



The Scripture of the
Founding Master

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Chapter Six Doubts Clarified

1. During the scriptural lecture period at a meditation hall, the Founding Master heard many disciples' discussing the issue of the clarity of heaven and earth and said, "Would you say that heaven and earth are conscious, or not?" Yi Kongju replied, "I would say that heaven and earth are definitely conscious." The Founding Master asked, "How do you know there is consciousness?" Kongju replied, "When a person performs wholesome deeds, blessings inadvertently accrue to him; but when a person performs unwholesome deeds, punishments inadvertently accrue. These responses are not even slightly in error, so if there were no consciousness, how would such distinctions between punishments and blessings exist?" The Founding Master said, "If this is the case, then offer some evidence that such distinctions occur and explain it in such a way so that everyone can understand." Kongju replied, "This is just a conviction I have after regularly hearing many dharma instructions everyday. But to scrutinize that principle and demonstrate it with evidence would be difficult."

The Founding Master said, "Arcane matters are difficult to fathom, and even when fathomed, difficult to demonstrate to the satisfaction of others. Now I will give you a piece of such evidence in simple language; starting from it, you should then go further and penetrate even that arcane matter that is difficult to prove.

"Generally, if we talk about earth, it is just silent, without language or activity, and so the people of this world presume it is an insentient substance. But in fact there is real and definite evidence of its being ever bright and numinous. In farming, when we sow seed, the earth perforce must help that seed grow. Furthermore, where red bean seeds are planted, the earth makes sure that red beans will sprout; where soybeans are planted, soybeans must sprout. Where much human labor was performed, there will be a large harvest; where little human labor was performed, there will only be a small harvest; and where human labor was performed incorrectly, losses will occur. Without the slightest con-

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fusion, doesn't the earth respond by clearly distinguishing in accordance with the characteristics of each seed and the input of human labor? Hearing this explanation, one might say, 'That is because the seeds themselves possess the essential elements of life and sprout thanks to the labor supplied by farmers; the earth is nothing more than the foundation.' However, how can a seed sprout and grow on its own without receiving the response from earth, and what result would there be had one applied oneself to planting and cultivating in a place that did not receive that response from earth? And not only that, but there is not one of all the myriads of things that rely on earth that does not appear without receiving that response from earth. Therefore, there is not a single thing that the earth does not influence, nor is there any case where it does not exert its authority regarding arising and ceasing, progression and regression. This is not just the case with earth. Heaven and earth are nondual. The sun, the moon, and the stars, winds and clouds, rain and dew, and frost and snow are all a single energy and a single principle, so there are none of them that are not numinously efficacious. Thus, all the wholesome and unwholesome deeds that human beings perform will never deceive regardless of how secret they might have been, nor can we resist the resulting retribution and response. All this is the consciousness of heaven and earth and the awesome power of heaven and earth's clarity. However, the consciousness of heaven and earth is not the same as human consciousness involving joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness. It is a consciousness that conducts itself in no-thought, a consciousness that manifests in signlessness, and a consciousness that is impartial and complete, without any selfish motives. Those who understand this principle will be awed by the clarity of heaven and earth, so that no matter what sensory condition one faces, one will not dare to deceive one's own conscience and commit transgressions. Those who have gone a step further and modeled themselves wholeheartedly on the consciousness of heaven and earth will gain an infinitely pure consciousness and could even command at will the awesome power of heaven and earth."

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2. The Founding Master asked several of his disciples, “If a person only harbored unwholesome thoughts secretly in his mind or committed transgressions secretly without anyone’s knowledge, why would he be ashamed to face the myriad things in heaven and earth?” Yi Wonhwa replied, “Even if it is something that a person did quietly by himself, the myriad things in heaven and earth know everything, just as one’s whole body is aware of a small bug crawling silently at one spot on the body. Even if this is but one small deed performed by a person in the vastness of heaven and earth, all things will naturally become known to the myriad things in heaven and earth. Thus, they themselves become ashamed to face the myriad things in heaven and earth.” The Founding Master said, “What Wonhwa says is plausible enough, but let me add one more thing. For example, a person who performs unwholesome deeds might think to himself that no one will know what he quietly decided to do in his own mind. However, once he has settled on that decision in his mind, he will soon act on that decision; and, once that decision is acted upon, the world will soon come to know of it. This is why one feels ashamed even if the result of that transgression occurs in secret. Therefore, when you are trying to discover a matter that someone has done in secret, you need only observe the result that becomes manifest. But people try in vain to learn other people’s secrets in advance.”

