

Secrets of the Zen Precepts

Zenkaiketsu by Manzan Dōhaku (1636-1714)

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Taisho Tripitaka Volume 82, number 2599

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Section 1:

An ancient virtuous one said (as is written on the bottom of the Blood Lineage Document), “The bodhisattva precepts are the One Great Matter of the Zen School, passed from Shakyamuni Buddha on Vulture Peak through Bodhidharma at Shaolin, in direct succession, mutually inherited.” Various schools transmit and maintain the bodhisattva precepts, but only the Zen School takes them as the One Great Matter. Although they are the same precepts, for us they are transmitted as Zen precepts, directly entering Vairochana’s Nature Ocean, simply raising up Vairochana’s Mind Seal. The Precepts Platform Ceremony of conferring and receiving the precepts in the Zen School has a form that exceeds the styles of various other schools. This is beyond thinking and out of reach of discrimination. Therefore, it is called the “One Great Matter.” Of course, it is fitting that without being an intimate disciple who has entered the room (received Dharma transmission), one cannot completely understand this. However, since the Yuan Dynasty in China, in the Zen monasteries it seems that the ceremony and regulations have been lost. Also, in this land of Japan, the tradition is sleeping and decaying. Only under the gate of Eihei (the school of Dōgen Zenji) is the Blood Lineage (kechimyaku) received and transmitted, even though the Precepts Platform Dharma is not practiced. The Blood Lineage has been transmitted continuously and intimately without ceasing, but since people have become lazy, the customary manner has not been employed. How delightful to have this, how one sighs when it is lost.

My teacher, Old Master Gesshū Sōko, through the power of his vow, set out to bring back the ancient way. Now having the ceremony again, we have the manner and methods, so again this karma (ceremonial procedure) can manifest. If we were to lose it, we would become anxious and hopeless. Since we can receive this tradition up to the present, the people spreading it are our school’s good fortune. Those who have trust know this as buddhas’ and ancestors’ life root and life lineage. Those who don’t have trust can be thought of as old waste paper. Buddha’s Doctor Jivaka saw all grass and trees as magical medicine, but ordinary people see them merely as grass and trees. Prince Kulika picked up broken tiles and none were not golden treasures, but ordinary people pick up broken tiles as mere tiles. Now the Blood Lineage is the magical medicine and golden treasure in the house of the buddhas and ancestors, and to see merely grass and trees and only pick up broken tiles is not the dynamic function.

Zen Teacher Yexian Guisheng said, “Our school’s teachers’ Blood Lineage, when examining it for oneself, could be ordinary or could be holy. There is Nagarjuna and Ashvaghosha, heaven and hell, molten metal and charcoal ovens, ox-headed guardians of hell, the dense array of myriad images, sun, moon, and the morning star, other worlds and this land, sentient and insentient beings – it’s like a hand drawing a picture. All belong to this school. In this school’s gate there is the ability to kill people or give people life. To kill people, one must use a knife. To give people life, one must use words.” This is Ye’s brief expression of the Blood Lineage, expounded without anything left out. Now if someone were to ask this mountain monk, “What is the knife that kills people, and words that give people life?” I would say, “Simply pointing to the one circle on top of the Blood Lineage diagram, this is killing. Manifestation of the whole works is giving life. Manifestation of the whole works all comes from within this circle without leaving it. Within this circle all enter this school.” Therefore, don’t ask about lewd men and lewd women. Arousing one thought of trust-power, all together are given the Blood Lineage. I beseech them to make a connection with this lineage gate. How could this not be great wonderful merit and virtue? This lineage gate is empty of knowledge and empty of views. Trusting this, one can enter. Then there is no function that is not obtained, there is no thing that is not included. The Brahmajala Sutra says, “All those who have

a mind must embrace and sustain Buddha's precepts." Buddha says it like this; thus, how could you not trust it? The Great Abhisheka Spirit Mantra Sutra says, "Thirty-six spirits protect those people who have received the three refuges. Twenty-five spirits protect and maintain people who have the five precepts." What need is there to mention that those who have these great precepts are also protected by buddhas, ancestors, devas, and earth spirits? Who would not treasure and mindfully respect these precepts? Do not take this lightly.

