



## Repentance: A Pure, Wonderful Dharma Door (continued)

### 禮懺：三乘清淨妙法門（續）

Q & A with Dharma Master Heng Chih during the 2016 Ten Thousand Buddhas' Jeweled Repentance

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恒持法師2016年萬佛寶懺問答訪談  
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**Question:** As you have continued practicing repentance (beyond that first week's experience,) has it changed over time?

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** We studied the *Shurangama Sutra*. The *Shurangama Sutra* is profound. It is profound in large part because it actually explains what's going on in the world today. Some of the other Mahayana sutras deal with much more expansive, esoteric, and philosophical things. But, the *Shurangama Sutra* gets down to the nitty-gritty of why we are, who we are and how we came to be all of that, so that was easy. The Master was explaining that sutra, and so then as things came up, they would also come up in our meditation, during the six or seven hours a day when we sat.

In the beginning, we didn't have the language (Chinese). We were Americans. We didn't recite sutras like those in the countries where Buddhism flourishes, such as the daily chanting of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* here at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. In the beginning, the Master did not teach us to chant sutras because the sutras were not yet in English. So, there were many rituals that came later. The meng shan, sutra recitation, and bowing repentances came much later.

The concentration at the beginning in terms of repentance was the *Shurangama Mantra*. It was the catalyst along with meditation and, of course, the presence of the Master. We were learning the mantra by heart, and it was extremely powerful. I truly believe—I don't have any proof, but I truly believe—that it was the catalyst for helping us get ourselves cleaned up.

問題：（在第一個禮拜的經驗之後）您繼續修懺悔法門，是不是後來有所改變？

恒持法師：我們學了《楞嚴經》，那是一部很奧妙的經，之所以奧妙，是因為它其實就在解釋這個世界發生的事。其他大乘經典傾向解釋廣泛深奧、哲學性的事物，但《楞嚴經》不一樣，它講的是根本問題：我們為什麼會在這裡、我們是誰，還有我們是怎麼來的，簡單多了。上人講解《楞嚴經》，然後一切就慢慢浮現上來；同樣的情形也發生在打坐時，在每天六、七個小時的打坐中。

一開始，我們完全沒有中文的背景。我們是美國人，沒辦法像那些佛教國家的人誦經，就像聖城每天早上唸《華嚴經》。所以一開始師父沒有教我們誦經，因為還沒有英文版的經文，很多像蒙山、誦經這些儀軌都是後來才有的，拜懺是更晚期才出現。

懺悔最開始集中於《楞嚴咒》，它和打坐同是催化劑，當然還有上人。我們很用心學習《楞嚴咒》，而且可以感受它強大的力量。我真的相信——當然我沒辦法證明，但是我真的相信——它就是幫助我們淨化自己的催化劑。

**Question: Can you say something about the nature of the connection between repentance and transference of merit?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** I can try. Repentance is done in terms of karma. There's karma before the act, during the act, and after the act. That is we have a mind-set before we do something. For instance, if you plan it before the act, you premeditate it. So you can premeditate a good deed, or you can premeditate a bad deed. You can't change that after it's happened. After you've gone from premeditating to doing it, you can't really go back to the premeditation at the point. You could stop in the middle of doing it and not do it, you could change what you thought you were going to do in the premeditation once you start doing it. But you can't change however much you've done. So, repentance deals with the last of the three aspects involved in creating karma—which is after the fact.

By repenting, you can change your karma. You can lighten your karma by being sorry. That is in the vinaya, and there are actually formulas for that detailing, how much you're able to lighten your karma and so forth. It's complicated. But in general, if you sincerely repent after the fact, you can change the weight of what you did. Suppose you did something good, suppose you decide you were going to be philanthropic and you wanted to give money to a hospital. You premeditate, you decide which hospital and you do it, and then after the fact you're left with the good karma of having done it. But you can change the weight of that outcome. Say in addition you transfer the merit—then there is even more goodness generated.

The same would be true if you did a negative act and you were sorry. Through your repentance you can change the weight of that bad deed. Say you're bowing now, and you remember something you did, and so you bow every day and then transfer the merit at the end of the day. The transfer of merit is going to increase the benefits of repentance. It can change your karma after the fact. It can lighten it. In the case of a good deed, it can expand it.

