



The Scripture of the
Founding Master

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Chapter Ten Belief and Dedication

1. The Founding Master said, “When a teacher meets someone who wishes to become his disciple, he first examines that person’s belief and dedication. If the practitioner has genuine belief, then the teacher’s dharma will be transmitted and the disciple will achieve merit; but if he or she does not have belief, the dharma won’t be transmitted and no merit will be achieved. What, then, is called the ‘the believing mind’? First, the disciple should not harbor doubts about the teacher. Belief means not to have one’s faith in the teacher waver, even when thousands of people slander him by referring to thousands of different things, nor to judge and speculate even when one finds some dubious points in what one personally witnesses. Second, belief means only to obey all the instructions of the teacher without insisting on one’s own opinions or being stubborn. Third, belief means to accept everything and never to complain, no matter how the teacher treats one, whether he offers excessively harsh admonitions or severe criticism, exposes one’s faults in front of others, or makes one carry out excessively strenuous tasks. Fourth, belief means never hiding or disguising one’s own faults in front of the teacher but truthfully confessing them. If the disciple possesses all four of these aspects, then his belief is extraordinary. He will readily manage to become the dharma vessel of the bud-dhas and enlightened masters.”

2. The Founding Master said, “The spiritual capacities of all practitioners vary by thousands and tens of thousands of degrees, but they may generally be categorized into the three levels of high, medium, and low. High spiritual capacity refers to that capacity in which judgment and belief are immediately established upon seeing and hearing the right dharma, so that one carries out all spiritual practices with self-confidence. Medium spiritual capacity refers to that capacity in which one neither comprehends with precision nor is totally ignorant and so, being unable to resolve one’s doubts, is always weighing the dharma and one’s teacher. Low spiritual capacity refers to that capacity in

The Scripture of the Founding Master

which one is unable to differentiate the perverse from the upright, and so, if well guided, conforms directly to that guidance without calculating or doubting. Of these three spiritual capacities, high is most valued and desired in religious orders. A person of high spiritual capacity will have no delays in his practice and will help expand daily the work of the religious order. The capacity that is second most worthwhile to guide is a person of low spiritual capacity who has a sincerely believing mind; for, although he may not have self-confidence, his dedicated effort to progress will not cease since he values the dharma and sincerely believes in the teacher; thus, he will ultimately be able to succeed. The one who is most difficult to guide and the most fickle, however, is a person of medium capacity. Such a person is likely to take the dharma lightly and to look down on the teacher. In all matters he lacks genuine sincerity, so it is extremely difficult for him to experience success in his practice or in his work. Therefore, those at the medium level must work hard to transcend that level. Of those at the low level, some may jump straight to the high level; but for those who cannot and who instead advance by passing through the stage of medium capacity, that is a dangerous phase that they must be cautious about.”

3. A disciple asked, “Not only is my innate ability dull, but I have only been practicing for a short time. I don’t know when I shall ever succeed. What shall I do?” The Founding Master said, “Practice in religious orders has little to do with one’s innate ability or with how long one has practiced; it depends only on whether or not a person can exert oneself in belief, zeal, questioning, and dedication. Anyone who has wholehearted belief, zeal, questioning, and dedication can be certain of speedy success.”

4. The Founding Master said, “When a particular situation inspires ordinary people to arouse spiritual aspiration, it is as if belief that could pierce the sky has seized them; but after a while, that belief sometimes fades. Also, when changes occur, such as gaining or losing a powerful position, or a family in discord finds harmony or turns from harmony to discord, and so forth, then one’s belief might also change. One may achieve great practice only when one

The Scripture of the Founding Master

checks one's believing mind even further each time one faces these situations, readily turning adverse situations into favorable ones, or, if in favorable situations, persisting with a firm checking mind that prevents oneself from falling into corruption or arrogance.”

5. The Founding Master said, “Persons who have high position, power, wealth, or extensive learning usually find it hard to arouse a great believing mind and enter the great Way. However, if such a person does arouse the mind to cultivate the Way or dedicates himself to serving the public, that person is someone who was born into this world after making a profound vow in a previous lifetime.”

6. The Founding Master said, “There are some among you who, despite forming a teacher-disciple relationship with me, have not preserved that trust and, by remaining attached to your own talents and opinions, try to carry on as you please. What value is there then in meeting me? If a practitioner has generated a great vow, and great belief and dedication, and devotes his heart completely to me, then no matter what I say or what work I assign him, he will never doubt or blame me. Only in this way will my mind and his mind mutually connect, and my effort and his effort not be wasted.”

