

Patriarch Tianran's 101 Heartfelt Admonitions

English translation of 法苑珠林

101卷 . Translated via the distill pipeline.

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Entries 1–10

1

In this time of the final move, both pioneering new endeavors and safeguarding what has been built must work hand in hand — yet one must never cling rigidly to external forms or confine oneself to a single place. Hold fast to this benevolent vow, and Heaven will arrange the opportunities. As long as you are willing to serve and cultivate yourself, you will naturally draw in countless faithful seekers who share this affinity.

2

Cultivating and serving Dao must always be done through effortless action. Regard all beings as your benefactors across countless lifetimes. Dedicate your whole heart to Heaven, forgetting yourself entirely. Even if there are achievements, attribute them all to Heaven and to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Only then can you avoid falling into the struggle for Dao-name, Dao-profit, and Dao-power. The present state of the temple truly fills your teacher with regret and sorrow.

3

Future achievement does not lie in the size of the temple, nor in the number of prayer halls and temple buildings, still less in comparing how many followers one has. What matters is whether those who cultivate Dao truly cultivate and earnestly practice, uphold their vows and precepts, remain free from greed and delusion, refuse to contend or argue, and attain the mastery of bringing heart and nature into perfect harmony — so as to fulfill their own mission.

4

Let all beings and yourself achieve fulfillment in this very lifetime. If for now you cannot guide them across, then pray and offer blessings so that in future lives they too may find liberation and fulfillment. Recognize clearly your own conditions for cultivating Dao, and within the great cycle of bestowing grace and receiving kindness, establish a current of goodness flowing between Heaven and the human world.

5

Disciples of the White Era must cultivate a vast and open heart. Rejoice in the success of others. Praise the excellence of others. Honor the labor of others with reverence. Cultivate the spirit of letting the world laugh together with us, letting the universe laugh together with us, letting all beings laugh together with us.

6

The Sixth Patriarch said: "Inner humility of the heart is merit; treating all beings as equal is virtue." At every moment, hold a heart of gratitude and repentance. Observe the favorable and adverse conditions around you. Toward all of it, look with a heart that smiles, and you will be freed from a great deal of affliction.

7

In these final times, each person must transcend and resolve on their own. Toward all grace and resentment, affection and enmity, grievance and kinship — do not cling. Rather, within the natural flow of conditions, release yourself from every entanglement, and only then can you truly be free. Ordinary people cultivating Dao cannot, for the moment, be like the ancient sages who gave rise to the mind without dwelling on anything. Then let them begin here: give rise to the mind, yet dwell on nothing.

8

The wisdom ordeals that lie ahead for the temple are truly beyond what one dares imagine. Your teacher cannot settle your body and mind for you, my disciples. I can only hope that you will comprehend Heaven's heart, the Buddha's heart, and your teacher's heart, and cultivate Dao honestly, holding firm to your vows and precepts. As Elder Brother Lùtóng once said: "The sacred vessel of the world cannot be acted upon. Guard against this! Be cautious of this!"

9

If every disciple in the White Era temple would pray for the blessings of all beings, would bow in prostration to transform calamities and quell ordeals, then the gathering of such virtuous thought would surely reduce the calamities and ordeals of the world to their lowest measure. And Heaven above would certainly extend the years given to you for carrying out this work.

10

Those who cultivate Dao in the Dharma-ending age must give rise to a great vow-heart. Let your own heart rise until it beats as one with the hearts of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Otherwise, if you seek only the liberation of this present life, how will you ever enter the ocean of true Dharma?

Entries 11–20

11

In serving Dao, the work naturally involves guiding others, expounding the teachings, pioneering new regions, and establishing prayer halls. Yet one must not forget the practical work of caring for society's suffering and uplifting the people — supporting and promoting efforts such as caring for the poor, tending to the elderly, aiding orphans, protecting the environment, and assisting the intellectually disabled. Even the release of captive animals and the protection of wildlife deserve your support. All of these are ways of forming broad affinities with sentient beings of the ten directions. Do not dismiss such work as merely worldly. If you do not mend the worldly, how can you perfect the spiritual?

