduct itself is the Way. [36]

If you yourself lack the mind that seeks the Way, you proceed in darkness and do not see the Way.

A true cultivator of the Way does not see the faults of the world.

If you see the wrongs of others, your own wrongness is thereby increased.

Others' wrongs are not my wrongs; my own wrongs are my own faults.

Simply cast out the mind that dwells on wrongs, [37] and afflictions will be destroyed.

When hatred and love do not occupy the mind, stretch out both legs and lie down at ease.

If you wish to guide others, you must yourself possess skillful means.

Do not cause them to harbor doubts; that is the manifestation of self-nature.

The Buddhadharma is in the world and does not depart from awakening within the world.

To seek bodhi apart from the world is just like seeking a rabbit's horn. [38]

Right view is called transcendence of the world; wrong view is called worldly.

When both wrong and right are entirely cast aside, the nature of bodhi is plainly present.

This verse belongs to the sudden teaching and is also called the great Dharma vessel.

The deluded may hear it through kalpas, but the awakened realize it in an instant.

The Master further said: "Today, at Da Fan Temple, I have expounded this sudden teaching. May all sentient beings in the Dharma realm, upon hearing these words, see their nature and become Buddhas." At that time, Governor Wei, together with the officials, monastics, and laypeople, heard the Master's teaching. There was none who did not awaken to it. All paid homage together and exclaimed, "Excellent! Who could have expected that a Buddha would appear in Lingnan?"

(Note: What follows expounds the meaning according to the Second Patriarch.)

[1] "Completely purify the mind in a single thought" is the guiding principle for entering Buddhahood. Apart from this, there is no other Dharma. Whoever can do this is said to open the great wisdom of prajñā. This section chiefly concerns arousing the wondrous functioning of prajñā. Prajñā is the unsurpassed sharp instrument for sweeping away every defilement of mind. The first method to undertake here is called "completely purifying the mind in a single thought." Only by

directly realizing the Pure Land of self-nature can it be called great; hence it is prefixed with mahā.

But how does a single thought purify the Dharma? Some say to stop thoughts and prevent their arising; others say to quiet the mind and contemplate purity. This is called adding fetters upon fetters and is never ultimate, for it remains dualistic and establishes two views. Know that it is originally pure. Ordinarily, one has already realized the state of quiescent cessation. At this time, let go in a single thought and return to the condition before thoughts arose. One immediately attains stillness and clarity; the wondrous functioning of prajñā is wholly contained herein.

The two words “further said” indicate that the fourfold assembly had waited for a long time. The listeners were first told to let go of all myriad conditions; then every instruction could be impressed upon them. There is also the saying, “Lay down the butcher’s knife and become a Buddha on the spot.” Complete purification is precisely letting go. Nothing in the world is more important than becoming a Buddha, and nothing is more immediate than becoming a Buddha in a single thought.

Even ten layers of iron drums may be shot through by a single arrow in the instant that one with sufficient strength releases it. But if one’s strength is inadequate, there can be absolutely no borrowing or contrivance, not the least bit of human artifice. The preceding section spoke of using this mind directly to comprehend Buddhahood; here, “completely purify the mind in a single thought” is precisely the method of direct comprehension.

[2] The wisdom of bodhi and prajñā is not possessed by the Buddha alone. All people inherently possess it, wholly and without distinction. Thus, the earlier statement that this was not Huineng’s own wisdom was an expression of humility by the Sixth Patriarch: the teaching was transmitted by the sages of old. But from where, one may ask, did those sages obtain it? Was it not their own wisdom as well?

[3] One must rely on the guidance of a great spiritual teacher to see one’s nature. Yet this seems inconsistent with the preceding instructions, for if it is inherently possessed, why must one still depend on another? Because one is deluded and cannot awaken by oneself. Though one possesses the essence, one cannot activate its function; thus the method must be pointed out and transmitted. Moreover, the most difficult teaching for people in the world to believe lies in the words “inherently possessed,” for people never believe that they are originally Buddhas and can originally become Buddhas.

[4] “Each attains wisdom” should be changed to “each opens wisdom.” Because wisdom is inherent and not externally acquired, it should not be called “attained”; because it is inherent but has not yet been awakened, it is called “opened.”

[5] Merely speaking of emptiness, one will not see one's nature even in ten thousand kalpas. Yet speaking is also an activity of mind; it becomes mere talk only when the activity of mind is not genuine. If one does not even speak of it, would one not be still further removed? Therefore, sincerity is the foundation of learning the Buddhadharma.

[6] One's intrinsic nature is Buddha; apart from that nature, there is no other Buddha. These two statements are decisive and directly indicate that everyone fully possesses Buddha-nature. Yet what can be done when people do not believe it? Because they do not believe, they do not take it to heart and therefore fail to put it into function. Though a wealthy person possesses a treasury of jewels, if it is not opened, he is no different from a poor person.

[7] Mahā does not merely mean "great"; it means vast, all-embracing, enduring, and complete. It cannot be compared to any formed thing; only out of necessity is it compared with empty space.

[8] First, do not become attached to emptiness. Here, attachment to emptiness means falling into the view of emptiness. The view of emptiness and the view of existence are equally inverted. This has three faults: first, the illness of biased emptiness, by which one falls into a pit and cannot pull oneself out; second, clinging to one's own view as correct, while never having truly realized emptiness; third, the view of emptiness belongs to an inferior form of wisdom and is also a habitual tendency. To transform this habitual tendency is harder than ascending to heaven. Therefore, before the meaning of emptiness has been thoroughly explained, merely telling people of emptiness is what is called "compassion that poisons": it can unknowingly destroy a person's wisdom-life. How careful one must be!

[9] The myriad things, forms, and appearances do not depart from the self-nature of suchness. This means that self-nature can contain all phenomena.

"Great" does not mean containing things as an object does. It encompasses everything without boundary. If it had form and appearance, there would be relative distinctions of inside, outside, and boundaries. But then, what would exist outside form? The sūtra calls this the great body; thus we know that the dharmakāya is great. The meaning is clear. "Within the natures of all people" should be changed to "arising from all self-natures."

[10] Sitting quietly with an empty mind and thinking of nothing at all is a misunderstanding of emptiness and samādhi. Forcefully suppressing deluded thoughts so that they do not arise, and taking this as ultimate, fails to recognize that suppression is itself still a deluded thought. It adds delusion upon delusion; how could this be called samādhi? One need only remain, thought after thought, inseparable from self-nature; understand that self-nature is originally empty and

quiescent; remain clearly aware within the mind; and, when encountering circumstances, neither become defiled nor deluded. This is called samādhi. The fundamental error of non-Buddhist paths lies precisely here.

[11] “One is all” means that essence necessarily includes function: within the essence of one suchness are fully present the functions of the myriad practices, merits, and adornments. “All is one” means that function does not depart from essence: all phenomena lack self-nature, are ultimately empty and quiescent, and return to the one true reality. Originally, essence is function and function is essence; nothing is apart from self-nature. When one understands this, one moves freely in every direction without obstruction. This is the practice of prajñā.

[12] All prajñā wisdom arises from self-nature. Here, the word “arises” should be changed to “manifests,” for function reveals essence without forgetting its original nature. People often misunderstand the words “mandate of Heaven”; non-Buddhist paths mistakenly regard nature as not their own, but as bestowed by Heaven. This is because they do not understand original nature. Changing “arises” to “manifests” indicates that it is originally inherent in self-nature and manifests in accordance with conditions.

[13] “With one deluded thought, prajñā is cut off; with one wise thought, prajñā arises.” The word “cut off” should be changed to “concealed,” and “arises” should be changed to “revealed,” so that the fundamental essence is not lost. If misunderstood, “cut off” falls into annihilationist view, while “arises” falls into eternalist view. The records of the Platform Sūtra often contain such problematic phrasing; fortunately, do not mislead yourselves.

[14] When one becomes attached to circumstances, thoughts of arising and ceasing arise and may wreak mischief. This is called forgetting the root. People in the world stir up waves when there is nothing to do, binding and obstructing themselves everywhere. How can they know the wonder of unobstructed functioning? No worldly matter is free of suffering, yet no matter is incapable of being transformed from suffering into happiness, and from happiness returned to emptiness, thereby reaching ultimate bliss.

If one knows that all phenomena are unobstructed and the mind is always freely flowing, this is to gain blessings through wisdom, called cultivating blessings and wisdom together. Yet people are deficient in blessings: they do not believe this principle and do not cultivate this practice. If one cultivates in a single thought, one’s very self is equal to a Buddha. There is no greater blessing and favorable condition in human life than this.

Moreover, all sentient beings equally possess Buddha-nature and could equally obtain such blessings and favorable conditions. Yet one ascends to the Buddha

stage while another falls into the three lower realms. Seeing this contrast, great compassion naturally wells up. Therefore, those firmly attached to self must treat others meagerly; those cold and indifferent in human feeling must fail to understand the principles of human relationships. If they lack reverence even toward the Buddha, their parents, and their teachers and elders, how can one expect them to be compassionate toward sentient beings? To seek Buddhahood without penetrating this principle is like seeking to enter a doctoral program without having finished elementary school. How can Buddhist practitioners neglect Confucian learning? And how can they disparage it?

[15] The two words “freely flowing” would better be rendered “clear and quiescent,” for clear quiescence is the characteristic of the essence that is neither arising nor ceasing. This section, however, places greater emphasis on function. “Freely flowing” refers to the wondrous functioning that encounters no disadvantage anywhere. Practitioners need not rigidly cling to an interpretation of “freely flowing.”

[16] Ordinary beings are Buddhas; afflictions are bodhi. This again returns to Buddha-nature as original. Only when the Sixth Patriarch had spoken to this point did he make it explicit, yet he was not afraid of frightening people. At this point I am suddenly moved to feel that the formal rituals and observances of the Buddhadharma will be ruined by those who do not understand Buddhist learning, while the formless true meaning of the Buddha will be ruined by those who study Buddhism—because they cling to words without understanding the Buddha’s meaning. Some may even clearly know the harm but dare not correct it. Alas!

[17] The five aggregates cannot be smashed apart; one need only cease deluded thought, and the true mind will reveal itself. To transform consciousness into wisdom, wisdom too is none other than the five aggregates. Originally there is no wisdom and nothing to attain. If even mind does not exist, where could wisdom be established? Since wisdom cannot be obtained, where could afflictions be? The Heart Sūtra says, “Seeing that the five aggregates are all empty,” but this means realizing the emptiness of the five aggregates, not rejecting or abolishing them. Moreover, the seeing itself is also among the five aggregates. “Smash apart” may be changed to “empty the five aggregates.”

[18] “From one prajñā arise eighty-four thousand kinds of wisdom” means that from the essence of one prajñā arise the wondrous functions of eighty-four thousand kinds of wisdom. Without the toil of worldly dust, what use would there be for prajñā? Thus one and many are not different, and prajñā and worldly toil are nondual. The word “arise” should be changed to “manifest,” and the word “change” in the following sentence should be changed to “transform.”

[19] “If there were no worldly toil, wisdom would always be manifest”: this expresses the meaning that ceasing delusion is itself truth. Yet, by comparison between the two, wisdom would be difficult to reveal without worldly toil.

[20] By upholding and reciting the Diamond Prajñā Sūtra, one may see one’s nature. The merit and virtue of this sūtra are immeasurable and boundless. It was originally taught for people of the highest vehicle and great capacity, yet there are many who misunderstand it. How difficult it is indeed to read the sūtras!

Ordinary people never willingly acknowledge themselves to be persons of the highest vehicle: this is the first ailment. All ordinary people have the inferior tendency to rely on something, thinking that the matter of seeing one’s nature can be attained through a sūtra: this is the second ailment. They mistakenly believe that the boundless and immeasurable merit belongs to the Diamond Sūtra, and that if I read it and seek it, the sūtra’s merit can surely be transferred to me, just as property can be transferred and inherited: this is the third ailment. The two characters merit and virtue—

Ordinary people are determined to misconstrue them as things possessing form. Thus pursuits of wealth, sons, and the like arise. If some response manifests, they credit the sūtra; if it does not, they instead give rise to doubt and slander. This is the fourth ailment. They do not know that merit and virtue lie in actual realization of the emptiness of nature; as for how this is to be actually realized, that depends entirely on oneself.

The Diamond Sūtra is like a great bell: it cannot sound by itself, but sounds when struck. Yet the Diamond Sūtra is not even a great bell; it is one’s own nature. Forget the method of striking back at one’s own nature, and it therefore does not sound. The Diamond Sūtra merely explains how to strike the bell; after reading it, one must still strike it oneself. Thus the first necessity is to recognize the original nature, so as not to be misled by the sūtra. Yet when has the sūtra ever misled anyone? It is like a person with diseased eyes who cannot see the light and blames the absence of light. Hence it is said that great clouds cover the sun; it is not that there is no sun. Though the sun is unharmed, clouds cover it, and one must rely on wind to blow them away and remove the obstruction. What is now said about there being cultivation, attainment, and realization is all expedient teaching.

[21] Above it was said that speaking of the Diamond Sūtra opens the mind to awakening and understanding, whereas here it is said that one does not rely on words and letters; listeners may doubt this. They do not know that the sūtra’s sentences are borrowed as a dharma gate, while contemplation remains within oneself. What is called sudden teaching does not mean that the teaching itself has sudden and gradual divisions. When sentient beings’ conditions ripen, they awaken

immediately upon hearing it, and it is therefore called sudden. But if the mind races outward, one may fail to realize and enter it through countless kalpas; even gradual cultivation offers little hope.

Not relying on words and letters means not wishing to seek outwardly; it does not mean discarding words and letters. Thus a sūtra may be compared to a mirror: it reveals that one's face is covered with grime, but the main task is to wipe one's face. If, on seeing the mirror, one forgets to examine one's face in return, one takes words and letters to mislead oneself. Yet it is not words and letters that can mislead me.

[22] After three years of severe drought, all things wither. Suddenly rain comes, and at once it becomes sweet dew. Yet a great tree cannot be saved by a light rain, while a small tree cannot withstand a heavy rain; circumstances cannot satisfy both. When the prajñā Dharma is taught, those of lesser capacity will certainly be frightened, because preconceived views already remain within them.

Therefore one must not hold fixed views. Worldly affairs have no fixed definition; right and wrong are merely provisional names. What A regards as right may not be right to B. If one can comprehend this, one will not cling firmly, and the wondrous function of non-abiding will appear. Clouds cover the sun, but the sun neither gains nor loses; how can the dust and toil of afflictions obstruct the original nature? Yet one must awaken to and see the original nature. Only when one knows that it fundamentally cannot be defiled can one comprehend this without remainder.

[23] To constantly give rise to right view: what is originally pure and undefiled is right. To see this through the illuminating power of wisdom is right view. It does not mean "right" as opposed to good and evil, or to wrong and right.

[24] The twelve divisions of the scriptures were all established in response to people; they could be established only because of the nature of wisdom. From this it can be seen that sentient beings and Buddhas alike possess this virtue-nature, which brings forth wondrous functioning. If there were no dust and toil, what need would there be for remedies? Only then do we know that the myriad dharmas fundamentally do not exist in themselves; they arise through conditions, arising out of emptiness, and are therefore known to be illusory.

[25] "With one awakening, one reaches the Buddha-ground": such statements must be clearly understood. One must know: what is it that awakens, and how is it called awakening? Understanding something intellectually does not count as awakening. One must truly see, and see at all times. Seeing and not seeing have their own special inner realm, known in one's own awareness. Therefore, only one who truly knows the characteristics of one's own mind first ascends to the Buddha stage.

[26] If one recognizes the original mind, that itself is liberation; if one attains liberation, that is prajñā samādhi. This precisely expresses dharmakāya, prajñā, and liberation—the so-called three-point maṇḍala. In Sanskrit there are twenty-eight letters; now only the character, the letter i, remains. In the Western Regions there are old and new forms of the letter i: in the old form, the three dots are separate; in the new form, they are joined by lines.

Tiantai takes the old letter i to represent the three virtues of the gradual teaching: dharmakāya is inherently possessed, prajñā is cultivated and attained, and only after entering nirvana without remainder is there liberation; each does not belong to the others. The perfect and sudden teaching takes the new letter i to represent the three virtues as inseparable, each mutually containing the others. There is the wondrous principle of separation and union in nature and cultivation: opened out, they are three; joined together, they are one. Together they form the secret treasury of the three virtues, perfectly interpenetrating and unobstructed, revealing the unity of nature and cultivation.

To unite sentient beings and Buddhas as sharing the same source is an inconceivable dharma gate. The Sixth Patriarch precisely expresses this meaning: “Recognizing one’s own original mind is itself liberation; that is prajñā samādhi.” Combined, they are one. Its subtle point is simply to purify the original mind, making clear that it has never been tainted or mixed.

[27] “One who awakens to the dharma of no-thought reaches the Buddha stage” has the meaning explained in the preceding passage. One must first awaken. After awakening, all dharmas are fully comprehended, and wondrous functioning appears. No-thought means simply having thoughts without abiding in them; it does not mean not using thought. As it is said, its functioning pervades every place, yet it does not cling to any place. This is called nondefilement, and it is prajñā samādhi. Samādhi, rendered in Chinese as “proper reception,” means not receiving: through non-abiding and nonattachment, one engages yet remains undefiled. Receiving is itself not receiving. Thus it is also called great samādhi; it is altogether lively and vital. Awaken to this Dharma, and one reaches the Buddha stage. What further doubt can there be?

[28] Regard those who share the same view and practice, and who make vows to uphold this sudden-teaching dharma gate, as one would serve the Buddha. Ordinary people and Buddhas are originally the same; since their Buddha-nature is the same, everything is the same. Whatever differences there are arise because people limit and obstruct themselves.

If people do not share the same view and practice, self and other stand in opposition and will certainly not understand one another. Because of me, I provoke

another's irritation, causing doubt and slander toward the Dharma. This is not only my own fault; it also obscures the wondrous functioning of prajñā. The statement that it must not be transmitted means that those below the middle capacity cannot be spoken to of what is above; to transmit it to one who is not the right person benefits neither party.

For prajñā, observing the recipient's capacity comes first. If one lacks the ability oneself, do not hasten to act out of compassion. Compassion without skillful means creates wrongdoing; how careful one must be! Moreover, those who share the same view and practice truly enjoy the harmony of fish and water. Even if they wished to give rise midway to doubt and slander, how could they do so? Those who share the same view have likewise entered deeply into the One Vehicle, believing without doubt. Those who share the same practice are resolutely devoted to actual cultivation, and alike attain realization in practice; otherwise they cannot be in accord. One advances while the other retreats, and doubts and slanders multiply; thus it is said to be of no benefit.

[29] The character ji in this sentence is perhaps an error for nai. The meaning is that what is verbally called tongxiang today refers only to mind-penetration; mind-penetration is the Dharma of seeing one's true nature. Like the sun abiding in empty space, it fully illuminates all ten directions without exception; thus it can destroy all wrong views and transcend the world.

[30] Though one is in the dark house of afflictions, the power of wisdom constantly remains; it is merely hidden and not seen. The words "must arise" are too dull and rigid; one may instead say, "This sun of wisdom constantly remains."

[31] "Use" may be changed to "do not cling," because wrong and right fundamentally have no fixed definition. Clinging itself becomes wrong. One certainly must not cling to wrong, but neither may one cling to right. Prajñā is the mind's spiritually aware state of nonattachment; the word "use" here is much too concrete and attached.

[32] The sentence "the arising of mind is delusion" is proposed for revision as "when the mind is deluded, delusion is formed." For one who sees the nature, the arising of mind is not necessarily delusion; for one who does not see the nature, even if thoughts do not arise, delusion still remains and will emerge when conditions are encountered. If this is misunderstood, one will certainly try to stop thoughts from arising and instead create an illness. Therefore, constantly remain aware and illuminating without delusion; as thoughts arise, let them subside. Serenely unmoving—this is the pure characteristic of bodhi's self-nature.

[33] "Nothing whatsoever is an obstacle" does not mean that everything is harmless and may be indulged in. With regard to good and evil, right and wrong, the mind itself remains equal and does not retain dualistic views.

[34] The character ge may be changed to ben, giving “originally, there is no mutual obstruction or affliction,” which is more forceful.

[35] The Way is nature itself; that is, it is the Dharma of seeing one’s nature.

[36] Right conduct is itself the Way; this means that no-mind is itself the Way. If the mind is truly without attachment, it is called right. At such points, ordinary people often mistake this “right” for right as opposed to wrong. That belongs to the dharma of good and evil as opposites; it is not the true Way.

[37] The six sentences beginning, “If one sees another’s faults,” are not smooth in meaning. The intended meaning is that if one sees another’s faults, this is one’s own fault, because what one sees is biased. Therefore, though another may be at fault, I must ultimately not condemn that person. If I condemn them, I myself have fault. If one can only remove the mind that finds fault with others, the mind naturally becomes empty and quiescent, and afflictions naturally vanish.

[38] These four sentences precisely express the meaning that transcending the world and entering the world are nondual: the mind makes no distinction between entering and transcending the world. Because the mind has afflictions and inverted views, the worldly realm is established. If one wishes to transcend the world, one must still emerge from amid afflictions. If there were no afflictions, the Buddhadharma would have no function, nor would there be any resources for cultivation.

Foolish people insist on dividing them into two. They do not know that there is nowhere in the world that is not Buddhadharma, for not a single thing can depart from the sphere of nature; it is one and the same dharma. If one abides, there are afflictions, and this is called entering the world. If one does not abide, there are no hindrances, and this is called transcending the world. One who knows this meaning is called awakened; awakening is transcendence of the world. One who does not know is called deluded; delusion is entering the world. Thus it is one and the same seeing.

What is right is called transcendent of the world, because it relies on wisdom and accords with pure awakened nature. What is wrong is called worldly, because it relies on consciousness, follows worldly sentiments, and is inverted. Therefore, true transcendence of the world lies in one’s inner condition, not in outward appearance. The mind is detached beyond measure, beyond what others can fathom; moreover, it is a matter of a single instant. This is what is meant by seeing one’s nature and becoming a Buddha at the very word.

The purpose of this section is to clarify that among sentient beings, not one lacks prajñā wisdom; it is not something possessed by the Sixth Patriarch alone. As for the

wondrous functioning of prajñā, it is the mind's functioning. The mind makes no distinction between entering and transcending the world, though affairs differ in whether they are ultimate or not ultimate.

What is ultimate is necessarily revealed in contrast to what is not ultimate. Worldly dharmas are nothing but dependent on consciousness; if they are transformed by wisdom, they become transcendent of the world. Its subtle point lies in the single phrase, "wholly purify the thoughts of the mind." One need only let go, and it is attained; there is truly no need to go to further trouble by transforming consciousness into wisdom. Consciousness and wisdom are not two. First, there is the division into consciousness and wisdom: this is sentient beings. Next, there is transforming consciousness into wisdom: this is the two vehicles. Then, there is consciousness itself as wisdom: this is bodhisattvas. Finally, there is neither consciousness nor wisdom: this is Buddhas. Yet all are merely the arising and ceasing of illusory mind.

Chapter Three: Resolving Doubts

One day, Prefect Wei prepared a great vegetarian feast for the Master. When the meal was over, the Prefect invited the Master to take the seat. Together with the officials, scholars, and laypeople, he respectfully bowed twice and asked, "This disciple has heard the Reverend expound the Dharma, and it is truly inconceivable. I now have a few doubts. [I] I beg you, out of great compassion, to explain them especially for me." The Master said, "If you have doubts, ask them, and I shall explain."

Lord Wei said, "Is not what the Venerable teaches the essential teaching of Master Bodhidharma?" The Master said, "It is." The Prefect said, "This disciple has heard that when Bodhidharma first converted Emperor Wu of Liang, the Emperor asked, 'Throughout my life I have built monasteries, ordained monastics, made donations, and provided vegetarian feasts. What merit and virtue is there in this?' Bodhidharma replied, 'Truly, there is no merit and virtue.' This disciple does not understand this principle and hopes that the Venerable will explain it." The Master said, "Truly, there is no merit and virtue."

Do not doubt the words of the sages of old. Emperor Wu's mind was misguided, and he did not understand the true Dharma. [II] He built temples, ordained monastics, gave alms, and held vegetarian feasts, calling this the seeking of blessings. But blessings must not be taken for merit and virtue. Merit and virtue are within the dharmakāya; [III] they do not lie in the cultivation of blessings."

The Master further said, "Seeing one's nature is merit; equality is virtue. When thought after thought is unobstructed, one constantly sees one's original nature,

and its true and wondrous functioning is called merit and virtue. Inward humility of heart is merit; outward conduct in accordance with propriety is virtue. The self-nature's establishment of all phenomena is merit; the mind-essence's freedom from thoughts is virtue. Not departing from the self-nature is merit; functioning without defilement is virtue. If you seek the dharmakāya of merit and virtue, simply act in accordance with this; that is true merit and virtue."

Those who cultivate merit and virtue do not slight others in their minds; they constantly practice universal respect. If one constantly belittles others, and attachment to self does not cease, one thereby has no merit. If one's intrinsic nature is false and unreal, one thereby has no virtue, for one is self-important through attachment to self and constantly belittles all others. Good friends, uninterrupted moment after moment is merit; a mind that acts evenly and straightforwardly is virtue. Cultivating one's own nature is merit; cultivating one's own conduct is virtue. [IV] Good friends, merit and virtue must be seen within one's own nature; they are not what is sought through giving and making offerings. Thus blessings and merit and virtue differ. Emperor Wu did not understand the true principle; it was not the Patriarch's fault."

The Prefect further asked, "This disciple often sees monastics and laypeople reciting Amitābha Buddha's name and wishing to be reborn in the West. [V] Please tell me, Reverend, whether they can be reborn there, and dispel my doubts." The Master said, "Governor, listen well, and Huineng will explain. The World-Honored One, in Śrāvastī, expounded the scripture on guiding beings to the Western Land, clearly stating that it is not far from here. Speaking in terms of outward appearances, it is one hundred and eight thousand li away."

[VI] The ten evil acts and eight wrongs within one's very body are what make it seem far away. It is said to be far away for those of lesser capacity, and near for those of superior wisdom. People are of two kinds, but the Dharma is not of two kinds. Delusion and awakening differ, and realization may be swift or slow. Deluded people recite the Buddha's name and seek rebirth there; awakened people purify their own minds. Therefore the Buddha said, "As their minds are pure, so are the Buddha lands pure."

Governor, for people of the East, if their minds are pure, they are free of wrongdoing; though people of the West, if their minds are impure, also incur faults. People of the East who commit wrongs recite the Buddha's name and seek rebirth in the West. People of the West who commit wrongs—[VII] by reciting the Buddha's name, in what land do they seek rebirth? Ordinary and foolish people do not understand their own nature and do not recognize the Pure Land within their bodies. [VIII] They make vows for the East or vows for the West, whereas awakened people find all places alike."

Therefore the Buddha said, “Wherever one dwells, one is always at peace and ease.” Governor, if the mind-ground is free from unwholesomeness, the West is not far from here. If one harbors an unwholesome mind, it is difficult to arrive there by reciting the Buddha’s name and seeking rebirth. I now urge you, good friends: first eliminate the ten evils, and you will have traveled 100,000 li; then eliminate the eight wrongs, and you will have crossed another 8,000. See your nature in every thought and always act with straightforwardness; then, in the time of a finger snap, you will behold Amitābha.”

“Governor, simply practice the ten wholesome deeds. Why must you further wish for rebirth? If the mind of the ten evil acts is not cut off, what Buddha will immediately come to welcome you? If you awaken to the sudden teaching of the unborn, you will see the West in but an instant. [IX] If you do not awaken and merely recite the Buddha’s name, the road to rebirth is far away. How can you arrive there?” Huineng will move the Western Land here for all of you; in an instant, you will see it before your eyes. Do you all wish to see it?” Everyone bowed in reverence and said, “If we can see it here, why need we further wish for rebirth? [X] We beg the Reverend, in compassion, to reveal the West at once, so that all may see it.”

The Master said, “Great assembly, the physical body of worldly people is itself a city; the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are its gates. There are five gates outside and the gate of mind within. The mind is the ground, and intrinsic nature is the king. [XI] The king dwells upon the mind-ground. When intrinsic nature is present, the king is present; when intrinsic nature departs, the king is absent. When intrinsic nature is present, body and mind endure; when intrinsic nature departs, body and mind decay. The Buddha is to be realized within intrinsic nature; do not seek outside the body.”

“When the self-nature is deluded, it is a sentient being; when the self-nature awakens, it is Buddha. Compassion is Avalokiteśvara; joy in giving is Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The capacity for purity is Śākyamuni; straightforwardness is Amitābha. The self and others are Mount Sumeru; a deviant mind is the ocean waters. Afflictions are waves; harmful poisons are evil dragons. Falsity is ghosts and spirits; worldly toils are fish and turtles. Greed and anger are hells; ignorance is animals.”

“Good friends, if you constantly practice the ten wholesome deeds, heaven will arrive at once. Eliminate the self and others, and Mount Sumeru collapses; remove the deviant mind, and the ocean waters dry up. When afflictions are absent, the waves cease; when harmful poisons are forgotten, fish and dragons perish. Upon the ground of one’s own mind, the Tathāgata of awakened nature emits great radiance. Shining outward, it purifies the six gates and can destroy the heavens of the six desires; shining inward upon the self-nature, it eliminates the three poisons,

and hellish and other offenses are all extinguished at once. Inwardly and outwardly bright and clear, it is no different from the West. Without this cultivation, how can one reach that land?"

Having heard this teaching, the entire assembly clearly realized their own nature. All bowed in homage and exclaimed, "Excellent!" They cried out, "May all sentient beings in the dharma realm, upon hearing this, awaken and understand at once." The Master said, "Good friends, if you wish to practice, you may do so at home; it does not depend on being in a monastery. [XII] Those who can practice at home are like people of the East whose minds are good; those in monasteries who do not practice are like people of the West whose minds are evil. So long as the mind is pure, that is the Western Land of one's own nature."

Lord Wei again asked, "How should those living at home cultivate? I hope you will instruct us." The Master said, "I shall compose a verse of no marks for the whole assembly. Simply cultivate according to it, and you will always be with me, without distinction. If you do not cultivate according to it, what benefit is there in shaving your head and leaving home? The verse says:"

If the mind is even, what need is there to labor at keeping precepts? If conduct is upright, what use is there in cultivating Chan?

In kindness, be filial and support your parents; in righteousness, those above and below should care for one another.

Through yielding, high and low live in harmony; through forbearance, the many evils make no clamor.

If you can drill wood to make fire, red lotuses will surely grow from muddy silt.

Bitter medicine is good medicine; words grating to the ear are surely loyal counsel.

Correcting one's faults surely gives rise to wisdom; protecting one's shortcomings reveals that one is not worthy within.

In daily life, constantly practice benefiting others; realization of the Way does not come from giving money.

Seek bodhi only in the mind; why labor to seek the mysterious outside?

Hear this: practice accordingly, and heaven is right before you. [XIII]

The Master further said, "Good friends, all of you must cultivate according to this verse, see and realize your own nature, and directly attain the Buddha Way. The Dharma does not wait. Let the assembly disperse for now; I shall return to Caoxi. If

any of you have doubts, come again and ask me." At that time, the Prefect and officials, the faithful men and women at the assembly, all attained awakening, accepted the teaching in faith, and put it into practice.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the essential meaning.)

[I] To resolve doubts is to seek certainty concerning what one doubts. What, then, is the matter in doubt? It is the essential point that must first be settled in this teaching.

Moreover, doubt can arise only after one has first gained some insight; it occurs when one has practiced and attained something, yet cannot resolve it oneself and therefore asks for a definite resolution. Thus, without diligence, doubt cannot arise and there is no basis for asking. Hence, great doubt brings great awakening; without doubt, there is no awakening. This is the beneficial kind of doubt.

Yet doubt is also one of the six great afflictions: it is the blind doubt of worldly views and the error of letting adventitious emotions take charge. Buddhas and bodhisattvas liberate the world simply by helping people decisively remove their doubts. Among the afflictions of sentient beings, doubt is the cause of all suffering. One not only doubts others, but also doubts oneself. Once one has seen one's nature, however, one can cut off delusions and realize truth, and can further resolve the doubts of others.

Moreover, principle and phenomena are nondual, and principle can supplement what is lacking in phenomena. Principle is settled through causes; phenomena are verified through results. Before a person has reached thorough realization, they cannot resolve matters for themselves when circumstances arise, and in the end cannot be called clearly awakened. This section determines Master Bodhidharma's essential teaching and dispels three doubts: first, attachment to merit and virtue with marks; second, dependence on others and ignorance of how to decide for oneself; and third, failure to understand the superiority of the power of mind, thus forgetting the principle of seeing and realizing one's own nature and directly attaining the Buddha Way. It explains layer by layer, dispels these doubts, and leads people through the gate.

[2] Emperor Wu's mind was deluded, and he did not understand the true Dharma. The character ("wrong") should be ("deluded"): deluded by appearances, he took merit and virtue to be worldly blessings—this was precisely great superstition.

The Sixth Patriarch's discussion of merit and virtue brings the matter entirely back to the mind-ground. For people of middling and lesser capacities, it can only be explained in this way. For one who has truly seen one's nature, the emptiness of nature itself is merit and virtue. The two words "merit and virtue" are also merely

provisional names and are truly unobtainable. Therefore he says, “Truly, there is no merit and virtue.”

If one speaks of there being no merit and virtue, then building monasteries, ordaining monastics, making donations, and providing vegetarian feasts are all established by the dharma-nature and have never not been merit and virtue. Whether there is merit and virtue or not depends only on whether one is awakened. When awakened, everything everywhere is entirely merit and virtue, because one does not cling to either existence or nonexistence. When deluded, even if one possesses every kind of meritorious practice, it is still not merit and virtue, because one stubbornly clings to marks and has not reached the ultimate.

The strongest attachment to marks is called the notion of self. Where there is self, one becomes arrogant toward others. Once the four marks of self, person, sentient being, and life span are established, how can it still be called merit and virtue? Therefore the final conclusion says: “Merit and virtue must be seen within one’s own nature; they are not what is sought through giving and making offerings.” Yet neither can they be attained apart from giving and making offerings. Blessings and merit and virtue differ in name but not in essence; it depends only on whether we recognize this.

[III] The Sixth Patriarch has already explained the meaning of merit and virtue in detail. Let us add this: not clinging to emptiness is merit, because it enables one to establish the various skillful dharmas. The sūtras speak of cultivating all wholesome dharmas; this is their meaning. Not clinging to existence is virtue, because virtuous nature is originally empty and quiescent, wholly unobtainable; this is its fundamental aspect. What is called the nature of blessings and virtues cannot be compared with the appearances of blessings and virtues.

Works such as building monasteries and ordaining monastics are precisely appearances of blessings and virtue. If outwardly one does not abandon all works of liberating sentient beings, while inwardly one does not establish the view of liberating sentient beings, and one clings to neither, then merit and virtue are adorned. One need not cling to principle and thereby deprive phenomena, nor cling to phenomena and thereby forget the original ground.

Furthermore, virtue does not manifest without merit, and merit is incomplete without virtue. Without virtue, merit is merit that is not merit. Those today who perform outward meritorious works do not function from the prajñā of their own nature, and their virtue therefore often fails to endure to the end. Thus thoughts of anger do not cease, the views of good and evil run too deep, and the wisdom of the equality of all things has no way to arise. They value results but not causes;

consequently, their undertakings cannot be thorough. Or they may begin well but end badly. If they wish to attain liberation from the world, how can it not be difficult?

[4] In the two phrases, “cultivating one’s nature oneself is gong; cultivating one’s body oneself is de,” the characters (“nature”) and (“body”) should be reversed for the wording to accord with the principle: gong is applied outwardly, whereas de is within. Cultivating the body concerns one’s relations with others, while cultivating one’s nature is self-discipline.

[5] When the World-Honored One spoke of the Western Land being ten billion Buddha-lands away, this was expedient means; there is no fixed number in reality. To say that the Sixth Patriarch did not understand doctrinal forms and was therefore mistaken would itself be mistaken; in truth, the two are not different. In terms of speech, the two lands are indeed ten billion Buddha-lands apart, yet for the mind, in a single instant there is neither distance nor nearness. Moreover, “ten billion Buddha-lands” does not refer merely to one direction. In relation to the ten billion, all are equally perfect, pervasive, and illuminating. One gate encompasses all gates; one must not again cling to phenomenal appearances. In the phrase “the ten evils and eight wrongs within the body,” the character for “body” should be changed to “mind” for it to accord with the meaning.

[6] “Deluded people recite the Buddha’s name, seeking rebirth there; awakened people purify their own minds.” When wise people see these two statements, there is naturally no problem. Foolish people, however, will surely raise disputes; some may become greatly alarmed, while others may detest the Chan school and instead commit the offense of slandering the Dharma. How pointless this is.

I must therefore elaborate further. The Pure Land Dharma is one of the expedient methods within the Buddha-Dharma. When people reach the extreme suffering of the Sahā world, nothing remains for them to cling to; there must be somewhere in which they can settle their minds and find a destination. Queen Vaidehī is one example. This is the first reason.

In the Dharma-ending age, practitioners’ faculties are no longer sharp, and they are not close to the nature of prajñā. Since it is difficult for everyone to enter meditative absorption, it is better to guide them toward the Western Pure Land, where there is hope of attaining a fruition stage. This is the second reason. For those of the highest vehicle, the meaning of the Pure Lands of the ten directions is taught: they enter the gate of accomplishment, open wondrous discerning wisdom, see all dharmas as equal, and together realize the ocean of Vairocana’s nature. This is the third reason.

