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"One Got It, the Other Missed"

(From The Transmission of the Lamp, *Chüan* 24)

CH'AN Master Wên-i of the Ch'ing-liang Monastery in Sheng-chou² was a native of Yu-hang.³ His original surname was Lu. When he was seven years old, he shaved his head and became the disciple of Ch'an Master Ch'üan-wei, of the Chih-t'ung Temple in Hsin-ting. At the age of twenty he was ordained in the K'ai-yüan Monastery in Yüeh-chou.⁴ During that time the Vinaya master Hsi-chio was expounding Buddhism in the Yü-wang Monastery in Mei-shan of Ming-chou.⁵ Wên-i went there to listen to his lectures and to seek the deep and abstruse meaning of Buddhism. At the same time, he also studied the Confucianist classics and made friends with scholars and literary men. Master Hsi-chio thought as highly of Wên-i as Confucius had of Tzu-yu and Tzu-hsia.⁶

However, when he suddenly had the urge to seek the truth of Ch'an, Wên-i immediately gave up all other pursuits, and taking up his staff, went traveling to the South. When he reached Fu-chou,⁷ he joined the Ch'ang-ch'ing Hui-leng⁸ congregation. Although his mind was not yet free from seeking, many people esteemed him very highly.

Not long afterward Wên-i set out again with his friends across

the Lake.⁹ Hardly had they started on their journey when a rain-storm began. The streams overflowed and flooded the land. Thereupon Wên-i and his companions took lodging temporarily at the Ti-ts'ang Monastery in the western part of the city of Fu-chou. While he was there, Wên-i took the opportunity to visit Lo-han Kuei-ch'en,¹⁰ who asked him:

"Where are you going, sir?"

"I shall continue my foot travels along the road."

"What is that which is called foot travel?"

"I do not know."

"Not-knowing most closely approaches the Truth."

Wên-i was suddenly awakened. Hence he and his companions, Ch'ing-ch'i Hung-chin and others, four in all, determined to be disciples of Lo-han Kuei-ch'en, and they consulted him freely in order to clear their doubts. They all gained a deep understanding of Ch'an, and one after another went through the ceremony of *shou-ch'i*.¹¹ Later, they were all to become the leading masters in their localities.

When they were ready to leave, Wên-i planned to stay and build a hut for himself in Kan-chê Chou, but Ch'ing-ch'i and the other companions persuaded him to join them in visiting the monasteries south of the Yangtze River. When they arrived at Lin-ch'uan,¹² the governor invited Wên-i to be the abbot of the Ch'uing-shou Monastery. On the opening day, before the tea ceremony was completed, the audience were already gathered around his seat. The director of the monks¹³ came up to him, saying, "All the audience are already gathered around your seat." Master Wên-i replied, "They really want to see the truly wise man." A moment later the Master walked up to his seat and all the audience made a deep bow. Then the Master said, "Since you all have come here, it is impossible for me not to make some remark. May I point out to you a way to truth which was given by our ancients? Be careful!" After saying this, he immediately left the seat.

At that moment a monk came forward and bowed to the Master. The Master said, "You may ask me a question!" But just as the monk was about to ask the question, the Master said, "The

abbot has not yet begun his lecture, so no question will be answered."

When the monk Tzü-fang came from the Ch'ang-ch'ing Monastery, the Master recited to him the *gāthā* written by Master Hui-leng of that monastery and then said, "What is that among all manifestations by which the solitary One is revealed?" Tzü-fang lifted his *fu-tzu*. The Master remarked, "How can you understand Ch'an in such a way?" Tzü-fang persisted, "What is your idea?" The Master retorted, "What do you call all manifestations?" Tzü-fang said, "The ancients never tried to disregard all manifestations." The Master replied, "Among all manifestations the solitary One is revealed. Why should you speak of disregarding them or not?" Tzü-fang was suddenly enlightened and wrote a *gāthā* accepting the Master's instructions.

From that time on, members of all the other congregations who had some understanding of Ch'an came to the Master. When they first arrived, they would be bold and self-confident, but as they were awakened by the Master's subtle words, they would begin to respect and believe in him. His visitors often exceeded one thousand in number.

Once when the Master came before the congregation, he let his disciples stand for a long time, and finally said:

"If your gathering should be dismissed [without a word], what is your opinion on whether or not Buddha's teaching is still implied? Try to tell me! If Buddha's teaching is not implied, why should you come here? Even if there is an implication of the Buddhist teaching, there are many gatherings in the city, so why should you come here?"