12

Your teacher faces every disciple fairly. The palm and the back of the hand are both flesh — I would never favor one over another. So long as you are willing to serve and willing to do the work, things will certainly be turned around for you. As for some of you expanding greatly while others progress slowly, that is largely a matter of conditions, and there is no need for envy. My hope is that my disciples' resolve will not waver. Your teacher blesses you deeply. Wait for the clouds to part, and you will see the bright moon. In the end, when all bitterness is spent, sweetness will come.

13

Toward the many tragedies in the world and the beings who have perished in disasters, you must offer a measure of compassion, grief, and sympathetic dedication of merit. When offering incense and performing prostrations morning and evening, you cannot pray only for the expansion of your temple's work. Otherwise, even if the work expands, you will lack the great compassion of shared being and unconditional loving-kindness toward those without affinity — those benevolent and merciful thoughts that define a practitioner's true character. Only by cultivating care for those unfortunate strangers with whom you have no connection can you draw those with affinity to come.

14

In fulfilling your vows, resolve your karmic ties. It is enough to express your heartfelt intention fully — do not create unnecessary entanglements, so that you may achieve liberation here and now, free as drifting clouds. Only then will you avoid falling into another layer of cause and effect, where in future lives and future ages you must still repay what is owed — which would be a misfortune in itself. In those early years, your teacher, in a moment of playfulness, wrote a few casual couplets on a whim, and planted the seeds of division in this life's temple community, causing disorder to appear across the Dao arena. I urge my disciples: be careful with your thoughts. Do not provoke emotional entanglements.

15

Your teacher may be a poor monk, but so long as you — throughout every level — harmonize your hearts and spirits and stand as one, how could your teacher turn a deaf ear? Even when conditions at this moment are not yet ripe, I still help in ways both visible and hidden, bestowing a great prayer hall upon every place. But if your own community's resolve cannot hold together, how can your teacher face the sorrowful gaze of the Buddhas of the ten directions? Truthfully, is that not putting your teacher in a difficult position?

16

Those who cultivate Dao must lighten their worldly attachments and deepen their sacred sentiments, remaining at ease and at peace wherever they are. A practitioner must never indulge in luxury, flaunt extravagance, or pursue grandeur. Your teacher is accustomed to poverty — one bowl, meals from a thousand homes; alone, wandering ten thousand miles — carefree and untrammelled. I simply cannot accept, nor can I train, these wealthy and privileged disciples.

17

For those who cultivate Dao, the sacred and the worldly must be clearly distinguished, and public and private affairs plainly separated. The slightest attachment and one easily goes astray. Since antiquity, where has there ever been a temple that used its sacred halls to conduct business? If you are greedy and grasping, Heaven will one day return to you exactly what you deserve, and perfection will elude you.

18

Regarding all the disputes and rumors within the temple, do not spread them to one another, and still less should you fan the flames. Cultivate a generous spirit of compassion and tolerance. If we treat others this way, Heaven will treat us the same.

19

In every thought, seek to open up future blessings for all beings. You must not seize power or hoard authority, damaging the good name of spiritual cultivation and harming innocent junior practitioners. Your teacher may be unworthy, but I have still left behind a temple in the human world for my disciples to carry on. I dare not make demands of you. I only hope you will safeguard it well and not betray the vastness of Heaven's grace.

20

Toward the suffering and disasters that befall sentient beings across the six realms, you should give rise within your heart to limitless care and prayer, hoping that they may soon encounter wholesome conditions and find the chance to transcend the sea of suffering.

Entries 21–30

21

Your teacher's whole heart yearns to offer heartfelt admonitions to those who stand at the front of your temple and manage its affairs — yet it remains impossible. This is simply because your hearts cannot resonate with mine. You cling too much to worldly rights and wrongs and to external forms, bustling anxiously through temple business all day yet never turning the light inward to illuminate the innate awakening of your original nature. Perhaps your teacher lacks virtue, and so cannot move you.

22

The Three Talents are not the exclusive possession of a single temple. Whenever there is an opportunity to help people see and complete Dao, your teacher is willing to go anywhere to strengthen the faith of all my disciples. If you fail to make good use of this, you will have squandered the whole arrangement of marvelous potential that Heaven bestowed.