Although the Buddha-Dharma takes expedient means as ultimate, there is certainly no principle by which this gate of Dharma was specially opened for deluded people alone. Thus, the Pure Land is the Pure Land, and deluded people are deluded

people. Deluded people who study Chan will not necessarily cease to be deluded; how could awakened people who cultivate Pure Land retain a view of purity? Readers must not misunderstand the Patriarch's intent. Deluded people refuse to recite the Buddha's name, knowing only how to seek the Buddha; their nature retains dependence, and they do not know to purify the mind. They vainly turn things upside down and completely lose the fundamental meaning of the Pure Land school. If awakened people purify their own minds, this is the true Pure Land.

Those who now cultivate the Pure Land do not fail to understand this principle, but they place too much emphasis on reciting the name, believing that ten recitations are sufficient for rebirth. This merely opens an expedient gate for those of lazy temperament who covet ease, and it is most regrettable. Therefore, the methods of the three mysteries should be vigorously promoted as a remedy. When Master Lianchi was on the verge of sleep in Chan contemplation, every thought remained inseparable from Amitābha. This is precisely the nonseparation of Chan and Pure Land; what is there to doubt?

Furthermore, the prajñā Dharma is complete in meaning and all-encompassing in method. If the Sixth Patriarch had indeed regarded rebirth in the West as the business of deluded people, why would he further say that one may transfer the West as if in a single instant and see it immediately before one's eyes?

In the past, when I transmitted and demonstrated the method of rebirth in the Western Pure Land, I first had the person contemplate where the form-endowed body was located. He would say, "It is sitting within the chair." Its smallness does not even extend beyond the chair. This is only form: the small is contained within the great, and there is nothing much to discuss. I then had him contemplate again: when a thought arises, this present place of practice is within my thought. This is the great contained within the small.

Extending this further, within a single thought even the vastness of Tianjin is contained in that thought. Extending it more broadly, what is called China, the world, the sun, moon, and stars, and even the three-thousand great-thousand world system—none is not contained, one by one, within the ocean of my nature. Countless such three-thousand world systems are each contained by me, and none departs from the ocean of my nature. Thus, the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is also within my thought, just like a single grain of millet in a great granary.

Thus, the West and I are not opposed to one another but mutually contain one another: within me is that land, and within that land am I. How, then, can they be called opposites? If one speaks of opposition, they become two things, with this and that, coming and going, far and near, rebirth and non-rebirth.

Since this view cannot be established, we know that rebirth is a provisional expedient and a temporary designation. When a single thought of mine arises and the West thereby appears, a connection is immediately formed; this is called rebirth. Thus, rebirth in the West is a matter of a single instant. This has already been stated in the Chapter on the Vows and Conduct of Samantabhadra: it is this king of vows alone. Only then do we know that the activity of mind is primary; when thought becomes utterly earnest, recitation naturally flows forth from the mouth.

Reciting the name is the result of holding it in the mind. When the mind has an image and a connection arises, one is born without being born and goes without going.

Yet at times, pressing concerns of people and affairs interrupt this mindfulness, or it may be abandoned altogether. Therefore, it must be thought after thought: keep it constantly in mind, and over time become continuous and undivided, like a fish in water that never leaves it even for a moment. This is the maturation of conditions; when conditions mature, fruition will certainly mature. There will then be no need to contemplate again, for it will remain so forever.

Before this method, however, one must add the practice of seated Buddha-recitation, which is set forth at the end of The Correct Meaning of the Amitābha Sūtra in Sections. The fourth mudrā of the Heart-of-Heart Esoteric Dharma likewise guides one to the Land of Ultimate Bliss; there is no distinction between them. Moreover, the prajñā school does not entertain the inferior view of setting up separate camps. Therefore, I have deleted the minor notes within the sūtra, in order to avoid disputes.

[7] In the phrase “people of the West commit offenses,” the word “perhaps” should be added, because the West is a land of accomplishment, from which there is never regression; how could there be evil there? The Sixth Patriarch uses principle as an analogy; he is not speaking rigidly. Worldly people always cling to the belief that one must first be born in the Pure Land before one’s intrinsic nature can be purified, as though the purity or defilement of one’s own nature depended on a Buddha-land for transformation. They do not know that purity of mind is the cause and rebirth is the fruition. With this one mistake, cause and effect are reversed, and there is no way to reason further. It is also said that those reborn while carrying karma may not necessarily be without faults in the West; it is simply that the West lacks the adverse conditions by which evil karma can come to fruition.

[8] In the phrase “not recognizing the Pure Land within the body,” the words “within the body” should be changed to “intrinsic nature.” Non-Buddhists mistakenly believe that there is a Pure Land within the body and thereby fall into wrong views. Their first error is to take the Pure Land as a truly existing thing; their second is to believe

that there is another such thing within the body. This results in grasping at appearances and produces the seeds of rebirth in hell. How lamentable.

[9] The phrase “Why need one further aspire to rebirth?” should be changed to “This aspiration itself is rebirth.” The sūtra says, “Whether already born, now being born, or to be born.” The single word “whether” integrates principle and phenomena. This is the Sixth Patriarch’s original intent.

[10] Regarding the phrase “In a single instant, one sees the West immediately before one’s eyes”: how many can deeply believe it? This passage is truly the foremost wondrous key to rebirth in the West. What is precious is the activity of mind; therefore, faith is the mother of merit and virtue.

[11] “Mind is the ground; nature is the king” is an error of the recorder. Nature belongs to the unmoving ground; provisionally, the mind-king is made primary. Mind belongs to arising and ceasing: the king may change, but the land does not change.

The body belongs to the realm of instruments, while mind belongs to the functioning of Dharma. If the instrument is damaged, the fundamental reality remains unchanged; it is only that Dharma functioning becomes difficult to arise. Yet the illusory mind still follows the fundamental reality; one simply must not grasp at appearances in seeking to perceive it. If one takes appearances as real, then when birth appears, one falls into eternalism; when death occurs and appearances vanish, one again falls into annihilationism. Neither is the direct perception of the true appearance of the fundamental reality. Such points are especially liable to lead people astray through words. If one clings to them still further, one will mislead others as well.

[12] To leave home is to cut off afflictions; how could it be a matter of outward form? Only after afflictions have been cut off does one possess proper deportment. Manifesting the appearance of a bhikshu is an expedient for liberating sentient beings.

If one clings to external appearances and regards leaving home as superior and remaining at home as inferior, forgetting cultivation, this is a low and worldly view. As for separating pure from afflicted, that is the discrimination of the two vehicles. Entering the mountains and fearing only that they are not deep enough shows that these two views have not been eliminated. The Sixth Patriarch, as an upāsaka, ascended to the position of Patriarch. For eighteen years he nurtured the Way and did not first possess the proper deportment. Because his resolve for the Way was urgent, he had no leisure to attend to such details. When conditions had matured, nothing was unacceptable. May benevolent readers promptly attend to the great matter of birth and death, and not waste precious time in futile disputation.

[13] The wording and meaning of the verse should be slightly corrected. “An even mind is precisely observing the precepts; upright conduct is no different from cultivating Chan.” This does not mean abandoning the precepts and failing to uphold them. Precepts guard against evil karma. Because the mind lacks equanimity, disputes arise. Greed is the cause of stealing, anger the cause of killing, and ignorance the cause of sexual misconduct; all of these are grave delusions. Being befuddled is no different from being drunk.

Conversely, when the mind is even, one is willing to relinquish. When one relinquishes, one does not grasp; when one does not grasp, there is no contention. When no evil karma arises, there are no precepts to speak of. “Upright” does not mean upright as opposed to crooked; it means candid and free from defilement.

If discrimination is relinquished, there is no defilement; this is called Chan meditation. The two are one. Kindness, righteousness, yielding, and forbearance are all principles for conducting oneself as a human being. The nondual Dharma of cultivation for lay practitioners lies in benefiting others through ordinary daily conduct; it is not something bought by giving money. If the two words “heavenly realm” were changed to “the West,” they would correspond with the preceding passage.

The phrase “Bodhi is sought only in the mind” should be changed to “Bodhi is realized in one’s own nature.” The work of inward realization must be like drilling wood to make fire; thus, this evil world of mud is precisely the ground from which the red lotus arises. The earlier statement, “Only when the mind is pure,” means that apart from this Dharma there is no second Dharma. Moreover, the formless verse is wondrous because it is ordinary, yet it is difficult precisely because it is ordinary.

Filial care for one’s parents, harmony between elders and juniors, and so forth are all the foundations of cultivation. One must constantly benefit others in one’s daily life. If one does not begin in such matters, there is no other way. Therefore, in seeking what is supramundane, one must first fulfill worldly dharmas. This Dharma gate is the supreme wondrous key to fulfilling worldly dharmas, and also the supreme direct path to supramundane Dharma.

Moreover, how perfectly harmonious and free should the great wisdom that transcends the world be? Yet now, merely over East and West, people are already confused and troubled. If they seek transcendence of the world, will it not be difficult? It is also said: “The Dharma does not wait.” This clearly tells worldly people that they must not harbor a waiting mind. A waiting mind is another name for procrastination. One must resolve the matter in this very life, leaving no doubt whatsoever. The words “hear of” should be changed to “resolve,” so that they accord with the intent of directly taking it up.

Chapter Four: Samādhi and Wisdom

The Master instructed the assembly: “Good friends, in this Dharma gate, samādhi and prajñā are fundamental. Do not be mistaken and say that samādhi and prajñā are separate. Samādhi and prajñā are one in essence, not two. Samādhi is the substance of prajñā; prajñā is the function of samādhi. At the very time prajñā is present, samādhi is within prajñā; at the very time samādhi is present, prajñā is within samādhi. To understand this principle is to cultivate samādhi and prajñā equally.”

[1] All students of the Way, do not say that samādhi first gives rise to prajñā, or that prajñā first gives rise to samādhi, as though they were separate. Those who hold such a view make the Dharma into two aspects. Though they speak wholesome words, their minds are unwholesome. They merely have samādhi and prajñā in name; samādhi and prajñā are not equal. But if both mind and speech are wholesome, with inner and outer as one, then samādhi and prajñā are equal.

Practice through one’s own awakening does not lie in contention. [2] If one disputes what comes first and what comes later, one is like a deluded person. Instead of putting an end to victory and defeat, one only increases attachment to self and dharmas, and does not depart from the four marks. Good friends, how are samādhi and prajñā equal? They are like a lamp and its light: where there is a lamp, there is light; where there is no lamp, there is darkness. The lamp is the substance of light, and light is the function of the lamp. Though their names are two, their substance is originally one. The Dharma of samādhi and prajñā is likewise.

The Master instructed the assembly: “Good friends, one-practice samādhi [3] means that in every place—walking, standing, sitting, and lying down—one always practices a direct mind. The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: ‘A direct mind is the place of practice; a direct mind is the Pure Land.’ Do not let your mind proceed by deviousness while your mouth merely speaks of directness. Do not speak of one-practice samādhi while failing to practice a direct mind. Simply practice a direct mind and, with regard to all dharmas, do not become attached. Deluded people cling to dharma-marks and grasp at one-practice samādhi. They bluntly say that sitting motionless, without allowing deluded thoughts to arise, is one-practice samādhi. To understand it this way is to become like insentient things; it is a condition that obstructs the Way.”

The Master instructed the assembly: “Good friends, the Way must flow freely. Why should it become blocked? When the mind does not abide in dharmas, the Way flows freely. [4] If the mind abides in dharmas, this is called binding oneself. If you say that sitting motionless is right, then consider Śāriputra, who sat in meditation in the forest yet was reproved by Vimalakīrti. Good friends, there are also people who teach others to sit, watch the mind, contemplate stillness, and remain unmoving and

without arising thoughts, taking this as their practice. Deluded people do not understand and become crazed through such attachment. There are many such people. Thus to teach in this manner is a grave error."

The Master instructed the assembly: "Good friends, the original true teaching contains neither sudden nor gradual. Human capacities themselves may be sharp or dull. [5] Deluded people enter gradually, while awakened people cultivate suddenly. When one recognizes one's own original mind and sees one's own true nature, there is no difference. Thus the provisional names 'sudden' and 'gradual' are established."

Good friends, in this Dharma gate, from ancient times onward, we first establish no-thought as its principle, signlessness as its substance, and non-abiding as its basis. [6] Signlessness means being free of marks amid marks. No-thought means being without thought amid thoughts. Non-abiding is the original nature of human beings.

Amid worldly good and evil, beauty and ugliness, even enmity and friendship, and at times of verbal affront, deception, or dispute, regard all as empty and do not think of retaliating with harm. In every thought, do not dwell on previous circumstances. If the preceding thought, present thought, and subsequent thought continue one after another without interruption, this is called bondage. If, with regard to all dharmas, thought after thought does not abide, there is no bondage. This is taking non-abiding as the basis.

Good friends, to be outwardly free of all marks is called signlessness. If one can be free of marks, the Dharma substance is pure. This is taking signlessness as the substance.

Good friends, when the mind is unstained amid all circumstances, this is called no-thought. [7] With regard to one's own thoughts, always remain free of all circumstances; do not give rise to mind on the basis of circumstances. If one merely thinks of none of the hundred things and entirely eliminates all thoughts, then when a single thought is cut off one dies and is reborn elsewhere. This is a grave error. Students of the Way, reflect upon this. If you do not understand the meaning of the Dharma, it is bad enough to err yourself; but to urge others on as well, while being deluded and unable to see, is moreover to slander the Buddhist sūtras. Therefore, no-thought is established as the principle.

[9] Good friends, what does 'no' negate, and what does 'thought' think? 'No' means no dualistic marks and no mind of worldly afflictions. 'Thought' means thinking of the true suchness of one's original nature. [10] True suchness is the substance of thought, and thought is the function of true suchness. Thoughts arise from the self-nature of true suchness; it is not the eyes, ears, nose, or tongue that can think. Because true suchness possesses a nature, thoughts arise. If true suchness were absent, the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue would immediately perish.

Good friends, thoughts arise from the self-nature of true suchness. Although the six faculties have seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, they are unstained by the myriad circumstances, while the true nature is always at ease. [11] Therefore the sūtra says: ‘One can skillfully distinguish the marks of all dharmas, yet remain unmoved in the highest meaning.’

Good friends, thoughts arise from the self-nature of true suchness. Although the six faculties have seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, they are unstained by the myriad circumstances, while the true nature is always at ease. [12] Therefore the sūtra says: ‘One can skillfully distinguish the marks of all dharmas, yet remain unmoved in the highest meaning.’

(Note: What follows expounds the meaning as related by the Second Patriarch.)

[1] From “samādhi and prajñā are one in essence” through “cultivate samādhi and prajñā equally,” this section is concise, clear, and penetrating. People commonly divide samādhi and prajñā into two, and thereby create distinctions of greater and lesser; this is the source of their disputes. Yet for one who truly sees the nature, there is no problem in speaking of one or of two. The Sixth Patriarch uses the lamp and its light as an analogy, saying, “Though their names are two, their substance is originally one.” The meaning is evident.

[2] That the two meanings of samādhi and prajñā are one essence and not two may be compared to capacity and force. Capacity is expressed in action and is what can be seen; force is contained within capacity and cannot be seen. Capacity is prajñā, and force is samādhi: they are one, not two. When we practice the Dharma, we first realize samādhi and attain meditative stability, which is sufficient to nourish prajñā. After leaving the cushion, we apply it in human affairs, arouse samāpatti, and open prajñā, which is sufficient to train samādhi. This is called the mutual support of samādhi and prajñā; thus we know they are one.

Moreover, an undeluded mind is called samādhi; knowing that all is illusory and yet remaining undeluded is called prajñā. Thus we know that prajñā is present within samādhi, and samādhi is present within prajñā; therefore they are not two. To say now that there is more prajñā and less samādhi, or that samādhi exceeds prajñā, is merely expedient speech, not ultimate truth. When the Patriarch speaks of cultivating samādhi and prajñā equally, these are words spoken after realization, not something beginners can know. Moreover, contention arises from doubt, and doubt comes from lack of realization. Therefore, what is valuable in every Dharma is one’s own awakening. Without beginning from an awakened mind, it is difficult to resolve this.

[3] One-practice samādhi is the accomplishment of holding samādhi and prajñā equally. It cannot be expressed in words; what can be expressed in words is not

samādhi. Long ago, someone mistakenly took the inability to distinguish purity from impurity as non-discriminating wisdom. How is that different from insentient wood and stone? Thus deluded attachment can become madness. “One-practice” means that this is so everywhere. Wherever one is, samādhi and prajñā support one another and become continuous and undivided; this is one-practice samādhi.

[4] “When the mind does not abide in dharmas, the Way flows freely.” I hope that you will take these two sentences to heart throughout your lives. Yet do not become bound by the very words “take to heart.” Try to preserve mindfulness between lightness and heaviness; this is the Way, this is free flow.

Moreover, in terms of the fundamental substance, there is truly no one who can abide, because in the self-nature not a single dharma can be obtained. All good and evil, beauty and ugliness, circumstances and mind alike are illusory images. Although habitual tendencies exist, ultimately they cannot defile or bind one. Therefore no evil person is incapable of changing for the better, and no person who gives rise to the great resolve fails to become a Buddha.

Again, to watch the mind and contemplate stillness, remaining unmoving and without arising thoughts, may through attachment become madness. This is called making a disease, because the mind abides in dharmas. Anyone who does not understand the essential point of mind and seeks, in seated meditation, to forcefully obtain the marks of samādhi is especially liable to fall ill. The more effort one makes, the duller the mind becomes. Not knowing what is to be transformed, one instead loses the marvelous, responsive functioning of prajñā.

In the past, Mazu sat in meditation seeking samādhi and hoping to become a Buddha. Great Master Nanyue ground a brick to make a mirror as an analogy, concerned that Mazu was clinging to phenomenal forms and failing to open up great potential and great functioning. Therefore, at the outset, one is first instructed to cease delusive thoughts and directly see the true mark of quiescent true suchness. Mind is fundamentally nonexistent; what mind is there to watch? It is originally pure; to contemplate it is already to make it impure. Taking this as one’s practice establishes self and others. To remain unmoving and without arising thoughts—how is this different from suppression?

Therefore none of these is accepted. If one directly sees the nature and suddenly attains complete fulfillment, habitual tendencies and karmic obstacles have no effect in that very instant. From then on, do not lose this from thought to thought; let it become continuous and undivided. It will surely be like water flowing freely: whether square or round, moving or still, it changes according to its vessel, yet water’s original nature never changes. Therefore it is said to be unblocked. Being unblocked means that nowhere is it not thus; hence it is called one-practice. Though

amid all circumstances, one ultimately receives nothing; hence it is called right absorption. This is what is meant by samādhi. In short, dharmas are employed provisionally, so there is no fixed Dharma. They are living application, so nothing is unchanging. The master lies within oneself; this is the mark of free flow.

[5] The phrase “human nature itself may be sharp or dull” should say instead that people have sharp or dull capacities; it need not refer to nature. Nature has neither good nor evil and is originally unstained, so how could it be sharp or dull? Sharpness and dullness are simply differences in the liberation of habitual tendencies. For example, if the mind is accustomed to writing but unfamiliar with farming, then reading is sharp and plowing is dull. Throughout the nine Dharma realms, from bodhisattvas to hell beings, Buddha-nature is equal and not two. Because conditions differ, distinctions of worthy and foolish, sharp and dull arise. Those who cling to this teaching will surely think themselves without Buddha-nature and forever without hope of becoming Buddhas. Is this not perilous?

[6] No-thought, signlessness, and non-abiding are three yet one. For when there is thought, marks are established; when there are no marks, there is no abiding. But for beginners, they can only be explained separately and clearly. Before they are integrated, one must certainly point out the method. Even so, this rests on one’s own awakening; how could it be taught?

The Dharma nature fundamentally cannot be defiled; therefore it is called the pure Dharma substance. What matters is having correct vision, recognizing it clearly and knowing it thoroughly. Even if one is temporarily confused, it ultimately cannot be defiled. It is not necessary to have no thoughts and see no marks in order to call non-abiding pure. When one recognizes what is original, it is like a person temporarily intoxicated who recovers upon sobering up, without increase or decrease.

If one does not recognize what is original, then, though an ordinary being may not be upside down in views, one remains muddled in the end. An uncarved piece of jade cannot be said not to be jade; it simply cannot yet be used. Therefore great awakening is precious, and one’s own awakening is supreme. Once awakened, one is naturally liberated when encountering circumstances; the mind has no bondage, dharma-views suddenly become empty, and the wondrous functioning of no-thought, signlessness, and non-abiding is completed as one.

Moreover, though dharma-views are empty, Dharma nature always remains. Thought after thought is clear and aware, without falling into annihilation. This is the great sage of free liberation. Therefore it is said, “One can skillfully distinguish the marks of all dharmas, yet remain unmoved in the highest meaning.” The highest

meaning is the fundamental substance that is quiescent and unmoving. Though one enters inferential cognition, one still returns to direct cognition.

[7] “When the mind is unstained, this is called no-thought.” To say “unstained” does not mean without color or shadow. When color stains paper, it cannot be removed; this is called staining. If color stains crystal or glass, the color was not absent when it stained, but after washing it is no longer there. Yet mind differs again; it cannot be compared to paper, crystal, or glass.

When mind and circumstances combine, they form an image; this image is ultimately illusory. To dissolve it with wisdom is to see that it was originally unstained. Therefore there is thought yet no-thought; there is something, yet it is not something. This is called no-thought. If one understands it in terms of being and nonbeing, it is bad enough to err oneself; but if one further urges others on, then one has a share in hell. How cautious one must be! The four words “the original nature of human beings,” inserted in the middle, make the flow of the preceding and following passages less smooth and may perhaps be deleted. Yet one may also say: “Non-abiding is the original nature of human beings.” This means that non-abiding is the characteristic of original nature. The subsequent explanation of the Dharma of non-abiding would then be clearer.

[8] All worldly affairs and afflictions arise from taking things to be real. If one truly knows that all is originally empty, the mind no longer responds to and contends with them. Once the mind no longer arises, on what could dharmas depend in order to stand? External appearances are external māras; mind and dharmas are internal māras. This discussion places blame on external appearances, supposing that if external objects do not entice us, the mind will not waver, and thus takes the exclusion of external conditions as ultimate. This is the inferior view of the two vehicles.

External appearances are originally just so, varied in every form; how can they obstruct me? It is only my own mind that clings to conditions and falsely gives rise to discrimination. What fault is there in things themselves? The difference between sages and ordinary beings lies only in the absence of a true master within. The two sentences, “When a single thought ceases, one dies; elsewhere one receives rebirth,” may be deleted, or changed to “one enters annihilation,” for the wording is already awkward and the meaning remains unclear. Should they be misunderstood, people may take death itself to be annihilation. Removing them would not impair the text.

[9] From “deluded and unable to see, they further slander the Buddhist sūtras” onward, the meaning of this section seems incomplete. Readers may discern it for themselves.

[10] In intrinsic nature, not a single dharma can be obtained. The character kong (empty) may be added after ben (original), making it benkong (originally empty); thus, not a single dharma can be obtained.

[11] For "mindfulness is mindfulness of the intrinsic nature of suchness," three characters may be added: "Mindfulness means that thought after thought does not depart from the intrinsic nature of suchness." Only then does it accord with the essential purport. For mindfulness of the intrinsic nature of suchness makes mindfulness the subject that is mindful and suchness the object of mindfulness. Subject and object stand in opposition; if they are divided into two, this is not the pure original essence. One must have thought after thought without clinging to thought after thought; this is the true aspect of suchness, from which one never departs. This is the essence, while mindfulness is the function. Only thus does it accord with what follows.

[12] "Not being defiled by the myriad circumstances" means that although one encounters the myriad circumstances and gives rise to seeing and hearing, one is ultimately not defiled by them. This is because intrinsic nature is originally without admixture or corruption and is ever unmoving; hence it is called true nature. "True" means neither arising nor ceasing, unlike illusory circumstances and the illusory mind, which arise and cease and are unreal. Therefore it is called the true mark; it is also called suchness and the supreme truth.

Chapter Five: Wondrous Conduct

The Master instructed the assembly: "In this Dharma gate of seated meditation, one does not fix the mind, nor does one fix on purity; nor is it mere immobility. If one speaks of fixing the mind, the mind is originally delusive. Know that the mind is like an illusion; [1] therefore, there is nothing to which to attach."

If one speaks of fixing on purity, human nature is originally pure. Because of deluded thoughts, suchness is obscured. If there are no delusive thoughts, one's nature is naturally pure. But if one stirs the mind and fixes on purity, one gives rise to the delusion of purity. [2] Delusion has no location; that which attaches is delusion. Purity has no form, yet one establishes an appearance of purity and calls this practice. Those who hold such a view obstruct their own intrinsic nature and become bound by purity.

Good friends, if you cultivate immovability, then whenever you see anyone, do not see that person's right and wrong, good and evil, or faults and shortcomings. This is the immovability of intrinsic nature. Good friends, although a deluded person may sit without moving, as soon as he opens his mouth he speaks of others' right and

wrong, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes; this is contrary to the Way. [3] To fix on mind or purity is to obstruct the Way."

The Master instructed the assembly: "Good friends, what is called seated meditation? In this Dharma gate, there are no obstructions and no hindrances. Outwardly, amid all states of good and evil, when thoughts of the mind do not arise, this is called sitting; inwardly, seeing that one's intrinsic nature is unmoving, this is called Chan."

[4] Good friends, what are Chan and samādhi? Outward freedom from appearances is Chan; inward nonconfusion is samādhi. If one outwardly clings to appearances, the inner mind is disturbed. If one is outwardly free from appearances, the mind is undisturbed. One's intrinsic nature is itself pure and itself settled; it is only because, upon encountering circumstances, one thinks of them that one becomes disturbed. If, on seeing all circumstances, the mind remains undisturbed, this is true samādhi. Good friends, outward freedom from appearances is Chan, and inward nonconfusion is samādhi. Outward Chan and inward samādhi—this is Chan samādhi. The Bodhisattva Precepts Sūtra says: 'My intrinsic nature is originally pure.' Good friends, in every thought, see for yourselves the purity of your intrinsic nature; cultivate and practice for yourselves, and attain the Buddha Way for yourselves. [5]"

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the meaning.)

[1] When practice is called wondrous, its completeness may be known. Completeness means completeness in the mind. When the mind can penetrate freely, practice itself is without obstruction. Essence and function are both complete; this is what is called wondrous. Sentient beings and Buddhas are altogether the same, yet what prevents sentient beings alone from being wondrous is their own self-obstruction. But since it is said to be self-obstruction, it should be possible to free oneself from it. Obstruction makes one a sentient being; freedom from obstruction makes one a Buddha. There is only this small divide.

Those who have not practiced do not know that there are obstructions. Those who have practiced know of them but grasp at them. Such grasping is not like the greed and acquisitiveness of worldly people; it is aversion. Yet aversion is also grasping. Because of this aversion, one retains a mind that delights in purity, and this purity thereby becomes delusion.

The two words "pure delusion" are most remarkable. How could beginning practitioners fail to be alarmed and doubtful upon hearing them? One should know that this concerns the most ultimate point. Unless one realizes the original nature, one cannot possibly comprehend its meaning completely. The mind is unobtainable, and intrinsic nature is like empty space. Here, one attaches neither to delusion nor to purity. It is like a jewel mirror: when a Han person comes, a Han person appears;

when a Hu person comes, a Hu person appears. Yet there is only appearance; no image is ever retained to obstruct the substance of the jewel.

Amid the myriad affairs of human life, one proceeds without obstruction. One is not unaware of good and evil, right and wrong, but responds according to conditions, with the mind free of hindrance. This is called not seeing, and it is also called immovability. In the immediate moment, this is called sitting; serene stillness is called Chan. This chapter is called “Wondrous Practice” because, within the essence of the samādhi of one mark, it brings forth the function of the samādhi of one practice. These two samādhis will be explained in greater detail below.

[2] The first chapter says only to use this mind. This chapter precisely explains the wonder of using the mind. One should investigate the single word “wondrous”: What is called wondrous? How can it be wondrous? To awaken to and understand the meaning of wondrousness belongs to wondrous practice. Wondrous means perfect penetration; only through penetration is there completeness, and only through completeness is there wondrousness. If there is even the slightest attachment, there is obstruction and no penetration. The wonder of this chapter lies in such expressions as “purity as delusion” and “the bondage of purity.” Those of inferior understanding may become doubtful, failing to understand that delusion has no locus;

nor does purity have any locus. Delusion has no form or appearance, nor does purity have any form or appearance. That which attaches is delusion; thus, attachment even to purity is delusion. These four words are as decisive as cutting iron or severing gold, utterly forthright and incisive. For whenever there is attachment, whether to purity or delusion, it all belongs to delusion.

When beginners first apply themselves to practice, they cannot avoid bringing some degree of concentrated attention. Yet concentrated attention differs from attachment. It is like a boatman towing his boat: he cannot avoid holding on, nor can he avoid moving; but when he arrives, he lets go. When the boat has reached its destination, even if he wished not to let go, it would be impossible.

Therefore, one should know that everywhere and in every circumstance there is wondrous practice, and one may awaken to the Way. After the words “know that the mind is like an illusion,” if the four words “this knowing too is like an illusion” were added, the meaning would be more complete. Original purity is the wondrous essence, while nonattachment is the wondrous function. When neither essence nor function is attached to, neither purity nor delusion is established. Nor is this mere immovability. Immovability means not rejecting anything while abiding nowhere.

Neither identical nor separate—this is what is called wondrous. Again, it is said: “Do not see people’s right and wrong, good and evil, or faults and shortcomings; this is

the immovability of intrinsic nature." This passage would be clearer if revised to read: "Although one sees people's right and wrong, good and evil, and faults and shortcomings, one does not establish views of right and wrong, good and evil, and faults and shortcomings. Intrinsic nature nevertheless remains unmoving." Ordinary people often misunderstand the two words "not seeing" to mean neither seeing nor hearing, and thus easily fall into annihilationism. Therefore, seeing remains seeing; one simply sees without the mind's grasping at self-view. Images pass without leaving a trace; it is not that there are no images. As one sees, they are empty; dharmas are naturally complete and pure. This is called right view and wondrous practice.

[3] The Way does not mean a principle or doctrine; it is the root, the essence, the intrinsic nature. Whenever people have not seen the Way, one can know it by observing how contentious they are. They should themselves become alarmed and awaken. The saying "not establishing words" means that all such things are extraneous affairs, serving only to obstruct the eye of the Way; therefore, they are not taken up. Yet when the Way itself is now being discussed, it should be like a physician discussing illness and prescribing medicine: once the medicine has been used, it is set aside. This accords with the Way. Do you understand?

[4] When thoughts of the mind do not arise, this is called sitting; inwardly realizing that intrinsic nature is unmoving is called Chan. To be moved upon encountering circumstances and to remain unmoved upon encountering circumstances are equally one-sided views. Here, "not arising" means that movement and stillness are nondual and that one remains unstained by anything. "Sitting" simply means just this. One must not add further verbal distinctions. With the slightest attachment, sitting again becomes a contrived question of how something arises.

The word "seeing" in "inwardly seeing" is most difficult to describe. Does it mean seeing with the eyes, or seeing with wisdom? To call it seeing is already movement. Does it mean not seeing, or having nothing seen? To call it not seeing is likewise already movement. If this word "seeing" were changed to "realizing," it would be more flexible. Yet whatever can be spoken of is no longer the ultimate truth. What matters is the power of one's own realization: truly reaching the state of nonattachment and non-abiding, seeing in every thought for oneself the purity of one's intrinsic nature, and attaining the Buddha Way for oneself.

[5] The emphasis lies on the four occurrences of "self." From this, one may know that seeking the Buddha is of no benefit.

Chapter Six: Repentance

At that time, the Master saw Guangshao and laypeople from all directions gathered in the mountains to hear the Dharma. He then ascended the seat and addressed the assembly: “Come, good spiritual friends. This matter must arise from your own nature. [2] At all times, moment after moment, purify your own minds, cultivate your own conduct, see your own dharmakāya, see the Buddha in your own minds, liberate yourselves, and uphold the precepts yourselves. Only then will you attain it; there is no need to come here for it. Since you have come from afar and gathered here together, we all share karmic affinities. Now each of you may kneel, and I shall first transmit to you the incense of the fivefold dharmakāya of your own nature, and then confer the formless repentance.” The assembly knelt, and the Master said:

“First, the incense of morality: within your own mind, there is no wrongdoing, no evil, no envy, no greed or anger, and no plundering or harming. This is called the incense of morality.

“Second, the incense of meditative stability: when you behold all states, whether good or bad, your own mind remains undisturbed. This is called the incense of meditative stability.

“Third, the incense of wisdom: your own mind is unobstructed, and you constantly illuminate your own nature with wisdom. You do no evil; though you cultivate every good, your mind does not become attached. You respect those above and are mindful of those below, and you show compassion for the lonely and poor. This is called the incense of wisdom.

“Fourth, the incense of liberation: your own mind clings to nothing, thinks neither of good nor of evil, and is free and unobstructed. [3] This is called the incense of liberation.

“Fifth, the incense of the knowledge and vision of liberation: once your own mind clings neither to good nor to evil, you must not sink into emptiness and guard stillness. Rather, you must study broadly and hear much, recognize your own original mind, comprehend the principles of all Buddhas, [4] blend your light with the world and respond to beings, be without self or others, and proceed directly to bodhi, with your true nature unchanged. [5] This is called the incense of the knowledge and vision of liberation.”

“Good spiritual friends, let each of you perfume yourselves inwardly with this incense; do not seek it outside. Now I shall confer upon you the formless repentance, [6] to extinguish the offenses of the three periods of time and render the three karmas pure. Good spiritual friends, each of you repeat my words together:”

“We disciples, in past thoughts, present thoughts, and future thoughts, may we never, thought after thought, be defiled by delusion and confusion. For all offenses arising from evil karma in the past, such as delusion and confusion, we repent of them all. May they be extinguished at once and never arise again.”

“We disciples, in past thoughts, present thoughts, and future thoughts, may we never, thought after thought, be defiled by arrogance and recklessness. For all offenses arising from evil karma in the past, such as arrogance and recklessness, we repent of them all. May they be extinguished at once and never arise again.”

“We disciples, in past thoughts, present thoughts, and future thoughts, may we never, thought after thought, be defiled by envy. For all offenses arising from evil karma in the past, such as envy, we repent of them all. May they be extinguished at once and never arise again.”

“Good spiritual friends, this is what is called formless repentance. What is repentance, and what is remorse? Repentance is repenting of one’s former faults: all offenses arising from evil karma in the past, such as delusion, confusion, arrogance, recklessness, and envy, are wholly repented, never to arise again. This is called repentance. Remorse is regretting one’s later errors: from this day onward, having now awakened to all offenses arising from evil karma, such as delusion, confusion, arrogance, recklessness, and envy, one cuts them off forever and never commits them again. This is called remorse. Therefore it is called repentance and remorse.”

“Ordinary beings, deluded and confused, know only to repent of their former faults; they do not know to regret their later errors. Because they do not feel remorse, their former offenses are not extinguished, and later errors arise again. Since former offenses are not extinguished and later errors arise once more, how can this be called repentance and remorse?”

“Good spiritual friends, having repented, join me, good spiritual friends, in making the Four Great Vows. [7] Each of you must listen attentively: I vow to liberate the boundless sentient beings in my own mind; I vow to cut off the boundless afflictions in my own mind; I vow to learn the inexhaustible dharma gates in my own mind; I vow to accomplish the unsurpassed Buddha Way in my own mind. [8]”

“Good spiritual friends, do you not all say, ‘I vow to liberate boundless sentient beings’? But when you say this, it is not Huineng who liberates them. Good spiritual friends, the sentient beings within the mind are what are called the mistaken and deluded mind, the wild and arrogant mind, the unwholesome mind, the envious mind, the malicious mind, and minds of this kind. All these are sentient beings. Each must liberate them with their own mind; this is called true liberation.”

“What is meant by liberating them with one’s own mind? It means that the sentient beings of mistaken views, afflictions, and ignorance within one’s own mind are liberated by right view. Once right view is present, prajñā-wisdom shatters ignorance, delusion, and falsehood. Sentient beings each liberate themselves: when error comes, rightness liberates it; when delusion comes, awakening liberates it; when ignorance comes, wisdom liberates it; when evil comes, goodness liberates it. To liberate in this way is called true liberation.”

“Further, ‘I vow to cut off boundless afflictions’ means using the prajñā-wisdom of one’s own nature to remove the mind of vain and delusive thoughts. ‘I vow to learn inexhaustible dharma gates’ means that one must see one’s own nature and constantly practice the right Dharma; this is called true learning. ‘I vow to accomplish the unsurpassed Buddha Way’ means always being humble and practicing what is genuine and true; leaving behind delusion and awakening, constantly giving rise to prajñā, relinquishing both truth and delusion, one sees the Buddha-nature. Then, at these very words, the Buddha Way is accomplished. Constantly keep this practice in mind; this is the Dharma of vow-power.”

“Good spiritual friends, now that you have made the Four Great Vows, I shall further confer upon you the formless precepts of the Three Refuges. [9] Good spiritual friends, take refuge in awakening, the Honored One Perfect in Both; take refuge in rightness, the Honored One Free from Desire; take refuge in purity, the Honored One among the Assembly.”

“From this day forth, take awakening as your teacher, and no longer take refuge in deviant demons or non-Buddhist paths. Let the Three Jewels of your own nature constantly bear witness for you. I urge you, good spiritual friends, to take refuge in the Three Jewels of your own nature. Buddha means awakening; Dharma means rightness; Saṅgha means purity. When your own mind takes refuge in awakening, delusion and confusion do not arise. With few desires and contentment, able to leave behind wealth and sensuality, you are called the Honored One Perfect in Both. When your own mind takes refuge in rightness, thought after thought is free of mistaken views. Because there are no mistaken views, there is no self or other, arrogance, craving, or attachment. This is called the Honored One Free from Desire.”

