Chapter 18: Repentance and Correcting Faults

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Repentance means confessing and laying bare. Remorse means regretting and reforming. Repentance and correcting faults means confessing and declaring one's past transgressions and renewing one's future conduct. Therefore repentance is the foremost essential for us cultivators of Dao. In our daily dealings with people and encounters with situations, we are invariably biased or skewed, creating all manner of transgressions. If we do not sincerely repent and correct our faults, how can we accomplish Dao? As the saying goes: "In Heaven there are no immortals or Buddhas who carry transgressions; in the human world there are no officials who bear guilt." This is precisely the meaning.

Therefore, repentance in this present life is undertaken for the sake of the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras — repenting so that one's own spirit may escape suffering; repenting so as to nurture and become a pure and complete person; repenting so that one's ancestors in the spiritual realm may be delivered and ascend. The true meaning of repentance — I hope each of you will by no means neglect it. In the Repentance Text that we recite every day:

> “ Maitreya, the Ancestral Patriarch, whose wondrous Dharma is boundless, shelters and protects all sentient beings. Repent before the Buddha, correct faults and renew oneself, and together be recorded in the Heavenly Register.

This too is saying that in our cultivation of Dao, if we do not repent and renew ourselves daily, it will always be difficult to reach the hope of complete fulfillment.

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