"Every one of you may have read *Contemplations on Returning to the Source*, *Explanations of a Hundred Mental Qualities*, *Treatise on the Avatamsaka Sūtra*, *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, and many another. Can you tell me in which of these teachings you find the absolute moment? If there is such a moment, please point it out to me. Are there no words in these sūtras which indicate this absolute moment? [If there are such words,] what have they to do with the absolute moment? Thus, when subtle words are retained in the

mind, they cause anxiety; when Ultimate Reality exists before the eyes, it is manifest in the objective condition of names and forms. How can this manifestation take place? If Ultimate Reality is manifest in objective conditions, how then can objective conditions be traced back to the Ultimate Reality? Do you understand? What is the use if you only read the sūtra without understanding this?"

A monk asked, "How can you reveal yourself so as to identify with Tao?"

The Master answered, "When did you reveal yourself and not identify with Tao?"

Question: "What is the senselessness of the six senses?"

The Master's answer: "Your family group."

The Master then said, "What is your understanding? Don't say, when you ask what such a question means, that you have not obtained it. Tell me the senselessness of the six senses. Are eyes and ears senseless? If what is fundamental exists within you, how can you say that you have not obtained it? The ancients said that when you want to keep away from what you are hearing and seeing, you attach yourself to what you are hearing and seeing; when you want to keep away from names, you attach yourself to names. Even when one reaches the fourth of the four *dhyānas*¹⁴ after innumerable years, once one gives up this practice all that one has achieved is lost. This is due to one's ignorance of fundamental reality. Through gradual cultivation, it takes at least three rebirths and at most sixty kalpas [to become a Śrāvaka¹⁵]. Also, it takes at least four rebirths and at most a hundred kalpas [to become a Pratyeka¹⁶]. The practice continues even through the three endless periods for the achievement of Buddhahood. According to the ancients, this cultivation is still not as good as 'One Thought,'¹⁷ which emerges from no-birth and is far beyond the achievements of the learning of the Three Vehicles [Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna, Bodhisattvayāna]. Our ancients also pointed out that in the absolute moment the waving of a finger perfects what eight thousand ways can achieve, or eliminates the three endless periods. All this should be carefully examined. If one would follow this way, how much effort one must put into it!"

A monk asked, "As for the finger, I will not ask you about it. But what is the moon?"¹⁸

The Master said, "Where is the finger that you do not ask about?" So the monk asked, "As for the moon, I will not ask you about it. But what is the finger?"

The Master said, "The moon!"

The monk challenged him, "I asked about the finger; why should you answer me, 'the moon'?"

The Master replied, "Because you asked about the finger."

The Prince of Nan-t'ang¹⁹ esteemed the Master's teaching and invited him to stay in the Ch'an monastery of Pao-en, and bestowed upon him the title of Ch'an Master Ching-hui. The Master came to the assembly and said, "The ancients said, 'I will stand here until you see it.' Now I would like to sit here until you see it. Do you think that this is the Truth, too? Which of these statements is closest to the Truth? Try your judgment."

Monk: "The bell has just struck and your audience is gathered together, Master! Please be 'this'!"

Master: "How can the audience match your understanding?"

Question: "What is the spirit of the ancient Buddhas?"

Master: "Where have you not seen enough?"

Question: "During the twelve periods of a day, what should one do, so that one will immediately identify himself with Tao?"

Master: "The mind of discrimination creates artificiality and falsity."

Question: "According to tradition the ancients transmitted their robes to their successors. What kind of man should be considered a successor?"

Master: "Where did you see that the ancients transmitted their robes?"

Question: "The worthies and sages of ten quarters all have entered the Source. What is the Source?"

Master: "It is where the worthies and sages all have entered."

Question: "What is the man who has approached Ultimate Reality like Buddha?"

Master: "For convenience we call him Buddha."

Question: "What is he who is free from what he hears and sees?"

Master: "All of you! Monks! Please tell me whether this monk can still be free from what he hears and sees? Those who understand what this question drives at will have no difficulty in becoming free from what is heard and seen."

Question: "What is the direct way to obtain Buddha's wisdom?"

Master: "There is nothing more direct than this question."

Question: "What is that which, like a plant of good omen,²⁰ never fades away?"

Master: "Deceptive talk."

Monk: "We all are gathered together here. Please clear up our doubts at once."

Master: "Discuss it in the dormitory; discuss it in the tea hall."

Question: "What is it when clouds scatter and the sun is seen?"

Master: "This is really deceptive talk."

Question: "What should be esteemed by monks?"

Master: "If there is anything that a monk esteems, he should not be called a Buddhist monk."

Question: "Among manifold forms of appearance, what is the pure essence of things?"

Master: "All are."

Question: "When manifestations all come at once, what do you think about that?"

Master: "Is it an eye or not?"