“When your own mind takes refuge in purity, amid all states of worldly toil, attachment, and desire, your own nature remains unstained and unattached. This is called the Honored One among the Assembly. To cultivate in this way is to take refuge in oneself. Ordinary beings do not understand this. From morning until night they receive the precepts of the Three Refuges, yet if they take refuge in the Buddha, where is the Buddha? If they do not see the Buddha, on what can they rely for refuge? Their words then become false. Good spiritual friends, each of you examine yourselves; do not use your minds wrongly. The sūtras clearly say, ‘Take refuge in

your own Buddha'; they do not say, 'Take refuge in another Buddha.' If one does not take refuge in one's own Buddha, there is nowhere to rely upon. Now that you have awakened for yourselves, each of you must take refuge in the Three Jewels of your own mind: inwardly regulate your own mind and nature, and outwardly respect others. This is taking refuge in oneself."

"Good spiritual friends, now that you have taken refuge in your own Three Jewels, each of you focus your mind. I shall explain to you the Buddha of your own nature in its one essence and three bodies. [10] This will enable you to see the three bodies and clearly awaken to your own nature. Repeat after me: 'In this physical body, I take refuge in the pure dharmakāya Buddha. In this physical body, I take refuge in the countless transformation-body Buddhas. In this physical body, I take refuge in the perfect reward-body Buddha.'"

"Good spiritual friends, the physical body is an abode; it cannot be spoken of as a refuge. The three bodies of the Buddha just mentioned are within your own nature. All people possess them, but because their own minds are deluded, they do not see their inner nature. They seek the Tathāgata's three bodies outside and do not see that the three-body Buddha is within their own nature. [11] Listen as I explain, so that you may see within yourselves that your own nature possesses the three-body Buddha. [12] These three bodies of the Buddha arise from your own nature; they are not obtained from outside."

"What is called the pure dharmakāya Buddha?"

"People's natures are fundamentally pure, and all phenomena arise from their own nature. When one thinks of all evil things, evil actions arise; when one thinks of all good things, good actions arise. Thus all these dharmas are within one's own nature. It is like the sky, ever clear, and the sun and moon, ever bright. When floating clouds cover them, it is bright above and dark below. Suddenly, when wind blows and scatters the clouds, above and below are both bright, and all forms appear. People's minds are constantly drifting, like the clouds in the sky."

"Good spiritual friends, knowledge is like the sun, and wisdom is like the moon. Knowledge and wisdom are constantly bright, but when one becomes attached to external objects, the floating clouds of deluded thoughts cover one's own nature, preventing it from shining forth clearly. If one encounters a good spiritual friend and hears the true Dharma, one can personally remove delusion and falsehood. Then inwardly and outwardly one is thoroughly illuminated, and all phenomena appear within one's own nature. Those who see their nature are likewise so. This is called the pure dharmakāya Buddha."

"Good spiritual friends, when your own mind takes refuge in its own nature, it takes refuge in the true Buddha. To take refuge in oneself is to remove from one's own

nature the unwholesome mind, the envious mind, the deceitful and crooked mind, the egocentric mind, the deceptive and false mind, the mind that belittles others, the mind that scorns others, the mind of mistaken views, the arrogant mind, and all unwholesome conduct at all times. Constantly see your own faults [13] and do not speak of others' good or bad. This is taking refuge in oneself. Always be humble and extend respect universally; this is seeing one's nature and penetrating it, without any further obstruction. This is taking refuge in oneself."

"What is called the countless transformation bodies? When one does not think of the myriad dharmas, one's nature is originally like empty space. When a single thought arises, this is called transformation. Thinking of evil things transforms into hell; thinking of good things transforms into heaven. Poison and harm transform into dragons and snakes; compassion transforms into bodhisattvas; wisdom transforms into higher realms; ignorance transforms into lower realms. The transformations of one's own nature are exceedingly many. Deluded people cannot awaken to this; thought after thought they give rise to evil and constantly follow evil paths. Turn one thought toward goodness, and wisdom immediately arises. This is called the transformation-body Buddha of one's own nature."

"What is called the perfect reward body? Just as one lamp can dispel a thousand years of darkness, one moment of wisdom can extinguish ten thousand years of ignorance. Do not think of what has gone before, for it is already past and cannot be obtained. Constantly attend to what comes after, [14] so that thought after thought is complete and bright, and you see your own original nature. Though good and evil differ, the original nature is not two. This nondual nature is called true nature. Within true nature, there is no staining by good or evil. This is called the perfect reward-body Buddha. If a single evil thought arises from one's own nature, it destroys good causes accumulated over ten thousand eons. If a single good thought arises from one's own nature, it brings the exhaustion of evils as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, until one reaches unsurpassed bodhi. To see oneself thought after thought, without losing the original thought, is called the reward body."

"Good spiritual friends, when thought arises from the dharmakāya, that is the transformation-body Buddha. When, thought after thought, one sees one's own nature, that is the reward-body Buddha. Awakening and cultivating by oneself, the merit and virtue of one's own nature—this is true refuge. Skin and flesh are the physical body; the physical body is an abode and cannot be called a refuge. Simply awaken to the three bodies of your own nature, and you will recognize the Buddha of your own nature. I have a formless verse. If you can recite and uphold it, the deluded offenses accumulated over many eons will be extinguished at once. The verse says:"

“Deluded people cultivate blessings but do not cultivate the Way; they merely say that cultivating blessings is the Way.

“The blessings of giving and making offerings are boundless, yet the three evils in the mind are created from the very beginning. [15]

“They intend through cultivating blessings to extinguish their offenses, but though they gain blessings in future lives, the offenses remain.

“Simply remove within your mind the conditions for offenses, and truly repent within your own nature.

“Suddenly awaken to the true repentance of the Mahāyāna: remove wrong and practice right, and there are no offenses.

“Those who study the Way constantly contemplate their own nature; thus they are of the same kind as all Buddhas.

“Our patriarchs transmitted only this sudden teaching; may all who see their nature become one in essence.

“If in the future you wish to seek the dharmakāya, leave all dharma marks behind and cleanse your mind.

“Strive to see for yourselves; do not drift idly along. If the next thought suddenly ceases, this life is finished. [16]

“If you awaken to the Mahāyāna and see your nature, seek with utmost sincerity, palms joined in reverence.”

The Master said: “Good spiritual friends, all of you must recite and retain this. Practice in accordance with it, and you will see your nature at these very words. Even if you are a thousand miles from me, it will be as though you were always at my side. But if you do not awaken at these very words, then even face to face you are a thousand miles apart. Why, then, make the effort to come from afar? Take care, and go well.” When the entire assembly heard the Dharma, none failed to awaken. They joyfully received and practiced it.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the purport.)

[1] The meaning of repentance and remorse is the same for sages and ordinary beings: it is simply to be purified in the present moment; there is no second dharma. Thus A’s repentance and remorse do not differ from B’s, nor are C’s and D’s different. Only because causes and conditions differ do the methods differ. Some

cannot be purified at once; some repent but do not feel remorse. Their habitual tendencies are deep and heavy, and thus this failing arises.

When sentient beings repent, each thought is forgotten in the blink of an eye. Bodhisattvas repent thought after thought, yet within each thought they do not fix upon any sin as something that can be confessed or regretted. They simply purify their own minds until they are like empty space, not knowing what is sin or what is repentance. Subject and object are both forgotten; they stand transcendent, beyond things. This is the truly vast and all-encompassing Dharma of repentance. If sentient beings can likewise do this, they will be nondual with the Buddha.

But people of inferior capacities lack sufficient self-confidence. They apply themselves for one day and then let matters grow cold for a hundred; the effect is too slight. There must therefore be something to guide them: they must establish a daily practice in order to have something to rely on. This is why the Sixth Patriarch established the Dharma of repentance. To confess is to confess past wrongs, knowing their nature to be empty. With one awakening, they can be ended at once. Yet the problem is that subsequent thoughts arise again, and therefore one must repent.

To repent is to stop future evils and prevent them from arising again. If one does not repent continually, what use is a momentary confession?

If one does not repent every day, one will inevitably have to confess every day, and it becomes mere empty formality. This is a method of preserving realization after seeing one's nature. For beginners, repentance is indeed a painful matter: it is like dwelling amid smoke and flames and fanning them away; the moment one stops fanning, they again cloud one's eyes. Therefore, only after seeing one's nature can one obtain the true method of repentance. One must constantly see one's own faults and shortcomings; only then does repentance become practicable.

By faults and shortcomings, this does not necessarily mean some particular evil deed. It means simply that the mind has not yet become empty. A mind that is not empty is the origin of all evils. If a spark of fire is not extinguished, it may at any time set the prairie ablaze. Moreover, repentance is a method of practice and an entrance to the path of right cultivation. Those who have not seen their nature cannot yet speak of true repentance; they merely learn its outward forms, then promptly forget them. This is most pitiful.

The method for repenting of karmic obstacles is set forth below. To remove dust and grime, one must first see the dust and grime; only then can one speak of sweeping it away. If one does not see karmic obstacles, how can one repent of them? One must first clearly understand what karma is and what an obstacle is. Karma is the dharmas that the mind repeatedly brings forth.

This includes neither good nor evil alone, and may also be morally indeterminate. Whatever can obstruct my path to Buddhahood is generally called a karmic obstacle.

All this is an illusory shadow arising from one's nature; hence it is called the illusory mind. The illusory mind itself is karma. If one can refrain from abiding in appearances, see them as empty, and return to the aspect of quiescent extinction, they do not become obstacles. Otherwise, they flow into evil and become ignorance, afflictions, and wrongdoing. Even wholesome karma that is not ultimate will eventually enter into evil and become an obstacle. Thus, before the mind-ground is illumined, every stirring of the mind and movement of thought is evil and is an obstacle. After realizing the mind, one knows that all is produced by the illusory mind.

Since mind has no substantial form, the various karmas likewise have no substantial form. With one awakening, they are suddenly empty. This is the most pure and swift method of repentance. Confession concerns the past: the past is like a dream, and with one awakening one is awake. There is no other method. This is spoken from the standpoint of fruition.

Repentance concerns the future. It means that one can foresee all future evils; if one is careless even once, one will surely suffer unending regret. Therefore it is called repentance. This is spoken from the standpoint of the causal stage.

Foolish people regard wrongdoing as truly existent. They think that even after confession, it returns with the next thought, and that although they confess repeatedly, it is difficult to clear away. They do not know that past karma was formed through repetition and became established through habit. Now it must likewise be transformed through repetition: transform and remove the habits, from great to small, and from small to emptiness, until they have no power. The single word repent is sufficient.

Because they have not thoroughly realized the principle, they develop this affliction. They should understand that the root is unobtainable. These repeated illusory habits of mine arise illusorily without form, and must likewise be transformed and removed without form. If one can awaken before a thought has arisen, one immediately sees empty quiescence. This is called true repentance. In the chapter on Samantabhadra's practices and vows, a method is specifically given for repentance: "Do not create [such evils] again hereafter." Yet not a single word is said about confession.

It merely says that if evil karma had substantial form, the empty space of the ten directions could not contain it, and so forth. This shows that the method of confession lies wholly in awakening and knowing, in not taking it as truly existent. This is the unsurpassed method of confession, and it depends entirely on one's own

awakening. This principle is very simple, yet people often neglect it because their ordinary practice is not earnest and pressing, and they have not pursued it to the end.

II This matter must arise from one's own nature. What matter is this? It is the one great cause and condition. Apart from this one matter, there is no other. The method of transcending birth and death lies in purifying one's mind in every thought. The method of purifying the mind is nothing other than cutting off the preceding thought. The preceding thought consists of all emotional views and discriminations. So long as sentient beings have not eliminated emotional views, their thoughts continue one after another and never depart from the three poisons.

With a turn of thought, the preceding thought is abruptly cut off. Yet habitual tendencies are deeply ingrained through conditioning, and karmic force is too strong. How can one let go in an instant? On questioning oneself, one still cannot set one's mind at ease, thinking that the roots of karmic wrongdoing are deep and cannot be removed all at once. Therefore, for those who have not seen their own nature, unless this barrier is broken, purifying the mind is truly not easy. One must begin with observing the precepts.

Those of lesser capacities are first taught repentance: with one confession, all previous wrongs are eliminated; one utterance of Amitābha can at once transcend the grave offenses of birth and death accumulated over eighty billion kalpas. First, they are enabled to set their minds at ease; then the method of repentance is explained. If they repent of later faults, past wrongs have already been extinguished and future wrongs do not arise, so their minds naturally become pure. This is what is meant by having to arise from one's own nature.

For those of superior capacities, it is definitively stated: the nature of sin and blessing is empty, and there is no sin to confess. Since the nature is originally pure, whenever the illusory mind ceases, illusory sins are empty at that very time. Yet because the nature is originally empty and quiescent, one must still begin from one's own nature.

People are neither sharp nor dull in this respect: repentance is one. Dharma gates are immeasurable, but the return to the source is one. The five fragrances of the dharmakāya show the way to set the mind at ease. These fragrances are not of wood, fire, or smoke; they are precepts, samādhi, and wisdom. To what do the fruits of these fragrances belong? They belong to the practitioner's own nature. What have they to do with the Buddha or the patriarchs?

The five kinds of fragrance ultimately return to knowledge and view—this is prajñā knowledge and view. Without prajñā, one cannot realize bodhi and attain liberation. Internal perfuming means removing one's long-standing habits. What is called

formless repentance does not mean that repentance itself lacks form; originally, sin itself is formless. Confession of the past and repentance for the future are ultimately unobtainable. It is only this inability to set one's mind at ease that becomes wrongdoing. Foolish people mistake it for something real; their minds merely follow what their mouths say. Only after a master's introduction and assurance do they set their minds at ease and accept it. Therefore, arousing the resolve to take this on is the foremost matter, and also the most difficult matter.

III After "at ease and unobstructed," add the phrase "the essence is itself pure" to awaken the eyes.

IV Replace the two words "Buddhist principle" with "wondrous functioning."

V Replace the two phrases "until bodhi" and "the true nature does not change" with the single phrase "directly seal the true nature of bodhi." Only then does it accord with the meaning of knowledge and view of liberation, for the true nature is originally unchanging.

Of these five fragrances, the first is the fragrance of the precepts. Precepts mean prohibition: they stop evil. Beginners must first stop the coarser evils, such as the four grave offenses of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and false speech, which are strictly prohibited. Since alcohol may serve as their intermediary, it too is prohibited, although alcohol is not itself the fundamental evil. This mostly remedies effects, and is called the form of precepts.

In Mahāyāna Dharma, however, the discipline is still more rigorous and subtle. It does not impose precepts merely on outward form, but on the mind. Purity is primary for the mind; when the mind is impure, this is called breaking the precepts. What is valued is one's own resolve and self-examination: one need not take outward forms as the standard in order to govern oneself. This remedies the causal stage. A true practitioner never departs from the precepts in any circumstance. The former is to extinguish a fire already burning and prevent it from burning again; this is to guard against future fires and prevent their seeds from being sown.

One should examine this according to one's own stage. Ask yourself: when seeing wealth or sexual allure, does greed still blaze forth? Or, on hearing one's name praised, does the face brighten and the mind stir? If so, one has already entered a dangerous path and evil ground. How can one fail to observe the precepts? Therefore, there is no fixed method.

Next is the fragrance of samādhi. The meaning of samādhi is broad. Worldly people often mistakenly regard motionlessness like wood or stone as samādhi, seeing and hearing nothing as samādhi, suppressing movement as samādhi, or prolonged sitting while guarding an aperture, neither eating nor sleeping, as samādhi.

Deceivers use such methods to delude the masses, while the foolish become deranged through them. Who knows how many wisdom-lives have been destroyed? Can such guilt still be questioned?

You must know that all sentient beings' suffering arises from the mind's delusion. Delusion prevents self-awareness; the mind follows external things and turns, and thus lacks stability. What is called samādhi is a mind that is neither deluded nor moved. To remain uncorrupted by wealth and rank, unshaken by poverty and lowliness, and unbent by power and force—this is samādhi. When the mind is empty and unstained, unmoved by circumstances, inwardly empty of the view of self and outwardly free of all appearances, with all dharmas equal and wondrous functioning at ease and unimpeded—this is right samādhi.

This samādhi is something everyone can attain, but it is too brief: in an instant one is shaken again. This is to possess the essence of samādhi without activating its function. Thus, beings who are Buddhas all day long yet are not Buddhas are sentient beings. Those who restrain themselves when circumstances arise, hold to samādhi without shifting, dislike disturbance and seek stillness are the two vehicles. Those capable of self-awareness are bodhisattvas. Those who respond as circumstances come, while their essence itself remains unmoved, without confusion and without fixed samādhi, lively and free—these are Buddhas.

Samādhi comes from the mind, not from appearances. Samādhi has neither movement nor stillness; what does not change is samādhi. Consider water: wetness is water's essence. It may become tea, soup, wine, or medicine, changing in myriad ways, yet its wet nature never changes. This is samādhi. It is samādhi in stillness and samādhi amid disorder as well, because the essence is not lost. This is great samādhi.

People suffer only because they do not know this. Whoever correctly understands the meaning of samādhi should never forget this original ground, nor change because of circumstances; thus one can attain great samādhi. Next is the fragrance of wisdom. Wisdom is the wondrous functioning of the illusory mind; it is no different from ordinary mind. The Buddha, too, is simply ordinary mind.

Because sentient beings have long departed from what is original, they take the ordinary to be extraordinary. When a father speaks of kindness and a son speaks of filial devotion, what is strange about this? To comprehend all things, respond freely to all situations, and remain inwardly unmoved is great wisdom. There are eighty-four thousand kinds of habitual dispositions in the world, and I have eighty-four thousand ways of responding to them. The measure of skill lies with me: responding appropriately in every case, with the mind not abiding in appearances—this is wisdom. Therefore, to preserve this without loss is wisdom within samādhi.

When functioning in activity without departing from the original ground, this is samādhi within wisdom. Without samādhi, wisdom cannot function; without wisdom, samādhi's function cannot become manifest. Samādhi nurtures wisdom, and wisdom supports samādhi. Samādhi and wisdom depend on one another; essence and function are suchness. This is prajñā.

When the mind grasps and enters the sea of birth and death, this is because it lacks the power of wisdom to transform it. If the mind transcends this and attains samādhi and wisdom, one leaves the three realms. Without waiting until after death, one is already born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss and directly ascends to the Buddha stage. Those of the highest vehicle immediately transcend to the ground of awakening and immediately attain liberation. When the mind is empty in the present moment, this is the fragrance of liberation; it is its essence. When function arises from this essence, opening Buddha knowledge and view and attaining liberation, it is called the fragrance of knowledge and view of liberation; this is its function.

One who understands emptiness naturally attains liberation. The emptiness spoken of is not emptiness in opposition to existence; it is original emptiness. It is not that nonexistence is taken as emptiness; existence, too, is empty. Nor is emptiness the emptiness of vacant space; it is the emptiness of things arising and ceasing through conditions, without a self-nature or substantial essence.

Everything in the world comes together only through conditions. It is enough to know that it is like a dream. The dream is not nonexistent, yet when one awakens from it, it cannot be grasped. There is no need to wait until after the dream to call it empty: even while dreaming, what is not empty? Worldly people cling to an appearance of existence and then set up an appearance of nonexistence in opposition. Once these two appearances are opposed, how can it be called emptiness? Moreover, seeking emptiness because they dislike existence, and grasping emptiness because they dislike existence, is precisely adding existence upon existence.

For example, those who seek samādhi cannot attain samādhi precisely because they seek it; this is like being unable to attain emptiness. One must know that emptiness is originally without appearance. When the mind is free of bondage, that is emptiness. Amid circumstances, be free of circumstances; amid dharmas, be free of dharmas; amid Buddhas, be free of Buddhas; amid emptiness, be free even of emptiness. This is the meaning of great emptiness: neither grasping nor rejecting, neither clinging nor being stained; receiving yet not receiving; mind itself not mind. Let the intent be like empty space, yet without the measure of empty space—only then may one speak of emptiness.

This is the first step in entering Buddhahood. Only upon direct realization of bodhi can one see this appearance of emptiness.

Bodhi is empty nature. Before a single thought arises, seeing and hearing are clear and distinct, without falling into inversion. The mind has no comparative measure and does not enter annihilation. Expanding, it pervades the ten directions; gathering in, it is contained within a single mote of dust. There is nothing it does not encompass, nothing that is not oneself, and nothing that is not empty. Outwardly, one does not cling to circumstances; inwardly, one does not cling to mind; still less does one cling to emptiness. This is great emptiness.

Once empty, what circumstances remain to be grasped, and what affairs remain to delude one? This is samādhi. Once empty, it encompasses all that exists and illuminates everything without exception. This is wisdom.

To be capable of samādhi and wisdom is itself morality; the fivefold fragrance is then fully present. Because worldly people have not seen the appearance of emptiness, they establish the two views of emptiness and existence, engaging in much dispute. Their dharma-views are firmly entrenched, and they grow ever farther from the Buddha. Those who cling to existence competitively give rise to views of profit and gain, and there is no limit to their mad perversity. Those attached to biased emptiness give rise to doctrines of annihilation, and many then commit suicide. Europeans and Westerners are born into madness and, at death, fall into annihilation; this is all this same illness.

Moreover, worldly people crudely equate Buddhism with emptiness, even going so far as to abolish everything, deny cause and effect, regard good and evil as of no consequence, take wild abandon for freedom, and consider keeping the precepts an attachment to dharmas. Step by step they go astray. All these are seeds of hell.

There is also a class of people who rigidly cling to doctrinal forms. They simply abandon food for fear of choking, preferring to preserve lesser teachings rather than enter the higher vehicle. All this results from failing, at the outset, to understand the meaning of emptiness. The fivefold fragrance, when explained provisionally, is divided into successive stages; but in the ultimate teaching, one should begin with the fragrance of liberation. Those who incline only toward the fragrance of liberation and do not arouse the fragrance of knowledge and vision are also of the disposition of the two vehicles. Only bodhisattvas can avoid partiality, understand essence and penetrate function. To recognize one’s own original mind is the fragrance of liberation; to comprehend all wondrous functions, know capacities, and engage with people and circumstances is the fragrance of liberation, knowledge, and vision. This is the true method of repentance.

The Sixth Patriarch taught according to people's capacities; for beginners, he had to discuss these matters separately. To integrate them depends solely upon oneself.

[Six] Formless repentance is the bodhisattva repentance practice described in the first section. Know that wrongdoing lies only in thoughts that have not been purified. Their impurity arises from not seeing their originally pure appearance. A thought is not necessarily wrongdoing; thought after thought, clinging and binding oneself—this is wrongdoing. Observe how criminals are imprisoned and deprived of freedom, and one may also awaken to this.

Therefore wrongdoing arises from thought and is also repented through thought. Mental thoughts are originally without appearance; appearances are provisionally established. Know the illusory and one is free of it; wrongdoing then becomes empty and quiescent along with the thought. Appearances are inherently unreal; establishing appearances only adds illness and affliction. The method of formless repentance takes first clarifying one's original nature as its essential point. The text emphasizes the word "thought," from which this may be understood. Students throughout the ages, without exception, have sought repentance because they dislike karmic obstacles, yet they have not understood the meaning of karmic obstacles; therefore, they have not obtained the method of repentance. The Sixth Patriarch, out of compassion, accordingly explained it to them.

[Seven] After repentance comes the passage on making the Four Great Vows. After repenting, people feel that the mind is empty, quiescent, and free of concerns. If they relax even slightly, habitual tendencies return. Therefore they must counter them with activity, diligently applying themselves to what must be done and directing the mind toward future vows, thereby strengthening the mind and consolidating its ground. For this reason, the Sixth Patriarch taught the method of vows, further enabling them to set their minds at ease.

[Eight] This passage emphasizes the word "self." It shows that throughout, one never departs from one's own mind-ground. The two words mind-ground refer jointly to mind and nature. In this school, mind is called nature, and the two are often not distinguished, for realizing the mind is seeing one's true nature; essence and function cannot be divided into two. In the three following sentences beginning "self-take refuge in Buddha," the word "self" must not be understood as "from"; it must be understood as "oneself" for the meaning to be practical and true. Moreover, it unifies the Three Jewels in one body, thereby clarifying the Three Jewels of self-nature.

[Nine] The passage on conferring the formless Three Refuges precepts follows the making of vows. Yet people may fear that their confidence is not firm enough, thinking: "My offenses and karmic debts from former lives are so grave—can they

really be forever cut off in this way?" Moreover, just as a child separated from its mother has no support, confusion and disorder suddenly arise. Therefore they are instructed to take refuge in the Three Jewels. But the Three Jewels are the Three Jewels—what do they have to do with oneself? One must realize and integrate the Three Jewels of self-nature in order to increase one's strength. Thus it says, "self-take refuge in Buddha," making this clear and certain and enabling them to set their minds completely at ease.

[Ten] In the passage, "All of you, focus your minds; I will explain to you the Buddha of self-nature, the one essence and three bodies," the preceding taking refuge in the Three Jewels still entails reliance on something. Here one returns completely to self-nature. The Buddha before one's eyes is in fact wholly unrelated; one must clearly awaken to one's own self-nature and return to the pure dharmakāya. What else could this be but becoming a Buddha? When the three bodies are complete, what wrongdoing remains to repent, and what karma remains to regret?

From "What is called the Buddha of the pure dharmakāya of self-nature" onward, the teaching repeatedly explains nothing other than how to set one's mind at ease. Yet the method of self-refuge, while clearly knowing that nature is empty, does not esteem empty talk. One must proceed from realization of principle to actual practice. "Remove from within self-nature all unwholesome thoughts," and so forth —this is the proper cultivation after awakening, the method of thoroughly eliminating habitual tendencies.

These unwholesome thoughts cannot be seen without cultivation. It is like opening a door: unless one moves house, one cannot see all the filth coming out by itself. What is meant by "transforming into," and so forth, is the wonder of a single turn; only then can one enter nonduality.

It says, "Though good and evil differ, original nature is not two." Once the essential basis of true reality is established, its wondrous functioning of transformation arises. In the end, it all returns to awakening and cultivating for oneself—this is the work of self-nature and true refuge. This is true repentance. The four great sections before and after gradually lead one in, stripping away attachments without one's noticing. How could the Patriarch's compassion be measured?

People often mistakenly regard the Chan school as attached to biased emptiness and consider Pure Land practice more practical and secure. But consider: teachings such as these are so thorough, meticulous, and apt—what could surpass them or compare with them? Moreover, even Pure Land practice ultimately cannot escape this Dharma; nor can any of the other schools depart from this one Dharma. This is what is called the single gate of nirvāṇa.

Those today who divide into schools and establish factions—why do they not quickly repent and examine themselves?

In this chapter, the Sixth Patriarch indicates for those who have first clarified the mind-ground a method of opening the gate. Its meaning seems simple and plain, but later, in such statements as “leave delusion and leave awakening,” “remove falsehood and remove truth,” and “then see Buddha-nature,” it turns toward profoundly deep prajñā. Who among practitioners would be willing—or dare—to leave awakening and remove truth? If one awakens to this meaning, one instantly accomplishes the Buddha Way at these very words. This is self-refuge in the Three Jewels: neither true nor false is established, and both delusion and awakening are empty. This is the formless Three Refuges precepts.

This entire long passage says that practice consists only in ordinarily refraining from unwholesome thoughts and the like. Yet its conclusion lies in clarifying the nonduality of the three bodies and entering the Mahāyāna Dharma gate of seeing one’s true nature. It leads from the profound to the simple and can enable people to awaken suddenly and turn back. If one wishes to leave behind the false path of cultivation with appearances, one must begin by eliminating unwholesome thoughts amid worldly dharmas. In this way one attains the body of self-enjoyment. How, then, can this be regarded as shallow and obvious, or dismissed as a trite old saying?

Below it says, “Make every effort to see for yourselves; do not drift idly on.” From these words “drift idly on,” people unconsciously hurry into old age. In the snap of a finger, the thirtieth day of the twelfth lunar month arrives; then their remorse is too late, and an entire life is over. People today seek wealth, rank, and careers, believing themselves to have calculated well. But even if food, clothing, housing, and everything else turn out as they wish, what use is it in the end? Those with the eye of wisdom should investigate this. They will know what must be turned back from. Unless one comes to weep bitterly, it is not true repentance.

[Eleven] “Do not see that there are Buddhas of the three bodies within your own body” is proposed to be revised as: “Do not see that self-nature itself is the Buddha of the three bodies.”

[Twelve] “Enable you all to see within your own bodies that self-nature has Buddhas of the three bodies” is proposed to have five characters removed, becoming: “Enable you all to see the Buddha of the three bodies of self-nature.”

[Thirteen] After “always see one’s own faults,” add the sentence “and do not cling to one’s own goodness,” thereby completing the meaning.

[Fourteen] In “One wisdom can extinguish ten thousand years of ignorance,” the following three lines, comprising thirteen characters, do not clearly express their

meaning and can easily give rise to misunderstanding; they may be deleted. The following line, “thought after thought is perfectly bright,” is sufficient to express the meaning.

[15] The verse reads: “The three evils in the mind are originally created.” It has been proposed that the two words “originally created” be changed to “yet again,” meaning that one accumulates blessings on the one hand while committing evil again on the other. Such people intend to cultivate blessings to offset their sins, not realizing that although they will receive blessings in future lives, their sins still remain.

[Sixteen] The verse line “When the latter thought suddenly ceases, a lifetime is ended” is proposed to be revised as: “Impermanence is swift; in a single moment, all is ended.”

[Seventeen] Before repenting, one should understand its principles; when repenting, one should become thoroughly familiar with its verses. Every kind of strength comes from the single word “familiar,” for familiarity gives rise to skill. The opening line, “Deluded people cultivate blessings but do not cultivate the Way,” may be called a single phrase that strikes the mark. Cultivating blessings seeks outwardly; cultivating the Way requires inward examination. The difference between them may be only an inch, yet it is a thousand miles. Thus it is said, “face to face, a thousand miles apart.” And who is the one face to face? Formerly, when the First Patriarch spoke to Emperor Wu of Liang, he said: “I do not know.” Was it truly that he did not know? Did he know but could not speak? Or was there no face that could be known? Investigate.

Chapter Seven: The Chapter on Conditions and Opportunities

After the Master received the Dharma at Huangmei, he returned to Caohou Village in Shaozhou. No one knew him there. At that time, a Confucian scholar named Liu Zhilüe treated him with great respect. Zhilüe had an aunt who was a nun, [2] named Wujinzang, who regularly recited the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra. The Master listened briefly and immediately understood its profound meaning, whereupon he explained it to her. The nun then took up the scroll and asked him about the characters. The Master said, “I do not recognize the characters; ask me instead about the meaning.”

The nun said, “If you do not even recognize the characters, how can you understand their meaning?” The Master said, “The wondrous principles of all Buddhas have nothing to do with written words.” The nun was astonished, and she told all the respected elders of the village: “This is a person who has realized the Way; we

should invite him and make offerings to him." Cao Shuliang, a great-grandson of the Marquis Wu of Wei, together with the local residents, all came to pay their respects.

At that time, the ancient Baolin Monastery had lain in ruins since the wars and fires at the end of the Sui dynasty. A monastery was therefore rebuilt on its former site, and the Master was invited to reside there. Before long it became a flourishing monastic center. After the Master had lived there for more than nine months, hostile factions again pursued him. [3] The Master fled into the mountains ahead, and they set fire to the grass and trees. He concealed himself by squeezing into a rock and thus escaped. The rock still bears the marks of the Master's seated knees and the pattern of his robe cloth; it was therefore called the Rock of Refuge. Recalling the Fifth Patriarch's instruction that he should conceal himself at Huaihui, the Master went into seclusion in the two districts.

(Note: The following expounds the intent of the Second Patriarch.)

[1] When reading the chapter on encounters with potential recipients, one should focus on the particular encounter: when precisely suited to a person's capacity, a single point opens them up. This is truly an inconceivable chapter. Nun Wujinzang's attachment lay in clinging to written words. The Patriarch shattered this attachment by saying that he did not recognize characters, directly telling her that the wondrous principles of all Buddhas have nothing to do with written words. The nun was then astonished and accepted this in faith. This was precisely an encounter of causes and conditions.

Fahai had not understood the meaning that Buddha and mind are nondual. His error lay in failing to understand the meaning of "immediately" in the phrase. Within the teaching that samādhi and wisdom are equally sustained, the Patriarch instructed him that wisdom arises from samādhi and therefore cannot be called two; samādhi and wisdom are not two, and mind and Buddha are one. Fahai thoroughly awakened from this. This was another encounter of causes and conditions.

Fada relied on the belief that his practice and accomplishments were far from slight: his three thousand recitations of the Lotus Sūtra, he thought, could not be matched by others. He gave rise to arrogance, and the Patriarch therefore broke down his banner of pride, saying, "If your bow does not reach the ground, what is the point of bowing? If the words do not reach the mind-ground, your effort is in vain." He then pointed out that Fada's fault lay in empty recitation that merely followed the sound, without understanding the meaning of wordlessness. Though his mouth recited the Lotus Sūtra, he had not recognized the wonder of the flower's opening. Without clarity about its central meaning, his cultivation was blind. Those who appear in the world through causes and conditions—

—do so for the one great matter. In human life, this alone is the greatest matter. Just as the essential purpose of forging a blade is to obtain iron, and the essential purpose of cooking rice is to obtain rice, so the essential purpose of becoming a Buddha is realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature. The Buddha's view is not the worldly view; the worldly view is an emotional view. Emotion is self-love, and views belong to attachment to self. To remove this illness, one must first see one's true nature. If one does not obtain the root, then even after immeasurable asaṃkhyeya kalpas, it will ultimately be of no benefit. One will merely be turned by the sūtra, and the more one is turned by it, the deeper one becomes entangled. This was another encounter of causes and conditions.

Buddhist practitioners today rarely encounter a good spiritual friend capable of discerning their faculties. Regardless of a person's capacities, such teachers assume that anyone who enters the gate is an inferior ordinary being, fit only for a single method. They do not know how to teach in accordance with the person's potential. If someone is suited to the Pure Land, they instead instruct that person to investigate Chan; if someone is suited to Chan or Esoteric Buddhism, they instead direct that person to study names and characteristics. How many people have been buried and lost in this way, no one knows. Yet they still consider themselves to be proceeding securely in this degenerate age, and insist that this is how it ought to be.

How is this different from an incompetent physician who harms people, lets them linger until they die, and then says, "People in this degenerate age are naturally short-lived. I did not dare prescribe this strong medicine; the fault is not mine"? Moreover, if a person has an insight midway and turns to another physician to open a different path, they obstruct him again, claiming that keeping him from entering a dangerous path is compassion. Their lack of skillful means is already so great; how could they speak of causes and conditions suited to the person?

[2] Profound meaning and oral explanation are both words. Although they are not separate from intrinsic nature, they are nevertheless matters external to it, for they all belong to dharmas. Only when dharmas are purified and mind is empty does Buddha-nature originally reveal itself, as does the original aspect of nirvāṇa. Nun Wujinzang's illness lay in her attachment to profound principles, but she had already felt that mere recitation was useless. The Sixth Patriarch guided her back to the mind-ground, exactly in accord with her causes and conditions; thus a single point shattered her attachment.

[3] Evil forces pursued him and even set fire to the forest. This too was an encounter of causes and conditions. Good things encounter many trials; without polishing, they do not shine. How could this be enough to burden a worthy person?

The monk Fahai was from Qujiang in Shaozhou. When he first visited the Patriarch, he asked, “Mind itself is Buddha. I pray that you will bestow your instruction.” The Master said, “When the preceding thought does not arise, this is mind; when the subsequent thought does not cease, this is Buddha. [1] Forming all appearances is mind; being free from all appearances is Buddha. If I were to explain this fully, I could not exhaust it in kalpas. Listen to my verse:”

Mind itself is called wisdom; Buddha itself is samādhi.

When samādhi and wisdom are equally sustained, the mind is pure.

Awakening to this dharma gate depends on your habitual nature. [2]

Function is originally unborn; cultivating both is correct.

Fahai awakened greatly upon hearing these words and praised them in verse:

Mind itself originally is Buddha; [3]

Not realizing this, I wronged myself. I now know the cause of samādhi and wisdom: cultivating both frees one from all things.

(Note: The following expounds the intent of the Second Patriarch.)

[1] The meaning of the two phrases, “the preceding thought does not arise” and “the subsequent thought does not cease,” is not actually made explicit. If one forces an interpretation, many misunderstandings will inevitably arise. Their meaning is that Buddha is the essence of mind, while mind is the function of Buddha. When the preceding thought does not arise, this is the time of quiescent cessation: it is Buddha, yet essence has never departed from function. Function is contained within essence, and that is mind; hence it is called “mind itself.” When the subsequent thought does not cease, this is the time of wondrous functioning: it is mind, yet function has never departed from essence. Within function—

—there is essence, and that is Buddha; hence it is called “Buddha itself.” Taken together, this is essence itself and function itself; mind and Buddha are nondual, hence “mind itself is Buddha.” Those who have not understood essence and function are most liable to interpret this vaguely. They may mistakenly suppose that if their own minds are good, they are already Buddhas and need not cultivate further, but may naturally become Buddhas. This truly becomes mere verbal Chan.