23

In truth, Heaven has given your temple far too many opportunities. Regrettably, your hearts lack sincere and grateful acceptance. Toward the dozen-some long-standing cases of karmic grievance that came before you, you have harbored weariness and rejection, and so you have forfeited a deeper opportunity for cooperation with the spirits of the ten directions and the netherworld. Indirectly, this has caused the conditions for celestials of the atmospheric heavens to descend and manifest to stall or shift elsewhere. Your teacher says this not knowing whether the senior cultivators can accept it. Believing oneself free of clinging to appearances while in fact still clinging to appearances — that too is an obstacle.

24

Toward disciples who have already left the temple or withdrawn from Dao, your teacher cannot bear to abandon them or sever the bond. You, as fellow cultivators, how can you turn a deaf ear? All the more should you nourish a heart of prayer and blessing, hoping that Heaven shows compassion, wishing they may soon realize their error and find their way back. The more genuine your intent, the more surely you can move them to awaken and return.

25

Do not cling to annual fortune-readings. Do not grow dejected at adverse currents in your circumstances. When you make great vows and establish great resolve, and your heart resonates with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, a single thought can transcend three thousand worlds, going straight beyond the path of birth and death. Sentient beings of the ten directions are gathered into that resonance by the sincerity of a single thought — truly, what cause for rejoicing!

26

Do not over-emphasize how many prayer halls you have or how large the number of your Dao-kin, thereby breeding thoughts of rivalry and possessiveness. The slightest deviation gives rise to calculating, and one easily falls from Dao. Know this: Heaven's final evaluation of merit and assessment of results is based on moral character, precepts, thought-intention, vows carried into action, and spiritual refinement — these determine one's rise or fall, not externally acquired blessings or forms.

27

How many have already been swept, before their very eyes, into the trap of Dao-power, Dao-influence, and Dao-name without even knowing it — truly heartbreaking! If cultivators cling to these appearances to the very end without awakening, what more can be said? Your teacher and the Matriarch returned empty-handed in those days, leaving behind only the responsibility of the three realms and the earthly temple for you to carry on. Why then must you cling to "yours" and "mine" and fight over them?

28

Those who cultivated Dao before me and have passed on are the ancient sages. Those who entered the path before me are the senior cultivators. Those who walk the path alongside me are fellow cultivators. All are precious teachers and true friends — the great fortune of a thousand lifetimes. All deserve our respectful bows. Keep a humble heart at all times and learn Dao from them always.

29

Do not spend decades cultivating and serving Dao only for your wealth and fame to grow while your innate wisdom remains unmoved. That will forever be merely worldly blessing, nothing more.

Beings of the Dharma-ending age must see through this clearly.

30

Throughout the entire process of cultivating Dao, employing and relinquishing, acting and withdrawing, must be held in balance with one another. With the outer king's achievements, pioneer the four directions — this is the visible work of Dao. With the inner sage's virtue, elevate heart and nature — this is the invisible work of Dao. Only by both can there be true accomplishment.

Entries 31–40

31

Direct your thoughts to dedicate merit toward those suffering beings in the world who at this time have still not received deliverance. Pray that they may soon encounter wholesome conditions and be able to cultivate Dao and realize Dao. Or bless them so that, even if deliverance is not possible in this present life, they may in the next cosmic era attain Dao, realize Dao, and bring their suffering to an end.

32

Do not take the happiness and comfort you presently enjoy as sufficient. Be grateful for your current cultivation environment: even amid adversity and trials, it far surpasses the plight of beings in the realms of hell, hungry ghosts, and animals. How then can you complain or grow despondent? Nor should you become proud or complacent.

33

Throughout cultivation and service, continually elevate yourself and spur yourself onward, so that you may enrich the light of virtue and wisdom and lessen the grip of karmic forces.

34

Read often the classics of the sages and worthies. In reviewing the old to understand the new, you come to grasp the wondrous principle of one thread running through all, and thereby appreciate the painstaking heart behind their teachings.

35

Cultivate and serve Dao with an impartial and public-spirited heart, attributing all merit and achievement to Heavenly Mother and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. In this way you will not fall into the obstacle of following people in cultivation rather than following principle.

36

When perfecting your Dao-kin, be mindful of teaching according to each person's capacity. Guide everyone to bring forth their heavenly heart and heavenly nature, making the recognition of principle the essential focus of cultivation.