Section 2:

All Buddhas have three great transforming non-outflow (anasrava) trainings, and the training of precepts is first. Shila paramita is not just one kind of precepts. There are the upasaka five precepts, shramanera ten precepts, bhikshu 250 precepts, and bodhisattva 58 precepts. This is the Way, together with samadhi, together with vinaya, abhidharma, shastras, and the three sayings on receiving the precepts, etc. It is like Great Pervading Wisdom Victor Buddha (who sat for ten eons, in chapter seven of the Lotus Sutra), whose sixteen sons all left home as bodhisattva shramaneras and completely attained the fruit of Buddhahood. Our Shakyamuni, the Great Sage, was in ancient times the sixteenth son. Caoxi, the Sixth Ancestor, as an upasaka lived at Dharma Nature Temple (now called Bright Filiality Temple, Guangxiaosi) in Guangzhou. Dharma Teacher Yinzong shaved his head. Temple Chief Zhiguang, a Vinaya Master, conferred on him the complete precepts. The Sixth Ancestor was born as a good knowing teacher (kalyanamitra), with all precepts and the Dharma naturally complete. Nevertheless, he responded to Yinzong's words, and completed the transforming gate of the ritual. Under Yaoshan, there was Shramanera Gao who had great power. Throughout his life as a bodhisattva shramanera he extended the ancestors' vehicle. Either there is the practice and karma (procedures) of the pure vinaya complete precepts, or there is the simple maintaining of the bodhisattva precepts. Thus, there is receiving and maintaining in both cases. Inside the room in the Zen house, the buddhas and ancestors transmit the sixteen precepts.

The Sōtō and Rinzai lineages both have the Zen precepts ceremony, the so-called "Great Teacher Bodhidharma's One Vehicle Precepts." At the end of the Song Dynasty, Eisai Oshō went to Song China and received the Dharma under the Huanglong Order (of the Linji School). Teacher Xuan Huaichang transmitted to him the Zen precepts. Eisai's "Treatise on Letting Zen Flourish to Protect the State" (Kozengokokuron) easily elucidates and conveys the teaching clearly in writing. What Eisai says had been already existing for ten-thousand years. In open language he says (quoting Huaichang), "The bodhisattva precepts are the One Great Matter of the Zen School. You crossed the ocean to find Zen. Now I give you the eating bowl, sitting cloth, treasure vase, staff, and whisk." From Shakyamuni, through the twenty-eighth ancestor Bodhidharma, it came down to the room of Xuan. Generation after generation, it carried on without side-roads up to the fifty-third generation of Eisai in a continuous line. Clearly examine this. Eisai says, "Our Zen School didn't just start now."

Also, in ancient times Great Teacher Eizan (Tendai founder Saichō), Transmitter of the Teaching, experienced and produced the "Inner Verification of the Buddha-Dharma's Mutual Inheritance of the Blood Lineage" (Naishō buppō sōjō kechimyakufu) in one scroll. In the beginning there was Bodhidharma coming from the west. After Eisai, there was Dōgen Oshō who went to Song China and received the Dharma from Tiantong, Old Man Rujing. He also transmitted the Zen precepts, which is the same as what Eisai transmitted. The Record of National Teacher Hōtō (Kakushin, who received the bodhisattva precepts lineage from Dōgen) says, "One who receives the bodhisattva precepts, in the deep grass of Buddha-Dharma, is a superior person." Indeed, this is Tiantong's transmission of the precepts ceremony. What was transmitted by Eisai to his offspring still exists today. Under the gate of Eihei, generation after generation inherit this.

But, alas, in this era of confusion, even though the Blood Lineage is still connected, the Precepts Platform Ceremony is not practiced. Fortunately, we have obtained Tiantong's ancient text for the ceremony of transmitting the precepts, and Eihei's great-vehicle great-compassion three-part precepts text for those inside the room, which are united as one vinaya. Also, large and small traditional temples still

remain. Their method for conferring and receiving the precepts is rare and impossible to fully comprehend or discuss. According to the Brahmajala Sutra and the Bodhisattva Jewel Necklace Sutra, simply receiving and maintaining the bodhisattva precepts is the completion of the precepts training. The great virtuous precepts section (of the Nirvana Sutra, p. 190 in Blum translation) says, engraved in the sutra's words, "If someone is practicing in a lazy vehicle, I call that lazy, but if someone is lazy with the precepts, I do not call that lazy. Bodhisattva-mahasattvas with great-vehicle mind are not lazy or remiss." This is called respecting the precepts.