Furthermore, the arising of the functioning of all dharmas is called mind, while returning to quiescent cessation is called Buddha. When it is mind itself, Buddha is in mind; when it is Buddha itself, mind is in Buddha. Thought after thought is mind; thought after thought is originally empty, and this is Buddha. Forming appearances

is mind; being free from mind is Buddha. Do not force a division into two, nor rigidly cling to their being one. Mind is immeasurable, whereas Buddha-essence is one. Mind is wisdom, and Buddha is samādhi. When samādhi and wisdom are equally sustained, mind itself is Buddha. Mind is originally unborn; the unborn is Buddha. Wherever mind is, Buddha-essence constantly abides. Not arising is the originally empty aspect; not ceasing is inexhaustible wondrous functioning. “Mind itself is Buddha” means that essence and function are thus one.

In sum, when teaching beginners, one’s words should be especially clear and concise. Never speak in winding, far-fetched ways or lead them into abstruseness, thereby obstructing their power of direct acceptance. Thus the following two phrases are more direct and satisfying: “Forming all appearances is mind; being free from all appearances is Buddha.” Yet he also says, “If I were to explain this fully, I could not exhaust it in kalpas.” How could these four lines completely elucidate it? And how could a small explanation such as this fully expound it? Practitioners must awaken to their original nature for themselves and not be bound by words.

[2] In the phrase “depends on your habitual nature,” the character for “habit” should perhaps be changed to the character for “self.”

[3] In “mind itself originally is Buddha,” the subtlety lies in the word “originally.” One who has not realized the original cannot speak in this way. “Free from all things” means free from all appearances.

The monk Fada was from Hongzhou. He left home at the age of seven and regularly recited the Lotus Sūtra. When he came to bow to the Patriarch, his head did not touch the ground. The Patriarch rebuked him, saying, “If your bow does not reach the ground, what is the point of bowing? There must be something in your mind. What practice have you accumulated?” Fada replied, “I have recited the Lotus Sūtra three thousand times.” The Patriarch said, “If you recited it ten thousand times and understood the meaning of the sūtra without considering yourself superior, then you could walk together with me. Now you carry this burden of achievement and do not even know your fault. Listen to my verse:”

Bowing is meant to break down the banner of pride; why does your head not reach the ground?

Where there is self, wrongdoing immediately arises; [2] forgetting one’s merit, one’s blessings are incomparable.

The Master further asked, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Fada.” The Master said, “You are named Fada, but when have you ever understood the Dharma?” He then spoke another verse:

You are now named Fada, diligently reciting without rest.

Empty recitation merely follows the sound; one who realizes the mind is called a bodhisattva.

Because you now have the right causes and conditions, I will now explain it to you.

Only trust that the Buddha is wordless; the lotus flower blooms from the mouth.

On hearing the verse, Fada repented and gave thanks, saying, “From now on, I shall be humble and respectful toward everyone. Your disciple has recited the Lotus Sūtra without understanding its meaning and has often remained in doubt. The Venerable Master’s wisdom is vast; I pray that you will briefly explain the principles in the sūtra.”

The Master said, “Fada, the Dharma is itself thoroughly comprehended; it is your mind that does not comprehend it. The sūtra itself has no doubts; your own mind gives rise to doubt. When you recite this sūtra, what do you take as its central principle?” Fada said, “This student’s faculties are dark and dull. I have always merely recited according to the words; how could I know its central import?” The Master said, “I do not recognize written characters. Try taking up the sūtra and reciting it once; I will explain it to you.”

Fada then recited the sūtra aloud. When he reached the chapter on parables, the Master said, “Stop. This sūtra takes the Buddha’s appearing in the world for the one great matter of causes and conditions as its central principle. Though it speaks of many kinds of parables, none goes beyond this. What are these causes and conditions? The sūtra says: ‘All Buddhas, World-Honored Ones, appear in the world solely because of the one great matter of causes and conditions.’”

“The one great matter is the Buddha’s knowledge and vision. [3] Worldly people are outwardly deluded by attachment to appearances and inwardly deluded by attachment to emptiness. If one can be free from appearances amid appearances and free from emptiness amid emptiness, one is neither inwardly nor outwardly deluded. If one awakens to this Dharma, in a single thought the mind opens; this is called opening the Buddha’s knowledge and vision. Buddha means awakening, and it is divided into four gates: opening awakened knowledge and vision, showing awakened knowledge and vision, awakening to awakened knowledge and vision, and entering awakened knowledge and vision.”

“If, upon hearing the opening and showing, you can awaken and enter, then awakened knowledge and vision—the originally true nature—will manifest. Be careful not to misunderstand the meaning of the sūtra. Seeing others speak of opening, showing, awakening, and entering, do not suppose that this is solely the

Buddha's knowledge and vision and that we have no share in it. To interpret it thus is to slander the sūtra and malign the Buddha."

"Since the Buddha is already a Buddha and fully possesses knowledge and vision, why would there be any need to open it further? You should now trust that the Buddha's knowledge and vision is only your own mind; there is no other Buddha. Because all sentient beings obscure their own radiance, greedily attach to the objects of the senses, and are disturbed inwardly by external conditions, they willingly submit to being driven about. Therefore the World-Honored One must arise from samādhi and, with every kind of earnest exhortation, urge them to rest and cease, not seek outside themselves, and become no different from the Buddha. This is why it is called opening the Buddha's knowledge and vision."

"I likewise urge all people constantly to open the Buddha's knowledge and vision within their own minds. Worldly people have distorted minds: foolish and deluded, they commit evil; their mouths speak goodness while their minds harbor evil; they are greedy, angry, jealous, flattering, deceitful, arrogant, and conceited; they violate others and harm living things. Such people open the knowledge and vision of sentient beings. If they can rectify their minds, [5] constantly give rise to wisdom, contemplate their own minds, cease evil, and practice good, they themselves open the Buddha's knowledge and vision."

"You must, thought after thought, open the Buddha's knowledge and vision; do not open the knowledge and vision of sentient beings. Opening the Buddha's knowledge and vision is transcendence of the world; opening the knowledge and vision of sentient beings is the world. If you merely toil at clinging to recitation and regard it as your daily practice, how is that different from a yak cherishing its tail?" Fada said, "If that is so, then once one understands the meaning, need one no longer trouble to recite the sūtra?" The Master said, "What fault does the sūtra have? How could it obstruct your recitation? Delusion and awakening lie in the person; benefit and harm arise from oneself. To recite with the mouth and practice with the mind is to turn the sūtra; to recite with the mouth but not practice with the mind is to be turned by the sūtra. Listen to my verse:"

When the mind is deluded, it turns the Lotus; when the mind is awakened, the Lotus turns it. [6]

Though one recites the sūtra for a long time without understanding it, one makes an enemy of its meaning.

With no thought, thought itself is right; with thought, thought becomes deviant.

Do not reckon either being or nonbeing; forever drive the white ox-cart.

On hearing the verse, Fada could not help weeping with sorrow and was greatly awakened on the spot. [7] He then told the Master, “From the past until now, Fada has never turned the Lotus Sūtra; rather, the Lotus Sūtra has turned me.”

He further asked, “The sūtra says that all the great śrāvakas, even the bodhisattvas, exhaust their thoughts and deliberate together, [8] yet cannot fathom the Buddha’s wisdom. Now you say that an ordinary person need only awaken to his own mind to be called the Buddha’s knowledge and vision. Unless one has the highest capacities, one can hardly avoid doubt and slander. Moreover, the sūtra speaks of three carts—the goat cart, deer cart, and white ox-cart. How are they distinguished? I beg the Venerable Monk to give further instruction.”

The Master said, “The meaning of the sūtra is perfectly clear; you yourself have turned away from it in delusion. The reason those of the three vehicles cannot fathom the Buddha’s wisdom is the fault of measuring and deliberating.”

“Even if they exhaust their thoughts and deliberate together, they only become ever more remote from it. The Buddha originally taught for ordinary people, not for Buddhas. If you are unwilling to believe this principle, you may leave your seat. You do not realize that you are already seated in the white ox-cart, yet seek the three carts outside the gate. Moreover, the sūtra plainly tells you that there is only the One Buddha Vehicle and no other vehicle; whether two or three, or even countless expedient means, various causes and conditions, analogies, and expressions—all these teachings are for the sake of the One Buddha Vehicle. Why do you not understand? The three carts are provisional, for an earlier time; the One Vehicle is real, for the present time. It only teaches you to relinquish the provisional and return to the real. After returning to the real, even the real has no name.”

[9] “You should know that all the precious treasures belong entirely to you, for you yourself to enjoy and use. No longer form the notion of a father, nor the notion of a son, nor any notion of use. This is called upholding the Lotus Sūtra: from kalpa to kalpa, never letting the scroll leave your hands; from day to night, [10] there is no time when you are not mindful of it.” Having received this instruction, Fada leapt with joy and praised him in verse:

Having recited the sūtras three thousand times, at a single phrase from Caoxi, [his delusion] vanished.

With one sentence from Caoxi, they vanished.

Before I understood the intent of transcending the world, how could I cease the madness of lives upon lives?

Goat, deer, and ox were provisionally set forth; the good was proclaimed at the beginning, middle, and end.

Who knew that within the burning house was originally the Dharma King? The Master said, “Only now may you be called a monk who recites the sūtras.” From that time, Fada grasped the profound purport and never ceased reciting the sūtras.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the meaning.)

[1] Regarding the monk Fada, the reading “does not take himself to be superior” is preferable; adding the character zi (self) after bu (not) makes the meaning clearer. Whenever people come to inquire about the Dharma, the moment they open their mouths, they are already clinging to something in their minds. This is birth and death.

[2] The fault of having a self refers to having three thousand Lotus teachings. When a person stands before one, the appearance of a person is established; when one faces a sūtra, the appearance of a dharma is established. This is why he diligently recited without ceasing and regarded himself as superior.

[3] “Opening the Buddha’s knowledge and vision” does not mean opening the Buddha’s knowledge and vision; it means opening one’s own Buddha-awareness and knowledge and vision. Thus it is said, “Only your own mind; there is no other Buddha.” But how is the Dharma opened? By transforming sentient beings’ knowledge and vision, for sentient beings’ emotional views are sufficient to obstruct the Way. This sūtra takes causes and conditions for appearing in the world as its principle, while the Nirvāṇa Sūtra takes Buddha-nature as its principle; their underlying meaning is the same. To understand the meaning is itself to recite the sūtra; these are not two separate matters. After Fada grasped the purport, he still did not cease reciting the sūtras. Thus his understanding was thorough.

[4] The four gates of opening, showing, awakening, and entering all concern one’s own affair. “Opening” is like clouds parting and the sun emerging. This shows that the sun has always been there; when the clouds part, it is seen. Everyone has a share in it; it is not possessed by the Buddha alone.

“Showing” means that one sees something but does not recognize it, and so it is pointed out. Everyone is a Buddha, yet does not recognize it themselves, and must rely on the guidance of a good spiritual friend. If one is heedless oneself, what use can such guidance be? “Awakening” means reflecting inwardly and coming to realization: discerning what one’s own mind is, what its appearance is like, and how it differs from the Buddha.

“Entering” is like a prodigal returning home: upon entering the door and seeing his mother, he suddenly realizes the wrongs of former days. Yet among these four gates, the first importance is faith. The Patriarch said, “You must now believe that it is only your own mind; do not seek outside.” This is precisely the meaning. I have often said that the Confucian and Buddhist traditions differ from other religions only in the phrase “seek much blessing for oneself”; thus we know that they surpass all others.

[5] The two words “right mind” mean a pure mind. Doing evil is called deviant; doing good is called right. Right mind is samādhi. From samādhi arise all wondrous functions; this is transcending the world. To laboriously cling to thoughts is to enter the world.

[6] In “turning the sūtra” and “being turned by the sūtra,” the relation of subject and object is clear. The key lies only in whether one is awakened. Fada’s present affinity lay precisely in this turning, and it too was a condition for transcending the world.

[7] The two clauses “could not help weeping with sorrow” and “was greatly awakened on the spot” should be reversed. Surely, only after great awakening, and upon reaching the height of joy, did he involuntarily weep.

[8] As for “they exhaust their thoughts and deliberate together, yet cannot fathom the Buddha’s wisdom,” the problem lies in measuring and deliberating. In the act of measuring and deliberating, if one does not employ self-view, one loses one’s basis; if one employs self-view, one is no longer empty and quiescent. The more one measures and deliberates, the more remote one becomes.

It is also said that without investigation one cannot penetrate deeply. Yet this investigation too is measuring and deliberating. If one tells people to investigate, they will again measure and deliberate to their heart’s content. If one tells them that all such measuring and deliberating is useless, they may instead rigidly guard themselves and sit vacantly, falling into biased emptiness and annihilationism. They do not know that investigation and discernment cannot be dispensed with; but what, after all, is to be investigated? One must investigate the true aspect before one’s own thought has arisen. This aspect is neither empty nor

existent. If one calls it existent, no form or appearance can be obtained; yet it is not inert emptiness or dead stillness. If one calls it empty, its wondrous functions are as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges, yet it remains quiescent and clear. Then one realizes that all inverted and confused delusions arise from the illusory mind. One need only let everything go and not follow circumstances as they turn. Seeing and hearing remain clear and ever-present; one discriminates without attachment. This is what is meant by “merely awaken to your own mind, and you will be called one who sees as a Buddha sees.” Buddha-seeing is awakened seeing: with

awareness in the lead, mastery remains with oneself, and one is not shaken or deluded. This is called turning things. Yet one must not rigidly cling to this view and thereby make a fetter of Dharma. Reckon neither being nor nonbeing; do not concern yourself with good or bad. This is the ultimate reality of the One Vehicle.

The three carts were only provisionally established for ordinary people.

[9] “Even the real has no name”: Dharma is pure and mind is empty. From this we may know that the phrase “return to the real” does not yet dispense with Dharma. Establish neither extreme and grasp not at the middle way. Form no notion of father, no notion of son; free in every direction, this is the precious treasure, for you yourself to enjoy and use.

[10] “From kalpa to kalpa, from day to night, there is no time when one is not mindful of it” means that everywhere and at all times one does not depart from seeing one’s true nature. There is never a moment when one is not practicing; one need not insist that reciting sūtras alone is practice. If there is no time that is not mindfulness, can there be any time that is not awareness? Can there be any time that is not empty?

The monk Zhitong, a native of Anfeng in Shouzhou, had first studied the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra more than a thousand times, yet did not understand the three kāyas and four wisdoms. [1] He bowed to the Master and sought an explanation of their meaning. The Master said, “The three kāyas are these: the pure dharmakāya is your nature; the perfect sambhogakāya is your wisdom; the countless nirmāṇakāyas are your conduct. If, apart from intrinsic nature, one speaks separately of the three kāyas, this is called having bodies without wisdom. If one realizes that the three kāyas have no intrinsic nature, this is called the bodhi of the four wisdoms. Listen to my verse:”

The self-nature possesses the three bodies; when illumined, they become the four wisdoms.

When made manifest, they become the four wisdoms.

I now explain this to you: believe deeply, and you will never again be deluded.

One effortlessly ascends to the Buddha-ground.

“I now speak to you: believe this truly, and you will never again be deluded. Do not imitate those who chase after things, speaking of bodhi all day long.” Zhitong further asked, “May I hear the meaning of the four wisdoms?” The Master said, “Since you understand the three kāyas, you should understand the four wisdoms. Why ask further? If, apart from the three kāyas, one discusses the four wisdoms separately, this is called having wisdom without bodies; and this very wisdom without bodies becomes no wisdom. He again spoke a verse:”

The nature of great perfect mirror wisdom is pure; with equality wisdom, the mind is free of illness.

In the wisdom of equality, the mind is free of illness.

In wondrous observing wisdom, seeing is without effort; the wisdom of accomplishing what is to be done is like the perfect mirror.

The fifth and eighth are transformed at fruition; the sixth and seventh are transformed in the cause. These are only names and have no real nature.

If, at the point of transformation, you leave no emotional attachment, then amid the ceaseless arising of phenomena you will forever abide in nāga samādhi. [2] This is the transformation of consciousness into wisdom. The teachings say: transform the first five consciousnesses into the wisdom of accomplishing what is to be done; transform the sixth consciousness into wondrous observing wisdom; transform the seventh consciousness into the wisdom of equality; transform the eighth consciousness into great perfect mirror wisdom. Although the sixth and seventh are transformed in the causal stage, and the fifth and eighth at the stage of fruition, only their names are transformed, not their substance. Zhitong suddenly awakened to intrinsic wisdom and accordingly presented this verse:

The three bodies are originally my essence; the four wisdoms are fundamentally the mind's luminosity.

The four wisdoms are the luminosity of the fundamental mind.

Body and wisdom interpenetrate without obstruction; in responding to things, they freely take whatever form is appropriate.

To arouse cultivation is deluded movement; to guard and abide is not true refinement.

Through the Master I understood the wondrous purport, and in the end forgot even the name "defilement."

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the meaning.)

[1] How could the meaning of the three kāyas and four wisdoms be understood merely by reading sūtras? What the Sixth Patriarch taught likewise only set forth its principle. Though he spoke to him, Zhitong still had not fully awakened. Why? Because he further asked about the four wisdoms. Let us supplement the meaning: the three kāyas are these—the pure dharmakāya is your essence; the perfect sambhogakāya is your appearance; the countless nirmāṇakāyas are your function. Essence, appearance, and function are three names for one substance, and they

have no intrinsic nature. To understand this is called the bodhi of the four wisdoms. It comes from inward realization and does not prize empty talk.

[2] “The nature of great perfect mirror wisdom is pure.” This nature is originally pure and belongs to the eastern gate of arousing the resolve. It is fundamental wisdom, also called non-discriminating wisdom, namely the eighth consciousness, ālaya consciousness. Both the Chan and Esoteric schools begin from this. What is called first breaking through ignorance begins here. When practitioners realize this wisdom, it is vast and boundless, comparable to a perfect mirror. All wondrous awareness and ignorance alike are transformed

from it, and therefore belong to one substance. At the very time of wondrous awareness, the wisdom-mirror neither increases nor arises because of it; at the very time of ignorance, the wisdom-mirror neither decreases nor ceases because of it. Therefore it is said to be originally pure, equal, and unmoving. The gate of arousing the resolve means that cultivation takes this as its starting point.

“In the wisdom of equality, the mind is free of illness.” This is the seventh consciousness, manas. Discrimination is the illness. It belongs to the southern gate of cultivation and pertains precisely to the work of eliminating habitual tendencies after one has realized the mind-ground. This is differentiated wisdom: one transforms discrimination into equal, non-discriminating awareness, and illness into freedom from illness.

The wisdom of accomplishing what is to be done is the same as the great mirror wisdom. The former pertains to the first five consciousnesses and is the gate of nirvāṇa in the north; it is of one substance with the eighth consciousness and is therefore said to be the same as the great mirror wisdom. The sixth consciousness is discerning but not constant; the first five are neither constant nor discerning; the eighth is constant but not discerning; and the seventh is both constant and discerning. The fifth and eighth are similar, and both enter non-discriminating wisdom.

The five and eighth are transformed through fruition, while the sixth and seventh are transformed through cause. This refers to the Chan and Esoteric schools, which fundamentally begin with the eighth consciousness and, together with the wisdom of accomplishing what is to be done of the first five consciousnesses, proceed from fruition to seek the cause. Other schools first remove the branches and leaves, beginning with the sixth and seventh consciousnesses and proceeding from cause to seek fruition.

One is the definitive meaning of the Mahāyāna, transforming from below upward: first breaking through fundamental ignorance and then removing habitual tendencies. This is called transformation on the basis of fruition, and pertains to the

fifth and eighth consciousnesses. The other is an expedient for beginners, transforming from above downward: first removing superficial habitual tendencies and then breaking through ignorance. This is called transformation within the cause, and pertains to the sixth and seventh consciousnesses.

The methods differ and are adapted to sentient beings' capacities; thus the teachings propounded differ accordingly. This does not imply any view of superiority or inferiority. These are merely provisional names; no real intrinsic nature can be spoken of. Hence it is said: "They are only conventional designations and have no real nature." Practitioners need only understand the meaning.

If, at the point of transformation, one leaves no emotional attachment, this means that one should practice diligently without indulging oneself. Nor should one fix one's attention on the point of transformation and grasp at the Dharma, thereby adding to one's emotional attachments and views; then one will become settled of oneself.

"Though activities flourish, one ever abides in the nāga samādhi." This samādhi is free and sovereign meditative absorption: one remains thus forever, and everywhere is consciousness. Outwardly, this is no different from an ordinary being; yet each consciousness is wisdom, and at its root one is one with the Buddha. The Laṅkāvatāra takes buddha-nature as its principle; this is precisely its meaning. Esoteric Buddhism further speaks of the five wisdoms, with the ninth consciousness at the center: the amala consciousness, also called the pure consciousness.

The four wisdoms return to one substance, which is the state of Vairocana. Entering samādhi through the single central gate, one encompasses all gates. Yet these are all merely conventional designations. One transforms its function, not its substance. It arises from the dharmakāya, yet depends on the three kāyas for the fullness of its virtues. Without the combined practice of Esoteric Buddhism and Chan, it is not easy to realize and enter.

Upon reaching the gate of accomplishment in the West, the Pure Land is included as well. What distinction, then, can there be?

The monastic Zhichang was from Guixi in Xinzhou. He left home in childhood and aspired to see his true nature. One day, when he came to pay respects, the Master asked, "Where have you come from, and what do you seek?" He replied, "This student recently went to Baifeng Mountain in Hongzhou and paid respects to Venerable Datong. He kindly explained the principle of seeing one's nature and becoming a Buddha. Yet my doubts have not been resolved, so I have come from afar to pay homage, humbly hoping that the Venerable Master will instruct me." The Master said, "What words did he speak? Try recounting them."

He replied, “After arriving there, I spent three months without receiving instruction. Because I was earnest in seeking the Dharma, one evening I entered his private chamber alone and asked, ‘What is the original mind and original nature of this person?’ Datong then said, ‘Do you see empty space?’ [1] I replied, ‘I do.’ He said, ‘Does the empty space you see have any form or appearance?’ I replied, ‘Empty space is formless; what appearance could it have?’”

He said, “Your intrinsic nature is like empty space: there is not a single thing to be seen. This is called right seeing. There is not a single thing to be known. This is called true knowing. It has neither blue nor yellow, neither long nor short; simply see that its source is pure and that the essence of awareness is perfectly luminous. This is called seeing one’s nature and becoming a Buddha; it is also called the Tathāgata’s knowledge and vision.” Although I have heard this teaching, I am still not fully resolved. I beg the Venerable Master to instruct me.” The Master said, “What that teacher said still retains seeing and knowing; that is why you have not understood. I shall now show you a verse:”

To see no dharma yet retain the view of non-seeing is much like drifting clouds obscuring the face of the sun.

To know no dharma yet cling to empty knowing is like lightning flashing in the vast sky.

When this seeing and knowing suddenly arises, how can one recognize the expedient means?

You should, in a single thought, know for yourself that this is wrong; your own numinous light will then shine forth constantly. [2]

When Zhichang heard the verse, his mind was suddenly opened. He then composed a verse:

Without cause, I arouse seeing and knowing, and seek bodhi by clinging to appearances.

If attachment remains in a single thought of awakening, how can it surpass the delusion of former times?

The substance of the source of awakening in one’s intrinsic nature vainly flows along with whatever it illumines.

Had I not entered the Patriarch’s room, I would have wandered blindly toward two extremes.

One day Zhidao asked the Master, “The Buddha taught the Dharma of the three vehicles, and also spoke of the supreme vehicle. Your disciple does not understand and hopes for your instruction.”

The Master said, “Examine your own original mind; do not cling to external dharma appearances. The Dharma has no four vehicles; people’s minds themselves have differing grades. Seeing, hearing, turning, and reciting are the Lesser Vehicle. Awakening to the Dharma and understanding its meaning are the Middle Vehicle. Practicing in accordance with the Dharma is the Great Vehicle. To penetrate all dharmas completely, possess all dharmas, remain unstained by anything, be free from the appearances of all dharmas, and obtain nothing at all—this is called the supreme vehicle. Vehicle means practice; it is not a matter for verbal dispute. You must cultivate for yourself; do not ask me. At all times, let your intrinsic nature be naturally at ease.” Zhidao bowed in gratitude and attended the Master until the end of the Master’s life. [3]

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the meaning.)

[1] Venerable Datong instructed Zhichang by using the appearance of empty space as a metaphor for intrinsic nature, and he further said that where there is not a single thing to be seen, this is called right seeing. His error has two aspects. First, his explanation is incomplete: he speaks only of one half. Intrinsic nature is originally like empty space, yet it constantly gives rise to the numinous light’s wondrous functioning. Bodhi originally cannot be grasped through appearances, but neither can it be seen apart from appearances. He speaks only of essence and does not clarify function; therefore, his explanation is incomplete.

Second, if one clings to this as a fixed view and establishes a dharma-view of abiding in emptiness, it becomes an illness. Therefore the Patriarch said, “It still retains seeing and knowing.” Once seeing and knowing are established, the numinous light cannot manifest. To seek through attachment to appearances is not bodhi.

Datong belonged to the school that sinks into emptiness and abides in stillness. He saw only the Buddha’s essence and did not understand the Buddha’s function; moreover, he clung to this as correct and did not realize that he retained seeing and knowing. He did not know that buddha-nature is vast and free from attachment, originally like empty space, while its wondrous functions are as countless as the sands of the Ganges. Everywhere there are appearances; because no appearance is established, it is called formless. Everywhere it encounters things; because no view is established, it is called without things.

Throughout the mountains, rivers, and great earth, amid every form and color, there is nowhere that is not the Buddha’s functioning and nowhere that can be apart from the Buddha’s essence. It depends only on whether you have thoroughly understood

and whether you are attached. If you have not thoroughly understood, then even if you are temporarily free from biased attachment, it is ultimately of no use and cannot be called pure and perfectly luminous. If this principle is not understood, it cannot be called seeing one's nature. Between them lies only the drifting cloud of a subtle dharma-view.

Since ancient times, practitioners have vainly suffered the bondage of Dharma and have found it difficult to arouse great capacities and great function because their initial approach was not thorough. Even when they reach the top of a hundred-foot pole, they ultimately do not step straight beyond it. This is one who has not turned around in empty space.

Therefore, one must be able to turn around in empty space, and one must also be able to turn around in rotten mud. Entering foul mud, one is not defiled; ascending to purity, one is not stained. Above and below, turning and leaping, the numinous light is never obscured. Everything depends on one's own awareness; not the slightest borrowing is permitted.

Do not fear that your strength is insufficient. Strength is developed through training, not through merely abiding. One must understand and awaken thoroughly; then one naturally has the courage to take responsibility, and daily practice will bear fruit. Otherwise, at every turn one will incur fault; before one has trained, one has already fallen into a pit.

Where the ancients were meticulous, they were meticulous twelvefold; where they were bold, ordinary people could not fathom them. Without entering the tiger's den, how can one obtain the tiger cub? Without entering birth and death, how can one transcend birth and death? This matter is inherently earth-shaking. If there is the slightest tendency to delay or hesitate, one cannot enter birth and death. If there is the slightest carelessness or superficiality, and one has not thoroughly understood the principle, one cannot emerge from birth and death. I speak this for those of the supreme vehicle. Surely people in the world will doubt my words, but they need only consult the verse of the First Patriarch.

The verse says: "Neither seeing evil and giving rise to aversion, nor observing good and diligently pursuing it; neither abandoning wisdom to draw near to folly, nor casting off delusion to seek awakening. Comprehending the great Way, one transcends all measure; penetrating the Buddha-mind, one goes beyond all bounds. Not following the same track as ordinary beings or sages, one is called, transcendentally, a patriarch."

[3] What is said here about the four vehicles is most earnest; yet these too are provisional names. Practitioners themselves know whether they are warm or cold.

They should ask themselves which vehicle they occupy and know for themselves. Thus he said, “Do not ask me.”

The monastic Zhidao was from Nanhai in Guangzhou. He requested instruction, saying, “Since leaving home, this student has studied the Nirvāṇa Sūtra for more than ten years, yet has not understood its main meaning. I hope the Venerable Master will kindly instruct me.” The Master said, “What do you not understand?” He replied, “‘All conditioned activities are impermanent; they are dharmas of arising and ceasing. When arising and ceasing have ceased, quiescent extinction is bliss.’ I have doubts about this.” The Master said, “What is your doubt?”

He replied, “All sentient beings should have two bodies: the form body and the Dharma body. The form body is impermanent, arising and ceasing; the Dharma body is permanent, without knowing or awareness.”

“The sūtra says, ‘When arising and ceasing have ceased, quiescent extinction is bliss.’ I do not know which body becomes quiescently extinct and which body receives bliss. If it is the form body, then when the form body ceases, the four elements disperse, and this is wholly suffering; suffering cannot be called bliss. If the Dharma body becomes quiescently extinct, then it is like grass, wood, tiles, and stones. Who, then, receives bliss? Moreover, dharma-nature is the substance of arising and ceasing, while the five aggregates are the function of arising and ceasing. There is one substance and five functions. Arising and ceasing are constant: when there is arising, function emerges from the substance; when there is cessation, function is gathered back into the substance.”

“If one allows further arising, then beings with sentience continue without interruption or cessation. If one does not allow further arising, then one returns forever to quiescent extinction, like insentient things. In that case, all dharmas are suppressed by nirvāṇa and cannot even arise. What bliss could there be?” [1] The Master said, “You are a disciple of the Buddha. Why do you adopt the heterodox mistaken views of annihilation and eternalism in discussing the Dharma of the supreme vehicle?”

“According to what you say, apart from the form body there is another Dharma body; you seek quiescent extinction apart from arising and ceasing, and you posit the permanence and bliss of nirvāṇa. You say that there is a body that receives and enjoys it. This is attachment to birth and death.”

“You are attached to worldly pleasures. You should now know that the Buddha, seeing how all deluded people take the combination of the five aggregates as the appearance of their own self, discriminate all dharmas as the appearances of external objects, delight in birth and hate death, and drift from thought to thought without knowing that all is dreamlike, illusory, and false, pitying them taught the

true bliss of nirvāṇa. They vainly undergo saṃsāra and turn the constant bliss of nirvāṇa into an appearance of suffering, pursuing it all day long.”

“For this reason, the Buddha revealed the true bliss of nirvāṇa: in a single instant there is no appearance of arising, and in a single instant there is no appearance of ceasing. There is no further arising and ceasing to be extinguished; thus quiescent extinction is manifest before one. When it is manifest before one, there is not even a measure of its being manifest. This is called constant bliss. This bliss has no recipient, nor is there one who does not receive it. How, then, can there be talk of one substance and five functions? Still less can one say that nirvāṇa suppresses all dharmas and causes them never to arise. This is slandering the Buddha and denigrating the Dharma. Listen to my verse: [2]”

The unsurpassed great nirvāṇa is perfectly luminous, ever quiescent, and ever illuminating.

Ordinary fools call it death; non-Buddhists cling to it as annihilation.

Those who seek the two vehicles regard it as non-action.

All these are calculations of emotional attachment, roots of the sixty-two views.

They falsely establish empty names; how could these be the true meaning?

Only those beyond all measure penetrate it without grasping or rejecting.

Through knowing the dharmas of the five aggregates, and the self within the aggregates.

Outwardly appear forms of every color, and each and every appearance of sound.

All are equal, like dreams and illusions; no view of ordinary beings or sages arises.

nor interpret them as nirvāṇa. The two extremes and the three divisions of time are cut off.

They constantly respond through the functions of the faculties, yet do not conceive of themselves as functioning.

Discriminate all dharmas, yet give rise to no thought of discrimination.

The kalpa-fire burns the ocean floor; the wind beats the mountains against one another.

The bliss of true, eternal quiescent cessation—the marks of nirvāṇa are thus.

I now speak forcibly in words, to make you abandon mistaken views.

Do not interpret according to the words; I permit you to understand a small portion.

Zhidao heard the verse, greatly awakened, joyfully bowed in reverence, and withdrew.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the purport.)

[I] The question is altogether too naïve. He forcibly divides the dharmakāya and the physical body into two, thinking that arising and ceasing are the arising and ceasing of the physical body. If this arising and ceasing cease, then the quiescent cessation of the dharmakāya is bliss. But if the dharmakāya neither knows nor perceives, who is there to know that it is bliss and to experience it? Such is the error of this deluded view; therefore, everything argued from it is inverted.

This fault is often found among beginning students of Buddhism. Yet it is not easy to remedy, for they do not apply themselves to investigation; even this principle cannot be attained, and they remain confused and stifled all their lives. One should know that everything is governed by mind. The dharmakāya and the physical body are neither one nor two. This physical body, too, is evoked by this illusory mind, while sensations of suffering and bliss arise and cease from thought to thought.

They still belong to the transformations of the illusory mind. If the illusory mind ceases, one naturally attains the bliss of free and easy quiescent cessation. Moreover, mind itself is illusory; arising and ceasing are likewise illusory. Because they are illusory, they are fundamentally unobtainable. Yet illusion is not nonexistent: though it exists, it is still illusory. To recognize illusion is for it to cease. But the nature of awareness does not cease. To cling to annihilation or eternity are both mistaken views.

Going further, one knows that arising and ceasing are indeed illusory, and that quiescent cessation also belongs to illusion. Yet quiescent cessation is not nothingness; it is neither truly existent nor void, and thus one reaches perfect subtlety. For deluded people, the Buddha analytically distinguished such dharmas as the dharmakāya and physical body, arising and ceasing, and quiescent cessation. This is an initial expedient. He then leads them back to their convergence in one essence, saying that originally there are no marks of arising and ceasing, and thus quiescent cessation is present. Yet quiescent cessation, too, is not a mark.

The sūtra says, "True marks are precisely non-marks." Therefore, there is no measure of its being present. Though it belongs to illusory appearances, this does not negate illusion. This bliss has no experiencer, yet neither is there one who does not experience it. It is enough for those with the eye of wisdom to understand this—

to understand that it is a provisional name, like a dream or an illusion. There is no need to insist on grasping it, nor any need to insist on rejecting it. This is to be a person of great capacity who has gone beyond measure. From such lines in the verse as “giving rise to no view of ordinary or sage” and “the marks of nirvāṇa are thus,” one may awaken.

[II] All who form views of this kind do so because they have not entered nonduality. Mind and dharmas stand in opposition; on the basis of mind they calculate about mind, establish the sixty-two views, and illusorily create all kinds of suffering. Moreover, they take suffering and bliss to be truly existent. This is the error of clinging to names and appearances. When they ask who is to experience bliss, they explicitly establish subject and object: a self that experiences and suffering and bliss that are experienced.

The inversion from beginning to end lies in the single word “calculate”: first, calculating annihilation and eternity; second, calculating suffering and bliss; third, calculating self and what belongs to self; fourth, calculating sentient and insentient; fifth, calculating the three bodies and five aggregates; sixth, calculating arising and ceasing and quiescent cessation; seventh, calculating nirvāṇa. In this way, oppositions are established one after another, the view of dharmas becomes ever more solid, and how can the original mark of quiescent cessation be seen? Such a person must place great weight on names and appearances; from the first step, he has entered the wrong path. Although he received the Patriarch’s instruction and greatly awakened upon hearing the verse, one should not hastily believe it.

Chan Master Xingsi [1] was a member of the Liu family of Ancheng, Jizhou. Hearing that the Dharma assembly at Caoxi was flourishing, he came directly to pay his respects and seek instruction. He then asked, “What should one undertake so as not to fall into stages?” The Master said, “What have you ever done?” [2] He said, “I do not even act upon the noble truths.” The Master said, “Into what stage do you fall?” He said, “Since I do not even act upon the noble truths, [3] what stage could there be?” The Master esteemed him highly and appointed Xingsi head of the assembly. One day the Master said to him, “You should go forth and teach in one region; do not let it be cut off.” Having received the Dharma, Xingsi returned to Qingyuan Mountain in Jizhou, where he propagated the Dharma and continued its transformation. He was posthumously titled Chan Master Hongji.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the purport.)

[I] His insight surpassed that of his teacher; therefore, he was fit to succeed as a Patriarch. Where, then, did his insight surpass that of his teacher? It lay in already knowing that there was nothing to undertake and that stages were originally not

established, and then using this to question the Sixth Patriarch in return. This shows the strength of his realization.

[II] When the Sixth Patriarch said, “Into what stage do you fall?” he seized upon the flaw in Xingsi’s statement, “I do not even act upon the noble truths.” His meaning was that originally there was nothing to say, yet in that very thought stages had already been established. Chan Master Xingsi replied, “I do not even act upon the noble truths; what stage could there be?” With this further sweeping away, everything was cast off completely. At that time, there was truly no second person like him.

[III] What difference is there between noble truth and conventional truth? If one need not act upon noble truth, what of conventional truth? Without understanding conventional truth, how can one reach noble truth? Only by acting without acting is one entirely free of views of noble and conventional. As Maitreya says, “Neither conditioned nor apart from it are the nirvāṇas of all Tathāgatas.” This is noble truth.

Chan Master Huairang was a member of the Du family of Jinzhou. He first visited National Teacher An at Songshan, who sent him to Caoxi to seek instruction. When Rang arrived and bowed, the Master said, “Where have you come from?” He said, “Songshan.” The Master said, “What is it that comes thus?” He said, “To describe it as a single thing would miss the mark.” The Master said, “Can it still be cultivated and realized?” [I] He said, “Cultivation and realization are not absent, but defilement cannot be obtained.”

[II] The Master said, “It is precisely this unobtainability of defilement that all Buddhas keep in mind and protect. Since you are thus, I too am thus.” Rang suddenly attained accord and understanding, and so attended the Master at his side for fifteen years, daily reaching ever deeper mysteries. Later he went to Nanling, where he greatly expounded the Chan school. By imperial decree, he received the posthumous title Chan Master Dahui.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the purport.)