37

Ordeals will always come. The great wisdom ordeal of the White Era's final stage is close at hand, and everyone must be prepared. As the saying goes, "Settle into calmness to withstand wind and rain." My disciples, upon this game board of the Dao situation, you must pass through polishing and tempering before you can become great talents.

38

Strengthen the inner fortitude of your Dao-kin. Hold fast to the root of cultivation. Nurture that one spark of brightness within human nature. Even if Dao cannot be fully realized in this present life, preserve good thoughts so they do not dim. In future lives, through non-retrogression, transcendence becomes possible.

39

Cultivate a breadth of mind that sees nowhere that is not Principle-Heaven, nowhere that is not Pure Land. Then the wind of the Bodhi-Way will spread broadly across the human world. What worries would your teacher still have? I hope my disciples will seize every moment that life persists to open this kind of opportunity.

40

Follow the spirit of service that your predecessors embodied, and carry forward the unfolding of wisdom-life. Recognize principle and recognize Dao without diverging; do not follow personalities. Let each person give their utmost to steady the Dao situation.

Entries 41–50

41

Follow the scriptural teachings of the ancient sages: see the worthy and aspire to equal them, strictly observe the guiding principles, and admire virtue so as to advance — but never, under any circumstances, treat immortals, Buddhas, or any individual as an idol to be worshipped.

42

Follow the way of virtuous character and honor the commandments. Among Dao-kin, admonish and encourage one another, support and guide one another. Cultivate and serve together, and bring forth the family spirit of the great Maitreya household.

43

Do not let greed and anger give rise to indignation over perceived injustice. Under the great principle of freedom from greed and delusion, cultivating with sincerity and genuineness, follow the instructions bequeathed by your predecessors. Broadly proclaim the selflessness of the Great Dao, in the spirit of bringing relief to all under heaven. As for rights and wrongs — Heaven itself will render fair judgment. There is no need for argument, lest it create divisions within the temple.

44

A hundred rivers converge into the sea — in the end, all return to one source. As long as you truly cultivate and truly serve, people may fail you, but Heaven never will. In the Dao situation of the future, where fish and dragons shift through a hundred transformations, hold fast to your own mission and responsibility.

45

Transmitting masters must be upright and proper, open and candid, dignified and presentable in how they conduct themselves and cultivate Dao. Only then will they avoid contaminating their own Heavenly Mandate.

46

The promotion of transmitting masters, lecturers, and the Three Talents requires careful deliberation. It must not be done in disorder, lest one lose the great for the sake of the small.

47

White Era temples are already far too many — what does this tell us? When your teacher and the Matriarch were alive, what grand temple did we have? And how did we carry out the work of Dao? This is worthy of my disciples' reflection!

48

Only the heartfelt aspiration of newly initiated Dao-kin — those with the freshness of initial resolve — can truly be counted as pure, sincere, and unadorned. Senior Dao-kin, by contrast, have been unable to keep their feet on solid ground or to free themselves from the confusion of right and wrong turned upside down.

49

This great White Era ordeal is imminent — right before your eyes — and it will be the dividing line of Heaven's evolutionary winnowing. The worldly situation, the Dao situation, the human situation: all are changing, and even your teacher cannot bring balance.

50

Every person's rising or falling is tightly bound to nine generations above and seven below. How can a cultivator of Dao not be cautious and careful?

Entries 51–60

51

If in ordinary times you do not read the written teachings of the sages, you cannot truly appreciate the aspirations and resolve of the sages. When danger and hardship come, how then will you calmly face the choice between life and death, between ascent and descent?

52

Your teacher's heart is weary — who can understand this? Who can share this burden? My hope is that you, advancing, can serve; retreating, can cultivate. Just as your teacher has said: In cultivating Dao, cultivate the heart. In serving Dao, give your whole heart. In refining yourself, save others. You must carry through from beginning to end.

53

One who cultivates Dao, before having completed the path, must never harbor greedy thoughts or vain imaginings, nor claim one's own merit and achievement. A single errant thought, and you fall into the snare of the demonic path.

54

Hold yourself to the strictest discipline, yet treat others with generosity and magnanimity. Always carry a heart of forgiveness, and forever keep open the road of return for Dao-kin who know remorse.