Not only our Zen School accords with this manner. The Master of the Teaching Vehicle (Tendai) School, Transmitter of the Teaching Saichō, went to Tang China and received the precepts training. This is the true transmission of the Tendai School lineage. He intimately succeeded to Zen Teacher Xiaoran (in 804), who had inherited Dharma from Mazu Daoyi, and who was living at Zen Forest Temple on Tiantai Mountain. Thus, Saichō received the Dharma and precepts. After returning to Japan, his disciples turned his Dharma eye. He established in Japan the only great-vehicle mountain at that time, Mt. Hiei. He vowed to open a Bodhisattva Complete-Sudden Great Precepts Platform. After Great Teacher Saichō entered nirvana, the emperor established the Precepts Platform Ceremony. For details on this, one can read the Great Teacher's "Treatise on Revealing the Precepts" (Kenkairon).

His disciple Kojo also wrote the "Essay on the One Mind Precepts." The Essay on the One Mind Precepts (quoting Saichō; see "Saichō" pages 141-143) says, "Generally speaking, the Buddha's precepts are of two kinds. One is the great-vehicle great-monk (full ordination) precepts. The ten major and forty-eight minor precepts become the great-monk precepts. Second there is the small-vehicle great-monk precepts. The 250 precepts become the great-monk precepts. In the first kind, according to the Samantabhadra Sutra (the closing sutra of the Lotus Sutra), three teachers are invited: Shakyamuni Buddha as bodhisattva precept upadhyaya, Manjushri Bodhisattva as bodhisattva precepts karma-acharya, and Maitreya Bodhisattva as bodhisattva precepts teaching and conferring acharya. All buddhas in the ten directions are invited as bodhisattva precepts witnessing teachers. All bodhisattvas in the ten directions are invited as bodhisattva precepts companions in training. The present precept transmitting teacher is invited as the presently manifesting teacher. If there is no precept transmitting teacher, one must confess and repent from one's heart. One must receive a sign before an image of the Buddha. Then one makes vows oneself and receives the precepts. This is self-vow receiving of precepts. This is taught in the Brahmajala Precepts Sutra and the Bodhisattva Jewel Necklace Sutra. The second kind of precepts is the small-vehicle precepts. According to the small-vehicle vinaya, presently manifesting ten teachers are invited to perform the ceremony (of bhikshu ordination) consisting of one statement of the motion and four (actually three) karmas (calls for agreement). Ten pure vinaya-maintaining great virtuous people are invited as the three teachers and seven witnesses. If one person is missing, the precepts cannot be transmitted. Now, Tendai yearly ordinand students who wish to turn the mind toward the great-vehicle as beginning novices do not receive the bhikshu precepts. However, long-term practitioners, like the Buddha, are allowed to study non-Buddhist and Agama writings (small-vehicle sutras)."

This teaching can be seen in the tenth fascicle of the Good Precepts Sutra. Also, the Lotus Sutra lists two kinds of bodhisattvas: Manjushri Bodhisattva, Maitreya Bodhisattva, and so on, are all leaving-home bodhisattvas. Bhadrupala and the 500 bodhisattvas are all staying-home bodhisattvas. These two kinds of people are listed as one assembly. Those not in the category of bhikshu are regarded as the great majority. Also, Saichō said (in Shōryū daijōkaihyō; in "Saichō" page 145), "I heard the Tathagata made precepts in accord with different circumstances and potentials. Sentient beings arouse the mind of awakening in great or small ways. Manjushri and the Elder Pindola (the arhat) are ranked differently. One teacher or ten teachers, the karma (procedure for ordination) is completely different." He also said, "In the Jewel Necklace Sutra, it says that receiving one ounce of bodhisattva precepts is called one ounce of bodhisattva, up to two, three, four, or ten ounces, up to the complete precepts."

Saicho also said (in "Saichō" pages 146-147), "Monk Gomyō (of the Japanese Hōso School) said that in Great Tang Dynasty China there were no 'bodhisattva monks.' There were no separately receiving bodhisattva monks (who received only bodhisattva precepts), only commonly receiving bodhisattva

monks (who received bodhisattva precepts in addition to bhikshu precepts). The policy of the great-vehicle is that there is not necessarily shaving off the hair and beard; the policy of the small-vehicle is that there is always shaving off the hair and beard. There are those with small-vehicle precepts who are also bodhisattva precepts receiving monks. It's not that there aren't any people with small-vehicle precepts who are also bodhisattva precepts receiving monks. There are those with small-vehicle precepts who are also bodhisattva precepts receiving monks – but there are no separately receiving bodhisattva monks (who receive only bodhisattva precepts).” Saichō said in response to Gomyō’s statement, “Monks don’t look through all sutras and don’t look through all treatises; therefore, they say that there are no separately receiving bodhisattva monks, but only commonly receiving bodhisattva monks.”