So in your question that begins “Many repentance liturgies tell us to repent for horrible things, killing our parents...” you ask if we found that hard to believe—that we had done such things in the past. For my part, I just ask myself: “How do we know we didn't do those things?” And that's pretty much how I handled that. They sound very far-fetched if you will, or way beyond the scope of our particular human capabilities, and yet how do we know we didn't? So, what does it hurt to repent of those things? We might have done them, so we may as well.

**問題：您能談一談懺悔跟功德迴向兩者關係的本質？**

**恒持法師：**我可以試試。懺悔是就業力而言，在行為之前、行為期間和行為之後都涉及業。做任何事之前，我們都有心態準備，例如行動之前已有計畫，就是有所預謀了。所以你可以計劃做好事，也可以預謀做壞事。但是事情一旦發生，你就無法改變它；行動完成，就沒有辦法再回到預謀階段。你可以在中途停止，然後不去做它；你也可以在剛開始的時候，改變主意。但是一旦達成，就沒辦法改變了。因此，懺悔跟造業的三個時程中的最後一個有關，也就是在事實發生之後。

懺悔可以改變業力，道歉可以減輕業力。這在佛教的戒律中都有談到，譬如能減輕多少業力等等，都有依據可循，不過挺複雜的。原則上就是，如果你事後誠心懺悔，你是可以改變這個業力。假設你做一件好事，譬如你想做慈善，想捐錢給醫院，你先計畫好，決定好捐給哪一家醫院就去做。因為做了這件事，你造了善業；如果你迴向這個功德，還可以讓這個善業輾轉增勝。

懺悔罪業也是同樣的道理，藉由懺悔可以破壞惡業的力量。譬如現在拜萬佛懺，如果你回想起過去做過的一些事，那麼你每天拜佛懺悔，結束之後迴向功德。這個迴向會增加你拜懺的利益，讓事後的惡業力量改變和減輕；如果是善業，就可以增加它的力量和功德。

你有一個問題說：「許多懺文要我們去懺悔一些可怕的事情，例如弑害父母…。我們是否很難去相信自己前生曾經做過那種事？」對我而言，我只問自己：「我怎麼知道我沒有做過那些事？」我就是用這樣的態度去面對。你可能覺得這想法很牽強或者超出人力範圍，但是我們怎麼知道我們沒有呢？所以懺悔會有什麼損失嗎？我們有可能做過，所以我們也可以懺悔。

**Question: We watch the news, and it's not theory. It's heart rending real problems. How to have compassion for some of the things going on, some of the people who do atrocious things?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** The *Shurangama Mantra*, can even mitigate the most horrific things we might have done—and that others are doing. But there has to be a lot of trust in the mantra and some actual practice of it, study of it, understanding of it.

**Question: Can you talk about your own process in terms of past lives?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Are we talking about horrible things? I don't have any knowledge of past lives nor am I particularly interested in trying to dig them up. I certainly continue to repent of all of these horrific things. I'm not sure what else to say about my "process." I have no spiritual powers, so I don't see beyond what you see.

**Audience:** But you do the repentance is the point.

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Sure. It's wonderful.

**Audience:** Why is it wonderful?

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** First of all, you clean yourself up. Some may ask "What does cleaning mean?" I guess you have to experience it to know it, and I suspect many of you have. You know, you go in and bow and pretty soon you're all tingly and lighter and more positive in your mind set, and those are things that just seem to happen when you do repentance. Maybe it's a humbling factor, maybe it's the fact that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are protecting us respond, give us a shot in the arm or whatever. So, that's always verifiable to me.

**Question: Have you ever had a memorable repentance experience yourself?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** Well, I won't talk about it personally, though, yes, of course, I have. But I'll describe a system called "Tell the assembly" that the Master set it up. Using this method of repentance, the four assemblies together listening. If someone wanted to repent, the Master would first have the person let him know basically what he was going to talk about before it happened. And the Master might offer some guidance. But then, the person wishing to repent would go to the center of the hall and very formally, with the sitting cloth opened up completely—like when we request Dharma—make three bows, kneel and then speak to the master, but everybody got to listen.