55

If you seek only liberation in this present life, then your bond with your teacher lasts merely this one lifetime. But if you arouse vast bodhi-minded compassion, broadly forming wholesome conditions to benefit all beings, then in the next cosmic era we will surely meet again — accompanying your teacher to transform the sahā world, as friends life after life, age after age. This is the undying heroic vow of compassion of all who cultivate Dao.

56

Cherish the thought-impulse of every minute, every second. Safeguard this one point of spiritual light within your life.

57

The heavenly timing is dire and urgent — all beings stand now amid great calamity. How can you not seize the time and pour yourselves fully into cultivation and service? Where is there leisure to judge others' strengths and shortcomings? How much time do you have to waste?

58

My disciples! The heavenly timing no longer permits you to be slack or delay. Strive with all your might for diligent progress, and do not betray the grace of the Buddhas who assist in your transformation — and who wait for you still.

59

If along the path of cultivation and service there were no ordeals, no interpersonal setbacks, how would you develop deep virtue and elevate your inner nature? I hope you comprehend this truth: do not breed resentment or create vexation amid adversity, for that only invites your own downfall.

60

Cherish every ordeal that can bring about your own perfection. Respect every being's viewpoint and criticism. Learn to accept the guidance and even the harsh reproach of others, receiving it all with a spirit of harmonious joy. Your teacher will bless you for this — for in doing so, you not only perfect your character but also create a peaceful and harmonious temple.

Entries 61–70

61

Pray for the multitudes of this suffering world — may they, too, find accomplishment. If you, my disciples, can live up to what is expected of you, your teacher can worry less and turn this love and concern toward others, hastening the arrival of their wholesome conditions.

62

At all times, cherish all conditions — yet cling to none of them. Then no condition will become an obstacle on the path of cultivating Dao.

63

Respect the immortals and Buddhas, yet do not cling to their forms.

64

Release the self. Reduce needless disturbances. Do not let the emotional bonds you have known be destroyed in an instant.

65

Maintain the wakefulness of this thought-impulse, yet do not obsessively cling to it — only then can future lives be free of delusion.

66

Forever maintain sincere faith in cultivating Dao, regardless of whether circumstances within and without are favorable or adverse.

67

Learn the Matriarch's concealment.

68

The precepts of the Three Purities must be observed. Keep public and private clearly distinct. Do not take advantage of any sentient being.

69

Do not merely discuss others' rights and wrongs. Look instead for their good qualities. Discover the beauty and simplicity of human nature — this alone is prajñā wisdom.

70

In perfecting talent, attend to genuine virtue. A gifted soul, a hero, achieves amid applause; just as surely, a person of outstanding character can be lost amid indifference.

Entries 71–80

71

When promoting talent, ensure that name and substance correspond — only then will you avoid delaying heavenly timing and human affairs.

72

A cultivator of Dao must at all times release the encumbrances within the body and outside the body, within the mind and outside the mind. Only then will one be free and at ease.

73

Learn to become a clear stream amid a muddied world, a single candle flame in the storm and dark of night.

74

Thoroughly honest talent, thoroughly dutiful cultivation — that is what Heaven most dearly loves.

75

A cultivator of Dao must become proficient in all the Buddhahood Precepts and ceremonial etiquette. This is an essential discipline of cultivating Dao.

76

When you encounter grave problems that resist resolution, prostrate often before Heavenly Mother. Where sincerity reaches its fullest, the answer comes of itself. That first thought-impulse arising within self-forgetting is precisely Heaven's revelation to you. When your teacher encountered difficult problems in those years, this is exactly what he did.

77

Respect the conditions of all temples and all sentient beings. Cultivate and serve with your whole heart. Do not prove unworthy of this opportunity that comes once in sixty thousand years.

78

This expanse of Dao work you uphold and tend does not belong to anyone — it belongs to Heavenly Mother. The leadership of human affairs is merely the surface appearance of conditions coming into contact. Therefore, never harbor the thought: "For whose sake am I cultivating Dao?" Broaden your heart and elevate the ideals of cultivating and serving. In the seeing and completing of Dao, broadly form wholesome affinities. Within the turning of heaven and earth, open new temples, enabling every person to achieve. Even should there be a small measure of accomplishment, dedicate that merit in gratitude, returning it to our Heavenly Mother.