In the Various Dharmas Without Action Sutra (Sarvadharmapravṛtti Nirdesha Sutra, see “Saichō” page 146) “Root of Joy” is called a “bhikshu-bodhisattva” and in the Lotus Sutra “Never Disparage” is called a “bhikshu-bodhisattva.” Similarly, it is written clearly in the Precepts Treatise, “The matter of transmission of (bodhisattva) precepts from teacher to teacher with mutual inheritance was received in Japan from south India, from a south Indian king’s third son Bodhidharma. The One Vehicle Precepts were received from Upagupta, reaching the land of Tang Dynasty China.” As mentioned above, Great Teacher Bodhidharma’s One Vehicle Precepts and Saichō’s Complete Sudden Precepts are both receiving the bodhisattva three collective karmas (pure precepts) and the 58 precepts for great-vehicle monks. One ounce, two ounces, up to a full measure, according to the measure of the bodhisattva, is that amount of protecting and maintaining the precepts.

The bodhisattva precepts are easy to protect and maintain, and this gives rise to much merit and virtue. If one breaks the ten grave precepts, one must either confess and repent or hear the precepts and receive them again. The Bodhisattva Five Precepts Dignified Conduct Sutra says, “If a bhikshu breaks the four grave parajika precepts of the small-vehicle vinaya, there is no way to receive them again. If a bodhisattva breaks the grave precepts, he can let go of his faults and receive them again.” The Jewel Necklace Sutra says, “Bodhisattva precepts have the method of receiving them and not being able to give them up. If one breaks them, one does not lose them or one’s future practice.” However, with one breakage of the bhikshu parajika precepts, there is no way to receive them again. So, the small-vehicle precepts are difficult to protect and maintain, and they give rise to little merit and virtue. The Vibhasha Shastra says, “When one finds a gold coin on top of a pile of copper coins, although there are a lot of copper coins, attaining the one gold coin brings more happiness and appreciation.” This is like the learning of the bodhisattva precepts. The sutras and treatises contain clear statements such as this. How can one not know this is so?

In the Elucidation of Asanga’s Summary of the Great Vehicle Treatise (Mahayana Samgraha Bhasya), in the 28th scroll Vasubandhu Bodhisattva, elucidating the unsurpassed precepts training and its wonderful realization, says, “Do you know the difference between the bodhisattva training and that of the shravakas? It is said that there are differences between them. For shravakas there is only the one protecting precept (embracing and sustaining standards of conduct); there is no embracing and sustaining good qualities precept or benefiting living beings precept. There are precepts that are common to shravakas and bodhisattvas and those that are not common to both. Natural faults like killing life, etc. are common to both, but faults such as digging the ground and cutting grass, etc. are not common to both, but only faults for shravakas. For a bodhisattva there is no fault in these activities. For example, for a shravaka, traveling during the summer rainy season is a fault, and for a bodhisattva, seeing things that would benefit living beings and not leaving the retreat to do them is a fault.”

Also, this treatise says, “The most profound difference between the shravaka and bodhisattva precepts is that the bodhisattva uses skillful means such as killing life and the ten grave unwholesome actions, but instead of breaking precepts there are boundless blessings. Verifying anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (complete perfect awakening), a king of the country demonstrated harming living beings to establish living beings in regulations and conduct, etc.”

The 38th fascicle of the same treatise says, “Regarding the benefits of common and uncommon precepts training, all bodhisattvas’ ‘natural faults’ (those that everyone understands to be harmful) should not be manifested or enacted. This is in common with shravakas. ‘Prohibited faults’ (those not necessarily

harmful, but against the monastic vinaya) may be manifested. This is not common to both. For shravakas there is breaking, but for bodhisattvas there is not breaking, or for bodhisattvas there is breaking, but for shravakas there is not breaking. Bodhisattvas have body, speech, and mind precepts, but shravakas only have two kinds of precepts for body and speech. Therefore, bodhisattvas can break precepts with their mind, which is not the case for shravakas. In summary, anything that benefits living beings is not a fault for bodhisattvas. Bodhisattvas should manifest in action and cultivate the training of body, speech, and mind wholesome karma.” In this way, one should know the difference between common and uncommon types of precepts.