3. A person asked the Founding Master, “In Eastern cosmology, heaven moves but the earth is stationary; in Western cosmology, heaven is stationary but the earth moves. Since these two statements are contradictory, would you mind adjudicating them for us?” The Founding Master said, “These cosmologies emerged already a long time ago and there have also been many theories proffered. But if I were to state my opinion simply, heaven and earth are originally nondual and whether they are in motion or stationary, they are not different from one another. Therefore, from the perspective of motion, heaven and earth both move; but from the perspective of being stationary, heaven and earth are both stationary. To give an analogy, just as a person’s energy and form are either in motion together or stationary together, so too are the energy of heaven and the foundation of earth in perfect harmony by being mutually connected and by circulating ceaselessly. However, if we are to speak of the principal and

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the subordinate, energy is principal and the foundation is subordinate, for when energy is active, the foundation must follow. This is in fact an immutable principle throughout all eternity.”

4. Sō Taewon asked about a statement of the Ancient Buddha: “‘During the kalpa of destruction, this world will be annihilated by the conflagration of heaven and earth.’ Is this actually the case?” The Founding Master said, “It is.” He asked again, “If the conflagration of heaven and earth occurs, then will the current heaven and earth be completely annihilated and a new heaven and earth created?” The Founding Master said, “Even if the conflagration of heaven and earth occurs, heaven and earth are not annihilated all at once. It is just like birth, old age, sickness, and death among human beings: one portion is being born, one portion is aging, one portion is sick, and one portion is dying, all in a never-ending, continuous cycle. So too, in heaven and earth, the principles of formation, subsistence, decay, and emptiness are operative at thousands of different areas, so that even at this moment there is a portion that is in formation, a portion that is subsisting, a portion that is decaying, and a portion that is being emptied, thus producing a continuing conflagration of heaven and earth.”

5. Taewon asked again, “In the teachings of the Ancient Buddha, he refers to the world systems of the trichiliocosm. Does this really exist?” The Founding Master said, “It does. However, the world systems of the trichiliocosm are not things established apart from this world, but refer instead to various kinds of worlds that exist separately within this very world. If you were to count them all, even the world systems of the trichiliocosm would not be enough.” He asked again, “In the contemporary field of astronomy, they also say that in this universe there are many other larger worlds beyond the world in which we live. What do you think about this?” The Founding Master said, “The words of the Buddha will be interpreted differently according to the understanding of the interpreter. Contemporary theories also are divergent, but in the near future, a great scholar who has seen his nature will authenticate my words. Do not doubt my words if you are someone who has faith in me.”

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6. He again asked, “It is said that there are ages of progression and regression in heaven and earth. What age is Korea in now?” The Founding Master said, “It is in the age of progression.” He asked again, “How long are these ages of progression and regression?” The Founding Master said, “The Ancient Buddha’s teachings estimated the length of each age of progression and regression to be one great kalpa.”

7. He asked again, “When heaven and earth go through these periods of formation, subsistence, decay, and emptiness, what brings about these transformations?” The Founding Master said, “As the Ancient Buddha’s teachings say, these transformations are effected through the three cycles of water, fire, and wind.”

8. He asked again, “In the teachings of the ancient sages, the sun, the moon, and the stars are said to be the spirits of the myriad things in heaven and earth. Is this really the case?” The Founding Master said, “It is.”

9. A lay disciple from Chŏnju met and conversed with an adherent of Catholicism. The Catholic adherent asked, “Do you know the Creator?” The lay disciple was unable to answer, so the Catholic said, “Since our God is omniscient and omnipotent, He is in fact the Creator.” Later, when the Founding Master heard the lay disciple’s report about the incident, he smiled and said, “Go back to that person and ask him: ‘Since you claim that your God is the Creator, have you seen Him?’ If he says that he hasn’t, then ask him, ‘Isn’t that the same as not knowing Him?’ After that, tell him, ‘When I thought about it again, I realized that the Creator does not exist elsewhere, but rather, your Creator is in fact yourself, my Creator is in fact myself, and all living creatures are in fact each their own Creators.’ This is the most appropriate remark. If he were to awaken to the meaning of this, it will become gospel for him.”