79

Right at this moment, how many sentient beings are suffering and cycling through rebirth? How many cultivators are drowning and undergoing ordeals? When you think of this, can you know how much your teacher's heart suffers? I hope that you will, in this very present moment, pray and dedicate merit for the tens of millions of sentient beings.

80

Seek to understand the circumstances and feelings of those in your care. Help them find the resolution of their doubts and liberation. No one is a sage — who among us is without faults of the heart and faults of the body? With a forgiving heart, help them leave behind the torment of remorse and suffering, and wait for their turning back and renewal.

Entries 81–90

81

The Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings of the three realms and ten directions are all rejoicing over this occasion of universal deliverance through Maitreya's destined advent. They exhaust their compassionate vows and exert their full strength working toward the Great Gathering across the three realms. Yet it is in the human realm that this great work is guided and completed. My disciples! You who are White Era cultivators should seize this auspicious period well. Without envy or craving, truly and sincerely cultivate — only then will you not fail the transforming assistance of heaven and humanity.

82

In these final times, all truth and falsehood, good and evil, worthy and unworthy are gradually being revealed. This is not Heaven setting tests. It is the cultivator's own mentality deviating and falling — all because Dao-name, Dao-power, and Dao-influence cannot be seen through, compounded by disputes over human affairs. Demons arise from the mind; ordeals are self-invited. Therefore, in cultivating Dao one must carefully guard the subtlest, most hidden thoughts.

83

Your teacher lacks talent and virtue. I was unable to inspire my disciples to practice cultivation consistently from beginning to end, and as a result the temple has devolved into today's condition — splintered into factions, each seizing its own power. I only regret that your teacher did not remain longer in the human world to exert a little more effort. How many people have managed a temple of wondrous and unsurpassed virtue as though it were child's play! I am ashamed before the grace of Heaven and the trust entrusted by the patriarchs.

84

Cultivators of Dao in the human realm are excessively attached to merit and external forms. Every time they establish a piece of Dao work, they attract boundless interference and create layer upon layer of karmic consequences. On the contrary, they are less easily taught than the ghosts and spirits of the netherworld and the karmic creditors — beings who are already suffering and dare not seek more through greed. Those beings merely wish to kneel and listen to a single dharma

assembly, to bathe in the Buddha-light, and thereby can immediately release greed, anger, ignorance, and arrogance, giving rise to no deluded thoughts of merit or rank. In gratitude and repentance they await the direction of the Immortals and Buddhas, assist the Dao work in various places, and at that very moment transcend the sea of suffering. This is precisely the extraordinary merit of delivering the netherworld.

85

In the netherworld realm there are likewise administrative staff, lecturers, and instructors upholding the Heavenly Dao, assisting the Ancient Buddha Dizang in caring for souls awaiting deliverance. Being in the hells, they deeply know suffering. Their gratitude toward Divine Grace and Saintly Virtue is especially genuine and heartfelt, and they are free of the worldly mind of gossip and dispute. Therefore Heavenly Mother often commends them. My disciples should redouble their efforts, lest your teacher and the Matriarch be left to worry.

86

Today's temple presents an impressive outward appearance, and the Living Buddha's disciples fill the world. By rights one should rejoice. Yet your teacher instead feels shame. I am merely the Crazy Monk, bearing in vain the title of Guide-Teacher of the Three Realms. All glory belongs to the grace of Heaven and the vast compassion of the patriarchs. The unfolding of Dao work likewise depends on the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions upholding and protecting it — by Heavenly Mother's command, silently turning heaven and earth. The virtue of the nameless does not show itself. My disciples, without them, how could our generation have spread Dao across the four seas and broadly formed wholesome affinities? I wish that you would always deeply revere the grace of the Buddhas.

87

Towering temple halls and solemn Buddha halls are certainly not dispensable. But if those who cultivate and serve only compete over external forms, the original intent of Dao is lost. In those years, your teacher did not even have a single temple. With empty sleeves and a clean breeze, I wandered the world, equally free and unhindered. In the present time, heavenly timing is limited. It would be better to take the charitable funds sincerely offered by sentient beings and use them for relieving human suffering, supporting environmental protection, and providing medical aid. This too is a wholesome path for White Era cultivators.

88

At this moment, the earth is riddled with a thousand wounds. If you do not exert your full effort to repair and remediate it, this beautiful planet will wither and perish in your hands. The Immortals and Buddhas of all the dharma realms are worried on your behalf. My disciples! Beyond the environmental protection of spirit and morality, you must also commit concretely to action in maintaining the natural environment.