**問題：我們經常看到令人憂心的新聞，那不是理論，是很實際的社會問題。我們如何對這些發生的事、這些窮凶惡極之人，生慈悲心？**

**恒持法師：**《楞嚴咒》可以減輕我們過去所做的極惡之事，甚至其他人正在做的。但這必須對《楞嚴咒》要有真實的信心，腳踏實地認真去讀誦、學習和認識這個咒。

**問題：可以談談關於過去生的這個部份嗎？**

**恒持法師：**你是說那些很糟糕的事嗎？我對前世沒有概念，也沒興趣去發掘它，當然我持續懺悔那些不好的事情。對於「這個部分」我不知道該說什麼，我沒有神通，能看到的也不會比你多。

**聽眾：**但重點是您懺悔。

**恒持法師：**當然，那很殊勝。

**聽眾：**為什麼很殊勝？

**恒持法師：**首先是得到淨化。有些人會問：「什麼是淨化？」我想這必須自己經歷過才知道。你們很多人或許都有過這種經驗，你走進大殿拜佛，拜著拜著……，你內心有些觸動，心態漸漸放鬆而正面。懺悔的時候，這些情形經常就會發生，也許是因為內心變得謙卑，或是佛菩薩護念我們所給的回應，鼓勵我們再接再厲，諸如此類的原因。對我而言，這是可以驗證的事實。

**問題：您有過印象深刻的懺悔嗎？**

**恒持法師：**當然有，但是我不會在這裡提。過去我們有一種叫做「無遮懺悔」，是師父設立的，這種懺悔方式是四眾弟子都可以參加，一起來聽。如果有人想要懺悔，師父會要這個人事先跟他說要懺悔的內容，可能會給這個人一些指導。之後要懺悔的人就走到大殿中央，很正式地展開坐具，就像平常請法——頂禮三

And, it was very effective, because if you could pull up the dark things that you never want to look at and actually verbalize them—they would go away.

The Mahayana verse in liberating life ceremony is the one that says: if you can forget about your karmic offenses then they are gone. It's a very good verse description of what happens in repentance. And that's what would happen! It wasn't like something you got; it was as though something you gave away. So, those of us listening, after many of those—could tell almost immediately when someone started their repentance whether or not it was going to be effective or not, because you could tell whether they dug deep enough and were brave enough to talk about what they had done.

And if they could do that, then the things would go away. That is one kind of repentance formula; there are other ways repentance can happen, some of which are more individual. I try to do a lot of counseling, listening to people, and that's one way repentance seems to show up if the person feels safe enough.

**Question: How is the experience of the ten thousand buddhas' repentance, different from some other ?**

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** The emperor Liang's repentance was written by a Ch'an Master for Emperor Liang for what he needed. The Water Repentance was written by a Ch'an Master for another emperor who needed something. So, there's a historic context to some of the repentances. That doesn't mean that they don't have a universal function, beyond being able to do what it was initially written to do.

But, the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance doesn't derive its beginnings from something historic. I don't think of it that way; I see it as being a template for the scope of the Mahayana. The Buddha's names just go on and on and on, and you realize that each one of them has a world, and that those worlds have locations, and those Buddhas have their retinues, and you know the whole thing is huge.

**Question: This is a really beginner level question that I'm embarrassed to ask. When we say these names, are we inviting them into the hall with us? Are they coming? Are these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas invoked and come to oversee us?**

拜之後長跪，然後公開向上人稟告，在場的每個人都聽得到。這種懺悔方式很有效，因為如果你能把自己從不願正視的那些黑暗面發露出來，它們就消失了。

大乘的放生儀軌中，有一個懺悔偈說：「心亡罪滅兩俱空，是則名為真懺悔。」可謂一語道破懺悔的功效，而且是真實會發生的！懺悔這個法門，不是你能得到什麼，而是你能放棄什麼。參加過許多次的無遮懺悔之後，每當有人開始懺悔，我們在旁邊聽的人幾乎可以馬上感覺到，這個人的懺悔有效或無效，因為你可以感覺到他們挖得夠不夠深，以及夠不夠勇敢吐露自己做過的事。

如果他們真能做到，那麼罪業就會消失。那是懺悔的一種方式，另外也有其他幾種，同樣可以達到懺悔的目的，有些是比較個人的。我試著提供很多諮商，傾聽對方吐露，在對方感覺有足夠安全感時，似乎也達到懺悔的效果。

**問題：萬佛懺跟其他懺有什麼不同？**

**恒持法師：**《梁皇寶懺》是一位禪師應梁武帝的要求而作，《三昧水懺》也是一位禪師應另一位皇帝的要求而作。雖然其中部分懺文有歷史背景，但並不意謂這部懺僅止於當初著述的本意，而不適用於大眾。

但是萬佛懺的源起，就不是出於某個歷史事件，至少我不這麼認為。對我而言，它表現了大乘佛法的空間觀，稱唸著一尊又一尊的諸佛洪名，觀想著每一尊佛都有祂教化的世界，這個世界在某一個方位，裡面住著諸佛的眷屬，於是你知道原來空間是這麼遼闊。