10. A disciple asked, “Where are paradise and hell?” The Founding Master said, “If your mind abides in a place that transcends transgressions and merits, suffering and happiness, then that place is paradise. If you are entrapped in

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transgressions and merits, suffering and happiness, then that place is hell.” He asked again, “How can we live forever only in paradise and never fall into hell?” The Founding Master said, “If you gain awakening to the original principle of your nature, never leaving the self-nature behind, then you will live always in paradise and will never fall into hell.”

11. A disciple asked, “In the Ancient Buddha’s teachings, it says that in the celestial realms there is a Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Is that heaven arrayed rung by rung in space?” The Founding Master said, “The heavenly realms are posited only to distinguish the levels of one’s practice. Whether it is in heaven or on earth, those places where there are highly attained practitioners are the heavens.” The disciple asked again, “Also it says that the higher one climbs in that heaven, the taller one becomes in stature and the lighter one’s clothes in weight. What does this mean?” The Founding Master said, “To say that he becomes taller in height means that, as the strength of his virtue grows, so does his spiritual energy. To say that his clothing becomes lighter in weight means that, as the strength of his virtue grows, so too does his turbid energy subside and his spirit become lighter. However, even those heavenly beings who reach the apex of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three will retrogress once their merit is exhausted, unless they have attained great, perfect, and right enlightenment.”

12. Cho Chŏn’gwon asked, “I once witnessed someone being punished because he cut down or injured some old trees near our village. Was he punished because even insentient things too exercise the influences of cause and effect?” The Founding Master said, “He was not punished because of a cause-and-effect relationship with those trees. During the past era of darkness (yin), there were countless ghosts and spirits who could not find bodies, so they took refuge in old trees, tutelary shrines, or famous mountains and great rivers, receiving much devotion from foolish people. If a person whose energy was weaker than theirs disturbed them, then they would have illnesses or punishments brought upon that person. However, now that the world is progressing toward an era of brightness (yang), from now on those spirits will not dare to harm humans.”

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13. A disciple asked, “By reciting which mantras and applying which method will my mind’s numinosity (simnyöng) open so that I may quickly attain the Way?” The Founding Master said, “Great practice does not depend on some mantra, but only on a person’s sincerity. Long ago an illiterate peddler of straw sandals was inspired to cultivate the Way, so he asked a sage about the Way. The sage told him that ‘mind is buddha’ (chüksim si pul) but the illiterate peddler thought he heard ‘three pairs of straw sandals’ (chipsin se pöl). For many years he recited ‘three pairs of straw sandals’ and pondered over it, until one day, his spirit suddenly opened and he realized that ‘mind is buddha.’ Furthermore, another practitioner went out to buy some meat and said to the butcher, “Cut me a piece from the clean part.” The butcher thrust his knife into the meat and asked, “Which part is clean and which part dirty?” Upon hearing this question, he attained the Way. These anecdotes clearly show that attaining the Way does not depend on some place, time, or mantra. However, since we have our own designated mantras, our merit will increase even more effectively if we resort to them while we are maintaining our dedication.”

14. A laywoman asked the Founding Master, “I would also like to perform purification rituals and offer formal prayer like the ordained devotees, but as a person who is tied to my family and who has no freedom, I cannot accomplish my wish. What should I do?” The Founding Master said, “Purifying one’s mind is no different for either ordained or householder. Just purify your own mind and sincerely offer your formal prayers. Then, there will be absolutely no difference in attaining awesome power equal to the degree of your dedication.”