89

The advancement of Dao work depends half on human effort and half on heavenly power. When sincerity moves Heaven's heart and conditions ripen, the day naturally comes when water finds its channel. The expansion of Dao work is certainly cause for rejoicing, but you must not neglect the rescue of suffering sentient beings throughout the world. Today's turmoil in Somalia, the chaos in Bosnia, the upheaval in Cambodia, the suffering of the Kurdish people — all of them are Heavenly Mother's children, your relatives across accumulated lifetimes. I hope you will pray and dedicate merit often. If you are able, swiftly and concretely commit to relief.

90

Cultivate Dao solidly and genuinely. Properly uphold and protect the wisdom-life of the Dao arena. Your teacher has nothing to bequeath. I only hope my disciples will treat well the thousands upon thousands of brothers and sisters who truly cultivate and earnestly practice — let them rise, achieve, and return to Principle-Heaven. The ancient sages said: "To attain unsurpassed Buddhahood, first become the ox and horse of all beings." A cultivator of Dao should let sentient beings step upon my shoulders to achieve Dao. Your teacher is willing, together with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, to pave with flesh and blood a stable path for sentient beings to cultivate Dao and attain Buddhahood.

Entries 91–101

91

Strictly speaking, what merit does the immense toil and suffering expended by cultivators on the path of cultivating and serving actually amount to? Even if there is some small measure of merit, one must still repay karmic debts, return ancestral kindness, pray for peace, and prepare provisions for the journey — and furthermore deduct the negative ledger of daily transgressions. My disciples! Do you still dare to praise yourselves and boast, to be conceited about your own merit?

92

Last time, your teacher urged you to learn the Matriarch's "concealment." Perhaps you did not deeply understand. Now let me explain clearly. A cultivator of Dao should learn from her, the venerable one — her name concealed from the human world, her form concealed from the three realms, her merit concealed within the aspiration of heavenly purpose. Your teacher's crazy reputation and crazy appearance the whole world knows. Yet how many can perceive the Matriarch's wisdom-virtue? She truly surpasses me by a full measure. Therefore, in these final times, conceal brilliance and nurture in obscurity. Restrain your name and conceal your virtue. Do not let external forms steal the light of Divine Grace and Saintly Virtue from the heart-fields of sentient beings.

93

In the future, the strange phantasms of thirty-six false patriarchs and seventy-two false Maitreyas will arise — all born from within the mind, not from external circumstances. What we see now — temples splintered into factions, fighting over power and seizing influence — is caused by selfish minds taking root, demonic spirits exploiting the opening, and the heavenly sovereign within abdicating its throne. If you do not become aware, you will fall into deviation without even knowing it. I hope my disciples will diligently cultivate the three trainings of discipline, concentration, and wisdom, using true wisdom to shatter boundless ignorance, and cultivate Dao with openness and integrity — only then will you not be led astray by temptation.

94

Those who cultivate Dao must be proper and upright, sincere and earnest. Even the humblest junior disciple who sweeps latrines and wipes towels can one day attain Heaven's rank. If you only seek to put on a show, cling to merit, consider yourself a noble person yet lack the generosity, compassion, and gentleness to guide others, then it will be hard to accord with Heaven's heart, and your attainment will be limited. Moreover, attaining Dao in one lifetime does not guarantee you will never regress. Therefore cultivate the utmost purity, sincerity, and authenticity, bearing toil and blame without complaint — and above all, always treat with kindness those beings who have not yet been saved and not yet awakened.

95

Those who serve as the Three Talents must be clear, still, and luminous — purely aligned with Heaven's heart, turning heaven and earth. Hold constantly to the mindset of non-action, selflessness, and seeing and completing Dao; only then can you bring to completion boundless sentient beings, and your merit will be no less than that of an Elder who pioneered Dao across an entire region. But if you dwell too long in human intentions and forget the seal-contract between Heaven and Buddha, you will easily fall into difficulty, unable to access the subtle mysteries, and find it hard to enter the perfectly harmonious great transformation of all Buddhas. With your vows unfulfilled, how will you one day return to South-Flower Palace to report on your mission?