[I] The Patriarch feared that although Huairang had seen it, his realization was not yet solid. Since he said that no thing could resemble it, might he not again have fallen into biased emptiness? Therefore, the Patriarch asked, “Can it still be cultivated and realized?” in order to test him. Had Huairang said that it could be cultivated and realized, this would have shown attachment to existence, and that he had not realized the original emptiness. Had he said that there was nothing to cultivate or realize, he might have fallen into biased emptiness.

He therefore replied, “Cultivation and realization are not absent, but defilement cannot be obtained.” “Not absent” means not leaning toward emptiness; “cannot be

obtained" means not attaching to existence. This is the true aspect of reality. Its subtlety lies in the fact that defilement cannot be obtained, without thereby negating cultivation and realization. Worldly people who understand only the principle that defilement cannot be obtained often lean toward abandoning cultivation, cling to principle, and neglect phenomena.

Others do not know that there is originally no defilement, and instead become attached to cultivation and realization, believing that something must be gained. All such people belong to the class of blind cultivation and aimless practice. The Patriarch saw that Huairang had already realized and entered the original ground; he was truly one who had passed through it, utterly different from one who had not realized it. Yet he feared that Huairang might slip away, not dare to assume responsibility, and become further attached to cultivation and realization, thereby shaking the root instead. So he immediately held him fast and did not let go, saying, "It is precisely this unobtainability of defilement"—equal in measure to the Buddha. This was the sealing of his mind with the Buddha's mind, a decisive confirmation then and there. In saying, "all Buddhas keep in mind and protect," he meant that both were alike in this way: do not hesitate or waver any longer. At such points, one must not relax and let them slip past.

[II] "Cultivation and realization are not absent"—practitioners understand this. But when it is said that defilement cannot be obtained, they surely do not dare to believe it at once. They may also say, "If there is no defilement, why speak of cultivation and realization?" This is nothing other than failure to understand essence and function, and thus failure to comprehend the ultimate. The words "defilement cannot be obtained" cannot be uttered by one who has not thoroughly awakened; therefore, the Sixth Patriarch immediately granted his confirmation. Yet Huairang still attended him at his side for fifteen years. Asked what he undertook, he said, "Simply keep mindful awareness well." Asked further how one keeps mindful awareness well, he said, "Keep it in this way."

Chan Master Yongjia Xuanjue was a member of the Dai family of Wenzhou. From an early age he studied sūtras and treatises and became proficient in the Tiantai Dharma gate of calming and contemplation. On reading the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, he realized the mind-ground. By chance, Xuance, a disciple of the Master, came to visit. They discussed intensely, and Xuanjue's words secretly accorded with those of all the Patriarchs. Xuance said, "From whom did you, sir, receive the Dharma?" [I] He said, "In studying the Vaipulya sūtras and treatises, I had teachers transmitting them to me."

"Later, through the Vimalakīrti Sūtra, I awakened to the Buddha-mind school, but I have had no one to confirm it." [II] Xuance said, "Before King Bhīṣmagarjitasvara, this may be so; after King Bhīṣmagarjitasvara, anyone who awakens without a teacher is

altogether a naturalistic non-Buddhist.” Xuanjue said, “I pray that you, sir, will provide me with verification.” Xuance said, “My words carry little weight. [III] At Caoxi there is the Sixth Patriarch, a great master; people from all directions gather there, all of them recipients of his Dharma. If you go, I shall accompany you.”

Xuanjue therefore came with Xuance to seek instruction. He circled the Master three times, shook his staff, and stood there. The Master said, “A śramaṇa possesses three thousand dignified deportments and eighty thousand subtle practices. From where, great worthy, have you come, that you give rise to such great arrogance?” [IV] Xuanjue said, “The matter of birth and death is great; impermanence is swift.” The Master said, “Why not realize the unborn and comprehend that there is no swiftness?” He said, “Realization itself is unborn, and originally there is no swiftness to comprehend.” The Master said, “Thus, thus.”

Xuanjue then performed the full ceremonies and bowed. [V] Shortly afterward, he took his leave. The Master said, “Are you returning so quickly?” He said, “Originally there is no movement; how could there be swiftness?” The Master said, “Who knows that there is no movement?” He said, “You yourself give rise to discrimination.” The Master said, “You have deeply attained the meaning of the unborn.” He said, “How could the unborn have a meaning?” The Master said, “Without meaning, who would discriminate?” He said, “Discrimination too is not meaning.” The Master said, “Excellent! Stay a little for one night.” [VI] At the time, he was called “One-Night Xuanjue.” Later he composed the Song of Realization, which became widely circulated in the world. He was posthumously titled Master Wuxiang and called True Enlightenment.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the purport.)

[I] When Xuance asked, “From whom did you, sir, receive the Dharma?” the implied answer was: from the master himself.

[II] Why must one seek a teacher’s confirmation? Although one may have already seen it for oneself, there still remain residual habitual tendencies; one’s capacity to assume responsibility is weak, or one may not dare to assume it at all, thereby obstructing further cultivation. For awakening and seeing are one matter, while removing habitual tendencies is another. If no one gives a decisive confirmation and one does not assume responsibility oneself, one will surely stop midway and advance no further, turning repeatedly toward doubt and alienating oneself. This is no small matter. Before King Bhīṣmagarjitasvara, there was no way to do this; but once a Buddha has appeared in the world, confirmation is essential. One must not mislead oneself.

[III] “My words carry little weight.” This shows that, between teacher and disciple, the affinity of trust is of greatest importance. Xuance and Yongjia were friends. Although

what Xuance said may have surpassed even the Sixth Patriarch's words, the other already had preconceptions and in the end could not benefit from them. Therefore, in teaching the Dharma to others, one must not be overly eager to please. One should observe the other's capacity and their affinity of trust in oneself, and respond accordingly. If they are not receptive, do not forcefully urge them. Teaching by not teaching surpasses teaching.

[IV] When the Patriarch said that he gave rise to great arrogance, he was not in fact breaking down his banner of arrogance, as was the case with Fada; rather, he had already recognized his capacity. From Xuanjue's bearing, upright as Mount Hua's sheer cliff, he knew that he was no ordinary person, and merely spoke thus in order to draw him out. The Master directly said, "The matter of birth and death is great; impermanence is swift," showing that transcending birth and death alone is the great matter. The three thousand dignified deportments and eighty thousand subtle practices are still secondary matters.

The Patriarch therefore continued, "Then why not realize it?" Xuanjue replied, "Realization itself is unborn, and originally there is no swiftness to comprehend." This indicated that the great matter had already been settled, so why focus further on phenomenal matters? The Patriarch therefore confirmed him, saying, "Thus, thus." This was profound approval.

[V] He then performed the full ceremonies and bowed because, after receiving confirmation, he should bow in thanks; it also showed that although such forms are not matters of the fundamental ground, they should not be discarded.

[Six] His taking leave after only a short while was no empty formality; it was meant to introduce the many subtle discussions that follow. The Patriarch then took advantage of the opening to test him further, in four stages: first, refuting his conception of time; second, refuting his discriminating conception; third, refuting his dharma-view of non-arising; and fourth, demonstrating that all is unobstructed.

When the Patriarch said, "Excellent! Stay for one night longer," he advanced the matter a further step. If all is indeed unobstructed, what harm is there in staying? Thus we may know that Chan Master Nanyue's remaining for fifteen years and remaining for one night have precisely the same wondrous function. One can imagine the magnificence of that Dharma assembly. These passages are truly worth careful study. We may know that the assembly at Dongshan has, even now, not truly dispersed.

The Chan practitioner Zhihuang first visited the Fifth Patriarch and claimed that he had already attained proper absorption. He lived in a hermitage and sat continuously for nearly twenty years. [1] A disciple of the Master, Xuance, was

traveling through Hebei when he heard Zhihuang's name. He went to the hermitage and asked, "What are you doing here?" Zhihuang replied, "Entering samādhi."

[2] Xuance said, "When you say that you enter samādhi, do you enter it with mind or without mind? If you enter without mind, then all insentient grasses, trees, tiles, and stones should be able to attain samādhi. If you enter with mind, then all sentient beings possessing consciousness should likewise be able to attain samādhi." Zhihuang said, "When I am entering samādhi, I do not see a mind that is either existent or nonexistent."

Xuance said, "Not seeing a mind that is either existent or nonexistent is constant samādhi. How could there be entering and leaving? If there is entering and leaving, it is not great samādhi." Zhihuang had no reply. [3] After a long while, he asked, "Whose Dharma heir is your teacher?" Xuance said, "My teacher is the Sixth Patriarch of Caoxi."

Zhihuang asked, "What does the Sixth Patriarch take as Chan and samādhi?" Xuance said, "My teacher teaches: wondrously lucid and perfectly quiescent, essence and function are suchness. The five aggregates are originally empty; the six sense objects are not existent. There is neither going out nor coming in, neither concentration nor confusion. The nature of Chan is non-abiding; free from abiding is Chan's quiescence. The nature of Chan is non-arising; free from arising is Chan's contemplation. The mind is like empty space, yet has not even the measure of empty space."

[4] On hearing this, Zhihuang immediately came to pay homage to the Master. The Master asked, "Venerable sir, where have you come from?" Zhihuang fully recounted the preceding circumstances. The Master said, "It is indeed as he said." Taking pity on him for having come from afar, the Master then gave him compassionate instruction. Zhihuang thereupon awakened greatly, and the mind he had gained over twenty years left not a trace. That night, gentry and commoners in Hebei heard a voice in the sky proclaiming, "Chan Master Zhihuang has realized the Way today." [5] Zhihuang later bowed in farewell, returned to Hebei, and taught the fourfold assembly.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the essential meaning.)

[1] How was sitting continuously for twenty years any different from guarding a corpse like a ghost? In any case, the great matter of one's intrinsic nature cannot be seen apart from sitting, yet the method of sitting must also accord with conditions. It cannot be attained through rigid sitting. One must calm the frenzied mind; one must work at "calming," and cannot avoid relying provisionally on methods.

Moreover, wisdom must arise within samādhi, and samādhi must be refined within wisdom, until they become fully integrated and mature. This especially cannot be achieved without tempering the mind through circumstances; it can never be attained by rigidly sitting and guarding it. Nanyue's polishing a brick in response to Mazu makes his intention clear. Now, all of these twenty years of practice were spent on guarding; once spiritual responsiveness is obstructed, great functioning can scarcely arise.

The moment he opened his mouth, he said "entering samādhi," plainly revealing a self that enters and a samādhi that is entered. The four marks stood fully established. How could this be called seeing one's true nature? Had he not encountered a good spiritual friend to open and guide him, that would have been the end of his whole life—how frightening! Moreover, when the mind gained over twenty years left not a trace, only then was there an entry point. For only after thorough awakening does one enter the path of proper cultivation.

[2] The two words "entering samādhi" are riddled with faults from beginning to end.

Zhihuang had practiced for nearly twenty years and clung to this method so firmly that it could not be broken: this was the first fault. Where there is a dharma, there is grasping and rejecting; entering and leaving, right and wrong, stand in opposition, and delusion is piled upon delusion: this was the second fault. Though he said that he was properly entering samādhi, he also said that he did not see a mind that was either existent or nonexistent. He was still wavering between advance and retreat, showing that he himself could not trustingly enter it. How could this be called great samādhi? This was the third fault. Great samādhi is formless, yet that does not mean there is no characteristic of samādhi;

rather, it means neither samādhi nor confusion—the characteristic of original, non-abiding, perfect, wondrous, lucid quiescence. To say that there is samādhi is already not samādhi, for this is a mind that has something to attain. Then who is the one who attains? Zhihuang. This was the fourth fault. Thus, the eye cannot tolerate even the slightest speck; otherwise, the whole game is lost.

[3] When Zhihuang heard Xuance's words, he had in fact already awakened, but did not dare confirm it for himself. This was precisely the former fault of claiming that he had already attained proper absorption. Because Xuance's words seemed too slight to him, he still did not dare place deep trust in them; the words "after a long while" make this clear. Later, when the Patriarch confirmed him, saying, "It is indeed as he said," his whole being at last fell away. This liberation in a single instant is called realizing the Way.

[4] Entering and leaving, concentration and confusion arise through discrimination and still belong to a mind that is present. One must enter the inconceivable realm

beyond what can be thought and discussed; only then is there true liberation, only then is there great samādhi.

Intrinsic nature is originally non-abiding. Do not take abiding in the quiescence of Chan and samādhi to be the true state; one should remain far from this inferior view, for it is a distorted dharma. Intrinsic nature is originally non-arising. Do not imagine that there is a Chan samādhi that can arise; one should remain far from this inferior view as well, for it too is a distorted dharma. Let the mind be like empty space, but do not cling even to a view of empty space; then there is naturally the great samādhi of original quiescence. Now, to rigidly cling to entering and leaving, or to a great samādhi that can be attained, is to have mind. How could that be called samādhi? But if one does not understand it in this way, one becomes vague and indiscriminate, perhaps falling into annihilationist views. How could that be the Buddha's intent?

[5] When readers hear that a voice in the sky announced Chan Master Zhihuang's realization of the Way, they will surely marvel at it as something miraculous and extraordinary. They often fixate on such matters, while passing lightly over the crucial point in the preceding passage. This is deeply regrettable. They do not realize that this was to plant in advance the causes and conditions for Hebei's gentry and commoners to enter the Way in the future. Thus, after Zhihuang returned, he was able to teach the fourfold assembly. Was this not the compassion of Dharma-protecting deities? What is there to doubt?

There was a youth named Shenhui, the son of the Gao family of Xiangyang. At the age of thirteen, he came from Yuquan to pay homage to the Master. The Master said, "You have come from afar, learned friend, and have endured much hardship. Have you brought along the fundamental source? If you have the fundamental source, you should recognize its master. Try explaining it." Shenhui said, "Non-abiding is the root, and seeing itself is the master." [1] The Master said, "How can this novice monk speak so casually?"

Shenhui then asked, "When the Venerable sits in Chan, does he see or not see?" The Master struck him three times with his staff and said, "When I strike you, does it hurt or not?" He replied, "It both hurts and does not hurt." [2] The Master said, "I too both see and do not see." Shenhui asked, "What does it mean to both see and not see?" The Master said, "What I see is always the faults of my own mind. I do not see other people's right and wrong, good and bad. Thus I both see and do not see."

"What do you mean when you say that it both hurts and does not hurt? If it does not hurt, you are no different from wood or stone; if it hurts, you are no different from an ordinary being, and anger and resentment arise. Your former 'seeing and not seeing' is a pair of extremes, while 'hurts and does not hurt' belongs to arising and

ceasing. You have not even seen your own intrinsic nature, yet you dare toy with people in this way?" Shenhui bowed in repentance and apology.

The Master further said, "If your mind is deluded and does not see, ask a good spiritual friend to seek the way. If your mind is awakened, you see your own nature and cultivate according to the Dharma. You yourself are deluded and do not see your own mind, yet you come asking whether I see or do not see. I know what I see myself; why should I wait for your delusion? If you see for yourself, you likewise need not wait for my delusion. Why do you not know and see for yourself, instead asking whether I see or do not see?" Shenhui again bowed more than a hundred times, seeking forgiveness for his faults. He diligently served the Master and never left his side.

One day the Master told the assembly, "I have one thing: without head or tail, without name or words, without back or front. Do you all recognize it?" [3] Shenhui stepped forward and said, "It is the source of all Buddhas and Shenhui's Buddha-nature." The Master said, "I told you it has neither name nor words, yet you call it the source and Buddha-nature. Even if you were to build yourself a thatched hut to shelter your head, you would only become a follower of the school of conceptual understanding." After the Patriarch's passing, Shenhui entered the capitals of Luoyang and Chang'an, where he greatly propagated Caoxi's teaching of sudden awakening. He wrote the Record of Manifesting the School, which became widely disseminated in the world. He was known as Chan Master Heze. [4]

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the essential meaning.)

[1] "Non-abiding is the root, and seeing itself is the master"—everyone can say this, but it cannot be taken as proof of genuinely seeing one's true nature. Therefore, the Patriarch deliberately did not approve it, and further drew out Shenhui's question in order to correct him.

[2] At this time, Shenhui was in the state of seeming right while actually being wrong, without anything to rely upon on either side. In the Chan school, this is called having no handle to grasp. Thus his whole being was "seeing." He first took non-abiding as the root; this was precisely abiding in non-abiding. Because there was abiding, he established seeing. He thought that seeing itself was the master; but when there is no seeing, where is the master?

He clung one-sidedly to seeing and took it as the master, and so fell into two sides, saying, "It both hurts and does not hurt." When the Patriarch said, "I too both see and do not see," he was merely playing with him. He then explained further: "Your saying that it both hurts and does not hurt falls into two sides. Not hurting is wood and stone; hurting is the ordinary being. What, then, do you belong to?" If one thoroughly awakened to the meaning of neither empty nor existent, neither real nor

unreal, then it would be neither hurting nor not hurting, and naturally one would not cling to either side. Thus the Patriarch rebuked him: “Your mind is deluded and does not see. Instead of investigating for yourself, you come to ask me how it is.” Shenhui’s repeated bows and prostrations expressed the utmost joy and gratitude after awakening.

[3] This thing originally has no name, yet provisional names need not be abandoned. Shenhui’s calling it “the source and Buddha-nature” was not in itself unacceptable. But Shenhui at that time was not permitted to speak in this way, because his views had not yet been purified.

The Patriarch cited these words specifically to lure people into a trap: they are not permitted to open their mouths, yet they are not permitted not to open their mouths. If they do not open their mouths, nothing is expressed; if they do open their mouths, they fall into verbal formulation. Once they fall into verbal formulation, they immediately become conceptual understanding and mere verbal Chan, not inner realization. A person who has truly seen their nature would certainly not express it in this way. Or if they directly called it “the source and Buddha-nature,” what harm would there be?

The Sixth Patriarch rebuked him not because he was too talkative in establishing “the source and Buddha-nature,” but precisely because he held this view. This proves that he did not recognize the source and Buddha-nature. This matter has nothing to do with names or words; one must first realize and awaken to it oneself. Once realization and awakening have been attained, no name can name it, and even conceptual understanding can be established without obstruction. This makes clear that the original nature is undefiled and therefore not bound by dharmas. Not being bound by dharmas means recognizing the original nature and thereby being able to free oneself and dissolve all attachments.

[4] Caoxi’s essential teaching, together with the orthodox transmission of mind from Buddha to Patriarch, was established through Heze. At that time, the Northern and Southern schools were competing to establish separate factions. Beginners took what they heard as what they saw and were greatly misled. Once the Record of Manifesting the School appeared, the schools and lineages were settled. Its merit and virtue are lofty beyond conception.

Here are extracts from the Dunhuang version of the Treatise on Determining the True and False of the Southern School, as well as from volume three of the Recorded Sayings of Shenhui: On the fifteenth day of the first month of the twenty-second year of the Kaiyuan era of the Tang dynasty, Shenhui delivered a discourse at Great Cloud Monastery in Huatai, establishing the orthodox lineage of the school. He said that Bodhidharma transmitted one robe as a token of Dharma faith, giving it to

Huike; Huike transmitted it to Sengcan, Sengcan to Daoxin, Daoxin to Hongren, and Hongren to Huineng. Thus, it was transmitted successively through six generations, in an unbroken continuity.

He further said: “Shenhui now convenes an unrestricted great assembly and adorns the Dharma site, not for merit and virtue, but to establish the essential teaching for students throughout the realm, and to determine right and wrong for all who study the Way.” He also said: “While Chan Master Shenxiu was alive, he pointed out that the robe transmitting the Dharma of the sixth generation was in Shaozhou, and he did not himself claim to be the sixth generation. Now Puji claims to be the seventh generation and falsely establishes Master Shenxiu as the sixth generation. Therefore, this cannot be accepted.”

Shenhui’s attack on the Northern school had two levels: first, he attacked its Dharma lineage while establishing that of the Southern school; second, he attacked the Northern school’s method of gradual cultivation while establishing the Dharma gate of sudden awakening. Thus, the complete teaching of Caoxi spread widely in Luoyang. In the twelfth year of Tianbao, Lu Yi, a censor who supported the Northern school, impeached Shenhui. An imperial edict therefore banished him to Yiyang Commandery, and he was later transferred to Wudang Commandery. In the thirteenth year, he was transferred to Xiangzhou, and in the seventh month was again ordered to move to Kaiyuan Monastery in Jingzhou. All this was brought about by followers of the Northern school. At that time, Shenhui was already eighty-five or eighty-six years old.

In the fourteenth year of Tianbao, An Lushan rebelled. Shenhui rendered meritorious service in raising military provisions. When the disturbances were pacified, Emperor Suzong summoned Shenhui to the inner palace and supported him there. Thereupon, the tradition of the Sixth Patriarch flourished greatly, while the Northern school fell into obscurity. He entered parinirvāṇa on the thirteenth day of the fifth month in the first year of Shangyuan, at the age of ninety-three. Thirty-six years after his death, Emperor Dezong decreed that Shenhui be established as the Seventh Patriarch.

An examination of the facts of Shenhui’s life shows them to accord rather closely with the prophecy made at the Sixth Patriarch’s nirvāṇa in the Dunhuang version of the Platform Sūtra. Later generations did not understand the mutual attacks between the Southern and Northern schools after the Sixth Patriarch’s passing, nor did they know that Shenhui was in fact the Seventh Patriarch who revived the Southern school.

A monk asked the Master, “Who has attained the purport of Huangmei?”
[1] The Master said, “One who understands the Buddhadharma has attained it.” The

monk asked, “Has the Venerable also attained it?” The Master said, “I do not understand the Buddhadharma.”

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the purport.)

[1] Is this merely the question of one monk? How many people harbor this very doubt! Learning in the Chan school differs from all worldly learning. It is learning, yet it cannot be acquired through questioning and study; it is cultivation, yet it is not something that can be accomplished by contrived effort.

The Dharma is nothing beyond contemplating the pure and empty mind, yet one is not permitted to contemplate the pure and empty mind. It is Dharma, yet not Dharma. Why is this so? Among the one hundred and sixty minds of sentient beings, the monkey mind is foremost; its illusory transformations are unfathomable. It cannot be confined within good and evil, nor bound by nirvāṇa and birth and death.

At times, what a thousand sages do not recognize may be known by an ordinary man or woman. Without cultivation it cannot be attained, yet the more one cultivates, the less one attains it. Its spiritual transformations are countless and cannot be taught; one can only guide according to the occasion and open the way when the time is ripe.

Good roots are not acquired in one lifetime, and causes and conditions cannot be forcibly pieced together. Merit and virtue arise naturally. One needs a person of great capacity, one who has tasted fully of good and evil, sweetness and bitterness; whose mind-capacity is broad, great, and unobstructed; who can endure every hardship and humiliation without taking it to heart; who enjoys all kinds of worldly blessings without greed, attachment, or grasping; who is wholly unbound by success and failure, gain and loss; and who also thoroughly understands human affairs, finding nothing either acceptable or unacceptable. This is one complete in good roots and merit and virtue. Yet causes and conditions are difficult to speak of, for within causes and conditions there are further causes and conditions.

For example, to encounter Buddhism is one cause and condition; having encountered Buddhism, to enter the true Dharma is a second; having entered the true Dharma, whether one’s own capacity is sufficient and accords with it is a third; if I possess this capacity but lack a teacher, it is insufficient to awaken me—this is a fourth; if there is one able to awaken me, yet I am misled by human affairs, emotional attachments, views, beliefs, and affinities—this is a fifth; though everything else is complete, if the length of my life and other conditions do not coincide—this is a sixth; and to enter the Buddhadharma yet be unable to attain liberation—this is a seventh.

Among these seven causes and conditions, the last is the most difficult: this is what is called the illness of Chan. Since people's capacities and circumstances differ, there can naturally be no fixed method for opening and guiding them. In ancient times, there was only the coming together of two persons: seeing that the other's capacity was near, one pressed forward step by step and did not let them evade the matter. On seeing, they saw immediately; on understanding, they understood all at once. From the Song dynasty onward, huatou were first employed, as a method of necessity; this had already fallen into an inferior vehicle.

A single huatou is no different from doctrinal teaching: once there is something to follow, it becomes a dead Dharma. If even Dharma is not to be grasped, how much less a dead Dharma! Yet the fault does not lie in the Dharma but in people's rigidity. Those who now rigidly investigate a single phrase seek thereby to kill off all thoughts. There are two questions: first, whether they can truly kill them off—what is called the great death; second, whether after death they can come alive again—what is called the great birth.

But whoever truly undergoes the great death will invariably undergo the great birth. The fear is that one neither dies nor is reborn, becoming neither donkey nor horse: not thinking one has gained anything, one dies in having nothing at all; or else one imagines some clever subtlety can certainly be transmitted, so that whoever attains it becomes the Seventh Patriarch. To make such an earthshaking undertaking into a gift exchanged in personal social dealings—is this not a grave offense? The Heart-of-Heart Esoteric Dharma that we cultivate today is merely one method of guidance. Through it, one may attain entry into samādhi within a foreseeable period; and when samādhi is accomplished, one trains one's capacity off the meditation cushion and brings forth the functioning of samāpatti. This too is a method of guidance.

As to the degree to which one is guided, and the various methods for advancing in cultivation, these are entirely no different from the Chan school. When one reaches the ultimate point, nothing whatsoever can be obtained.

The Sixth Patriarch said, "Do not contemplate the pure and empty mind." This mind is originally pure and originally empty; there is nothing to accept or reject. Each should make their own effort and proceed well according to conditions. That is all. How could there be some marvelous secret formula or grand theory to show? When he said, "I do not understand the Buddhadharma," he was precisely cultivating from the two words "as though foolish." When he said, "One who understands the Buddhadharma has attained it," what sort of person was that? A person of great wisdom. And how could this purport belong to Huangmei alone?

The moment this monk opened his mouth to ask, his mind was already apparent. His understanding was already base, and his intention already mistaken; he directly

misled all people under heaven. In my view, both the doctrinal schools and the Chan school never depart from mind, and thus never depart from Dharma. The doctrinal schools consist in dharmas upon dharmas; the Chan school consists in no-mind upon no-mind. Before returning to the Chan school, all are Dharma. Once one has returned to the Chan school, there is no Dharma to speak of. This does not mean that the Chan school makes no use of Dharma; it means only that it does not grasp at Dharma.

A special transmission outside the teachings: transmission itself is Dharma. The Chan school does not teach people to grasp at Dharma because, once one grasps at a Dharma, one no longer sees the originally pure appearance of awakening. This cannot be called returning to the source or returning to the Chan school. For one who understands, all teachings and dharmas can be applied within the Chan school and put to use. Precisely because nothing is grasped, one understands yet does not understand; precisely because nothing is discarded, one does not understand yet understands.

Whether still or active, silent or speaking, in samādhi or not, nothing is not appropriate. One may speak, or one may not speak; one may attain, or one may not attain. It all depends on awakening and realization. Today, in order to preserve the school's house, one cannot but lower the standard in seeking students and place somewhat greater emphasis on methods; yet one does not wish to bear this designation. In fact, however, one cannot avoid bearing it. Alas, lofty music finds few who can join in.

If a great scholar teaches in an elementary school, that person can only teach according to the textbooks. It is not that the teacher's accomplishment is insufficient, but that the students' level is too low.

Given the present circumstances, this is all that can be done. Practitioners should understand their circumstances and position and need not make excessive demands. As for the highest truth, at a still higher level, the Buddhadharma admits not the slightest human favoritism. Judged by the rules, it is better to have too few than too many. The more one accommodates, the farther away one goes. Because of such accommodation, most people are changed over to Buddha-recitation; this is truly the utmost helpless expedient. One should know that in the Chan school Buddha-recitation may serve as an auxiliary, but one cannot abandon Chan and incline exclusively toward it. Why? Because the essential principle cannot be altered.

Rebirth in the Western Pure Land and seeing one's true nature are equally difficult if one does not have the requisite capacity. Yet if one penetrates deeply into a single gate, one will certainly achieve attainment. To see one thing and then think of another is a common failing among students; the decision rests with oneself.

One day, the Master wished to wash the robe that had been transmitted to him, but there was no fine spring nearby. He therefore went about five li behind the monastery, where he saw luxuriant mountain woods and auspicious vapors swirling about. The Master shook his staff and planted it in the ground; a spring emerged at once in response. It gathered into a pool, and he knelt upon a stone to wash the robe. A monk from Shu named Fangbian came to pay homage to the Master. The Master asked, “What craft do you specialize in?” He replied, “I am skilled in making images.” The Master became grave and said, “Try making one, then.” [1] Fangbian was at a loss for what to do.

After several days, he completed a true likeness, seven inches high, exquisitely wrought in every detail. The Master smiled and said, “You are skilled in shaping forms, but you do not understand Buddha-nature.” He then touched Fangbian’s crown and bestowed a prophecy: “Forever you shall be a field of blessings for humans and devas.” He rewarded him with the robe. Fangbian divided the robe into three parts: one he draped over the image, one he kept for himself, and one he wrapped in palm fiber and buried in the ground, vowing, “When this robe is recovered in the future, I shall reappear in the world, reside and uphold this place, and rebuild its halls.” In the eighth year of Jiayou of the Song dynasty, a monk named Weixian was repairing the hall when he dug into the ground and found the robe as new as ever. The image remains at Gaoquan Monastery; prayers to it are invariably answered.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the purport.)

[1] The Patriarch said sternly, “Try sculpting it.” The man was completely at a loss and could proceed no further in this matter. The Patriarch said, “You are skilled at sculpting images.” The character xing (nature) should here be changed to xiang (form); regrettably, he did not understand buddha-nature. Such people can only be retained as fields of merit for humans and devas, and so he was rewarded with a material object. Moreover, this character xing is perhaps actually wei (only) in the following sentence, giving the meaning: “You are skilled at sculpting, but do not understand buddha-nature.” This reading may be smoother.

A monk cited Chan Master Wolun’s verse:

Wolun has his skills: he can cut off a hundred thoughts.

He can cut off a hundred thoughts.
When facing circumstances, the mind does not arise;
Bodhi grows day by day. [1]

When the Master heard this, he said, “This verse has not realized the mind-ground. If one practices according to it, it adds further bonds.” He then presented a verse:

Huineng has no skill;
He does not cut off a hundred thoughts.
When facing circumstances, thoughts often arise—
How could bodhi grow? [2]

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch's exposition of the purport.)

[1] A monk cited Wolun's verse. In the first line of the earlier verse, he is attached to existence; in the second, he is attached to subject and object; in the third, he rigidly clings to Dharma. He gradually falls into annihilationism, and a hundred illnesses arise in profusion. Moreover, bodhi itself neither increases nor diminishes; to say that it grows is to make it subject to arising and ceasing.

[2] The later verse was offered as a corrective. The first line demolishes subject and object; the second shows that illusory functioning is not abandoned, so one does not fall into annihilationism; the third shows that after seeing one's true nature, even though thoughts frequently arise, there is no obstruction.

This monk was precisely a figure of Shenxiu's school. What the Patriarch taught was the state of profound, unobstructed nonduality, spoken for those of the highest vehicle. For those who do not understand, it instead adds bonds upon bonds and fetters upon fetters. This must be understood. People in recent times do not understand the Buddhadharma and regard the Chan school as a poison that harms people. They do not know that using Dharma is like using medicine: it can save people or kill people, but the medicine bears no responsibility—who told you to misuse the prescription? I have only heard that incompetent physicians kill people; I have never heard that mediocre medicines kill people.

Chapter Eight: Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment

At that time, the Patriarch was residing at Baolin Monastery in Caoxi, while Master Shenxiu was at Yuquan Monastery in Jingnan. The two traditions were then flourishing, and people commonly spoke of "Southern Huineng and Northern Shenxiu." Thus arose the distinction between the sudden teaching of the South and the gradual teaching of the North.

[1] Yet students did not understand the essential purport of the school. The Master said to the assembly: "The Dharma is originally one school, though people are divided into north and south. The Dharma is of one kind, but realization may be swift or slow. How, then, can there be sudden and gradual? The Dharma itself has neither suddenness nor gradualness; people have sharp or dull faculties, and therefore there are the names 'sudden' and 'gradual.'" Yet Shenxiu's followers often ridiculed the Patriarch of the Southern school, saying, "He does not know a single

character. What ability could he possess?" Shenxiu said, "He has attained wisdom without a teacher and has deeply realized the supreme vehicle. I am not his equal."

"Moreover, our teacher, the Fifth Patriarch, personally transmitted to him the robe and Dharma. Could this have been without reason? I regret that I cannot go far away to draw near to him, for I vainly receive the favor of the state. None of you should remain here; you may go to Caoxi to seek clarification." One day he instructed his disciple Zhicheng: "You are intelligent and wise. Go for me to Caoxi to hear the Dharma. Whatever you hear, remember it with all your heart, then return and tell me." [2]

Zhicheng received the instruction and went to Caoxi. He joined the assembly in paying respects and making inquiries, without saying where he had come from. At that time the Patriarch told the assembly: "There is now a thief of the Dharma secretly present in this gathering." [3] Zhicheng immediately came forward, bowed, and fully related the matter. The Master said, "You have come from Yuquan, so you must be a spy." He replied, "I am not." The Master said, "How can you say you are not?" He replied, "Before I spoke, I was; once I had spoken, I was not." The Master said, "How does your teacher instruct the assembly?" He replied, "He constantly instructs the people to settle the mind and contemplate purity, and to sit for long periods without lying down." The Master said, "To settle the mind and contemplate purity is illness, not Chan. Long sitting only constrains the body; what benefit does it bring to principle? Listen to my verse:"

Born, one sits and does not lie down; dead, one lies down and does not sit.

Dead, one lies down and does not sit. Originally this is a stinking bag of bones—why establish it as a practice? [4]

Zhicheng bowed again and said, "This disciple studied the Way for nine years under Master Shenxiu, yet gained no corresponding realization. Now, upon hearing the Venerable Master speak, I immediately accord with my original mind. The matter of birth and death is grave for this disciple. In your great compassion, Venerable Master, please give further instruction." The Master said, "I have heard that your teacher instructs students in the Dharma of precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom. How does your teacher explain the forms of practice of precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom? Tell me."

Zhicheng said, "Master Shenxiu teaches that refraining from all evil is called precepts; practicing all good is called wisdom; and purifying one's own mind is called meditative stability. This is how he teaches. By what Dharma does the Venerable Master instruct people?" The Master said, "If I said that I had a Dharma to give people, I would be deceiving you. I merely untie bonds according to circumstances and provisionally call this samādhi."

[5] “The precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom spoken of by your teacher are indeed inconceivable, but the precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom as I see them are different.” Zhicheng said, “Precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom can only be one kind. How can they differ?” [6] The Master said, “Your teacher’s precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom are for those of Mahāyāna capacity; my precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom are for those of the highest vehicle. Awakening and understanding differ, and realization may be swift or slow. Listen to what I say and see whether it is the same as his. The Dharma I teach does not depart from self-nature. To speak of Dharma apart from its essence is called teaching in terms of appearances, [7] and self-nature remains ever deluded. You must know that all myriad dharmas arise and function from self-nature. This is the true Dharma of precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom. Listen to my verse:”

When the mind-ground is free from wrong, this is the precepts of self-nature;

When the mind-ground is free from delusion, this is the wisdom of self-nature;

When the mind-ground is free from disorder, this is the meditative stability of self-nature;

Neither increasing nor decreasing, it is itself vajra;

The body comes and goes, yet fundamentally there is samādhi. [8]

Having heard the verse, Zhicheng repented and expressed his gratitude. He then presented a verse:

The illusory body of the five aggregates—how can illusion ever be ultimate?

Turning back toward suchness, the Dharma still is not pure.

The Master approved it and again said to Zhicheng: “Your teacher’s precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom encourage those of lesser capacities and understanding; my precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom encourage those of great capacities and understanding. If one realizes self-nature, one establishes neither bodhi nor nirvāṇa, neither liberation nor knowledge and views. When not a single dharma can be obtained, then one can establish the myriad dharmas. If you understand this meaning, it may also be called bodhi and nirvāṇa, and may also be called liberation and knowledge and views. One who sees self-nature may establish or not establish; coming and going freely, without obstruction or hindrance; acting in response to circumstances, answering in response to words; universally perceiving transformation bodies without departing from self-nature—such a one attains sovereign spiritual powers and samādhi as play. This is called seeing self-nature.” [9]

Zhicheng again asked the Master, “What is the meaning of not establishing?” [10] The Master said, “Self-nature is free from wrong, free from delusion, and free from disorder. Thought after thought, prajñā contemplates and illumines; it constantly departs from dharma appearances and is free and at ease, able to move freely in every direction. What is there to establish? Self-nature realizes itself; sudden awakening is sudden cultivation, and there are no gradual stages. [11] Therefore, do not establish any dharma. All dharmas are quiescent and extinguished. [12] What sequence could there be?” Zhicheng bowed and wished to serve him constantly, without slackening morning or evening. (Zhicheng was from Taihe in Jizhou.)

The monk Zhiche was from Jiangxi. His family name was Zhang, and his personal name was Xingchang. In his youth he was chivalrous and given to martial exploits. After the Southern and Northern schools had divided, although the leaders of the two schools had put aside all sense of self and other, their followers competed in generating attachment and aversion. At that time, disciples of the Northern school set up Master Shenxiu as the Sixth Patriarch, and, resenting that the Patriarch’s transmission of the robe was known throughout the land, they instructed Xingchang to assassinate the Master. The Master, knowing their minds, foresaw the matter and placed ten taels of gold beside his seat.

When night had fallen, Xingchang entered the Patriarch’s room, intending to harm him. The Master stretched out his neck to meet the blow. Xingchang struck with his blade three times, but caused no injury at all. The Master said, “A proper sword does not strike wrongly; a wrongful sword does not strike properly. I owe you only gold, not my life.” Xingchang fell down in shock. After a long while he revived, begged forgiveness, repented of his fault, [13] and immediately wished to leave home and become a monastic.