The Bodhisattva Precepts Original Essence Treatise (by Taehyon, 8th century Korea) says: “Asanga’s Yogacharabhumi Shastra teaches that because of bodhisattvas’ skillful means for benefiting others, there will be little manifestation or enacting of natural faults, and not breaking precepts gives rise to merit and virtue... Also, the sutra says, ‘Bodhisattvas know that if breaking the precepts is the cause and condition for people to receive and maintain the loving and joyful great-vehicle, then one can break the precepts. A bodhisattva at that time should think thus: I would rather reduce my lifespan by one kalpa by descending into the Hell of No Escape for one kalpa by receiving the retribution from this fault. By doing so, this person will not regress in bodhi.’ Manjushri said that the Buddha said, ‘By destroying precepts to benefit others, one descends into Avichi Hell. This is no place to be, but Buddha praises this as very good.’ In the Yogacharabhumi Shastra it is the same.”

Again, the sutra says, “If there is this kind of breaking of precepts, it is better than if there is not, and it is not really breaking them. Breaking precepts is called being a bodhisattva, not breaking precepts is called being outside the Way.” If one doesn’t comprehend this principle, then one is not able to avoid diverging from the path. One must know that the difference in the merit and virtue of bodhisattvas and shravakas cannot be spoken of on the same day (cannot be compared at all).

The Mahayana Jewel Ornament Sutra says, “Just as a small mani-jewel is better than a crystal, the difference being the size of Mount Sumeru, a bodhisattva just beginning to arouse the mind of the Way surpasses all shravakas.” The Collection of Six Paramitas Sutra says, “A full ocean of muddy water cannot compare to a quart of sweet-dew (ambrosia).” Our school follows the superior lineage teachers, even though outside the teachings, in the Zen School, there is the living function of no rank. The end of this mind is a bodhisattva’s mind. These days, disciples who study the mystery, according to their potential, only follow the traces. Isn’t this mind the shravaka mind? One must protect and maintain the bodhisattva sweet-dew mani-jewel precepts, and not vainly attach to maintaining the ocean water crystal shravaka precepts. This I pray, this I pray.

In Donglin’s Complete Precepts Universal Teaching, the teacher held up a whisk and said, “In the generation of the yellow-faced old master, the Buddha, the teachings were collected and passed down. Combined they are called the tripitaka of sutra, vinaya, and treatises. Its vastness, layer upon layer in the great storehouse, can be seen. What is explained in the tripitaka is precepts, concentration, and wisdom. This is called the three non-outflow trainings. What all buddha’s disciples cultivate is the precious Dharma of precepts, concentration, and wisdom, and what they train in is what the sutra, vinaya, and treatises say. These texts cannot be browsed through quickly. The study of the precious Dharma must not be neglected.”

In the Nirvana Sutra (page 80 in Blum translation) it is told to the great assembly, “Now the true Dharma is entrusted to the country’s king and ministers, as well as the fourfold assembly, so that all students should be encouraged to progress in precepts, concentration, and wisdom. If there are people who don’t study these three aspects of Dharma and are lazy, they will break precepts and destroy the true Dharma. In such a case, the kings, ministers, and the fourfold assembly should punish them.” It also says (page 90), “If among the monks there are those who break the precepts, there is no cause or condition for others’ reverence and prostrations, even though they are wearing the kashaya robe.” Therefore, in China, Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty told the eminent monk Zhizang, “I see that monks and nuns mostly haven’t trained and studied. White-robed laypeople and monks don’t understand the vinaya. The customary method for governing them doesn’t seem to work. This student would someday like to set up a

method for training laypeople and monks according to vinaya.” Even though this is a matter for teachers, the Buddha (in the Nirvana Sutra) still told the king to make rules for monks. Similarly, in this land of Japan, in ancient times the Emperor made a decree to admonish the monks: “If a person of the Way violates the Dharma, how can he educate laypeople? We hear that the sangha is one of the three treasures. Cutting off greed, hate, and delusion, teaching humans and transforming the world, the sangha is therefore a treasure. Without this merit, then monks are just like wandering vagrants and thieves of the country. What benefit is there for the world? These are not Buddha’s disciples, not Dharma teachers, and they don’t know how precious the sangha is. From now on I will appoint a monk to govern and oversee all monks and nuns, and there will be an observing and regulating monk who assists in overseeing monks’ affairs. Also, there will be a ‘virtue accumulation’ division for assisting all monks.” On that day there was an order for an officer to call the Dharma Head to order the monks to gather.