7. The Founding Master said, “The reason religious orders check a practitioner's belief and dedication is because belief is none other than the vessel that holds the dharma, the driving force that resolves all cases for questioning, and the foundation for observing all the precepts. Practice without belief is like fertilizing a dead tree: ultimately, you will never see any result. Therefore, you must first establish genuine belief, so that you may deliver yourself. In teaching others as well, arousing belief in those who lack it is the primary merit.”

8. The Founding Master said, “Believing in the Three Jewels also involves the two categories of self-powered belief and other-powered belief. Other-powered belief means literally believing in and worshiping the Buddha, dharma, and sangha that have actually appeared in the world. Self-powered be-

The Scripture of the Founding Master

belief means discovering the buddha, dharma, and sangha that are within one's own self-nature and inwardly believing and practicing them. These categories become the foundations for each other, so self-powered and other-powered belief must develop in tandem. However, once one's practice reaches the ultimate state, there will be no boundaries between self and other, and the myriad things in heaven and earth and the dharma realm of empty space will all turn into the Three Jewels."

9. The Founding Master asked the disciples, "When you have not seen me for a long time, how much do you miss me?" The disciples replied, "Intensely!" The Founding Master said, "Undoubtedly so. However, no matter how filial children may be to their parents, it is hard to compare that to the parents' concern for their children. In the same way, no matter how devoted disciples may be to their teacher, it is hard to compare that to the teacher's concern for them. If a disciple's belief in and yearning for his teacher is half as much as the teacher's love and concern for him, then the dharma will definitely be transmitted."

10. The Founding Master said, "If a disciple who seeks the dharma from his teacher, does not devote his whole heart or fails to be steadfast in his dedication to the teacher, he won't be able to receive the dharma completely. Long ago, when the Sōn master Kujōng first entered the monastery on a bitterly cold day, he received an order from his teacher to install a cauldron. All through the night until the dawn he changed and installed the cauldron nine different times without complaining at all, so finally he received the name Kujōng (Nine Cauldrons) and became a monk. Thereafter, he did not receive any special dharma instructions but only served his teacher for several decades, never wavering in the sincerity of his confidence in and his reliance on his teacher. Finally, when his teacher became gravely ill, he nursed him with even greater devotion. His mind suddenly awakened at that time, and he realized that awakening for oneself is identical to receiving the dharma. A person seeking the dharma must have this much belief and dedication in order to receive the dharma completely."

The Scripture of the Founding Master

11. The Founding Master said, “Though the spring breeze blows impartially without any thought of self, only living trees can receive its energy and grow; though sages give dharma disquisitions impartially without any thought of self, only people with belief can receive that dharma completely.”

12. Returning from an excursion to the Diamond Mountains, the Founding Master addressed the congregation, “The host of the inn in the Diamond Mountains where I stayed this time was a Christian and, through his unwavering faith, was living a very happy life. I asked him about his background and he told me that in the thirty-odd years of his life of faith, he had experienced many vicissitudes, but that each time he did so, he would thank God for His love when things turned out well, and also thank Him for admonishing him about his faults when things turned out badly. Thus his mind strengthened and his faith deepened each time he was faced with either favorable or unfavorable situations, and he was able to lead a happy life as he was today. You, too, should try to assess the degree of your own faith deep in your hearts. Although that person was still limited to other-powered belief and had not fully comprehended the fundamentals of truth, he was still able to lead such a life. And yet, if you practitioners who develop in tandem both self-powered and other-powered belief were to find yourself obstructed by the vicissitudes of life, how can we call that right faith and authentic dedication? Since, of the many types of faith, you have come across this consummate and realistic locus of faith, you must constantly check your mind, thereby mastering all situations with your faith and not become a foolish person whose faith wavers according to circumstances.”

13. When the Founding Master was dwelling at Söktu hermitage, Chang Chökcho, Ku Namsu, and Yi Man’gap traveled a hundred li despite their feminine frailty to pay homage to the master out of their scrupulous belief and dedication. The Founding Master was moved and said, “Your faith is so genuine, I wonder if you would eat dung if I asked you now?” Hearing the master, the three women immediately went outside and brought some dung back with them. The Founding Master said, “Sit down.” He continued, “Watching your

The Scripture of the Founding Master

behavior, your faith is such that I'm sure you would eat something even worse than dung. Right now, our order is still small, so I have many opportunities to look after you attentively; but when our order expands in the future, I may not even be able to know each time you come and go. Check your mind and see if the kind of scrupulous belief and dedication you have today will continue even during those times, and try to persist throughout eternal kalpas in the belief and dedication you have today.”