The Master then gave him the gold and said, “Go for now. I fear that the followers may turn about and harm you. On another day, you may change your appearance and return; I shall then receive you.” Xingchang accepted the instruction and fled away that night. Later he sought out monastics, left home, received the full precepts, and practiced diligently.

One day, remembering the Master’s words, he came from afar to pay his respects. The Master said, “I have long been thinking of you. Why have you come so late?” He replied, “Yesterday I received the Venerable Master’s forgiveness for my offense. Though I have now left home and practice austerities, it is still difficult to repay your kindness. Only transmitting the Dharma and liberating sentient beings could repay it. This disciple has often read the Nirvāṇa Sūtra but does not understand the meaning of permanence and impermanence. I beg the Venerable Master, in your compassion, to explain it briefly.”

The Master said, “What is impermanent is Buddha-nature; what is permanent is the discriminating mind concerning all good and evil dharmas.” He said, “What the Venerable Master says greatly contradicts the sūtra text.”

The Master said, “I transmit the Mind-Seal of the Buddha. How could I dare contradict the Buddhist sūtras?” He said, “The sūtra says that Buddha-nature is permanent, yet the Venerable Master calls it impermanent. All good and evil dharmas, even bodhicitta, are impermanent, yet the Venerable Master calls them permanent. This is contradictory and only increases the student’s doubts.”

The Master said, “In the past, when I heard the nun Wujinzang recite the Nirvāṇa Sūtra once, I immediately explained it to her. Not a single word or meaning was inconsistent with the sūtra text. And in explaining it to you, I will likewise never give two different accounts.” He said, “This student’s understanding is shallow and obscure. I hope the Venerable Master will give a detailed explanation.”

The Master said, “Do you know? If Buddha-nature were permanent, then why speak of all good and evil dharmas? Even through countless eons, there would not be a single person who aroused bodhicitta. Therefore, when I speak of impermanence, I am precisely speaking of the Buddha’s teaching of the path of true permanence.”

“Furthermore, if all dharmas were impermanent, then every single thing would have a self-nature capable of undergoing birth and death, while the nature of true permanence would have places where it did not extend. Therefore, when I speak of permanence, I am precisely speaking of the Buddha’s meaning of true impermanence. The Buddha compared ordinary beings and followers of non-Buddhist paths, who cling to false permanence, with adherents of the two vehicles, who take permanence to be impermanent; together they form the eight inverted views. Thus, in the definitive teaching of nirvāṇa, he refuted those partial views and revealed true permanence, true bliss, true self, and true purity.” [15]

“You now cling to the words while turning your back on the meaning. You mistake annihilationist impermanence and a fixed, dead permanence for the Buddha’s perfectly subtle final teaching. Even if you read it a thousand times, what benefit would there be?” Xingchang suddenly attained great awakening and spoke this verse:

Because I held to a mind of impermanence, the Buddha taught a nature of permanence.

Those who do not understand skillful means are like gathering pebbles from a spring pond.

Now, without exerting effort, Buddha-nature appears before me. [16]

It was not bestowed by the Master; nor have I gained anything.

The Master said, “You are now thorough; you should be called Zhiche.” Zhiche bowed in gratitude and withdrew.

The Master saw that difficult questions from the various schools all arose from malicious minds. [17] Many gathered beneath his seat, and, out of compassion, he told them: “Those who study the Way should completely eliminate every good thought and evil thought. [18] There is no name that can be named; name it self-nature. The nature of nonduality is called true nature. Upon the basis of true nature, all Dharma gates are established. Upon hearing these words, you must immediately see for yourselves.” Hearing this, everyone bowed and requested to serve him as their teacher.

(Note: What follows is an exposition of the meaning by the Second Patriarch.)

[1] Within this school, there is direct pointing to the source of mind: in its very substance it is empty and quiescent. Even mind cannot be grasped; how then could there be any Dharma? Sudden and gradual are illusory discriminations arising in the mind. They are merely skillful means, adapted to people’s sharp or dull faculties, for the sake of remedying them.

To divide south from north, distinguish sudden from gradual, compare literacy with illiteracy, and weigh strengths against weaknesses—viewed from within this school, all such matters are contemptible and shameful. I should be too occupied with compassion for them to hate or resent them. Master Shenxiu, being in the North, could not avoid maintaining a place of practice; yet he never himself claimed to be a Patriarch. Later, his followers called themselves the Seventh Patriarch, thereby making him the Sixth Patriarch by implication. Those in his school did not understand the larger principle and instead burdened Master Shenxiu’s pure virtue. Yet this was not enough to burden a worthy person.

From his instructions to Zhicheng and the others, one can know his mind. A true student of the Way must always be as open-hearted as a valley. Anyone who sets up views of victory and defeat, self and other, is not a true student of the Way. The people of the Northern school simply lacked affinity with the Sixth Patriarch; how could they be forced? Master Shenxiu alone sent Zhicheng because his capacity had already matured.

We need not rigidly divide the Southern and Northern schools into superior and inferior. It is like a school: secondary school is secondary school, and university is university. Their distinction is evident; why stir up further afflictions? Yet recently some people have again raised great disputes, claiming that the Buddhist Dharma has fortunately survived without falling into decline entirely because of the Northern

school's practical cultivation, unlike the Southern school, which values only empty talk. Rather than failing in an attempt to paint a tiger, they say, one should specialize in a single gate, cultivate the precepts, cultivate purity, and so forth.

Alas, what kind of words are these! Chan Master Heze established the essential principle and clarified right and wrong for all who study the Way under heaven. Is this still not understood? The Buddha-Dharma is the Dharma of nonduality, and that which is most ultimate is an unshakable truth. Without understanding this principle, how can one speak of entering Buddhism? The methods adopted by the various schools are all expedient means before entering the gate; ultimately, reaching home is their destination. Now, for one returning home, whether by carriage, horse, foot, or boat, all are conditioned expedient means, while the purpose of returning home is not two.

Now, while still on the road, people first raise disputes, distinguish fast from slow, choose between boats and carriages, and forget the purpose for which they set out. Hence arise views of good and evil and distinctions of superior and inferior. They do not realize that these have nothing whatever to do with the Buddha-Dharma. Even if one rigorously upholds the Dharma and sincerely does good, one is only somewhat nearer to entering Buddhism by comparison; when it comes to the root, one is still separated by a thousand mountains and ten thousand waters.

This is precisely why the Northern school could not inherit the school and continue the patriarchal lineage. Why? It merely departs from Dharma or clings to Dharma.

The sūtra says, "To be free from all appearances is to be called all Buddhas." How clear and pure this is! Moreover, when the patriarchal position is transmitted in succession, how could its purpose be for any individual? Why would Huangmei have shown special favor to the Sixth Patriarch alone? Why transmit the robe at midnight —could it have been out of personal feeling? And how would the Sixth Patriarch have dared privately to receive it and flee? It was precisely because this matter concerns the establishment of the true guiding principle and the discernment of right and wrong for practitioners throughout the land. Those who see this see something of great importance.

Those under Master Shenxiu's instruction—how could they understand this? And if the robe and bowl were things to be fought over by force, what could not be fought over? Moreover, those of his lineage would not necessarily have been willing to cultivate honestly and genuinely; they would merely have stirred up empty debate. As for the present decline of the Chan school, it truly has other causes.

First, the environment is unfavorable: those who genuinely cultivate the Way have no means of support, so one cannot harshly condemn the conduct of funerary rites and repentance services as a livelihood. Second, there are too few places where

meditation retreats are held, and they have become ever more remote from the world. Third, qualified teachers are becoming scarcer by the day; they are either old or in seclusion. Fourth, the habitual tendencies of beginners are objectionable and make them difficult to approach. For example, a group of Chan practitioners may proclaim that they have already transcended birth and death, their faces full of Chan affectation and their behavior mad and eccentric. They are truly disagreeable; no wonder worldly people disparage them.

But when has the Buddhadharma ever wavered in the slightest? Take a factory as an analogy: there are many people and many complicated affairs, and unworthy persons are unavoidable. I ask only whether its products are excellent; I need not ask what sort of people it employs. How can one give up eating for fear of choking? This matter concerns the future of the true Dharma. There is no need to speak of merit and virtue, but why create karma? Do not, for a momentary gratification, commit this offense of slandering the Dharma and thereby sink forever into the hells, life after life.

[2] This cannot be understood through oral transmission or verbal instruction alone, though these may still serve as auxiliary conditions. If one knows that the mindlessness involved can be retained in memory, how could it be like an affair that can be passed on in words? The Way is realized by oneself; all dharmas are merely guiding causes.

[3] Did the Sixth Patriarch not know that these words of his might seem like a narrow view? Yet those who understand know that this is precisely where his compassion lies. He wished especially to draw people forth and awaken them; it also expresses the meaning that the straightforward mind is the place of practice.

[4] The mind is originally without abiding, yet one speaks of abiding because the person has not yet seen the original reality of non-abiding. One therefore has no choice but to make provisional use of Dharma.

If one has already understood abiding in non-abiding, then abiding in this way is sufficient. Why speak again of abiding mind, thereby adding to one’s affliction? Purity is an aspect of the original essence. Since the person has not yet seen original purity, one has no choice but to employ contemplation. But if one has already understood it ultimately, then it is originally thus; why speak again of contemplating purity, thereby adding to one’s affliction? Non-abiding purity is the Buddha’s essence; contemplation, abiding, and sitting are functions of Dharma. Without relying on these functions, how could one enter Buddhahood? Once their purpose has been fulfilled, they should be relinquished. If one greedily clings to Dharma, the spiritual radiance instead becomes difficult to manifest; that is illness, not Chan.

Therefore, deliberately stopping, letting be, or extinguishing are not yet illnesses at the outset; only when one persists in grasping them and refuses to let them go do they become illnesses.

Now one speaks of sitting for long periods without lying down. I ask: how long must one sit before stopping? It is the mind that restrains the body. Since the mind is not yet empty, the obstruction of Dharma still remains. Not only will one fail to see the Buddha essence, perfectly luminous and profoundly still; even the Buddha's vast and unobstructed functioning will be constrained and unable to arise. How then can one transcend birth and death? Moreover, prolonged sitting establishes the view of duration, and restraining the body creates distinctions of merit and fault. In such anxious uncertainty, even the dead method of abiding mind and contemplating purity will be difficult to accomplish, let alone the ultimate realization.

The Sixth Patriarch spoke for those of ultimate capacity. But for people whose wild minds have not ceased, who are inverted, perverse, and confused, one cannot avoid using Dharma as a remedy. A disorderly country requires severe laws; as their situations differ, the methods employed also differ. How could there be any fixed Dharma?

[5] Precepts carry the sense of prohibition, but they apply only to evil; one does not speak of precepts in relation to goodness. To guard against evil in its fruition, one establishes precept rules, precept marks, and the like. But to guard against evil in its causes, samādhi and wisdom themselves are the precepts. If people attain samādhi and awaken wisdom at the causal stage, clearly comprehending cause and effect, there will be no process of entering evil and then observing precepts against evil.

Esoteric Buddhism takes samādhi and wisdom as the great precepts. This is truly studying the precepts, and those who attain the essence of precepts cannot be compared with those who merely practice their outward forms.

The three virtues are originally one essence. The expedient practices of beginners differ from directly realizing the essence of precepts; how could there be a fixed Dharma? Yet these people divide them into three separate parts and place undue emphasis on phenomenal forms; their account is not yet complete. They do not know that the three dharmas cannot be cultivated separately: to attain one is to attain all three, and the full three are one. There has never been samādhi without wisdom and precepts, nor precepts without samādhi and wisdom.

The same is true of wisdom. Moreover, the three dharmas are originally only provisional designations. If one can truly realize the original nature, the three dharmas become secondary matters. As soon as the Sixth Patriarch opens his mouth, he breaks their bondage to Dharma, saying that originally there is no Dharma. Since the original nature is pure, how can one falsely claim to have Dharma

to give others, thereby further confusing them? Yet since they have mistakenly accepted the bondage of karma, he now follows expedient means in explaining it, using illusion to control illusion and not dispensing with provisional names. It is precisely in such places that his strength is most evident; one may also glimpse something of the fundamental source. Its meaning is subtle indeed.

[6] Precepts, samādhi, and wisdom are, in name, originally but one. Yet people have eighty-four thousand dispositions, and Dharma gates accordingly are immeasurable. How can one cling to a single one?

[7] Precepts, samādhi, and wisdom are all established from mind. If the mind has no faults or afflictions, there is no need for precepts. Precepts directed at results seek through attachment to appearances; hence this is called teaching in terms of appearances. In speaking to those of lesser capacity, one cannot avoid proceeding from appearances back to intrinsic nature. For those of superior capacity, however, one begins directly from intrinsic nature: first return to empty quiescence, and everything is resolved. This is the simplest, purest, swiftest, most direct, and most ultimate way: once it is resolved, all is resolved. Thus one may know that the three thousand dignified deportments and eighty thousand subtle practices were originally established for those of dull faculties. Yet they cannot be discarded; this is what is called an expedient means.

[8] In these five lines of verse, the essential point is that the mind contains neither wrong nor delusion nor confusion; yet the point of departure still lies in intrinsic nature. When one sees the vajra of intrinsic nature, neither increasing nor decreasing, one attains the proper experience of samādhi. Though there is coming and going, one is entirely free. This is the precept of no-precept: inwardly realizing the essence of precepts while outwardly fully observing their forms. This is to seek the cause from the fruition, to begin at the root. It varies according to the person; there is no fixed Dharma. What benefit is there in so much contention?

[9] Beginning with the phrase “if one realizes one’s intrinsic nature” and ending with “this is called seeing one’s nature,” this entire long passage of instruction is fully elaborated and clearly indicated by the Sixth Patriarch. What further doubt can there be? This passage should be read until thoroughly familiar, then contemplated at all times and never forgotten. But one must recognize that this too is still teaching in terms of appearances; one must not grasp it and thereby add to the illness of Dharma. This is precisely the meaning of not establishing any thesis.

[10] What is the meaning of not establishing any thesis? To understand this, one must first understand the original meaning. Since the original nature is undefiled, why speak further of such dharmas as birth and death, nirvāṇa, movement, samādhi, and liberation? If Dharma is not established, from where could one further

distinguish stages and gradual steps, or a meaning of not establishing? Yet non-establishment is original, while establishment and non-establishment are expedient means. If one can abide in neither establishment nor non-establishment, that is the meaning of non-establishment. Do you understand?

[11] Seeing that it is thus is sudden awakening; decisively being thus is sudden cultivation. Awakening itself is cultivation. Not forgetting it at every moment is cultivation at every moment. Awakening is simply awakening; there are no distinctions of stages, quantity, or degree. Therefore, once one recognizes it, one must decisively take it up; this itself is cultivation.

Whether one is raw or mature, old or new, forgetful or unforgetful—all this pertains to the work after awakening, not to whether the original nature is right or wrong. Here one must not hesitate. Therefore, at the outset one must recognize it thoroughly. This is originally the work of a person of immeasurable greatness; it is called great courage. Great wisdom is thorough recognition. Great benevolence is penetrating comprehension without remainder. Great courage is decisive freedom from doubt. If one considers oneself a person of lesser capacity and has no aspiration to advance, then there is no need to proceed. But take care not to give rise to excessive doubts and slander, obstructing the path of others and further adding to one's own karmic obstacles.

[12] All dharmas are quiescent and extinguished; what stages could there be? This is repeated in order to make it decisive and leave no room for further doubt. How utterly clear and pure! If the word "originally" were added after "all dharmas," it would add still greater force, showing that originally there are no stages; distinctions arise only from oneself.

[13] Everything before one's eyes in the world is a result. Every result necessarily has a cause; never is a result obtained without a cause. Since there is a cause, how can one escape its result? One can only further transform cause and effect: turn the present result into a cause for the future, transforming and dissolving everything. When others respond with adversity, I embrace them with compassion.

Xingchang and the Sixth Patriarch had karmic affinities from past lives. Beyond the ten pieces of gold, there was also enmity and resentment, though no debt of life was owed. Once the Patriarch willingly accepted this and embraced him with compassion, revealing the causes and conditions, the matter was suddenly resolved. It was not that the Sixth Patriarch deliberately displayed spiritual powers; this itself was spiritual power. At that time, how could the Sixth Patriarch have retained the slightest trace of gratitude or resentment? He merely responded as the situation required. Xingchang's pleading for mercy and repentance showed that his own karmic conditions had matured, and so the Patriarch guided him.

[14] When the Buddha liberates sentient beings, he merely liberates them from their clinging views. When he liberates bodhisattvas, he merely liberates them from their views of dharmas. Permanence and impermanence are dharmas illusorily arising in the mind. If one clings to them as fixed and thus, they become views. If one knows that they are neither annihilated nor permanent, one is no longer bound by Dharma.

Sūtras are Dharma, and because sūtras are spoken by the Buddha, worldly people take them to be immutable. They do not know that medicine is prescribed according to the illness; how could there be a fixed meaning? When another clings to permanence, I correct this with impermanence. When another clings to impermanence, I speak of permanence to break that attachment. Returning to neither permanence nor impermanence accords with the principle of nirvāṇa; this is what is called complete contemplation.

Permanence and impermanence, when separately explained, are opposites; when united, they express the complete meaning. If one understands this meaning, one may accord with conditions without changing. Unchanging is the essence; according with conditions is the function. Speaking in terms of function, permanence is permissible and impermanence is permissible: to speak of permanence is precisely impermanence, and to speak of impermanence is precisely permanence. When speaking of essence, it cannot be obtained. This unobtainability is the original nature of the Buddha-nature's true permanence.

[15] In the four words permanence, bliss, self, and purity, one must begin by understanding self. Seeing the original reality of self, one finds it originally pure, originally devoid of such views as right and wrong, good and evil, arising and ceasing, suffering and bliss.

The Dharma essence is empty and quiescent. It was originally thus, is thus now, and will remain thus in the future. All minds that exist at present are ultimately unobtainable. Once arising and ceasing are extinguished, the bliss of quiescent extinction is naturally constant and unchanging. Self does not mean the self of clinging to a false self; it means the original self. The self of the false self and the self of the original self are neither one nor two. When understood as interpenetrating, nature and appearance are nondual; there is no need to establish them as one, nor any need to divide them as two. Those who have not seen their nature misunderstand the meaning of self, then establish the four appearances of self, person, sentient being, and life span. Views of dharmas consequently arise, and affliction and confusion arise again. This must be corrected.

[16] Zhiche's true point of seeing his nature lies in the two lines, "Now I exert no effort, and Buddha-nature appears before me." Therefore the Patriarch said, "You

have now thoroughly penetrated it.”

[17] Difficult questions arising from an evil mind all come from firmly clinging to the false self. Such people are most deserving of pity—how much more so when they have cultivated the mind for many years under a teacher! All such people have scant blessings. Their suffering, vexation, self-contempt, and fixation on birth and death show that they cannot bear the great Dharma and have themselves ruined their capacity as Dharma vessels.

Most remarkable is that this illness often manifests just as one is about to enter the gate. Because it consists of seeds of evil habits, it will not emerge until one is at the threshold. Among those who have not cultivated, this is called arising through conditions: these evil habits arise as circumstances meet conditions, and there is nothing surprising about that. Among those entering the gate, it is called the turning over of seeds.

These bad habitual tendencies are seeds lying dormant within; through practice they emerge, just as an illness hidden within is drawn out by the power of medicine. Worldly people often doubt this, but it is something practitioners themselves can perceive. They should promptly subdue and transform them, always applying effort to self-restraint. Above all, they must not give rise to obstructing doubts or blame Heaven and fault others. Still less should they slander the Dharma; then their sins and evils will only increase, and liberation will become ever more difficult.

The generosity, forbearance, and endurance of hardship practiced in ordinary times all serve to nurture blessings and to tame and transform these tendencies. Otherwise, they turn inward ever more deeply, and become ever harder to eradicate. This is a process that practitioners must undergo. Often, one mistake leads to another until matters cannot be retrieved; bodily illness is only the lesser consequence.

Therefore, seeing the Way depends on causes and conditions, while nurturing the Way relies on merit and virtue. Whoever refuses to acknowledge mistakes, endure hardship, be taken advantage of, or examine themselves is a person of scant blessings and not someone fit for great things.

Among all evil dispositions, the desire for personal gain is indeed difficult to break, but the habitual tendency of seeking reputation is even harder to break. Compared with the great matter of birth and death, this small concern for saving face is like ten thousand yi of gold compared with dung and dirt. Yet they delight in taking the dung and dirt while casting away the gold. Are they not people of scant blessings who demean themselves? The way to save oneself is to break through emotional attachments and views, distinguish what is weighty from what is light, not fear being taken advantage of, and be able to endure.

Bringing karmic seeds to the surface is not a bad thing. It is like poisonous snakes in a cave: they are difficult to lure out, but if they emerge and are not removed, their harm becomes even greater. Repentance is an expedient means; returning to emptiness is ultimate.

But do not mistake these habitual tendencies themselves for empty and simply let them be. Once they arise again, one drifts along with them and is no longer empty. Nor should one mistakenly regard these habitual tendencies as merely temporary illusory manifestations that ultimately do not impair the essential nature. If one misunderstands the meaning of nondefilement, then what use would there be in the Buddha's establishment of the Dharma of repentance? This is the sort of conduct that glosses over faults and conceals wrongs; its sin is equivalent to suicide. In short, recognizing the root is foremost. One who has truly seen one's nature naturally does not suffer from this ailment. Even if it arises temporarily, it will soon transform and dissolve of itself.

[18] Those who study the Way should constantly eliminate all wholesome and unwholesome thoughts.

What has no name may be named, yet the name belongs to intrinsic nature. We must examine ourselves inwardly at every moment in light of these few words; only then can this be called diligent practice. As for the method of inward examination, first place the word "empty" before everything. For emptiness means no gain or loss; without gain or loss, there is no calculating; without calculating, there is no obstruction. With each thought, turn it around; once turned around, empty it. Wholesome and unwholesome thoughts pass like shadows, leaving no trace. This does not mean not seeing or hearing, but seeing and hearing without being stained. It does not mean not coming into contact, but coming into contact without attachment. It is like delivering goods on another's behalf: it is not that nothing is being done, yet in truth nothing concerns one; it is not that one has no connection with it, yet in truth one is not involved. When the mind has no binding defilement, liberation is present in that very state.

If one does not give rise to the causes of calculating gain and loss, how could the result of contentious and malicious thoughts arise? So many people attended the Sixth Patriarch for years—could they have failed to understand the root and yet still have been like this? Thus we know that realizing the mind is one matter, while removing habitual tendencies after realizing the mind is another.

The method for removing habitual tendencies is constant inward examination: use prajñā to give rise to all wondrous contemplations, supervise and discipline oneself, and sweep them away. Once one understands how to turn the Dharma, one attains emptiness and purity. But without understanding the mind-ground, one certainly

cannot understand how to turn the Dharma. This distinction between the Southern school's sudden approach and the Northern school's gradual approach clarifies the matter for all people. Those with discerning eyes recognize it at once.

Yet those who do not understand still believe that they are the same Dharma, except that the Southern school enters suddenly while the Northern school enters gradually, making it only a matter of sooner or later. Why must one enter suddenly? And why insist on rigidly distinguishing South from North? This view seems very plausible, yet it is wrong. The distinction between what is deviant and what is correct may at first be no more than a fraction of an inch, but at the stage of fruition it becomes a difference of a thousand miles. Therefore it should be thus, it must be thus; there is not the slightest room for human sentiment or compromise.

Following the Northern school's method of practice, one ultimately labors without result and, moreover, leads others astray in their wisdom-life. Rather than take the wrong road, it is better not to set out. But people differ in their causes and conditions. If they do not take the wrong road and their aspiration does not die, they may later return to the correct road. If their resolve is not firm, however, there is nothing to be done. One can only allow them to turn according to their causes and conditions; one cannot force them. Every word and action of the ancients served as a model for later generations throughout the world. They were unwilling to make a temporary expedient concession that would leave future trouble behind. Therefore, the Southern and Northern schools fundamentally cannot stand side by side; this is not a matter to be treated vaguely.

Chapter Nine: The Chapter on Dharma Protectors

On the day of the Lantern Festival in the first year of Shenlong [705], Empress Zetian and Emperor Zhongzong issued an edict: "We have invited the two masters, An and Xiu, to receive offerings in the palace. In the intervals between the affairs of state, We investigate the One Vehicle with them. The two masters modestly defer to each other, saying: 'In the south there is Chan Master Neng, who secretly received from Master Ren the robe and Dharma and transmits the Buddha's mind-seal. He may be invited and questioned.' We now dispatch the palace attendant Xue Jian with a swift edict to invite you. May the Master, in compassionate consideration, come quickly to the capital." The Master submitted a memorial declining on grounds of illness, wishing to end his days among the forested hills. [1]

Xue Jian said, "The Chan worthies in the capital all say that, if one wishes to comprehend the Way, one must sit in Chan and cultivate meditative concentration. There has never been anyone who attained liberation without relying on Chan meditation. [2] May I ask what Dharma the Master teaches?" The Master said, "The

Way is awakened to through the mind; how could it lie in sitting? The sūtra says: 'If one says that the Tathāgata sits or lies down, that person follows a wrong path.'"

"Why? He comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. He neither arises nor ceases. This is the Tathāgata's pure Chan. The dharmas are empty and quiescent; this is the Tathāgata's pure sitting. Ultimately there is nothing to be realized—how much less is there any question of sitting!" Jian said, "When this disciple returns to the capital, the sovereign will certainly ask about this. May the Master, out of compassion, instruct me in the essential point of mind, so that I may report it to the two palaces and to those in the capital who study the Way."

"It is like a single lamp that lights a hundred thousand lamps: those in darkness are all illuminated, and the light continues without end." The Master said, "The Way has neither brightness nor darkness. Brightness and darkness signify alternation and succession. 'Brightness without end' is still an end; such names are established through mutual opposition. Therefore, the Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: 'Dharmas have no comparison, because they are free of mutual opposition.' [3]"

Jian said, "Brightness is a metaphor for wisdom, and darkness for afflictions. If practitioners do not use wisdom to illuminate and dispel afflictions, by what means can they escape beginningless birth and death?" [4] The Master said, "Afflictions are precisely bodhi; they are neither two nor different. To use wisdom to illuminate and dispel afflictions is the understanding of the two vehicles, suited to capacities such as sheep and deer. Those of superior wisdom and great capacity are not like this."

Jian said, "What is the Mahāyāna understanding?" The Master said, "Ordinary beings see brightness and ignorance as two; the wise fully comprehend that their nature is not two. The nature that is not two is the true nature. This true nature is not diminished among ordinary and deluded beings, nor increased among the worthy and sages. It is not disturbed while abiding amid afflictions, nor quiescent while abiding in meditative concentration."

It is neither cut off nor eternal, neither coming nor going; it is neither in the middle nor inside or outside. It neither arises nor ceases. Its nature and appearances are suchness, ever abiding and unchanging. This is called the Way.

Jian said, "The Master speaks of neither arising nor ceasing. How is this different from the non-Buddhist paths?" The Master said, "When non-Buddhists speak of neither arising nor ceasing, they use cessation to halt arising and use arising to reveal cessation. Yet cessation is still not cessation, and arising is said to be non-arising. When I speak of neither arising nor ceasing, it is because there has fundamentally been no arising, and so there is now no cessation. This is why it differs from the non-Buddhist paths. If you wish to know the essential point of mind, [5] do not think of either good or evil. Naturally, you will enter the pure substance of

mind—clear and ever quiescent, with wondrous functioning as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges. [6]”

Having received this instruction, Jian was suddenly and thoroughly awakened. He bowed in farewell and returned to the imperial court, where he submitted a memorial reporting the Master’s words. On the third day of the ninth month of that year, an edict was issued commending and praising the Master: “The Master declines on account of age and illness, yet cultivates the Way for Us and is a field of blessings for the realm. The Master is like Vimalakīrti, who feigned illness in Vaiśālī, expounded the Mahāyāna, transmitted the mind of the Buddhas, and spoke the Dharma of nonduality. Xue Jian conveyed the Master’s instructions concerning the Tathāgata’s knowledge and vision. Through the residual blessings of Our accumulated good deeds and the wholesome roots planted in former lives, We have encountered the Master’s appearance in the world and have suddenly awakened to the supreme vehicle. We are grateful for the Master’s kindness and revere it without end.” A polished monastic robe and a crystal bowl were also presented. The governor of Shaozhou was ordered to restore and adorn the temple buildings, and the Master’s former residence was bestowed as the National Grace Temple.

(Note: What follows is the Second Patriarch’s exposition of the meaning.)

[1] The mutual deference of the two masters reveals their open-minded humility; yet it also shows their confidence that they were not his equal. The Sixth Patriarch, being the proper person for the occasion, indeed had no need to defer. Yet he still declined on grounds of illness, because the conditions were not yet ripe and his going would have been of no use. Moreover, it was a time when the followers of the two schools were fiercely contending. If he had accorded with those in high office, it would only have increased suspicion and jealousy; if he had not accorded with them, it would have harmed the true Dharma. To know the proper occasion is spiritual efficacy; this itself is spiritual power.

[2] The Chan worthies said that to comprehend the Way one must sit in Chan and cultivate meditative concentration; the Patriarch said that the Way is awakened to through the mind—how could it lie in sitting? Of these two views, eight or nine out of ten people would surely approve that of the Chan worthies. Why? Because its reasoning seems comparatively adequate, and one has no grounds on which to challenge it.

Now let us distinguish them clearly. The positions of the two sides differ. For Chan worthies, this is the methodless method by which beginners gain an entry; for the Sixth Patriarch, it is a direct indication, at the very entrance, of the definitive ultimate ground. One is convenient for beginners, while the other benefits those capable of

direct realization. They cannot be discussed as though they belonged to the same level.

The word “sitting,” when it means crossing the legs, closing the eyes, guarding the mind, and restraining the body, merely turns scatteredness toward calm. It is the ordinary sitting of cultivating quietude, not the sitting of Chan meditation. The “sitting” in “sitting Chan” refers to immediate realization; it means direct pointing. Sitting has the wonder of sudden seeing. Chan is the unity of essence and function, a realm of meaning that cannot be expressed in words.

Speaking of its essence, it is fundamentally quiescent; speaking of its function, it is complete. Since it is originally neither arising nor ceasing, ultimately there is nothing to be realized. Mind is empty and dharmas are quiescent; this is purity. It cannot be named, but it is provisionally called Chan.

Therefore, to stop immediately and suddenly awaken to this state is to sit in Chan. But if one rigidly clings to the appearance of sitting and grasps at an appearance of concentration, believing that one must obtain some message from it, then the mind of subject and object, the mind of gain and loss, the mind of success and failure, the longing for concentration, the aversion to distraction, the mind that seeks to suppress, and the mind that pursues will arise in profusion. How can one attain concentration? Not only will one be unable to sit steadily; one will also find it difficult to see the original appearance of purity. One seeks liberation, yet becomes bound by Chan.

Does this mean, then, that the methods of Chan meditation may be discarded? For beginners, unless they first quiet their wild minds, they cannot see their original nature and bring forth the great wisdom of prajñā; thus sitting certainly cannot be abandoned. Yet when sitting properly, one must first understand the original intent of sitting. It is only a temporary expedient, used to gather the mind into oneness; it must not be taken as ultimate. Once one has attained concentration and opened wisdom, one should investigate and awaken to one’s original nature, directly realizing the pure fundamental substance. This is called one-mark samādhi. The one mark is itself markless; it is realized within concentration. This is what the sūtra means by “perfectly illuminating the pure appearance of awakening.”

Having realized the essence, one then sees it at all times amid the four deportments of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, never for a moment failing to see it or forgetting it. One first attains the essence of the Way and now brings forth its function. Why must one see it only while sitting, only to lose or regress from it when not sitting? This is called one-practice samādhi.

Those beginners who cling to the method of sitting do not understand transformation. Or they may already have seen true reality, yet, because their

habitual tendencies are deep, mistakenly believe that what they have realized is not right. They then again rigidly adhere to Chan meditation, hoping to increase their strength. They do not know that they are instead receiving the bonds of Dharma and find it difficult to bring forth responsive functioning. At most, they become followers of a school of conceptual understanding.

Thus this matter is like leading an army against an enemy: at the outset there is absolutely no fixed method. At times one must proceed step by step; at other times success depends on adapting to circumstances. Sitting in Chan and awakening through the mind should neither be neglected. But when one goes directly beyond the top of the hundred-foot pole, not only does sitting become a burden, but even awakening becomes superfluous. Why? Because it is originally thus. Once it has been decisively recognized, there is no need to raise a view of Dharma again and thereby obstruct oneself.

But how can those of limited understanding be told of this? Those who cling to Dharma-views constantly discriminate among teachings: this school is superior, that school inferior. They forget the meaning of the originally equal ground and do not know that returning to the source is not two. After returning to the source, everything is swept away completely. What remains to be grasped? What remains to be cherished? The Chan worthies in the capital knew only how to rigidly preserve established methods and did not understand the ultimate. How many people of sharp faculties did they mislead! Their grievance has nowhere to be redressed. Just as with practitioners today, deeply ingrained habits are hard to reverse, and all suffer from this same ailment. Some even openly take correct teachings for demonic doctrines. How many are there who can avoid being shaken and confused?

[3] “Dharmas have no comparison, because they are free of mutual opposition.” I once doubted this statement. Dharmas are precisely what admit of comparison; if there were no comparison, how could they be called dharmas? Dharmas are what the mind conceives. Once the mind conceives something, it naturally discriminates and compares, falling into dualistic opposition.

Later I came to know that the nature-substance is empty and quiescent, pervading everywhere without exception; therefore, it is direct perception. Although all dharmas arise through inferential discrimination and comparison, they never depart from this ultimate truth and finally return to direct perception. Thus it is said that dharmas have no comparison. It is not that dharmas lack comparison as entities; rather, there is no dualistic opposition, for comparison ultimately cannot be obtained and thus remains without comparison and without dependence. If one relies on words and rigidly clings to them, does this not become an illness? Yet it is not words that mislead us, but the mistaken attachment of our own views. Those who read the sūtras must understand this.

[4] In the phrase “use wisdom to illuminate and dispel afflictions,” the very word “use” already exposes the illness; it is almost beyond remedy. Birth and death arise because the mind grasps and will not let go. Such people take afflictions to be one thing, wisdom another, and the act of using the latter to illuminate and dispel the former yet another. These three dharmas stand in opposition and become ever more bewildering; all are established upon that single word “use.”

They do not know that these three dharmas do not depart from one essence. The so-called afflictions, wisdom, and the function of illumination are all functions of mind, brought forth from the intrinsic nature of bodhi. Brightness too is that; ignorance too is that. The two vehicles fall into the opposition of form and emptiness, whereas the Mahāyāna is form itself as emptiness. To speak of transformation is also superfluous, for once one fully comprehends that their nature is not two, only the names have changed.

Thus, although afflictions may be transformed into wisdom and wisdom may become afflictions, and although there are all kinds of illusory appearances, the essential nature of bodhi has never undergone the slightest change. This is the simplest, most wondrous, and ultimate method for resolving transformational birth and death.

The Mahāyāna begins from the original ground. By first realizing the true nature, what arises from within never regresses. The two vehicles cannot bear direct reception of this, and can only begin from phenomenal forms. Because their approach is external, they can achieve only limited results and find it difficult to reach the ultimate. Why? Temporary suppression is indeed superior to the state before practice, yet one will eventually regress. One must still turn toward the Mahāyāna before attaining thorough completion.

These two rounds of effort are truly troublesome. Moreover, once an initial view has taken hold, people willingly settle for what is inferior and limited, not daring to accept it in faith. This is also a limitation of their capacity. The Buddha wished people to arouse great resolve and cultivate flexibility and vitality precisely to prevent this later illness and to guard against their limiting themselves.

Arousing great resolve begins with generosity: one should give away every view of self and attachment to dharmas. Cultivating flexibility and vitality begins with non-abiding: when the mind abides nowhere, Dharma-views do not become fixed, one readily attains freedom, and one enters the Mahāyāna without realizing it. Because one can have neither fixed acceptance nor fixed rejection, this is provisionally called suchness. Because one no longer regresses, it is called unchanging. Know that it is originally thus, not something deliberately made to be so. Those of the Mahāyāna see through it clearly and can return with ease. Those of the two vehicles are timid

and have not seen thoroughly, so they unconsciously hesitate. Yet once they turn back and awaken to the ultimate, there is no longer any distinction of great or small, sharp or dull.

[5] What was discussed in the fourth section is precisely the essential point of mind. It is the most essential matter of the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate and should be carefully noted.

[6] Having said “clear and ever quiescent,” it then says, “with wondrous functioning as innumerable as the sands of the Ganges.” These two lines fully express the wonder of suchness. What the Chan worthies in the capital said was not not the Way; it was simply inferior to it, because they clung one-sidedly to Dharma.

But did he not know that essence itself has function? His understanding, however, was not yet thorough. He forcibly divided afflictions, wisdom, and the like into two, establishing subject and object; thus the function could not become wondrous, nature and appearances were not in harmony, and it was difficult to enter purity. With a single instruction from the Sixth Patriarch, his whole being became alive and responsive. The word “only” in the Essential Teaching is the same word “only” as in the Diamond Sūtra’s “should only abide as taught”: both convey the same decisiveness, meaning that apart from this there is no second dharma, so do not hesitate again. Having received this brief instruction, Jian truly experienced a sudden, thorough awakening. Jian’s journey was indeed not in vain.