The governing monk’s job is overseeing the monks’ affairs. In China there is the ceremony department official and there is the government office. In this land of Japan there is the Dharma Head. The Dharma Head is called the Temple and Shrine Manager. Above in the capitol and cities, below in the counties and towns, in this generation there is nowhere where there is not such management. Therefore, we do not forget what was said on Vulture Peak. Also, we pray that the Dharma gate of government can become like Emperor Wu of Liang, who said, “This generation does not study the three classes of Dharma, not fearing harm, and feeling lucky to have relaxed Vinaya rules. Indulging in “yang” meat and alcohol, and “yin” sexual greed, it’s like making straw fences where no wood is used. Monks dwelling in both large and small temples steal the peace, passing the days idly, breaking precepts without remorse; often this is the case. Anyone with wisdom cannot help but sigh.”

Such people do not look at the Brahmajala Sutra, the Tathagata’s true words, which says (in minor precept 43): “If Buddha’s disciples with faithful mind leave home and receive Buddha’s true precepts, if they intentionally bring forth a mind in violation of the sacred precepts, they should not receive any offerings from danapati (donors); they should not walk on the land of the nation’s king, and should not drink the water of the nation’s king. Five thousand demons will block their way, while calling such people big thieves. If such people enter houses and towns, demons will follow and brush away their tracks. The eyes of living beings will not want to see such people. Those who break the precepts are no different from animals, no different from wooden stumps.”

It is also said that inside a lion’s body, worms eat the lion’s flesh. Also, at the Shurangama Assembly the Buddha left an admonition for future disciples, saying, “Various kinds of thieves will put on the robe, betraying the Tathagata, creating many kinds of harmful karma.” The sacred words of the Buddha are such as these, reaching the bones and marrow. How can one not fear wrongdoing when considering them? Kings and ministers, if they know the ancient teachings and Buddha’s regulations, and want to promote the old orders and rules, must order people to follow them and govern the people strictly. Then, it is said, the people will be able to walk on the land of the nation’s king and drink the water of the nation’s king. If donors with faithful mind know this, then if monks break the precepts not even one thread of clothing or one grain of rice will be offered. Then how could monks obtain clothing and food, and avoid hunger and cold?

Even if the donors know this and still make offerings, the Buddha had clear admonitions (in minor precept 36 of the Brahmajala Sutra): “I would rather have my body wrapped in a thousand layers of white-hot iron netting than ever accept any clothing offered by a faithful donor for a body that has violated the precepts. I would rather swallow glowing hot iron pellets and streams of raging flames for a hundred thousand kalpas than ever swallow the myriad flavors of food or drink offered by a faithful donor with a mouth that has violated the precepts.” Alas, clearly the Buddha’s teaching is like this. Yet, not trusting Buddha, not fearing demons, without regard for cause and effect, ignorant of the true cause, taking advantage of managers and faithful donors who are forgiving and trusting, some monks put them at ease by using big words to defend themselves, causing harm to themselves and others. How sad!

Chan Teacher Wanan Yan of Donglin Temple on Mount Lu said, “Now the later born descendants of the Buddha, not keeping precepts and vinaya, not learning concentration and wisdom, not practicing the

Way and its virtue, only use broad learning and debating, persuading the common people. Following that way, there is no return.” Nowadays, what Wanan called “broad learning and debating” people are only one in ten-thousand. Only embracing fame and profit internally, while showing greatness externally, many monks have only crooked learning and false discrimination, persuading the foolish with flawed views, bringing shame to this Dharma school. Truly, following such a way, there is no return. How lamentable, how lamentable! This mountain monk (I, Manzan) coincidentally dwells at Tōrin (with the same name as Donglin in China). Like a person of Puzhou sent away as a thief (a Chinese legend), even while in the midst of such circumstances, I secretly grieve in my heart about this problematic situation, ruminating and unable to sleep.