15. A person asked Yi Chaech’öl, “I’ve heard that your teacher is a sage. So does he know everything about human affairs and universal principles?” Chaech’öl said, “He knows everything.” The person said, “Does he know how to build airplanes and trains?” Chaech’öl said, “A sage understands the fundamentals of human affairs and universal principles. Specialists in those fields would know about those technical matters.” The person said, “Then, isn’t it an inconsistency to say that he understands everything about human affairs and

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universal principles?” Chaech’öl replied, “By ‘fundamentals’ we mean the root. Whatever the object, if one understands the root, then the branches and leaves will also be included. To give you an example, a local governor or the head of a nation may not fully understand what a certain clerk or a technician knows at the bottom of the administrative rung. If, however, he understands well the fundamentals of administration and directs each department in an orderly fashion, then would you say that he understands that matter, or not? A sage’s knowledge is also like this: since he comprehends the general meaning of great and small, being and nonbeing, as well as right and wrong, benefit and harm, we say that he knows everything about human affairs and universal principles; this does not mean that he is well versed in the various areas of technical competence. Since he thoroughly comprehends the general meaning, myriad types of knowledge are all contained within its main principles and scope.” Chaech’öl returned and reported the conversation to the Founding Master, who said, “On the whole, what you said is right, Ilsan.”

16. When the Founding Master was staying in Seoul, he noticed that Min Chayönhwa always liked to eat the leftovers from the Master’s meal, so he asked why. She said, “I do it because, in the Buddhist texts, it mentions that if one eats the Buddha’s leftovers, one will attain the path to deliverance or may even achieve buddhahood.” The Founding Master said, “I understand this comes from the utmost faith and respect you have for me, but is this faith based on a correct interpretation of the passage, or is it instead faith that comes from ignorant superstition?” Chayönhwa replied, “I just believe it; it’s not from any analysis of its true meaning.” The Founding Master said, “When a person eats the Buddha’s leftovers, he will come that much closer to the Buddha. Naturally, what he will see is the Buddha’s conduct, what he will hear are the Buddha’s words, what he will awaken to is the Buddha’s right dharma, and what he will become accustomed to are the Buddha’s habits. That being the case, wouldn’t it be easier for him to attain deliverance and to achieve buddhahood? This is the true meaning of that passage.”

17. A disciple asked the Founding Master, “They say that if one circum-

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ambulates the stupa in a Buddhist temple numerous times, one will be reborn in paradise after one's death. So adherents often worship by circumambulating a stupa. Is this belief really true?" The Founding Master said, "This passage does not mean that our physical body should circumambulate only a stupa made of stone; rather, it means that if our own minds always circumambulate and examine the stupa of our bodies made from earth, water, fire, and wind, then we will be able to enjoy paradise. If our physical body circumambulates only the stone stupa but our minds do not know how to circumambulate the stupa of our own bodies, then how can we say that we have understood the true meaning?"

18. A disciple asked, "According to the Ancient Buddha's teaching, if one's practice matures, one will attain the three knowledges and the six superpowers. At what dharma stage will we attain the three knowledges and the six superpowers?" The Founding Master said, "Two of the three knowledges (the recollection of past lives and the divine eye) and five of the six superpowers (the divine eye, divine ear, knowing the thoughts of others, recollection of past lives, and magical powers) can be partially attained by people who have not yet reached the status of dharma strong and Māra defeated but are sometimes not attained even by persons of the Way who have reached the status of dharma strong and Māra defeated or higher. However, the knowledge of the extinction of the outflows (āsravaksaya) and the superpower of the extinction of the outflows can only be attained by buddhas and bodhisattvas who have attained to great, perfect, and right enlightenment."

19. A disciple asked, "I would like to know the meaning of the four signs mentioned in the Diamond Sūtra." The Founding Master said, "Apparently there have been many interpretations of these four signs given by various scholars over time, but I will explain it simply by relating it to actual experience. The 'sign of a self' is a name for conceit, wherein one considers everything only from one's own position and values only oneself and what belongs to oneself. The 'sign of a person' is a name for an anthropocentric attitude, wherein one thinks that, since humans are superior to the myriad living