Monk: "My entire being is fully equipped with integrity; please engage me in a decisive battle."

Master: "Your integrity has been defeated by yourself."

Question: "What is the Mind of the ancient Buddha?"

Master: "It is that from which compassion, sympathy, joy, and limitless indifference flow out."

Monk: "It is said that a chamber which has been dark for one hundred years can be made light by a single lamp. What is this single lamp?"

Master: "Why should you talk about one hundred years?"

Monk: "What is the real Tao?"

Master: "The first vow to put it into action. Also, the second vow to put it into action."

Monk: "What is the ground of Absolute Truth?"

Master: "If there should be a ground, it would not be Absolute Truth."

Monk: "How can the Truth be established?"

Master: "This still has nothing to do with it."

Monk: "Who is the ancient Buddha?"

Master: "Even right now there is nothing that is disliked."

Monk: "What should one do during the twelve periods of the day?"

Master: "Tread firmly with each step."

Monk: "How can the ancient mirror reveal itself before it is uncovered?"

Master: "Why should you reveal it again?"

Monk: "What is the subtle idea of all Buddhas?"

Master: "It is what you also have."

Question: "The ancient teachings state that from the origin of non-abiding, all things are established. What is the origin of non-abiding?"

Master: "Forms rise from that which has no substance; names come from that which has no name."²¹

Monk: "The robes left by the deceased monk are auctioned by other monks. Who is going to auction a patriarch's robe?"

Master: "What kind of robe of the deceased monk do you auction?"

Monk: "What happens when a vagrant returns to his native place?"

Master: "What is there to offer?"

Monk: "There is not a thing."

Master: "How about his daily supplies?"

The Master later stayed in the Ch'ing-liang Monastery. He came before the assembly and said:

"We Buddhists should be free to respond to whatever comes to us according to the moment and the cause. When it is cold, we respond to nothing else but cold; when it is hot, we respond to

nothing else but heat. If we want to know the meaning of the Buddha-nature, we must watch the absolute moment and cause. In the past as well as at present there have been many means to enlightenment. Have you not read that when Shih-t'ao understood what was in the *Treatises of Sêng-chao*: "To unify ten thousand things into one's self is to be a sage indeed," he immediately said that a sage has no self, yet nothing is not himself. In his work *Contemplation on Identification and Unification* [Ts'an Tung Ch'i], he first²² points out that the mind of the Buddha in India cannot go beyond this. In this treatise he further expounds this idea. You, monks, need to be aware that all things are identified with yourself. Why? Because in this world not one isolated thing can be seen!"

The Master also said to the assembly, "You must not waste your time. A moment ago I told you that you must grasp the absolute moment and watch what is coming to you. If you lose the moment and miss the chance, you just waste your time and mistake what is formless for form.

"O monks, to take what is formless for form means losing the absolute moment and missing a chance. Just tell me whether it is correct to take the form for the formless. O monks, if you try to understand Ch'an in such a way, your efforts will be sadly wasted, because you are madly pursuing two extremes. What is the use of this? You should simply keep on doing your duty, follow what will come to you, take good care of yourself, and be careful."

Question: "What is the spirit of the Ch'ing-liang Monastery?"

Master: "When you go to other places, just say you are on the way to Ch'ing-liang."

Question: "How can you be free from all things?"

Master: "What is obstructing you?"

Question: "What can we do with day and night?"

Master: "Idle talk."

Question: "How is it when one sees one's body as illusion? How is it when one sees one's mind as illusion also?"

Master: "Is it necessary to be in such a condition?"

Question: "To identify oneself with reality immediately, one should speak non-dual words. What are non-dual words?"

Master: "How can you add any more?"

Question: "What is the essence of things [*dharmakāya*]?"

Master: "It is the body of transformation [*nirmānakāya*]."

Question: "What is the first principle?"

Master: "If I should tell you, it would become the second principle."

The Master asked Hsiu-shan Chu,²³ "There is a saying: 'If there is a slight difference, it will make as great a separation as between heaven and earth.' How do you understand this?"

Hsiu-shan Chu said, "If there is a slight difference, it will make as great a separation as between heaven and earth."

Master: "If your understanding is like this, how can you get the point?"

Hsiu-shan Chu: "What then is your understanding?"

Master: "If there is a slight difference, it will make as great a separation as between heaven and earth."

Immediately Hsiu-shan Chu made a deep bow.

The Master and Ch'an Master Wu-k'ung were sitting by the fire. The Master picked up an incense spoon and asked, "If you do not call this 'an incense spoon,' what do you call it?"

Wu-k'ung replied, "An incense spoon!"