14. While the Founding Master was giving a dharma discourse, Kim Chōnggak sat in the front of row, dozing. The Master scolded her, saying, “The sight of you dozing in front of me is as ugly as a water buffalo.” Hearing the Master, Chōnggak immediately rose to her feet, did four prostrations, and smiled. The Founding Master said, “Through the years I have scolded Chōnggak so often that she could easily have become estranged from me, but her faith never wavered. She is someone who would follow me regardless of life and death.” Then, he added, “If there are things a disciple can't say to the teacher or a teacher can't say to the disciple, then theirs is not a perfect teacher-disciple relationship.”

15. The Founding Master said, “While I was sitting in the prime dharma master's room just now, No Tōksongok's face clearly appeared before my eyes and did not vanish for quite a while. Because she has belief and dedication that pierces the sky, her devout mind appeared in this way despite being blocked for over a hundred li by mountains and rivers.”

The Scripture of the Founding Master

16. Chŏng Sŏkhyŏn asked, “There may be many painful circumstances in my life, but I live in the joy of offering mental affirmation daily before the Dharmakāya Buddha.” The Founding Master said, “I’m not sure whether Sŏkhyŏn has found the authentic joy that comes from truly understanding the meritorious virtue and awesome power of the Dharmakāya Buddha, but offering mental affirmation is certainly one way of discovering joy in the midst of suffering. If one lives in this way, there is no reason not to be able to be gratified even in painful circumstances. When I was dwelling on Pongnae Mountain, several of those staying with me in a deep, remote mountain valley where the shelter and food were very poor and the physical labor quite extreme, had to endure all sorts of severe hardships, but even so, they always experienced a joyous life by simply hearing the dharma and in serving me. On another occasion in Yŏnggwang, my very first nine disciples, who originally had never done any physical labor, went through indescribable hardship while they were reclaiming the tideland on those snowy, cold days in the depths of winter. But without expressing any complaint or dissatisfaction, they turned their hardship into joy through their happiness in establishing our new order, and whatever instructions I gave, they joyfully received and obeyed them all. During those times, those disciples may have appeared to others as if they were going through unbearable hardships, but in reality, their hearts were so filled with boundless joy that they were gratified by heavenly joys right in this world. Hence, if you intend to pursue this practice and this work, you first must attain the strength to turn all sensory conditions always into joy by readily transcending numerous hardships through firm belief and grand hopes. Only then will you be able to continue eternally a paradisiacal life in the limitless world.”

17. Among the disciples, there was one who cut off his hand as a token of his faith. The Founding Master strongly reprimanded him, “One’s physical body is an indispensable asset for continuing one’s practice and work. What benefit is there in damaging your indispensable asset in order to express your faith? What’s more, authentic belief and dedication originally depend on one’s mind and not on one’s physical body. In the future, no one should ever commit such an act.” He continued, “No matter how outstanding one’s knowledge and

The Scripture of the Founding Master

literary prowess or how highly others admire one for some temporary feat, that will not be sufficient to be a successor in this order's lineage. Only a person who has exerted utmost effort in this practice and work with inalterable belief and dedication defying death itself will be qualified for that."

18. Mun Chǒnggyu asked, "The three men, Song Kyu, Song Tosǒng, and Sǒ Taewon, are now young. In the future, which of these three has the most promise?" The Founding Master kept silent for a long while, so Chǒnggyu asked again, "They each have their own strengths and weaknesses, so it is difficult for me to judge." The Founding Master said, "Song Kyu is not a person who can be easily estimated with your perceptive capacity. Ever since I met Song Kyu and his brother [Tosǒng] I have never known an occasion where they caused me to worry. They unfailingly carried out whatever I asked them to do, and I never had to tell them twice. Therefore, my mind became their mind, and their mind became mine."

19. The Founding Master said, "The sages who preside over an epoch appear supported by the power of a cycle of great fortune of heaven and earth. If sentient beings dedicate themselves with complete sincerity to such sages and their orders and make a vow, then their vows will quickly come true. On the other hand, if they disrespect such sages or interfere with their work, their transgressions and punishments will also be enormous. Moreover, this is not only the case with a particular sage, for anyone whose method of applying the mind is completely unified with a sage's will also have the same awesome power."