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things, other creatures were created for the sake of humans and thus it is all right to treat them in any way one pleases. The ‘sign of sentient beings’ is a name for lacking advancement because one gives up on oneself, since one differentiates sentient beings from buddhas and doubts that a mere sentient being like oneself can accomplish anything. The ‘sign of long life’ is a name for sign that elders have, wherein one vaunts either seniority, accumulated assets, or superior position without distinguishing right from wrong. One who has these signs will not be able to reach buddhahood.” The disciple asked again, “Through what method may we eradicate these four signs?” The Founding Master said, “To eradicate the sign of a self, we must understand the principle of impermanence by realizing that the physical body, possessions, position, or authority, which are our most beloved things, are of no use to us on the day we die, so that nothing is definitively mine. To eradicate the sign of a person, one must realize the principle of the eternal cycle between the six destinies and the four types of birth, within which each of us is changing bodies. To eradicate the sign of sentient beings, one must realize that originally sentient beings and buddhas are nondual: if a buddha is deluded, then he is a sentient being; if a sentient being awakens, then he is a buddha. To eradicate the sign of long life, one must realize that physical bodies may be young or old, noble or common, but in the nature there is no young or old, noble or common. If a practitioner completely eradicates these four signs, he is in fact a buddha.”

20. Yi Ch’unp’ung, who abandoned his Confucian norms to ordain, met the Founding Master and said, “Seeing you, oh Great Master, I am as enchanted as if I were meeting Confucius, who had three thousand disciples under him. However, it has always bothered me that there were certain aspects of Buddhism that the past sages of Confucianism did not accept.” The Founding Master asked, “Which aspects?” Ch’unp’ung replied, “Since Buddhism advocates emptiness and calm extinction, it abnegates the obligations one has to father and sovereign.” The Founding Master said, “The Buddha’s original intent was to open the gate of deliverance for countless parents and children throughout an infinite number of kalpas and over many lifetimes, but there may have been some of his subsequent disciples who deviated from that intent. But in the

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future, Buddhism will try to make all dharmas appropriate to the times, so that believing in Buddhism will improve matters at home, and in the society and the nation as well. Thus, do not worry about abnegating one's obligations to father and sovereign. Furthermore, the 'ultimate nothingness' (wuji) and the 'grand ultimate' (taiji) in the Book of Changes (Zhouyi) are the true realm of emptiness and calm extinction. Confucius's 'benevolence' is the state of emptiness and calm extinction, which is free from selfish desires. The state of prolepsis that Zisi taught in the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong) cannot be the tranquil and unmoving state of anticipation without there being emptiness and calm extinction. As for the Great Learning's (Daxue) 'clarifying illustrious virtue,' illustrious virtue cannot be clarified without there being emptiness and calm extinction. Therefore, each religion and each lineage may offer different explanations and use different terms, but the original source of those truths is the same. However, if you linger only in the state of emptiness and calm extinction, you will not be able to become a great person of the Way. Therefore, take emptiness and calm extinction as the essence of the Way, and benevolence, righteousness, propriety and knowledge as its function. It will be the perfect, great Way only if you apply these appropriately amid the myriad affairs of human beings."

21. A disciple asked, "Someone came and asked me who the Great Master's teacher was. I answered that our Great Master attained great enlightenment on his own and did not have a personal teacher." The Founding Master said, "In the future, if there are people who again ask who my teacher is, answer that I am their teacher and they are my teacher." Another disciple asked, "In the Great Master's dharma lineage, which buddha was your foundational teacher?" The Founding Master said, "Although one great era is giving way to another, the World Honored One Śākyamuni remains my foundational teacher."

22. A disciple asked, "Since we have revolutionized the worship of buddha images, are we not permitted to erect memorial statues of you or of the many generations of dharma teachers that follow you, no matter how far in the future

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it may be?” The Founding Master said, “You may erect memorial statues to commemorate their contributions, but you may not treat them as objects of faith.”

23. A disciple asked, “Are there degrees of importance in the Fourfold Grace such that heaven and earth and parents are said to occupy the status of watching over, and fellow beings and laws are said to occupy the status of responding?” The Founding Master said, “There is no need to distinguish their degrees of importance, but, in terms of generational rank, heaven and earth and parents correspond to parents, and fellow beings and laws correspond to siblings. Thus, I have distinguished between ‘watching over’ and ‘responding.’”