Chapter Ten: Entrustment

One day the Master summoned his disciples Fahai, Zhicheng, Fada, Shenxiu, Zhichang, Zhitong, Zhiche, Zhidào, Fazhen, Faru, and others, saying: “You are unlike other people. After I enter parinirvāṇa, each of you will become a teacher in one region. I shall now teach you how to expound the Dharma without departing from the fundamental tradition.” [2]

“First, you must set forth the three categories of Dharma gates and employ the thirty-six pairs. In speaking and acting, you must depart from both extremes. When expounding all dharmas, do not depart from the self-nature. Should someone suddenly ask you about the Dharma, let every utterance proceed in pairs, taking paired dharmas as its basis. Their coming and going are mutually conditioned; ultimately, when the two dharmas are both removed, there is nowhere further to go. [3] The three categories of Dharma gates are the aggregates, realms, and entrances.”

“The aggregates are the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. The entrances are the twelve entrances: the external six objects—

forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and dharmas—and the internal six gates—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The realms are the eighteen realms: the six objects, six gates, and six consciousnesses."

"The self-nature can contain the myriad dharmas and is called the storehouse consciousness. Once discursive thought arises, it becomes transforming consciousness, producing the six consciousnesses, issuing through the six gates, and apprehending the six objects. Thus arise the eighteen realms, all functioning from the self-nature. If the self-nature is deviant, it gives rise to eighteen deviant states; if the self-nature is correct, it gives rise to eighteen correct states. Evil functioning is the functioning of sentient beings; wholesome functioning is the functioning of Buddhas. From what does this functioning arise? It arises because the self-nature contains paired dharmas." [4]

"There are five pairs among the insentient external objects: heaven and earth, sun and moon, brightness and darkness, yin and yang, water and fire. These are the five pairs. There are twelve pairs in the language of dharma characteristics."

"Language and dharmas, existence and nonexistence, form and formlessness, characteristics and lack of characteristics, defiled and undefiled, form and emptiness, movement and stillness, purity and impurity, ordinary beings and sages, monastics and laity, old and young, great and small—these are the twelve pairs. There are nineteen pairs in the functioning of the self-nature."

"Long and short, deviant and correct, delusion and wisdom, foolishness and intelligence, distraction and samādhi, kindness and malice, precepts and non-precepts, straight and crooked, real and unreal, perilous and level, afflictions and bodhi, permanence and impermanence, compassion and harm, joy and anger, equanimity and miserliness, advance and retreat, arising and cessation, dharmakāya and form-body, nirmāṇakāya and sambhogakāya—these are the nineteen pairs."

The Master said, "If you understand how to use these thirty-six pairs of dharmas, the Way will penetrate all sūtras and teachings, and in going out and coming in you will depart from both extremes. When the self-nature functions and you speak with others, outwardly be free of characteristics amid characteristics; inwardly be free of emptiness amid emptiness. If you cling entirely to characteristics, deviant views will increase; if you cling entirely to emptiness, ignorance will increase." [5] Those who cling to emptiness slander the sūtras and plainly say that writing is unnecessary.

"Yet if they say that writing is unnecessary, people should likewise not speak, for speech itself is a characteristic of writing. They also say that the direct Way does not establish writing, but the very two words 'does not establish' are themselves writing. [6] When they see others speaking, they immediately slander them, saying that they are attached to writing. You must know that being deluded oneself is still tolerable,

but slandering the Buddhist sūtras is not. Do not slander the sūtras; the karmic obstacles of doing so are countless."

"If one clings outwardly to characteristics and seeks truth through practices, or extensively establishes practice halls and speaks of the faults of existence and nonexistence, such a person will not see the nature for kalpas. Simply listen and practice according to the Dharma. Nor should you cease thinking of all things and thereby obstruct your own Way-nature. [7] If you listen but do not practice, you will instead give rise to deviant thoughts. Simply practice according to the Dharma and bestow the Dharma without abiding in characteristics. If you awaken, speak according to this, use it according to this, practice according to this, and act according to this, you will not depart from the fundamental tradition." [8]

"If someone asks you about meaning, answer a question about existence with nonexistence, and a question about nonexistence with existence. Answer a question about ordinary beings with sages, and a question about sages with ordinary beings. The two ways are mutually conditioned, giving rise to the meaning of the Middle Way. If one question is answered with one counterpart, and all other questions are handled in the same way, you will not depart from principle. Suppose someone asks, 'What is called darkness?' Answer: 'Brightness is the cause, and darkness is the condition. When brightness disappears, there is darkness. Brightness reveals darkness, and darkness reveals brightness. Their coming and going are mutually conditioned, forming the meaning of the Middle Way.' All other questions are likewise answered in this way. When you transmit the Dharma in the future, teach one another accordingly, and do not lose the essential teaching." [9]

In the renzi year, the first year of the Taiji era, in the seventh month of the Yanhé era, the Master ordered his disciples to build a stūpa at Guoen Monastery in Xinzhou and urged them to complete the work quickly. It was finished late in the summer of the following year. On the first day of the seventh month, he gathered the disciples and said: "By the eighth month, I wish to leave this world. If you have doubts, ask them promptly, so that I may resolve them for you and put an end to your delusion. After I have gone, there will be no one to teach you."

When Fahai and the others heard this, they all wept. Only Shenxiu remained composed and shed no tears. [10] The Master said: "The young monk Shenxiu has attained equanimity toward good and ill; praise and blame do not move him, and sorrow and joy do not arise. The rest of you have not attained this."

"Over these years in the mountains, what Way have you practiced after all? You now weep—but for whom are you grieving? If you grieve because you do not know where I am going, I myself know where I am going. If I did not know where I was going, I would not have foretold it to you. You weep because you do not know where I am

going. If you knew where I was going, you should not grieve. The Dharma-nature is originally without arising or ceasing, coming or going. All of you sit down. I shall speak you a verse called the Verse on True and False, Movement and Stillness. Recite and retain this verse. If your understanding accords with mine, and you practice accordingly, you will not lose the essential teaching." The assembly of monks bowed and requested the Master to compose the verse. The verse said: [11]

Nothing whatsoever is true; do not take what is seen as true.

If one sees something as true, that seeing is entirely untrue.

If one can possess true reality within oneself, then, free from the false, the mind itself is true.

If one's own mind is not free from the false, where can truth be found?

Sentient beings understand movement; insentient things do not move.

If one cultivates the practice of immobility, one is like an insentient thing that does not move.

If you seek true immobility, within movement there is immobility.

Immobility that is merely immobility belongs to the insentient and has no Buddha-seed.

Be skilled at discerning characteristics, while remaining unmoved in the ultimate truth.

To hold such a view is the functioning of suchness.

I tell all students of the Way: make every effort and apply your minds.

Do not, at the gate of the Mahāyāna, cling instead to the wisdom of birth and death.

If your words accord at once, then discuss the meaning of Buddhahood together.

If they truly do not accord, join your palms and let them depart happily.

This tradition is originally without contention; contention means losing the intent of the Way.

To cling to opposites and contend over Dharma gates is for the self-nature to enter birth and death.

When the assembly heard the verse, they all bowed. Having understood the Master's meaning, each gathered in his mind, practiced according to the Dharma,

and no longer dared to contend. [12]

Knowing that the Great Master would not remain in the world much longer, the senior monk Fahai bowed twice and asked: “After the Venerable enters parinirvāṇa, to whom will the robe and Dharma be entrusted?” The Master said: “From the time I expounded the Dharma at Dafan Monastery until now, it has been copied, recorded, and circulated under the title The Platform Sūtra of the Dharma-Treasure. Guard and protect it, transmit it from one to another, and liberate all sentient beings. To rely solely on this teaching is called the true Dharma. [13] I now teach the Dharma to you but do not transmit the robe, because the roots of your faith are already mature, you are resolute and free from doubt, and you are capable of undertaking this great task. Yet according to the meaning of the transmission verse of the former patriarch, Master Bodhidharma, the robe should no longer be transmitted.” The verse said:

I originally came to this land to transmit the Dharma and save deluded beings.

One flower opens into five petals; the fruit naturally comes to maturity. [14]

The Master further said: “Good spiritual friends, each of you purify your minds and listen as I expound the Dharma. If you wish to perfect all-knowing wisdom, you must realize the samādhi of one characteristic and the samādhi of one practice. [15] If in all places you do not abide in characteristics, and amid those characteristics give rise to neither love nor aversion, neither grasping nor rejecting, and do not think of such matters as benefit and harm, success and failure, but remain at ease, calm, open, and unassuming, this is called the samādhi of one characteristic.”

“If, in all places, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, you maintain a single, direct mind, without moving from the bodhimaṇḍa, then you truly make the Pure Land. This is called the samādhi of one practice. If a person possesses these two samādhis, it is like seed in the ground: it is contained, nurtured, grows, and matures into fruit. The samādhi of one characteristic and the samādhi of one practice are likewise so. The Dharma I now teach is like timely rain, universally moistening the great earth. Your Buddha-nature is like seeds that, upon receiving this moisture, all sprout and grow. Those who receive my teaching will certainly attain bodhi; those who follow my practice will surely realize the wondrous fruit. [16] Listen to my verse:”

The mind-ground contains every seed; when universal rain falls, all sprout.

Once one suddenly awakens and false attachments are gone, the fruit of bodhi naturally ripens. [17]

After speaking the verse, the Master said: “The Dharma is not two, and the mind is likewise so. The Way is pure and has no characteristics. Be careful not to contemplate stillness or empty your minds. This mind is originally pure, with nothing to grasp or reject. Each of you should strive diligently and depart well according to conditions.” [18] At that time, the assembly bowed and withdrew.

On the eighth day of the seventh month, the Great Master suddenly said to his disciples: “I wish to return to Xinzhou. Quickly prepare a boat for me.” The assembly pleaded earnestly for him to remain. The Master said: “Even when Buddhas appear in the world, they still manifest nirvāṇa. Whatever comes must go; this is the constant principle. This bodily frame of mine must have a place to which it returns.” The assembly asked, “After the Master leaves, when may we expect you to return?” The Master said: “Fallen leaves return to their roots; when it comes, it has no mouth.”

They further asked: “To whom will the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye be transmitted?” The Master said: “One who has the Way obtains it; one without a mind comprehends it.” [19] They said: “We do not know how many generations of transmission there have been since the Buddhas and patriarchs of old first appeared in the world. We pray that you will kindly explain.” The Master said: “The ancient Buddhas who have appeared in the world are numberless and cannot be counted.”

“Now, beginning with the Seven Buddhas: in the past Adornment Kalpa there were Vipāśyin Buddha, Śikhin Buddha, and Viśvabhū Buddha; in the present Worthy Kalpa there are Krakucchanda Buddha, Kanakamuni Buddha, Kāśyapa Buddha, and Śākyamuni Buddha. These are the Seven Buddhas.”

“Śākyamuni Buddha first transmitted the Dharma to the Venerable Mahākāśyapa; second, to the Venerable Ānanda; third, to the Venerable Śāṇakavāsa; fourth, to the Venerable Upagupta; fifth, to the Venerable Dṛtaka; sixth, to the Venerable Micchaka; seventh, to the Venerable Vasumitra; eighth, to the Venerable Buddhanandi; ninth, to the Venerable Buddhamitra; tenth, to the Venerable Pārśva; eleventh, to the Venerable Puṇyayaśas; twelfth, to Aśvaghoṣa.”

“The thirteenth was the Venerable Kapimala; the fourteenth, Nāgārjuna; the fifteenth, the Venerable Kāṇadeva; the sixteenth, the Venerable Rāhulata; the seventeenth, the Venerable Saṅghānandi; the eighteenth, the Venerable Gayaśata; the nineteenth, the Venerable Kumāralāta; the twentieth, the Venerable Jayata; the twenty-first, the Venerable Vasubandhu; the twenty-second, the Venerable Manorhita; the twenty-third, the Venerable Haklenā.”

“The twenty-fourth was the Venerable Siṃha; the twenty-fifth, the Venerable Basiasita; the twenty-sixth, the Venerable Puṇyamitra; the twenty-seventh, the

Venerable Prajñātāra; the twenty-eighth, the Venerable Bodhidharma; the twenty-ninth, Great Master Huike; the thirtieth, Great Master Sengcan; the thirty-first, Great Master Daoxin; the thirty-second, Great Master Hongren; and Huineng is the thirty-third patriarch. Each of the patriarchs above received a transmission."

You must pass this on from generation to generation hereafter; do not let it go astray or become distorted. [20] He was further asked, "Will there be any calamity after this?" The Master said, "Five or six years after my passing, someone will wish to take my head. Listen to my verse:"

On his head he supports his parents; in his mouth he must eat.

When the calamity of "fullness" comes, willow and poplar will be officials.

On the third day of the eighth month in the guichou year of the second year of Xiantian of the Great Master, after the meal at Guoen Monastery (the era name was changed to Kaiyuan in the twelfth month of that year), he said to the assembled disciples, "Each of you sit in your proper place. I am about to take leave of you." Fahai respectfully said, "What teaching will the Venerable Master leave behind, so that deluded people of later generations may see the Buddha-nature?" The Master said, "Listen carefully."

If deluded people of later generations recognize sentient beings, that is Buddha-nature; if they do not recognize sentient beings, they may seek the Buddha for ten thousand kalpas and still find him hard to encounter. I now teach you to recognize the sentient beings of your own mind and to see the Buddha-nature of your own mind. If you wish to see the Buddha, simply recognize sentient beings. It is only because sentient beings are deluded about the Buddha, not because the Buddha is deluded about sentient beings. When one's own nature is awakened, sentient beings are Buddhas; when one's own nature is deluded, Buddhas are sentient beings."

When one's own nature is equal and impartial, sentient beings are Buddhas; when one's own nature is crooked and perverse, Buddhas are sentient beings. If your minds are crooked and devious, then the Buddha is among sentient beings; when a single thought is even and straight, sentient beings become Buddhas. My own mind contains a Buddha; the Buddha within oneself is the true Buddha. If one lacks a Buddha-mind within oneself, where else can one seek the true Buddha? Your own minds are Buddha; do not harbor further doubts. Outside there is not a single thing that can be established; it is the original mind that gives rise to the myriad dharmas."

Therefore, the sūtra says: "When mind arises, the various dharmas arise; when mind ceases, the various dharmas cease." I now leave you a verse as my farewell. It is called the Verse of the True Buddha of One's Own Nature. Those of later generations

who understand the meaning of this verse will themselves see their original mind and themselves accomplish the Buddha Way. The verse says: [21]

The suchness of one's own nature is the true Buddha; wrong views and the three poisons are the demon king.

When one is deluded by wrong views, the demon dwells in the house; when right view is present, the Buddha sits in the hall.

When wrong views and the three poisons arise within one's nature, the demon king has come to dwell in the house.

Right view itself removes the mind of the three poisons; the demon becomes Buddha—this is truly not false.

The dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya—the three bodies—are originally one body.

If you can see for yourself within your own nature, this is the cause of attaining Buddhahood and bodhi.

Pure nature originally arises from the nirmāṇakāya, and pure nature constantly abides within the nirmāṇakāya.

Nature causes the nirmāṇakāya to follow the right path; in the future, its perfection will truly be inexhaustible.

The nature of sexual desire is originally the cause of pure nature; eliminating sexual desire is the body of pure nature.

Let each depart from the five desires within their own nature; in the instant of seeing one's nature, one is true.

If in this life one encounters the gate of sudden teaching, one may suddenly awaken to one's own nature and see the World-Honored One.

If you wish to cultivate practice and seek to become a Buddha, not knowing where can you intend to seek the true?

If you can see the true for yourself within your mind, possessing the true is the cause of attaining Buddhahood.

Those who do not see their own nature and seek the Buddha outside are, in every thought, greatly deluded people.

The dharma gate of sudden teaching has now been left behind; to save people of the world, one must cultivate it for oneself.

I tell you, future students of the Way: without this view, you will drift on in great confusion. [22]

Having spoken the verse, the Master said, “All of you, take good care. After my passing, do not act with worldly grief, weeping and shedding tears, receiving condolences from others, or wearing mourning garments. Such people are not my disciples, nor do they accord with the true Dharma. Simply recognize your own original mind and see your own original nature: neither moving nor still, neither arising nor ceasing, neither coming nor going, neither right nor wrong, neither abiding nor departing. I fear that your minds may be deluded and fail to understand my meaning, so I again instruct you, enabling you to see your nature. After my passing, cultivate in accordance with this; it will be as though I were still alive. If you go against my teaching, then even if I were still in this world, there would be no benefit.” [23] He again spoke a verse:

Steadfast and unmoving, do not cultivate goodness; at ease and untroubled, do not create evil.

Quiet and still, cut off seeing and hearing; vast and open, let the mind have no attachment. [24]

After speaking the verse, the Master sat upright until the third watch of the night. Suddenly he said to his disciples, “I am going.” Then he quietly passed away. At that time an extraordinary fragrance filled the room, a white rainbow stretched down to the earth, the forest trees turned white, and birds and beasts cried mournfully. In the eleventh month, officials of the three prefectures of Guang, Shao, and Xin, together with monastic and lay disciples, contended to receive the true body, but could not decide where it should go. They then burned incense and prayed, “Wherever the incense smoke points, there the Master shall return.” At that time, the incense smoke rose straight toward Caoxi.

On the thirteenth day of the eleventh month, they moved the shrine containing his remains, together with the robe and bowl that had been transmitted, back there. On the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month of the following year, they brought the body out of the shrine, and the disciple Fangbian covered it with fragrant clay. Remembering the prophecy concerning the taking of the head, the disciples first protected the Master’s neck with iron sheets and lacquered cloth before placing him in the stūpa. Suddenly, white light appeared within the stūpa and shot straight up into the sky; it dispersed only after three days. The authorities of Shaozhou reported this to the throne, and by imperial decree a stele was erected to record the Master’s conduct in the Way.

The Master lived to the age of seventy-six. He received the robe at twenty-four, shaved his head at thirty-nine, and for thirty-seven years expounded the Dharma and benefited living beings. Forty-three people received authorization to succeed to the Dharma; the number of those who awakened to the Way and transcended the ordinary is unknown. The robe of faith transmitted by Bodhidharma, the jeweled bowl and patched robe bestowed by Emperor Zhongzong, the true likeness of the Master made by Fangbian, and the Master's ritual implements were all entrusted to the stūpa attendant for perpetual preservation at the Baolin place of practice. The Platform Sūtra was transmitted to make manifest the essential teaching. All this serves to flourish the Three Jewels and universally benefit the multitude of living beings.

(Note: What follows is the exposition of the essential meaning by the Second Patriarch.)

[1] This section first speaks of the functioning of the Dharma: it is not solely for benefiting others, but also benefits oneself. Whoever can bring forth this functioning thereby demonstrates attainment of the essence. Mahāyāna Buddhadharma lies in great capacity and great functioning; thus, when applied to worldly dharmas, there is nothing it cannot penetrate perfectly. All the distress, suffering, and afflictions of the world arise from nothing beyond interpersonal dealings and mutual confrontation.

First is hard collision: each side opposes the other and refuses to yield; one is likewise obstinately attached to one's own position and will not retreat, so the matter cannot be dissolved. Here yielding is the means of release. Second is blockage: each clings to a single view, leaving no room for accommodation; both sides are obstructed. Here one uses understanding and transformation, as when people are jammed together in a crowd and cannot move through it: it is difficult to proceed straight ahead. The wondrous function of prajñā is to follow the situation and bend rather than oppose it, and one will naturally find a way through.

Third is rigid adherence: the other person's view of self is firmly fixed, and they cling unchangingly to it, holding that there is a fixed dharma. Here non-abiding is taken as the principle. If I do not cling, the other has no power over me, and that person's fixed dharma will naturally be transformed by me. Thus one responds according to the occasion and thereby transforms them. Prajñā transforms worldly dharmas so that one may transcend the world. Suffering belongs to involvement in the world; to transcend the world is to be free of suffering. Yet without suffering there is no means to turn toward joy. In all cases, one must not depart from one's own nature; thus one can remain such as one is.

[2] Dharma-transmission empowerment is the method of instruction between master and disciple. Only one who has realized the true aspect of reality, knows one's own habitual tendencies, and can assess the habitual tendencies of others may serve as a master. Realizing the true aspect of reality is to attain fundamental wisdom; penetrating the habitual tendencies of others, and bringing it into function through wondrous contemplation, is differentiated wisdom. This is precisely the supernormal power of knowing others' minds.

To discern what kind of capacity another person possesses is the wisdom eye; to know what Dharma to employ in guiding and liberating that person is the dharma eye. Together these are called the wisdom of exhausted outflows; the heavenly eye is secondary to them. Anyone who serves as a teacher must possess these two eyes before transmitting a Dharma that liberates people. Because the Sixth Patriarch saw that these people differed from others and that each could serve as a teacher in one region, he taught them the Dharma. One must first receive its benefit oneself before one can benefit others. Otherwise, both parties may lose the essential teaching, and the harm will not be slight.

[3] The Buddha appeared for the one great cause and condition; it was not merely for his own liberation. Benefiting others is precisely self-benefit, and it depends upon cultivation and training. Yet since one wishes to liberate others, one cannot avoid using dharmas; and the very purpose of using dharmas is to break their attachment to dharmas and return them to empty quiescence.

Using a responsive dharma means meeting an opposition with an opposition. Whoever comes must be holding some view. For instance, when someone asks, "What is the meaning of the Patriarch's coming from the West?" that person holds this view in mind with great firmness. Now, by pointing without explanation to the cypress tree in the courtyard, one first leaves the person bewildered, causing them to set aside this meaning of coming from the West and loosen the confines of their mental state. What was fixed becomes lively; attachment to views is dissolved, and one enters comprehensive contemplation. If the person's capacity can accord with it, they will naturally respond.

But if they become rigidly attached to the tree, then the illness is incurable, and there is no need to waste words. This uses opposition to break through, and breaking through to guide. The patriarchs' intentions were indeed most painstaking. "Coming and going condition one another" means that the threefold classification of dharma gates is provisionally used and then completely swept away. The phrase "there is nowhere further to go" is wonderfully efficacious indeed. It shows that the empty characteristics of all dharmas still return to the original field of nature, which cannot be grasped.

This is the essential teaching. The method of instruction must be thorough, just as saving a person must be thorough; one must never abandon the work halfway and fail to complete one's virtue. Giving Dharma instruction is truly a last resort, but one must always guard against a person's rigid attachment turning into illness. Whether or not they can receive it, one must fully explain what one has to say in order to prevent later problems; one must never fail to reveal the ultimate meaning. Do not slight beginners or withhold it because you regard it as too profound and secret; to cherish them in this way is precisely to mislead them. Instruction differs from authorization. Authorization should not be given early or lightly; but regarding the ultimate point, there is no harm in explaining it repeatedly, so that they do not forget the original. This is the teaching of the Dharma.

[4] What responsive dharma could there be within one's own nature? One's own nature is originally empty and quiescent; ultimately there is no dharma to oppose. Yet karma is constructed by the illusory mind, and one must still borrow illusory dharmas to counteract it. Everything arises from emptiness, and everything returns to emptiness. Within empty nature, one temporarily raises responsive dharmas, establishing them according to circumstances; once the occasion has passed, they become empty. Knowing this, when using dharmas one will not be bound by dharmas, and they become wondrous functions.

[5] The excellence of this passage lies in the fact that understanding its function penetrates everything. One employs dharmas while remaining free from dharmas, like a physician using medicine with complete mastery and applying it freely. If one is wholly attached to appearances, wrong views increase; if one is wholly attached to emptiness, ignorance increases. These four sentences fully express the wondrous functioning of prajñā.

In short, when applying dharmas to others, never begin with preconceived views. Within the emptiness of nature, one naturally attains immeasurable wisdom; the wisdom of knowing others' minds truly arises from this. Otherwise, one loses skillful means and cannot be a master. Although this Dharma is used to liberate others, it truly liberates oneself as well. To liberate all sentient beings and thereby attain Buddhahood means to understand the habitual tendencies of all sentient beings; it also means sweeping away one's own habitual tendencies. This is the method of practice after seeing one's nature. Practitioners should constantly embody and reflect upon this meaning. When the conduct of mind becomes thoroughly mature, wondrous functioning will be present; moreover, one may awaken to the principle that conditioned opposites are empty, naturally grasping at nothing, while function does not depart from essence.

[6] Not establishing written words and language does not mean discarding them. Writing is language on paper, and language is writing spoken aloud. Whenever

something can be conceived and is to be expressed, one relies on writing or language. But at the point that is inconceivable, it cannot be expressed by writing or reached by language—what use, then, can writing and language have? What is called "the path of language is cut off" means that the activity of mind has ceased. Whenever the mind has an activity, there is a dharma that can be conceived; only then is language not cut off.

People today may have a deep grounding in Chan practice, yet at every turn they aspire to lofty and distant things, bent on displaying the loftiness and subtlety of the Chan school. They do not realize that its loftiness and subtlety lie precisely in the ordinary: in movement and stillness, speech and silence, there is nowhere that is not language and words. Though the voice may thunder like thunder pouring into one's ears, those who do not understand remain bewildered in the end. Even the Buddha could do nothing about the five thousand who left their seats.

7 The two characters dao and xing should be clearly distinguished and explained. Nature pervades the dharma realm; there is nowhere that is not nature, and thus nowhere that is not the Way. From the substance of nature arise all the functions of the Way—how lively and perfectly interpenetrating they are! If one abides in a state in which one thinks of nothing among the hundred things, taking it to be empty quiescence, one does not realize that abiding itself is already an affair. Whoever clings to empty quiescence: that very clinging is not emptiness. When functioning does not flow freely, the Way is obstructed. How could this be suchness or the true aspect of reality?

8 The sūtra says, "Thus know, thus see, thus believe and understand": this means practicing in accordance with the wondrous functioning explained here. The sūtra also says, "Do not give rise to dharma appearances": this means not departing from the non-abiding substance of nature by falsely establishing views of dharmas. In this way, one does not lose the essential principle.

9 "Accomplishing the meaning of the Middle Way" is also an expedient expression. One must understand that once the two extremes are abandoned, there is no Middle Way to be established either. The Middle Way, too, arises dependently; it is merely one coming and going among illusory dharmas. This passage refutes the other party's attachment to views of dharmas and gives the essential instruction for curing the disease of dharmas. Whoever comes must first hold some view, and this view is precisely the disease. Earlier it spoke of opening, showing, awakening, and entering. This is opening the Dharma: opening the door of self-view and showing the correct path. The words "opening" and "showing" depend on the teacher; "awakening" and "entering" depend entirely on oneself.

10 The root of attachment is the basis of birth and death. This root of attachment belongs to ignorance; ignorance belongs to the absence of wisdom; and the absence of wisdom is due to not having clarified the root. To clarify the root is to clarify the principle of the unborn. Once one fully comprehends the unborn, one knows that people are originally unborn—how, then, could there be death? What is called birth and death is merely the illusory arising and ceasing, coming and going, of an illusory body. Knowing that all is illusory, and that the dharma nature which is not illusory originally has no arising,

cessation, coming, or going, one should not cling to the present illusory body as birth, nor, when this illusory body changes and perishes in later years, need one cling to it as death. Since there is no birth or death, how could I give rise to aversion or attachment? For several years they cultivated the Way in the mountains, intending to cultivate freedom from being moved by praise or blame and freedom from the arising of sorrow or joy. Yet now, hearing that the Patriarch wished to leave the world, they all wept. Outwardly, it was grief for the Patriarch; inwardly, it was attachment to themselves. They had still not forgotten the self, for his departure went against their wishes and made them uneasy.

The Patriarch said, “If you knew where I am going, you should not grieve and weep.” This means that if one knew that dharma nature originally has neither arising nor cessation, coming nor going, one should not give rise to such emotional views. Why? Because nothing whatsoever is real. Shenxiu’s expression also remained unmoved, and he shed no tears; but can this alone be taken as proof that he had seen his true nature? Not necessarily.

For seeing one’s true nature cannot be measured from outward appearances. Because everyone was weeping, Shenxiu deliberately responded in a counteractive way. But one who truly sees one’s nature may weep, or may not weep. To weep is movement without movement; not to weep is likewise movement without movement. Movement without movement means not being deluded when encountering circumstances, and thus being able to transform them.

Those who have not seen their true nature are moved when they encounter circumstances; once moved, they cannot transform them. Or they forcibly suppress themselves from moving—this is non-movement that is itself movement. Therefore, it cannot be determined from outward appearances. If it were, among the Patriarch’s disciples Shenxiu alone would have seen his true nature; could that be so? One should understand that the Sixth Patriarch spoke thus for those whose root of attachment had not been cut off, and for later generations. This must be understood.

11 The verse means that nothing whatsoever is real: everything is wholly illusory and without true reality. One must not cling to “the real” and thereby form a view. If one establishes a view that there is something real, that view itself is no longer real. You should know that you yourself inherently possess what is real. You need only leave behind the false, and that is the real; when illusion departs, the real naturally becomes manifest.

If your own mind cannot leave behind the false, from where could you see your own reality? Therefore, sentient beings can comprehend the meaning of movement and explain it well. Inanimate things cannot move, much less understand movement. Those who now cultivate the practice of non-movement should not be unmoving like inanimate things. Those seeking true non-movement should see non-movement within movement. Movement is function; non-movement is essence. Function does not depart from essence, and movement still returns to non-movement, for it is fundamentally unstained and ultimately pure.

“Non-movement is non-movement” means that non-movement is originally the state of inanimate things, which from the outset have neither sentience nor Buddha-nature. “Able to distinguish appearances well” means that one who has seen their true nature is active in function. Within the ultimate meaning of the substance of nature, such a person neither abides nor clings, and is active yet unmoved. To be able to form such a perfectly interpenetrating, non-abiding view is the wondrous functioning of suchness.

I inform all practitioners of the Way: you must strive to clarify the Way. The meaning is that, within the gate of the Mahāyāna, do not cling to wisdom. Know that with no wisdom and nothing attained, one accords with the meaning of suchness and non-movement; for seeking wisdom is also birth and death. Thus, among companions cultivating the Way, those whose minds mutually confirm one another may discuss it together. With those whose minds do not mutually confirm one another, what benefit is there in disputing? Simply join your palms and let them be pleased. They may not understand, and it would only increase afflictions.

This school takes ultimate emptiness and purity as its essential principle. In emptiness there is nothing to dispute; wherever there is dispute, emptiness has not been realized, the intent of the Way has been lost, and one has become attached. Attachment runs counter to one’s intrinsic nature and vainly establishes birth and death; it is utterly pointless. This verse is concise in expression and pure in meaning, its main intent being to stop disputes. The Patriarch also clearly knew that in the degenerate age there would be many disputes, through which people would all the more mislead themselves and others. Therefore, he said that where views of dharmas are improper, they should be corrected; but if capacities do not accord, never oppose them. Instead, have compassion for them and do not dispute.

12 Gather in the mind and cultivate according to the Dharma. This is one's own great matter. Do not again concern yourself with others' idle affairs and thereby mislead yourself. This is truly how one repays the Sixth Patriarch's kindness.

13 The Sixth Patriarch deliberately pointed out that this is called the True Dharma. This shows that the True Dharma, Semblance Dharma, and Degenerate Dharma are not wholly matters of time. One need not necessarily identify the first five hundred years as the period of the True Dharma and the present as the Degenerate Dharma. The True Dharma takes the mind-ground as primary; Semblance Dharma makes names and appearances its concern; and Degenerate Dharma abandons even appearances.

The Buddhadharma extends through the three divisions of time. Those who study Buddhism today have, at the very least, planted various wholesome roots before one or two Buddhas. This does not mean merely turning from evil toward good. "Roots" means the five faculties; what else could they be but the mind-ground? The following phrase, "the faculty of faith is fully mature," means that faith has been accomplished and one is fit to undertake a great matter. This is entirely the True Dharma of the mind-ground.

14 "Conditions in the eastern land have ripened" means that the right opportunity has arrived. After the Sixth Patriarch, the True Dharma flourished greatly, and the flower bore fruit in China. Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, was the flower; the following five Patriarchs were its leaves. After flower and leaves, there must be fruit. This alludes to the orthodox lineage that followed. The first two lines speak of the cause, the third of the condition, and the fourth of the fruition. At that point, the robe and bowl were no longer of use.

Thus, whatever happens in the world has its time and conditions; what benefit is there in fruitless effort? How much more so in a great matter that shakes heaven and earth! Applied to affairs, this principle can greatly assist meditative stability: act in accordance with conditions, but be careful regarding causes and do not calculate results. The power that transforms all fixed karma is simply this power of emptiness. Hence it is said that the strength of emptiness, though without sinews, is incomparably great.

15 One-Mark Samādhi realizes the essence; One-Act Samādhi gives rise to its function. One mark is no mark; one mind is no mind. In every circumstance, one constantly sees the essence of empty quiescence. Naturally there arise no views of dharmas involving aversion or attachment, acceptance or rejection, formation or destruction. Empty, numinous, and tranquil—this is the accomplishment of One-Mark Samādhi: unchanging, yet able to accord with conditions. One-act means continuously remaining thus, without alteration.

In every circumstance, whether moving or still, speaking or silent, walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, one never departs from this essence of empty quiescence. Even if views of dharmas involving aversion or attachment, acceptance or rejection, formation or destruction arise in response to temporary circumstances, one never clings to dharmas. This is what is called a direct mind, pure and unified, empty, numinous, and lively. This is the accomplishment of One-Act Samādhi: able to accord with conditions while ultimately remaining unchanged.

These two samādhis cannot be separated; hence it is said that this Dharma is not two, and the mind is just so. Since the One is originally pure, all is therefore pure. This is called the Way. Why then cling to pure contemplation or seek to empty the mind? Once one gives even slight deliberate attention to such contemplation and emptiness, one has a view of dharmas, vainly establishes acceptance and rejection, and instead becomes bound by dharmas. This is one who has not realized One-Mark Samādhi and has not perfected One-Act Samādhi.

Reflecting upon this, it is evidence that I have not seen the true aspect of reality. It is not called clarifying the Way, for when the essence has not been realized, its function cannot arise either.

Those who practice asceticism for decades yet ultimately fail to attain the ultimate are mistaken at the outset. They do not enter realization through One-Mark Samādhi, but vainly seek the false freedom of One-Act Samādhi; their inversion and perversity are evident. How could they easily accomplish the wisdom of all aspects? The Patriarch also said that one endowed with these samādhis truly accomplishes the Pure Land. There are now many who cultivate the Pure Land, but do they enter realization through this? This is the state of non-retrogression and the provisions for rebirth in the West. How can these be divided into separate schools? How could the Buddha's intent have two meanings?

16 This section is wholly focused and is most essential. From the first section's statement, "Bodhi-nature is originally pure; simply use this mind, and directly realize Buddhahood," it proceeds throughout without interruption. It truly gives a detailed exposition of the method of direct realization, speaking with the utmost care and compassion. These four lines may be called the final injunction, the decisive essential principle for all people. They increase immeasurable strength and courage for the Way. If one still has doubts after this, one's karmic offenses are indeed grave. That we have heard this supreme Dharma and encountered these excellent conditions—who knows through how many lives this has been cultivated?

17 The four-line verse is the Sixth Patriarch's verse for universally transmitting the robe and bowl. Among the forty-three persons, whoever awakens to it may inherit his Dharma lineage. Its meaning is that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature;

when conditions are encountered, it manifests. Yet there must be sudden awakening: once the flower of the mind has opened, Buddhahood is certain. This is the intent of the entire sūtra.

18 This passage has ten lines. The first four speak of the originally pure essence; the middle four speak of functioning without contrivance, as the saying goes: the Way is realized in the mind, not in sitting. The final two speak of safeguarding realization after awakening. Its subtlety lies in striving without deliberate contrivance. This matter cannot be treated as weighty or light, rigidly or gloomily, nor can one relax one's effort. Without a person of great blessings and capacity, one cannot undertake it.

19 Those who have the Way attain it; those without mind penetrate it. You should know that one who has the Way does not necessarily attain it, for if one has the thought of having the Way and the notion of something attainable, the intention of dharmas still stands. One has not entered the state of no-mind and therefore cannot penetrate it.

In these words of the Sixth Patriarch, the first sentence refutes, in accordance with their own view, people's notion of having the Way; the second refutes, contrariwise, their disease of having mind. To refute in accordance with their view is to resolve it by following their own view. The meaning is that the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye cannot be handed over or transmitted. If the Way could be transmitted, it would not be the True Dharma. "Those who have the Way" are those who deeply understand this meaning and attain it through their own realization; it is not the Way of which you speak.

To counter by reversal means to open [a person] up by going against his intention. Since he already clings to this view, he is thereby acting with a mind of attachment; he has not yet accomplished the samādhi of one mark. It is precisely this sickness that obscures and deludes him. He thinks that this matter ought not to be questioned, and that to question it is to lose the meaning of the Way. You need only proceed without a mind of attachment, and you will accord with the Way. The earlier disputes over robe and bowl, and sectarian views, were sick because the mind had not been emptied. Yet all Buddhas and patriarchs, from above down to the present, have accorded with the single way of the empty mind. The wonder of no-mind is the same Way of every Buddha, transmitted from generation to generation; it must not be distorted or mistaken. Nor is there any dharma gate beyond this.

20 The Sixth Patriarch here deliberately sets forth the patriarchal succession of the true Dharma and its transmission through the generations. This is the intent of correctly establishing names and determining the Dharma, thereby fixing the central tenet for later generations. Once the true Dharma eye is established, what use is

there for contention? Hence he says, “Transmit it from generation to generation; do not allow it to go astray.” This is a proper injunction; how could it have been for the old man himself? It is precisely for people like us. How can we repay such compassion and grace? After the phrase “each has its own transmission,” I propose adding the four characters “the essence of the Way is one” to complete its meaning. Though each may have a distinct transmission, the Way itself is one. Otherwise, I fear that those who cling to words may mistakenly suppose that each has its own secret.