Now fortunately there are those with great function and great mind, who treasure and revere the bodhisattva great precepts, requesting their transmission, requesting to receive the fifty-eight bodhisattva precepts for monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen. They can naturally maintain the major and minor precepts, and with different mouths reciting together, they do not reject, but sincerely request the precepts. They do not forget them even when old and tired, and seeing their meaning they will finally establish the Mind-Ground Precept Platform and intimately confer the Vajra Jewel Precepts, conferring the true transmission of the Blood Lineage. Although they are the same Bodhisattva Precepts, they are correctly transmitted as the Zen Precepts. This is beyond conjecture. In our school it is called the “one great matter.” Truly, it is thus. The Inner Room Precept Platform manifests directly from Vairocana’s Nature Ocean, and the ritual of conferring and receiving is most rare and difficult to comprehend, as is the protecting and maintaining of the precepts.

In the first “delighting in killing life precept,” the Ancestral teachers’ killing cats (Nanquan in case 181 of Dōgen’s 300 koans), snakes (Guizhong in case 43 of Dōgen’s 300 koans), and worms (Changsha in case 20 of Dōgen’s 300 koans), was possible because their compassion for protecting life exceeds common sense. Since they were capable of understanding the bodhisattva mind-ground, they were able to do this. And in the tenth “disparaging the three treasures precept,” Vimalakirti disparaged Buddha, disparaged Dharma, and disparaged Sangha. This was possible because his faith in the three treasures exceeds common sense. Therefore, our view should not be limited to seeing only the breaking of the precepts. This is also the case for the other precepts between the first and tenth, and there are many cases for each, not just one. With the fleshly eyes, these cases may not look like maintaining standards of conduct (the first pure precept), but illumining with the Dharma eye, there is not even a hairsbreadth of violating standards of conduct. All of this is embracing and sustaining good qualities (the second pure precept) and benefiting living beings right where they abide (the third pure precept). If one doesn’t have true right view, how can one understand the signs of protecting and maintaining?

Therefore, since ancient times, outside our school’s Dharma inheritance, practitioners have not been allowed to open a precept platform and confer the precepts, for the sake of profit and fame, aggressively seeking disciples with unwholesome intentions. What is said in the Precepts Sutra cannot be taken lightly. Even for people who have inherited Dharma, their Dharma age (years since ordination) and virtue may not yet be ready. Therefore, it is not easy to establish the Precept Platform Ceremony. The causes and conditions of these times force me to say this, for the sake of future generations of people in the position of teacher, who advocate for and represent the Buddha.

In our school, of the three trainings, precepts (shila) is first, concentration (samadhi) and wisdom (prajna) are secondary. That’s why it is said that maintaining the precepts is leveling the ground, concentration is the house, and this produces wisdom. Each step is clearly illuminated. The power of concentration and wisdom is dignified and myriad actions are complete, up to attaining Buddha’s Way. All of them still take the precepts as the foundation. These are beneficial words, like moxibustion to treat illness. The first moxa stick is very hot and hard to bear, but if one says he can omit the first stick and just apply the second and third, this is absolutely no good. Dharma has the three trainings, which are also like this. The precepts are like the first stick of moxa, concentration and wisdom like the second and third. If one doesn’t follow this order, how can the severe illness of the afflictions (klesha) be treated? Receiving the precepts is not easy, and maintaining them is most difficult. It’s like carrying a floating pouch; if there

is even a pinhole, one cannot avoid sinking. It's like holding kusha grass; if one doesn't hold it securely, one's hand will be injured. It's like a vase of virtue; do not be arrogant or heedless. It's like taming a crazy elephant; one must not release the iron hook. Like this, one can receive and maintain the precepts until there is no sign of receiving and maintaining. This is called not grasping the true sign of the precepts. When there is no grasping the true sign of the precepts, there is a mind with no evil thoughts. This is called pure precepts. All buddhas praise this. How could it be otherwise?

Now my old grandmother mind is filled with urgency, so I've lost track of how long I've gone on like this. If someone were to ask me, "As the precepts have been mutually transmitted from teacher to teacher, from whom did Rochana Buddha (who first taught the bodhisattva precepts in the Brahmajala Sutra) receive the precepts?" I would only say to him, "The old unicorn horn walking stick." If he were to ask again, "From whom did the walking stick receive the precepts?" I would answer again, "This old monk hasn't been let down." Does everyone still have faith? Maybe not. Please listen to my verse:

Round and round, true emptiness.

Conferring and receiving, clearly no beginning or end.

Last night a golden bird flew into the ocean,

This morning all that remains is one circle of red.