96

To have jumped free of the worldly arena of fame and profit is already no easy feat — do not fall into yet another whirlpool: treating organizational forms and external structures as the purpose itself. These are merely expedient arrangements — assign dedicated people to coordinate with governance requirements and be done with it. Grand Elders need not cling to their positions. Know that the universal salvation of the Heavenly Way still silently draws in the worthy and virtuous, and the gentleman's virtue is subtle yet daily more radiant. Do not only hear applause in media promotions while losing the heart of the ancient sages who accepted their charge in times of crisis and bore the weight of sacred entrustment. What your teacher and the Matriarch left you is the Dao arena, not a church.

97

Those who cultivate Dao in the age of declining dharma must carefully guard their thought-impulses, for the slightest deviation leads to their own ruin. The karmic creditors of sentient beings, accumulated over countless eons, and the asura realm have already tacitly agreed: they will no longer demand lives or seize merit, but will wait for the person's own thought-impulses to deviate, causing the sacred spirit within to rebel, implicating nine generations above and seven below, and thereby fragmenting and dissolving the Dao work. Disciples, just look at the chaos in certain

temples — will you not quickly alert yourselves, reflect, and awaken?

98

Never contend for merit or seize accolades in the temple, pass judgment on whether other lineages' Heavenly Mandate is real or false, or force fellow devotees to be re-initiated. Some even say, within the same Grand Elder's congregation, that each other's initiations are invalid. Can it be that the most sacred pointing entrusted by Heavenly Mother and the Patriarch turns to gold only in your hand but to iron in another's? Absurd! A single thought of greed and delusion, a single word of false accusation, injures the painstaking effort of patriarchs through the ages who protected this lifeline, and commits the grave offense of shedding the Buddha's blood and splitting the sangha. So long as you do not defy Heaven, betray the patriarchs, or exalt yourself, each lineage's Heavenly Mandate is the responsibility of its own Elders, who answer to Heaven. The golden thread of the Heavenly Mandate is anchored in the moral foundation of those who truly cultivate and earnestly serve. I hope my disciples will respect the lineage origins, perfect one another, and together protect the harmony of the temple across the three realms.

99

Your teacher has just returned from the northeast of China, where the asuras' methods were savage. Nearly a hundred disciples shouldered the catastrophe, and in their extremity still upheld their vows, going to righteousness and laying down their lives, crying out for the compassion of their teacher. I knew they had to complete their humaneness along a path where power could not bend them. I wished to save them but could not — my grief was beyond measure! For decades, countless disciples in that land have protected the wisdom-life amid an ocean of blood and purgatory, truly cultivating and earnestly practicing, neither craving nor seeking. Disciples in temples of free nations are far from their equal! If you still do not cherish Divine Grace and cling to disputes, then the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first levels of hell await your descent!

100

It is not yet time for large-scale Dao work in mainland China, though if conditions permit, you may go to plant seeds. But you must be cautious and protect yourselves — do not come to harm through carelessness. And do not contact the Grand Elders of former days, lest you endanger them. This is the Maitreya Patriarch's strategy for protecting the Dao seeds. The Heavenly timing has arrived for the great reckoning — my disciples! Those who cultivate and serve must entrust their lives to Heaven, giving heart and strength to truly cultivate and earnestly serve. Be confused no longer!

In those years when your teacher cultivated and served, I was merely a transmitting master, bearing largely the responsibility of transmitting the orthodox lineage. From the time the Matriarch and I received the Heavenly Mandate at the Eight-Trigram Furnace, I served only seventeen years before departing. All accomplishments are Heaven's grace — how would I dare claim credit! Now many transmitting masters have served in Dao longer than your teacher did, so ask yourselves: do your moral character, genuine merit, and real virtue match your titles and positions? After the senior generation departed, instead of repaying grace, fulfilling vows, and protecting the temple, you erected your own hilltops, recruited junior members to your factions, and attacked one another, leaving tens of thousands of devotees lost and bewildered. How does this answer to Heavenly Mother and the Buddhas of all directions? Your teacher lacks virtue — perhaps I should surrender the title of Honored Teacher of the Three Realms! Disciples, summon your resolve: everything in this world is merely external forms — do not let external forms invert your true suchness and Buddha-nature. Can you understand your teacher's anguished heart?