The Master did not approve of his answer. However, more than twenty days later Wu-k'ung realized what the Master really meant.

Once before a meal, the monks came to attend upon the Master. The Master pointed to the bamboo screens. Two monks went to roll up the screens. The Master said, "One got it, the other missed."

Some time ago, when Yün-mên asked a monk where he came from, the monk answered that he came from Kiangsi. Yün-mên said, "Have the old masters in Kiangsi stopped talking in their sleep?" The monk made no answer. Later on a monk [Fa-yen's disciple] referred to this episode and asked the Master, "What was the meaning of it?" The Master said, "Such a great master as Yün-mên was examined by this monk."

The Master asked another monk where he came from. The monk answered, "From the temple [where Ch'an is being taught

now].” The Master asked, “Did you identify consciously or unconsciously?” The monk made no answer.

The Master ordered a monk to fetch some earth to fill up the lotus flowerpot. When the monk did so, the Master asked him, “Where did you get the earth, from the east side of the bridge or from the west side?” The monk replied, “I got the earth from the east side of the bridge.” The Master asked him then, “Is this true or false?”

The Master asked a certain monk where he came from. The monk answered that he came from the Pao-en Monastery. The Master then asked him, “Are all the monks there well?” The monk answered, “Yes, they are all well.” The Master said, “Go there and have a cup of tea.”

Another time the Master asked a monk where he came from. The answer was that he came from Szu-chou, where he had visited the holy image of Ta-sheng. The Master asked, “Will Ta-sheng’s image be carried out of the enshrined pagoda this year?” The monk answered, “Yes, it will.” The Master then said to another monk who stood nearby, “Can you tell me whether he has been to Szu-chou or not?”

The Master once questioned the abbot Pao-tzu, saying, “The ancients said that neither mountain nor river could be an obstruction, because light penetrates everywhere. What is this light that penetrates everywhere?”

The abbot said, “The sound of the beating of the gong from the east side.”

The Master pointed to a bamboo tree and asked a monk, “Do you see it?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Is it that the bamboo tree comes to your eyes, or rather do your eyes go to it?”

The monk answered, “Neither is the case.”

There was a certain scholar who presented a painted scroll to the Master. The Master looked at it and said,

“Is it that your hand is skillful, or rather that your mind is skillful?”

The scholar said, “My mind is skillful.”

The Master said, "What is your mind?"

The scholar had no answer.

A monk asked, "Where is the shadow of the moon?"

The Master answered, "Luxuriantly displaying themselves are ten thousand things."

The monk asked, "What is the real moon?"

The Master answered, "Ten thousand things display themselves luxuriantly."

The Master converted those who came under his influence in Chin-ling and presided three times over the great Buddhist center there. He taught Ch'an day and night. During that time the great monasteries in other places followed the Master's teachings, and his admirers in other countries came from far distances to visit him. Thus through him Master Hsüan-Sha's²⁴ teachings prospered south of the Yangtze River. He attuned himself to the "great function" by following the nature of things. He removed obstacles in the learners' minds and illumined the darkness. Devotees from all places came to him to present what they understood, while others bowed to him asking for enlightenment. The Master's remedies all met with good response. Those who followed the Master's directions and were enlightened thereby were innumerable.

On the seventeenth day of the seventh month in the fifth year of the Hsien-tê period [951-959] of the Chou Dynasty, the Master announced his illness. The Prince of the Kingdom came to console him. On the fifth day of the following month the Master had his head shaved and took a bath. Then he bid good-bye to his disciples and seated himself with his legs crossed. He passed away, and his visage was very lifelike. His age was seventy-four; it was fifty-four years after he had been ordained. At his funeral procession all the monasteries in the lower section of Chin-ling offered sacrifices. The high officials, from Li Chieh-hsün down, all wore mourning and proceeded to his pagoda in Tan-yang of Kiang-ning.²⁵ His posthumous name was Great Ch'an Master of the Dharma-Eye and his pagoda was called Beyond Form. His earliest disciples, Tê-chao in T'ien-t'ai, Wên-sui, Hui-chü, and others, fourteen men all together, were esteemed highly by the King and the princes. The latest dis-

ciples, forty-nine in all, such as Lung-kuang and T'ai-ch'in, expounded Ch'an and each taught in his own place. Their fascicles are also found in *The Lamp*. Because of his disciples' works and teachings, the Master was called Leading Master of Subtle Enlightenment. Also bestowed on him was the posthumous title Great Leading Master of Stored Wisdom. His sermons, given at three centers, *gāthās*, hymns, eulogies, inscriptions, comments, and other items numbered several hundred thousand words. Students of Ch'an copied them, and they were widely disseminated throughout the country.