24. A disciple asked, “In The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism, the section ‘The Principle of Gratitude to Heaven and Earth’ says, ‘If people wish to show gratitude to heaven and earth, they first must practice by modeling themselves wholeheartedly on that Way.’ Heaven and earth have endowed such great grace upon us, but how can we say that we show our gratitude to heaven and earth just by modeling ourselves on them?” The Founding Master said, “Let me give you an example on this topic. Suppose in the past that disciples in the congregations of buddhas and bodhisattvas or in the lineages of sages, saints, and superior persons were to receive the grace of being taught by their teachers; afterwards, even though they could not repay them with material rewards, by knowing everything their teachers knew and practicing everything their teachers practiced, they were able to continue their teachers’ work. Should we then say that those disciples were grateful or ungrateful to their teachers? When you reflect on this example, you will be able to understand that to practice by modeling oneself on heaven and earth is to show gratitude to heaven and earth.”

25. A disciple asked, “In the section ‘An Agenda for Gratitude to Parents’ it says, ‘We should follow without exception the essential Way of practice and the essential Way of human life.’ How can this be showing gratitude to pa-

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rents?” The Founding Master said, “Once you carry out the essential Way of practice, you will attain the Buddha’s knowledge; once you follow the essential Way of life, you will attain the Buddha’s actual practice. As a child of one’s parents, if you accomplish the Buddha’s work by attaining his knowledge and practice, then your honorable name will spread throughout the world, which will naturally cause the grace of your parents to be known. Once this occurs, then, thanks to their offspring, the parents’ good name will spread forever throughout all time, becoming an object of respect for myriad people. How can this be compared to caring for one’s parents just for the short period of their lives? Therefore, this actually becomes a Way to show unsurpassed gratitude.”

The disciple asked again, “We are taught to ‘protect to the best of our abilities the helpless parents of others, as if they were our own.’ How can this be showing gratitude to our parents?” The Founding Master said, “According to the principle of rebirth that the Ancient Buddha taught, throughout many thousands of kalpas in both past and future, there actually are countless numbers of parents who have been, or who will be, designated for us. How can we say that we have requited this tremendous amount of gratitude we owe to these many parents when we show it only to the one or two parents of our present life? Therefore, whether our current parents are still alive or whether they have already passed away, if we protect the helpless parents of others, this then will be showing great gratitude to all our parents of the past, present, and future.”

26. A disciple asked, “In The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism, what is the relationship between each item in the ‘Items of Heedfulness in Daily Applications’ and the ‘Threefold Study’?” The Founding Master said, “The Items of Heedfulness in Daily Applications have been established by splitting up the Threefold Study. The fifth of its items is the path to promote progress in Cultivating the Spirit. The second, third, and fourth items are the path to promote progress in Inquiry into Human Affairs and Universal Principles. The first item is the path to promote progress in Choice in Action. The sixth item is the path to examine and assess whether or not you have carried out the practice of the Threefold Study.” The disciple asked again, “How would it turn out if you were to divide each item in the Items of Heedfulness in Daily

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Applications between action and rest?” The Founding Master said, “Items three, four, and five are the things to practice when at rest, and the path to prepare the materials of practice when in action. Items one, two, and six are the things to practice when in action and the path to prepare the materials of practice when at rest. These paths all complement one another, and are paths to ensure that you will not neglect practice for even a moment.” The disciple asked again, “What is the relationship between the Items of Heedfulness in Daily Applications and the Items of Heedfulness Regarding Temple Visits?” The Founding Master said, “The Items of Heedfulness in Daily Applications are a rapid method that enables one to practice consistently while living in human society, regardless of whether one is learned or ignorant, a man or woman, young or old, wholesome or unwholesome, noble or common. The Items of Heedfulness Regarding Temple Visits are a method that complements and points to the Items of Heedfulness in Daily Applications.”

27. The Founding Master was listening to a discussion between residents in a meditation hall. One resident said, “There will be more merit in dividing a bowl of rice between ten people than giving it all to just one.” Another resident said, “There will be more merit in satisfying even one person than not satisfying any of them.” The residents were unable to reach a conclusion, so the Founding Master made this judgment, “In the case of giving the same single thing, if it is given to just one person, only he will get to enjoy it and then return the favor. If it is given to one village or one nation, only that village or nation will get to enjoy it and then return the favor. If it is given to an enterprise that serves the whole world without limitations, then the whole world will get to enjoy it and then return the favor. Therefore, even in the case of giving the same thing, if you compare the merit of giving it to a cause that is limited as opposed to a cause that is without limits, the merit will be immeasurably greater when you give without limits.”