It is like Zigong’s relation to Confucius. He said, “The Master’s writings may be heard and known. But the Master’s words concerning human nature and the Way of Heaven cannot be heard and known.” He did not realize that the Master’s teaching on human nature and the Way of Heaven was already fully contained in those writings; only Zigong could not fathom it. Moreover, human nature and the Way of Heaven cannot fundamentally be expressed by writings; yet without writings, how could they be expressed?

[21] The meaning of the passage beginning, “Listen carefully, all of you,” has not truly been made explicit, so I shall explain it here. It means that deluded people in later generations recklessly abandon [the Dharma] solely because they do not recognize that their own nature is Buddha. If they recognized that sentient beings themselves possess buddha-nature, then not only could I become a Buddha, but every sentient being, even the most evil, could unquestionably become a Buddha. If they do not recognize this, they will forever turn their backs on the Buddha Way and, through countless kalpas, will be unable to see the Buddha.

I now teach you that knowing your own mind is itself buddha-nature. If you wish to see the Buddha, ask only yourself. To recognize the true reality of your own mind-nature is to become a Buddha, for it is nondual with the Buddha. This is the first method by which to begin, and it is of the utmost importance. Deluded people today all limit themselves. This is sentient beings deluding themselves; it is not that the Buddha deludes sentient beings.

If one awakens to one’s own nature, then even while one’s body occupies the position of a sentient being, one has already become a Buddha. If one is deluded about one’s own nature, then although this very body is originally Buddha, one enters the toil of the dusts in vain and becomes a sentient being. Therefore, one who can enter the wisdom of equality is a sentient being who is Buddha.

Those who are perversely deluded and dangerous are Buddhas become sentient beings. If the mind is devious and crooked, the Buddha is hidden amid sentient beings. When every thought is even and straight, one immediately accomplishes the Buddha Way. The only difficulty is lack of familiarity: one often easily forgets and

loses it. Before one has become continuous and undivided, there seem to be comings and goings, advances and retreats. But in the end, do not retreat or lose it.

You must know that your own mind is itself Buddha; this is the true Buddha. If you yourself do not regard yourself as Buddha, where else will you seek the true Buddha? The Patriarch again earnestly admonishes: “Your own minds are Buddha; do not harbor further doubt. All myriad dharmas are established from self-nature, and nothing whatsoever is lacking.”

He then left behind another verse on the true Buddha of self-nature, saying again that people of later generations who understand the meaning of this verse will see their own original mind and themselves accomplish the Buddha Way. Those sentient beings of later generations who cultivate for many years without attaining the vision of their nature all suffer from this illness: they themselves do not dare to assume responsibility, considering this humility and self-effacement. They do not understand the principle that one should not yield when righteousness calls. If they see others following the Buddha’s intent, making effort, or assuming responsibility, they instead regard them as arrogant and presumptuous.

Such people are scorched sprouts and rotten seeds, who destroy others’ wisdom-life; they are not worth discussing the ultimate truth with. Yet those harmed by them also suffer because their Dharma-obscurations from former lives are profound: they too have misled others, and thus in this life encounter these evil causes and conditions. Those who understand this meaning should quickly repent. As for the method of repenting such offenses, one need only arouse a great resolve and make great vows. After seeing one’s nature, one must certainly assume responsibility without doubt; only then is it of use. Otherwise, one will drift idly through an entire lifetime. How lamentable!

[22] The dharma gate of sudden teaching has now been left behind. This means that the Buddhadharma will endure forever without end; those who obtain it are as though they had gained the unsurpassed treasure. Thus, one may suddenly become a Buddha through four lines of verse; abundance is unnecessary. If one instead abandons oneself and drifts idly through a lifetime, how regrettable that would be.

[23] The passage beginning, “Only recognize your own original mind,” is precisely teaching people to cultivate the wondrous functioning of non-abiding. Whoever can abide nowhere will certainly not fall into the two views. Entering the gate of nonduality, one then reaches equality, and from this the world becomes peaceful. Finally, it also says, “as when I was alive”: whether present in the world or absent from it is precisely nondual. First, it makes known that becoming a Buddha depends upon one’s own efforts; second, it destroys the view of birth and death; third, it

clarifies that the Buddhadharma endures forever without end. The assembly on Vulture Peak has indeed not dispersed.

24 These four lines of verse are exceedingly subtle, concise, and direct. By reciting them repeatedly, one may practice wherever one is. The first two lines empty the two views of good and evil. If one can be completely free of attachment, then there is no need even for these two lines, and their wondrous function has already been fully exhausted. Only the character “cut off” in the third line is inappropriate, for I fear that it may lead people mistakenly into an annihilationist view.

For seeing and hearing, in principle, cannot be cut off at all. Later generations who cultivate a dead samādhi have misunderstood this meaning, and this is extremely dangerous. Master Dayu once changed it to “Seeing and hearing are ever quiescent,” which makes it complete. Later, someone changed the character “cut off” to “and”; this meaning, too, may be used. All this is to avoid the fault of annihilationism.

It is now proposed to change it to the character xi ( ), and to change xin ( ) to the character er ( ), simply using function words throughout to accord with the sense of empty numinosity. Moreover, the four lines originally speak of mind and emphasize in the strongest terms that mind cannot be obtained; therefore, it is permissible to remove the character mind. When practitioners read to this point, they need not fixate on it. Nor is this true only here: this humble work, this Platform Sūtra, and even the entire Tripiṭaka and its twelve divisions may likewise be neither grasped nor clung to. This merely employs this mind to directly comprehend the essential meaning of becoming a Buddha.

“Faith robe” means something taken as a token of trust, just as an official has a seal of authentication. The robe was made of quxun cloth from the Western Regions. The robe previously transmitted to Fangbian was perhaps not this robe.

Appendix

(I) A Brief Biography of the Sixth Patriarch

The Master was named Huineng. His father, of the Lu clan, bore the personal name Xingtao; his mother was of the Li clan. She gave birth to the Master at midnight on the eighth day of the second month of the wuxu year, the twelfth year of the Zhenguan era of the Tang dynasty. Before this, his mother dreamed that white flowers before the courtyard were blooming in profusion and that two white cranes were flying together. Upon waking, she found herself pregnant. She then observed fasting and precepts with purity and sincerity. After carrying the child for six years, she gave birth to the Master.

At his birth, a fine radiance rose into the sky, and a rich fragrance filled the air. At dawn, two monks came to pay their respects and said to the Master's father, “A son was born last night. We have come especially to name him. His name should be Hui-neng: Hui above and Neng below.” His father asked, “Why the name Huineng?” The monks replied, “Hui means to bestow the Dharma's beneficence upon sentient beings. Neng means to be able to perform the work of a Buddha.” Having spoken, they departed, and no one knew where they went.

The Master did not drink his mother's milk. At night, a divine being nourished him with sweet dew. When he was three, his father died and was buried beside their home; his mother remained faithful to his memory and raised the child. When he had grown up, he sold firewood to support his mother. At the age of twenty-four, he heard a sūtra and attained insight. He went to Huangmei to pay homage to the Fifth Patriarch, who recognized his capacity and transmitted to him the robe and Dharma, appointing him heir to the patriarchal seat. This was the xinyou year, the first year of the Longshuo era.

He returned south and lived in concealment. On the eighth day of the first month of the bingzi year, the first year of the Yifeng era, he met Dharma Master Yinzong and discussed profound subtleties with him. Yinzong awakened and accorded with the Master's intent. On the fifteenth day of that month, the fourfold assembly gathered, and the Master had his head shaved. On the eighth day of the second month, eminent worthies assembled and conferred the full precepts upon him.

Vinaya Master Zhiguang of the Western Capital served as precept master; Vinaya Master Huijing of Suzhou served as karma master; Vinaya Master Tongying of Jingzhou served as instructor; Vinaya Master Jiduoluo of Zhongfu recited the precepts; and Tripiṭaka Master Mita of the Western Regions served as witness to the precepts. This ordination platform had been established by Tripiṭaka Master Guṇabhadra during the Song dynasty. A stele there stated: “In the future, a flesh-body bodhisattva will receive the precepts here.”

Furthermore, in the first year of the Tianjian era of the Liang dynasty, Tripiṭaka Master Zhiyue came by sea from India and planted a bodhi tree from that land beside this platform. He also foretold: “One hundred and seventy years hence, a flesh-body bodhisattva will expound the supreme vehicle beneath this tree, liberate innumerable beings, and become the true Dharma master transmitting the Buddha Mind-Seal.” When the Master arrived here, he shaved his head and received the precepts. Together with the fourfold assembly, he expounded the essential meaning of the single transmission, exactly as had been foretold.

In the spring of the following year, the Master took leave of the assembly and returned to Baolin. Yinzong, together with more than a thousand monastic and lay

followers, accompanied him as far as Caoxi. At that time, Vinaya Master Tongying of Jingzhou and several hundred students resided with the Master. When the Master arrived at Baolin in Caoxi, he saw that its halls and buildings were narrow and cramped, unable to accommodate the assembly, and wished to enlarge them.

He therefore called upon Chen Yaxian, a local resident, and said, “This old monk wishes to ask the benefactor for land the size of my sitting mat. May I have it?” Yaxian asked, “How wide is the Venerable's sitting mat?” The Patriarch took out his sitting mat and showed it to him, and Yaxian assented. When the Patriarch spread out the mat, it covered the entire four directions of Caoxi. The Four Heavenly Kings appeared in bodily form and sat guarding the four quarters. The present temple grounds include Heavenly Kings Ridge, so named because of this event.

Yaxian said, “I know that the Venerable's Dharma power is vast. Yet the graves of my great-grandfathers are all within this land. Should you later build a stūpa, I hope you will preserve them. I am willing to give up all the rest forever as a precious monastery. However, this place is on the dragon-and-white-elephant geomantic vein. It may be leveled to the sky, but not leveled to the ground.” The construction behind the temple followed his words in every respect.

Whenever the Master traveled through scenic places in the surrounding mountains and waters, he would stop to rest, and thus thirteen hermitages came to be established. What is today the Huaguo Courtyard is registered as part of the temple. The Baolin Dharma site had also been identified earlier by Tripiṭaka Master Zhiyue from the Western Regions. Traveling from the South China Sea past the mouth of Caoxi, he scooped up its water to drink and found it exceptionally fragrant and sweet. He said to his disciples, “This water is no different from that of India. Upstream from this creek there must be an excellent place suitable for a hermitage.”

Following the stream to its source, he looked about and saw mountains and waters encircling one another, with peaks of unusual beauty. He exclaimed, “It is just like Mount Baolin in India.” He then said to the residents of Caoxi village, “A Buddhist monastery may be built upon this mountain. One hundred and seventy years hence, an unsurpassed Dharma treasure will be propagated here; those who attain the Way will be as numerous as a forest. It should be called Baolin.”

At that time, Hou Jingzhong, prefect of Shaozhou, submitted a memorial reporting these words. The emperor approved the request and bestowed the name Baolin, and the Buddhist palace was thus completed. Its founding was in the third year of the Tianjian era of the Liang dynasty. Before the temple hall was a pool in which a dragon often appeared and disappeared, disturbing and damaging the trees. One day it manifested an enormous form; waves surged, and clouds and mist darkened the sky. All the disciples were frightened.

The Master rebuked it, saying, “You can manifest a large body but cannot manifest a small one. If you are a divine dragon, you should be able to transform yourself, showing the large in the small and the small in the large.” The dragon suddenly submerged. Shortly afterward, it reappeared in a small form and leapt out of the pool. The Master spread out his alms bowl to test it, saying, “You surely would not dare enter this old monk's bowl.” The dragon then swam forward, and the Master scooped it up with the bowl.

The dragon could not move. The Master carried the bowl back to the hall and taught the Dharma to the dragon. The dragon then shed its bones and departed. Its bones, about seven inches long, had head, tail, horns, and feet all intact, and were preserved at the temple. Later, the Master filled in the pool with earth and stones. The place now marked by an iron stūpa on the left before the hall is where it stood.

After the Master entered the stūpa, at midnight on the third day of the eighth month of the renxu year, the tenth year of the Kaiyuan era, a sound like iron chains being dragged was suddenly heard inside the stūpa. The monks rose in alarm and saw a man in mourning attire run out from it. They soon discovered a wound on the Master's neck and reported the entire affair of the thief to the provincial and county authorities. County Magistrate Yang Kan and Prefect Liu Wutian received the official document and urgently ordered the thief's capture. Five days later, the culprit was seized in Shijiao Village and sent to Shaozhou for interrogation.

He said that his surname was Zhang and his name Jingman, and that he was from Liang County in Ruzhou. A Silla monk named Jin Dabei at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou had given him twenty thousand cash to take the head of the Sixth Patriarch Master back to Korea for veneration. Upon hearing his confession, Prefect Liu did not immediately impose punishment. Instead, he personally went to Caoxi and asked the Master's foremost disciple, Lingtao, “How should this be dealt with?” Lingtao replied, “According to the law of the state, he should be executed along with his family.

“But according to the Buddhist teaching of compassion, enemies and kin are equal; moreover, he sought it in order to make offerings, so his offense may be forgiven.” Prefect Liu sighed in admiration and said, “Only now do I know the vastness of the Buddhist gate.” He therefore pardoned him. In the first year of the Shangyuan era, Emperor Suzong sent an envoy to request the Master's robe and bowl for veneration in the inner palace. On the fifth day of the fifth month of the first year of the Yongtai era, Emperor Daizong dreamed that the Sixth Patriarch Master requested the robe and bowl.

On the seventh day, he issued an edict to Governor Yang Jian: “In a dream, I received a request from Chan Master Neng for the transmitted robe and kāṣāya to be

returned to Caoxi. I now dispatch General Liu Chongjing, Protector of the State, to carry them respectfully upon his head and return them. I regard them as national treasures. You are to enshrine them in the proper manner at the original temple and specially appoint monks who personally receive the lineage's essential teaching to guard them strictly; do not allow them to be lost.” Later, people sometimes stole them, but they were always recovered nearby. This happened several times. Emperor Xianzong bestowed upon him the posthumous title Chan Master Dajian, and his stūpa was named Yuanhe Lingzhao. His other deeds are recorded in stelae by Tang Minister Wang Wei, Prefect Liu Zongyuan, Prefect Liu Yuxi, and others.

Recorded by the stūpa-guarding monastic Lingtao.

The Master's stone for dropping at the waist was engraved with the eight characters, “Recorded by Layman Lu in the first year of Longshuo.” This stone was formerly preserved at Eastern Chan Monastery in Huangmei. During the Jiajing era of the Ming dynasty, an eunuch from Guangdong requested that it be returned from there to Caoxi, where it still remains. Moreover, Wang Wei, Vice Director of the Right, wrote in his Record of the Patriarch for Master Shenhui: “The Master mingled among laborers for a total of sixteen years. When he encountered Yinzong lecturing on the sūtras, he thereupon had his head shaved.”

Furthermore, Prefect Liu Zongyuan wrote in his Stele Inscription for the Patriarch's Posthumous Title: “After receiving the tokens of faith, the Master withdrew into concealment on the southern coast for sixteen years. When he found that the time was suitable, he resided at Caoxi as a teacher of others.” Prime Minister Zhang Shangying wrote in his Record of the Fifth Patriarch: “The Fifth Patriarch taught at Eastern Chan Monastery in Huangmei County, apparently because it was convenient for him to care for his mother. In the first year of Longshuo, he transmitted the robe and Dharma to the Sixth Patriarch, dismissed the assembly, and entered the Eastern Mountain to build a hut.”

A local resident, Feng Mao, gave the mountain to the Master as a Dharma site. From this evidence, it is clear that the Master went to Huangmei and received the Fifth Patriarch's robe and Dharma in the xinyou year, the first year of Longshuo. By the bingzi year of Yifeng, sixteen years had elapsed, and only then did the Master go to Faxing to shave his head. Some other texts state that the Master went to Huangmei during the Xianheng era, but this is probably incorrect.

At the beginning of the founding of the Song dynasty, when imperial forces pacified the South China Sea region, the remaining troops of the Liu clan caused disturbances. The Master's stūpa and temple were reduced to ashes, but his physical body was protected by the monk guarding the stūpa and suffered no damage. An edict was soon issued to restore the site, but before the work was

completed, Emperor Taizong of Song ascended the throne. Taking a keen interest in the Chan school, he ordered a new seven-story stūpa to be built for the Master and added the posthumous title Chan Master Dajian Zhenkong.

During the Taiping Xingguo era, in the tenth year of Emperor Renzong's Dasheng era of the Song dynasty, the Master's physical body was received in a ceremonial carriage and venerated in the inner palace. The posthumous title Chan Master Dajian Zhenkong Pujue was added. Emperor Shenzong of Song further added the title Chan Master Dajian Zhenkong Pujue Yuanming. The local prefecture restored the Buddhist monastery. These events are fully recorded in a stele inscription by Yan Shu, Duke Yuanxian. The flesh-body remains preserved to this day. Later, the Song dynasty further added the two characters Guangzhao to his title. In the jimao year of the Zhizheng era of the Yuan dynasty, the temple suffered warfare and fire, and the dragon bones were consequently lost.

His Dharma heirs included Tripiṭaka Master Jueduo from West India; Fuhai Zhituo of Shaoyang; Zhicheng of Luling; Xiaoliao of Biandan Mountain; Zhihuang of Hebei; Fada of Zhongling; Zhitong of Shouzhou; Zhiche of Jiangxi; Zhichang of Xinzhou; Zhidao, Yinzong, the ascetic Wu, Daoying, and Zhiben of Guangzhou; Xingsi of Qingyuan; Huairang of Nanyue, firm in pure conduct; Xuanjue of Wenzhou; Benjing of Sikong Mountain; Xuan

ce of Wuzhou; Lingtao of Caoxi; Huizhong and Xian Kong of the Western Capital; Shenhui of Heze; Jing'an of Fuzhou; Chan Master Xun of Songshan; Dingzhen of Luofu; Daojin and Shankuai of Zhikong Mountain; Yuansu and Zongyi of Shaoshan; Shanxian of Qinwang Mountain; Zizai of Bingzhou; Taishen of Xia Mountain; Fajing of Guangzhou; Biancai of Qingliang Mountain; Fazhen, Xuankai, and Tancui of Qingliang; Wei Qu, Prefect of Shaozhou; and Lay Bodhisattva Sun of Yixing—forty-three persons in all.

(II)

The First Patriarch, Great Master Bodhidharma, was the twenty-eighth patriarch in India. On the twenty-first day of the ninth month of the bingwu year, the seventh year of the Putong era of the Liang dynasty, he arrived in China, and from this began the transmission of the Buddha Mind-Seal. The Patriarch's conversation with Emperor Wu of Liang did not accord, so on the twenty-third day of the eleventh month he went to Luoyang. He stayed at Shaolin Monastery on Mount Song for nine years, sitting facing a wall in silence all day.

He once presented this verse: “Neither seeing evil and giving rise to aversion, nor observing goodness and striving after it; neither abandoning wisdom to draw near to folly, nor casting aside delusion to turn toward awakening. Reaching the great Way, beyond measure; comprehending the Buddha mind, beyond crossing over. Not

treading the same path as ordinary beings or sages—this is transcendently called ‘Patriarch.’” On the fifth day of the tenth month of the bingchen year, the second year of the Datong era of the Wei dynasty, he passed away while seated upright; yet in truth he never departed.

Song Yun of Wei, returning from an embassy to the Western Regions, encountered the Patriarch at the Congling Mountains and saw him carrying a single sandal in his hand. Later, when the disciples opened the tomb, they found only an empty coffin, with one leather sandal remaining. Master Nona said that in the White tradition, the First Patriarch went to the Western Regions to transmit Esoteric Buddhism. Thus we know that the Buddha has no fixed Dharma; it depends solely upon the recipient's capacity. He transmitted the Mind-Seal in the East and the Esoteric Seal in the West; these causes and conditions were not accidental.

(III) Turning the Pivot in a Single Thought

To turn the pivot is to turn a single thought. What Master Guifeng called turning upward and turning downward are both turnings of the pivot in a single thought. The First Patriarch Bodhidharma said, “When one thought turns the pivot, one immediately accords with what has been inherently attained.” This is the unsurpassed essential instruction for seeing one's true nature. Worldly people let thought after thought drift and shift with circumstances, creating all kinds of painful karma. This is what is called lingering on and forgetting to return. If one suddenly awakens, that is turning the pivot. To turn back means to contemplate in reverse.

The original nature is right before your eyes; reflect inwardly and you will see it. Yet because your views have long been held so firmly, your capacity has grown dull and rigid. In mind and in circumstances alike, everything becomes deadlocked. This is suffering of one’s own making. But since one can create suffering, one can also create happiness; since one can enter delusion, one can also awaken. Wondrous functioning is fully present in a single turning of the capacity. Moreover, seeing one’s nature and attaining Buddhahood is an undertaking of such vast and perfect spiritual scope.

One must not be rigid and wooden, nor frivolous and superficial. If the mind is not empty and responsive, one cannot respond swiftly to circumstances. I have therefore selected several dozen koans from such works as The Compendium of the Five Lamps and Records Pointing to the Moon, adding a brief comment after each. I call this “A Single Thought That Turns the Capacity,” for fellow practitioners to investigate and use as a whetstone. It is not that one can awaken through this alone, for awakening lies with the practitioner. Examine where the ancients began and where they found the turning point.

If I myself were in such a situation, how would I arrange matters? This is what is meant by raising one corner and borrowing its skillful force, nothing more. Those who enjoy studying the Platform Sūtra will find their capacities becoming ever more responsive. This is merely a small aid for those seeing their nature, and so it is appended here.

Recorded by lay practitioner Wang Xianglu of Renzhi, the eighteenth day of the fifth month, Guiwei year, the thirty-second year of the Republic of China (1943).

The World-Honored One displayed a wish-fulfilling jewel that assumed the color of its surroundings and asked the five heavenly kings, “What color does this jewel produce?” The five heavenly kings each named a different color. The World-Honored One concealed the jewel, then raised his empty hand and asked, “What color does this jewel produce?” The heavenly kings replied, “There is no jewel in the Buddha’s hand. Where could there be any color?” The World-Honored One said, “How profoundly deluded you are! When I showed you the worldly jewel, you insisted that it had blue, yellow, red, and white colors. When I showed you the true jewel, you did not recognize it at all.” At that time, all five heavenly kings awakened to the Way.

Though there was no jewel in the Buddha’s hand, he asked what color it was. People in the world have long been deluded by forms and appearances. On seeing the wish-fulfilling jewel, they are immediately turned by it. How could they know that the Buddha’s intent does not lie in the jewel? With a single turning of the capacity, the five heavenly kings all awakened to the Way. Yet this was only partial awakening, not thorough awakening. What is thorough awakening? Suppose that, like the World-Honored One, someone were to show you a wish-fulfilling jewel that assumed the color of its surroundings and ask what color it produced. How would you answer?

When the brahman Long Claws offered the World-Honored One flowers of the albizia and paulownia trees, the Buddha called out, “Immortal, put them down.” The brahman put down the flower in his left hand. The Buddha again called, “Immortal, put them down.” The brahman then put down the flower in his right hand. The Buddha again called, “Immortal, put them down.” The brahman said, “Both my hands are now empty. What more do you tell me to put down?” The Buddha said, “I am not telling you to relinquish the flowers. You should relinquish the six external sense objects, the six internal sense faculties, and the six consciousnesses between them. Relinquish them all at once. Where there is nothing left to relinquish, there is the place where you let go of body and life.” Upon hearing these words, the brahman awakened to the forbearance of the unborn.

At that time, the brahman’s capacity was precisely ripe, and the Buddha therefore guided him in this way. Not everyone can be guided in this manner. Otherwise, even if the Buddha spoke compassionately and earnestly, the person would remain

bewildered. If he encountered a great master of the Chan school, the master might not even open his mouth, but simply drive him out with a shout.

Chan patriarchs have always given very few formal teachings, yet nowhere is there not a teaching. Their sole purpose is to lead people into the mind-ground. For example: “Bring tea and I receive it; bring food and I eat it.” In what place is the Buddhadharma not indicated? When they ascend the teaching seat, even a few sparse words contain the essence of the entire Buddhist canon. It depends only on the listener’s own realization.

As for direct pointing, the patriarchs were often unwilling to initiate it lightly, fearing that students who heard the Dharma too easily would neglect arduous inquiry. For what enters from outside is not one’s own treasure. Only the Buddha and great patriarchs can apply it in accord with a person’s capacity, enabling immediate faith and entry. Methods of compassion differ from one another.

When seven worthy women were wandering in the Śītavana forest, one of them pointed to a corpse and said, “The corpse is here; where has the person gone?” Another said, “How? How?” The other sisters contemplated this closely, and each attained realization. Indra, moved by this, scattered flowers and said, “Holy sisters, whatever do you require? I shall provide for you throughout my life.”

The woman said, “My household is fully furnished with the four necessities and the seven treasures. I require only three things: first, a rootless tree; second, a plot of land without yin and yang; third, a valley that cannot be made to resound.” Indra said, “I possess everything that may be required, but I truly do not possess these three things.” The woman said, “If you do not have these, how can you understand how to help people?” Indra was at a loss, so he went with them to ask the Buddha. The Buddha said, “Kauśika, among my disciples, even the arhats do not understand this meaning. Only the great bodhisattvas understand this meaning.”

Each person has his or her own causes and conditions and understanding. Do not regard these three things as three separate things; everyone has a share in them. Indra was first obscured by these three things, and so he was bewildered and failed to see. He asked the Buddha, but the Buddha could not easily explain them either. Know that the Buddhadharma lies in the utmost ordinariness; once one falls into abstruse speculation, it becomes remote again. If one turns back to observe while apart from circumstances, one finds the turning point.

One day, while the Venerable Subhūti was teaching the Dharma, Indra rained down flowers. The Venerable One asked, “Did these flowers come from heaven? From the earth? From people?” Indra replied, “No.” The Venerable One asked, “Then where did they come from?” Indra raised his hand. The Venerable One said, “Just so, just so.”

What did the raised hand signify? And what did the flowers signify? The Chan school often speaks of “three pounds of flax” or “the cypress tree in the courtyard”; these are all seemingly unrelated. Later people force themselves to imitate such a manner. It is truly laughable.

When the brahman Long Claws sought a discussion of doctrine with the World-Honored One, he made this agreement: “If my position is defeated, I shall cut off my head in apology.” The World-Honored One asked, “What is the central principle of your position?” The brahman said, “I take not accepting anything as my principle.” The World-Honored One asked, “Do you accept this view?” The brahman brushed his sleeves and left.

Partway along the road, he had an insight and sighed, “My position is defeated in two ways. If I accept this view, my defeat is obvious; if I do not accept this view, my defeat is subtle. Among all humans, devas, and followers of the two vehicles, none knows where my position fails. Only the World-Honored One and the great bodhisattvas know where it fails.” He returned before the World-Honored One and said, “My position is defeated in two ways, and therefore I should cut off my head in apology.” The World-Honored One said, “There is no such thing in my Dharma. You should turn your mind toward the Way.” Thereupon he and his five hundred followers all took refuge with the Buddha, left home, and attained arhatship.

Now ask: what was it that he realized midway? And when he saw the World-Honored One and apologized, he still did not explain how his position had failed. Do you see it? The World-Honored One said, “You should turn your mind toward the Way.” This shows that the marvel lies only in a single turn. Had Shenxiu awakened to this and composed his verse a second time, he would have entered the gate. The Sixth Patriarch, too, merely turned his mind in relation to Shenxiu’s earlier verse; this spared much trouble. The same is true in worldly affairs: those who are always making complications are the most foolish people in the world. Those who create trouble where there is none, add complications to complications, and then cannot resolve them do so only because they are attached to mind; they go round and round, multiplying matters. Just put them down.

Yang Xuanzhi, governor of Qicheng, visited Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch, and asked, “In India, the five seals have been transmitted from master to disciple, and those who receive them are called patriarchs. What is their Way?” The Patriarch said, “To clarify the Buddha-mind school and have practice and understanding correspond is to be called a patriarch.” He further asked, “What lies beyond this?” The Patriarch said, “One must understand others’ minds, know their past and present, be unwearied by existence or nonexistence, and take hold of nothing in dharmas. Neither worthy nor foolish, neither deluded nor awakened—if one can understand in this way, one is therefore called a patriarch.”

A verse says: “Neither seeing evil and giving rise to aversion, nor observing good and striving after it; neither abandoning wisdom to draw near to folly, nor casting aside delusion to seek awakening. Reaching the great Way, one transcends all measure; penetrating the Buddha-mind, one goes beyond deliverance. Not treading the same path as ordinary beings or sages, one is called a patriarch, standing beyond them.”

The Way is the Way, and a patriarch is a patriarch; the two are not the same thing. Because it is not merely the Way of one who is not a patriarch. Only one who possesses the Way can liberate sentient beings, and is therefore honored as a patriarch. Patriarch and Buddha are nondual; they breathe through the same nostril. This verse speaks from the most ultimate standpoint. It merely expresses the state in which mind abides nowhere, and was originally spoken for those who have already awakened.

Those who have not awakened grasp at dharma appearances and become ever more deeply and distantly deluded. Yet it is not the patriarch who harms them; people mislead themselves. A knife or sword is not a thing for a child to play with. If the child loses his life, the knife or sword cannot be blamed. Anyone who sees this verse and doubts it must be clinging to views of good and evil, wisdom and folly, delusion and awakening. If one can understand from the four occurrences of “neither,” this is transcending measure and going beyond deliverance. All the hundredfold sufferings, afflictions, and inverted views arise from bondage to one’s own measuring and self-deliverance. The key to transcending the world lies solely here.

The woman Ānticchā asked Mañjuśrī, “Though one clearly knows the principle that birth is unborn, why is one still carried along by birth and death?” Mañjuśrī said, “Because one’s strength is not yet sufficient.”

This is an extremely subtle point of doubt, and its marvel lies in the words “clearly knows.” Awakening is one matter; habitual tendencies not yet being exhausted is another. Everyone shares this common failing. When they reach this doubt, they retreat and investigate no further, thereby misleading themselves. An ancient worthy said, “What is precious is that your eye be correct”; the fear is only that one’s knowing may be unclear or incorrect. For practitioners, this is precisely the time to exert themselves; most to be avoided is abandoning oneself midway. Tell me: after clearly knowing, can one still be carried along by birth and death?

The Fourth Patriarch entered Oxhead Mountain and asked a temple monk, “Is there a person of the Way here?” The monk replied, “Which one of us who has left home is not a person of the Way?” The Patriarch said, “Which one is a person of the Way?” The monk had no reply. Another monk said, “About ten li into the mountains from here, there is a Lanrong. When he sees people, he does not rise or join his palms.

Could he be a person of the Way?" The Patriarch then entered the mountains and saw the master sitting upright and at ease, paying no attention to anything.

The Patriarch asked, "What are you doing here?" The master said, "Contemplating mind." The Patriarch said, "Who is it that contemplates? What is mind?" The master had no reply. He then rose, made reverence, and asked, "Where does Your Reverence reside in seclusion?" The Patriarch said, "This poor monk has no fixed dwelling; sometimes east, sometimes west." The master asked, "Do you know Chan Master Daoxin?" The Patriarch said, "Why do you ask about him?" The master said, "I have long revered his virtue and hope to pay him a visit."

The Patriarch said, "I am Chan Master Daoxin." The master asked, "Why have you descended here?" The Patriarch said, "I have come especially to visit you. Is there another place where one may rest?" The master pointed behind him and said, "There is a small hermitage there." He then led the Patriarch to it. As they circled the hermitage, they saw only tigers, wolves, and the like. The Patriarch raised both hands in a gesture of fear. The master said, "There is still this." The Patriarch said, "What is this?" The master had no reply.

A little later, the Patriarch wrote the character for "Buddha" on the rock where the master had been sitting in meditation. Seeing it, the master was startled. The Patriarch said, "There is still this." The master did not understand and bowed deeply, requesting instruction in the essential truth.

The Patriarch said, "The hundred thousand dharma gates all return to this square inch; as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, all wondrous virtues are contained in the source of mind. All gates of precepts, samādhi, and wisdom, all spiritual powers and transformations, are fully present of themselves and do not depart from your mind. All afflictions and karmic obstacles are originally empty and quiescent; all cause and effect are like dreams and illusions. There are no three realms to escape, no bodhi to seek. Humans and nonhumans alike are equal in nature and appearance."

"The great Way is empty and vast, beyond thought and deliberation. You have now attained such a Dharma. Nothing is lacking; how are you different from the Buddha? There is no other Dharma."

"Simply let your mind be free and at ease. Do not undertake contemplative practices, and do not try to still the mind. Do not give rise to greed or anger, and do not harbor sorrow or anxiety. Vast and unobstructed, let yourself move freely in every direction. Do not do good; do not do evil. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, whatever meets the eye and whatever conditions arise are all the Buddha's wondrous functioning. Joyful and free of care—this is called Buddha."

The Master said, “Since the mind is already complete, what is Buddha? What is mind?” The Patriarch said, “Do not ask about Buddha apart from mind; when you ask about Buddha, it is not other than mind.” The Master said, “Since you do not permit contemplative practice, when objects arise, how should the mind counteract them?” The Patriarch said, “Objects and conditions are neither good nor bad; good and bad arise from the mind. If the mind does not forcibly impose names, how can deluded feelings arise? Once deluded feelings do not arise, the true mind freely knows everywhere. Simply follow the mind in freedom and ease, without further counteraction. This is called the ever-abiding dharmakāya, without any change or alteration.”

This “this” and “that” are not easy to recognize. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas have painstakingly and compassionately sought only to make you recognize this. It is not something for deceiving people or putting on a show. All seventeen hundred koans are fully encompassed in this single case.

Jueduo, a Tripiṭaka master from the Western Regions, was an Indian. He awakened upon hearing the words of the Sixth Patriarch. Later, while traveling on Mount Wutai, he saw a monk who had built a hermitage and was sitting quietly. The Master asked, “Why do you sit alone?” The monk replied, “I contemplate stillness.” The Master said, “Who is the one who contemplates? What is this stillness?” The monk bowed and asked, “How should this principle be understood?” The Master said, “Why do you not contemplate yourself and purify yourself?” The monk was at a loss.

The Master said, “From whose gate have you come?” The monk replied, “Chan Master Xiu.” The Master said, “Even the lowest followers of non-Buddhist paths in the Western Regions do not fall into this view. What benefit is there in sitting vacantly and rigidly?” The monk then asked, “Whom does the Master take as his teacher?” The Master said, “My teacher is the Sixth Patriarch. Why do you not quickly go to Caoqi and settle the essential point?” The monk immediately went to study with the Sixth Patriarch. The Sixth Patriarch’s instruction accorded with that of the Master, and the monk thereupon entered awakening. No one knows where the Master eventually went.

This single error has led astray who knows how many people. Look at Great Master Mazu of Jiangxi: even he could not avoid this failing. How exceedingly difficult it is!

Chan Master Nanyue lived at Prajñā Kaiyuan Temple. There was a monk there named Daoyi, namely Mazu, who often practiced seated Chan on Mount Heng. Knowing that he was a vessel of the Dharma, the Master went to ask him, “Venerable, what do you seek by sitting in Chan?” Daoyi replied, “I seek to become a Buddha.” The Master then took a brick and began grinding it on a stone in front of

the hermitage. Daoyi asked, “What are you grinding it for?” The Master replied, “I am grinding it into a mirror.”

Daoyi said, “How can grinding a brick make a mirror?” The Master said, “If grinding a brick cannot make a mirror, how can sitting in Chan make a Buddha?” Daoyi asked, “Then what should one do?” The Master said, “It is like an ox harnessed to a cart. If the cart does not move, should one whip the cart or whip the ox?” Daoyi had no reply. The Master continued, “Are you learning seated Chan, or are you learning to sit as a Buddha? If you are learning seated Chan, Chan is not sitting or lying down. If you are learning to sit as a Buddha, Buddha has no fixed form.”

“With regard to the dharma of non-abiding, one should neither grasp nor reject. If you sit as a Buddha, you are killing the Buddha. If you cling to the form of sitting, you have not understood its principle.” On hearing this instruction, Daoyi felt as though he had drunk clarified butter. He bowed and asked, “How should I apply my mind so that it accords with formless samādhi?” The Master said, “You study the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate as one plants seeds. The essentials of Dharma that I teach are like the rain that falls from heaven. When your conditions come together, you will see the Way.”

He further asked, “The Way has no material form; how can it be seen?” The Master said, “The dharma eye of the mind-ground can see the Way; formless samādhi is likewise so.” Daoyi asked, “Does it arise and perish?” The Master said, “If one sees the Way in terms of arising and perishing, gathering and dispersing, one has not seen the Way. Listen to my verse:

The mind-ground contains all seeds;
when they meet the rain, all sprout.
The flower of samādhi is formless—
what can perish, and what can arise?”

Earlier it was said that Northern Shenxiu represents Chan, while Southern Huineng represents the essential tradition. Because one clings to Chan, it is difficult to return to the source. Once one directly returns to the source, this is called the sudden teaching, and meditative stability is naturally contained within it. From this time on, Mazu no longer clung to the form of sitting, yet there was never a time when he was not in meditative absorption. Everyone possesses the seed; but what can be done if they are unwilling to plant it?

At this point in typesetting, ten pages still remained. Suddenly, air-raid precautions became urgent; moreover, this paper was unavailable on the market, and funds were insufficient. Unable to wait long, we therefore stopped here and will print a supplementary booklet at a later date for fellow enthusiasts. Yet this is only a

temporary expedient and has nothing whatever to do with the ultimate matter. Moreover, this dog-tail continuation only further confuses the eye; it is indeed Renzhi's fault. Readers, please forgive it.

Lay Practitioner Renzhi adds this note.