**問題：很不好意思，我想問一個非常粗淺的問題。當稱唸佛名的時候，是不是邀請祂們來大殿？他們會來嗎？那些應邀來的佛菩薩，會不會來監督我們？**

**恒持法師：**你可以這麼說，這完全看你如何去看待。的確，有些儀軌確實是在迎請。在傳授三皈五戒時，傳戒和尚確實需要邀請諸佛降臨。

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** I guess you can say that. I think it's going to be what your take on it is. But, yes, there are some rituals where you are definitely inviting. When the Three Refuges and Five Precepts are transmitted, the presiding monks do invite the Buddhas.

In the contemplation during bowing in the *Great Compassion Repentance*, it's layer upon layer, I see myself here in this bubble, but I also see that bubble and that Buddha and me bowing and all these different, so it can expand out. There are also Contemplations of the Dharma Realm that are associated with the Avatamsaka, and they do that.

**Audience:** Those are quite amazing because also you see, it's personal and also beyond the limitation of your personal-ness. It's both at the same time. That to me is just wow, quite amazing.

**Question:** We've discussed the action. What about emotions in bowing?

**Dharma Master Heng Chih:** They diminish with cultivation. According to the Master's way of teaching, it's not that you cry and it's cathartic; he would say, you cry and the ghosts come. You leave a place open for them.

The impact of emotions is discussed in the *Shurangama Sutra*: The Buddha charts from pure reason to total emotion, using the analogy of air and water. Water, representing emotion, flows down; air, representing reason, rises up. The obvious extension of that analogy is to change the emotion into reason and not cognitive reason, but wisdom. So, although many people experience emotions when they first encounter Buddhism, or when they sincerely repent, clearly the object is to diminish the emotions.

Finally, let us discuss the meaning of **Karmavachana**. It's a formal meeting. Everything in the vinaya done by the Sangha formally is a karmavachana. For instance, Taking Refuge is karmavachana. When a karmavachana is needed, there is usually an initial announcement and then during the meeting itself there will be three announcements followed by three responses. So, in Taking Refuge we say the Three Refuges three times in different ways. ॐ

我們人為什麼拜佛，第一除去我們貢高的心，第二，生出一種和柔的心，和柔就是心裡不剛強。又生出一種恭敬心。

——宣公上人法語

Why do we bow to the Buddhas? First, it is to get rid of our arrogance. Second, is to be more soft nature which means not being hard in heart. It will also give rise to respectfulness.

— By Venerable Master Hua

當我很專注在拜《大悲懺》的時候，我會看到層層疊疊的景象，我看到自己在一個泡泡裡，同時又看到另一個泡泡，泡泡裡我看到了佛陀，看到了自己在頂禮，各種不同的境界不斷延伸。《華嚴經》裡的法界觀，就是那個樣子。

**聽眾：**這境界挺不可思議的，因為它是個人的感受，卻又超越個人的極限。兩者竟然能同時發生，我只能驚呼：太神奇了。

**問題：**剛剛講的都跟身體有關，那麼拜佛時出現的情緒呢？

**恒持法師：**它們會隨著修行漸漸消失。上人教我們的，並不是說哭就可以得到淨化。師父說哭一哭，鬼就靠近你了，因為你讓它趁隙而入。

《楞嚴經》提到「情」的影響。佛陀用「氣」和「水」來做比喻，討論純想到純情之間各種不同的情形。水代表「情」，向下流；氣代表「想」，往上升。這個譬喻很明顯在勸誡我們要轉「情」為「想」，這個「想」不是知性的「想」，而是「智慧」。因此雖然很多人一開始接觸佛教，或者當他們很虔誠懺悔時，都有情感方面的流露，然而修行應該以淡化情緒為目標。

最後，我們講一講羯磨的意思。羯磨是一種正式的聚會，出家人依據戒律而正式舉辦的事情就稱為「羯磨」，例如皈依就是羯磨的一種。進行羯磨時，首先是對大眾宣讀（告白）內容，然後過程中會重複告白三次，每次都會徵求大眾的回應。 ॐ