28. A disciple asked, “What is the difference in merit between making offerings that retain signs and making offerings that are signless?” The Founding Master said, “Making offerings is like fertilizing fruit trees: making offerings

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that retain signs would be like spreading fertilizer on top of the soil, and making offerings that are signless would be like digging the fertilizer into the soil. Fertilizer spread on top of the soil would find its energy easily scattered, but fertilizer dug into the soil will find its energy to be long lasting and effective. The difference in merit between making offerings that retain signs and making offerings that are signless is just like this.”

29. Cho Wonsön asked, “In one of the Tonghak (Eastern Learning) songs, there is a line, ‘Benefit lies in double bows and sinuous lines’ (i chae kunggung ũrŭl). What does this mean?” The Founding Master said, “There are all sorts of diverse interpretations, but if we adhere to their orthography, kunggung (double bows) would be the ultimate nothingness (mugŭk) – that is, the Il-Won – and ũrŭl (sinuous line) would be the ‘grand ultimate’ (t’aegŭk). Thus, they illuminate the original source of the Way and its power, and the song is saying that there will be many benefits if we advocate such a perfect Way and its power and live without creating rancor anywhere.” The disciple asked again, “It is said, ‘If one constantly sings the kungŭl song, good fortune will follow.’ What does this mean?” The Founding Master said, “While having faith in such a Way and its power, if one continuously recites the name of the Buddha or chants incantations many times, then naturally the one mind will become pure and clear and resentment and malice will melt away in everyone’s minds. Accordingly, heaven and earth, and the dharma realm of empty space, will all become pure and clear, peaceful and harmonious. Since this is what it says, where could there be a better song? Go ahead and sing it a lot.”

30. Ch’oe Suinhwa, whose family had been Tonghak adherents for many generations, by some chance had a spiritual inspiration and entered the order. One day, she asked the Founding Master, “When I had faith in Tonghak, I always believed in and waited for the rebirth of Master Suun [Tonghak’s founder]. When I first met you, Great Master, it was exactly as if I were meeting that Master, so that my feelings toward you have deepened still further and I cannot restrain my delight.” The Founding Master smiled and said, “Great sages like him can freely and autonomously control the comings and goings of their

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minds and bodies. According to their agenda, they may be reborn again in the country in which they were born before or anywhere in the East or West, without the slightest restriction. In the past as well, many of the greatest persons of the Way were born in this country, but in the future, too, many of the greatest persons of the Way from all four quarters will gather here and establish a religious and moral order without parallel in the past or future. Thus, when you believe in me, have faith on account of my Way and its power, not faith that derives from a mind that is dependent.”

31. A disciple had the habit of recklessly commenting on others’ rights and wrongs. One day, he called Master Chŭngsan, founder of Chŭngsan’gyo a lunatic. The Founding Master heard this and said, “How dare you criticize past personages so recklessly? It is not right to criticize the master for the faults of his disciples. Moreover, only a wise person can recognize another wise person. Someone whose perception has not fully developed should not recklessly make comments about others.” The disciple asked, “Then, what kind of man was he?” The Founding Master said, “Master Chŭngsan was a rare seer and divine personage. In the future, when our congregation has become widely known to the world, he will be revered and commemorated forever together with Master Suun.”

32. Kim Kich’ŏn asked, “If we were to compare the stages of ‘the Later Day’s Great Opening’ that these seers explained to the breaking of dawn, how would it be to say that Master Suun’s activities were like alerting us to the first hint of daylight while the world is still sound asleep, Master Chŭngsan’s activities were like alerting us to the next phase, and your activities, Great Master, are actually beginning the work as the day gradually brightens?” The Founding Master said, “That sounds plausible enough.” Yi Hoch’un asked again, “If we were to compare it to a year’s farming, how would it be to say that Master Suun’s activities were like alerting farmers to get ready to start farming, Master Chŭngsan’s activities were like teaching farmers the farm calendar, and your activities, Great Master, are actually demonstrating farming methods to those farmers.” The Founding Master said, “That also makes sense.” Song Tosŏng

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next said, “Those masters may have been such divine personages, but their reputation in the world has been uneven because of their disciples. How will those personages be viewed in future generations?” The Founding Master said, “If a person’s work is authenticated by someone who is qualified, then it will be authenticated. The fact that we are discussing them today means that, when our dharma is recognized in the world, those masters will also be recognized. What is more, since those men fostered many future persons of the Way, the later persons of the Way will venerate those predecessors.”

33. A person asked, “In the traditional esoteric legends of our country, it says, ‘In the future, Chŏng Toryŏng will ascend to the throne on Kyeryong Mountain and govern everything under heaven.’ Will this really come to pass?” The Founding Master said, “Kyeryong Mountain refers to the world of brightness (yang) that is emerging. By Chŏng Toryŏng is meant that upright leaders will be governing the world. This prophecy means that in the emerging world of brightness, upright people will lead the family, society, nation, and world.”

34. Kim Kich’ŏn asked, “Is it possible for a person who has not yet ‘seen the nature’ to ascend to the full status of dharma strong and Māra defeated?” The Founding Master said, “It’s impossible.”

35. He asked again, “Which is more difficult: the effort to ascend from the ordinary grade to the status of Māra defeated or the effort to ascend from the status of Māra defeated to the status of tathāgata?” The Founding Master said, “That depends on one’s spiritual capacity. Some people of the highest spiritual capacity will ascend immediately to the status of tathāgata as soon as they have defeated Māra, but those of lesser spiritual capacity may be detained for a long time even after they have ascended to the status of Māra defeated.”

36. He also asked, “It is said that as a practitioner of the Way proceeds with his cultivation, he will reach the stage in which he performs the ‘liberation of the corpse.’ Which status does he need to achieve for this to occur?” The

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Founding Master said, “Some people are unable to do this even though they have ascended to the status of tathāgata, but others have done so by concentrating on a specific type of partial cultivation, although they have neither ‘seen the nature’ nor achieved even the status of Māra defeated. But you cannot say that through this they have achieved the well-rounded Way. Therefore, in the coming age, no matter how well you have mastered all knowledge from astronomy above to geography below, managed to separate flesh from bone, or achieved superpowers, then you are only a partial person of the Way unless you understand the human affairs and universal principles governing this world. Therefore, you must proceed with the simultaneous training in the Threefold Study and nurture a well-rounded character.”

37. He asked again, “Among the requirements for ascending to the status of dharma strong and Māra defeated, it is said that one must gain liberation from birth, old age, sickness, and death. Does this refer to the state of ‘passing away while sitting or dying while standing’ as the eminent Buddhist monks of the past have done?” The Founding Master said, “It means that one has fully mastered the truth of neither arising nor ceasing, so that one is not bound by birth or death.”

38. He asked again, “In the future when we are voting for a prime dharma master, to what status should he or she have ascended in order to be selected?” The Founding Master said, “Even in this degenerate age, one must ascend to at least the status of Māra defeated to be qualified for the position of prime dharma master.” He asked once more, “If there appears a person of the Way whose dharma power is superior to that of a current prime dharma master, how should we handle promoting that person to a higher dharma rank?” The Founding Master said, “It should be done by getting the general consensus of the congregation.”

39. A disciple asked, “To what status must we ascend before we are no longer subject to retrogression?” The Founding Master said, “One must attain to the status of beyond the household, or above. However, it is not the case that,

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just because one has reached the state of nonretrogression, one will not regress even if one neglects the practicing mind. The truth of everything under heaven is that there is not a single thing that stays unchanged. Even the buddhas, who have reached the stage of nonretrogression, must continuously sustain their practicing mind, so that all the favorable or adverse sensory conditions or the thousands of Māras and heretics will not be able to turn back their minds. This is what is called nonretrogression.”

40. He asked again, “It is said that those of the highest spiritual capacity instantly attain ‘sudden awakening/ sudden cultivation.’ Do they complete awakening and cultivation all at once?” The Founding Master said, “There were a few of the ancient buddhas and enlightened masters who were known to have accomplished sudden awakening/sudden cultivation; in actuality, however, there are thousands of steps to the process of ‘seeing the nature’, and one must pass through various stages of cultivation, too, before one accomplishes sudden awakening/sudden cultivation. For example, it is like day-break: darkness recedes unnoticed and daylight arrives unnoticed.”