

**ĐẠI ĐẠO TAM KỶ PHỔ ĐỘ  
TÒA THÁNH TÂY NINH**

**(THE GREAT WAY OF THE THIRD AMNESTY ERA  
TAY NINH HOLY SEE)**

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# A Brief Introduction to Caodaism

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgment.....	4
Introduction by Christopher Hartney.....	5
1. Introduction to Caodaism .....	6
1.1 What is the Basic Doctrine of Caodaism?.....	6
1.2 What is the Essence of Belief in Caodaism?.....	8
1.3 What is the concept "Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ" .....	9
1.4 What are Primary Philosophies of Caodai Religion?.....	10
1.5 Is Caodaism Biblical Monotheism or Inclusive Monotheism? .....	11
1.6 What is the significance of the term “Tam Giáo Qui Nguyên - Ngũ Chi Hiệp Nhất”?.....	11
2. Caodaism: Its History and Development.....	13
2.1 What were the Vietnamese Cultural and Historical Setting during the Establishment of Caodai Religion in early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century? .....	13
2.2 Why was The Caodai Religion born in Vietnam? What are its Historical Milestones? .....	14
2.3 Who established Caodai Religion? .....	14
3. Caodaism’s Social Influences.....	14
3.1 What Benefits does the Caodai Religion have to Offer to Individuals who want to Learn about the TRUTH (about GOD)?.....	14
3.2 What are the Influences of The Caodai Religion for Creating a New Order for life?.....	15
3.3 What Benefits are offered by The Caodai Religion in providing Global Religious Development for Human Welfare?.....	16
3.4 What Contributions has The Caodai Religion made to the Development of Religious Beliefs and the Global Spiritual Connection in the 21st century and thereafter? .....	17
4. Divine Symbols in Caodai Temple - Tay Ninh Holy See .....	18
4.1 What is the Philosophy behind the Symbol of “The Divine Eye” (Biểu Tượng Thiên Nhãn)?....	18
4.2 The Symbol of Celestial Sphere (Biểu Tượng Quả Càn Khôn).....	18
4.3 What does “The Image of Caodai’s Three Saints” (Biểu Tượng Tam Thánh) imply?.....	19
4.4 What is the Meaning of the Statue of Maitreya on the Tiger (Tượng Phật Di Lạc cỡi cọp)?.....	20
4.5 What are The Meanings of the Iconic Dragon Columns (Biểu Tượng Cột rồng)?.....	21
4.6 What Messages are Conveyed The Symbols of “Brahma Buddha (Thê Phật Brahma), Shiva Buddha (Thê Phật Shiva), and Krishna Buddha (Thê Phật Krisna)”? .....	22
4.7 Why are Divine Symbols from Other Religions Engraved in Caodai Temple? .....	23

4.8 The Flags of Caodai (Cờ Phướn và Cờ Vàng, Xanh, Đỏ) .....	24
4.9 What are The Meanings of the Statues of God’s Altar’s Custodians (Ông Thiện / Ông Ác)?.....	25
5. Structure of Caodaism .....	26
5.1 The Bát Quái Đài.....	26
5.2 The Hiệp Thiên Đài.....	26
5.3 The Cửu Trùng Đài .....	27
5.4 There are Three Bodies or Councils governing the Holy See.....	28
5.5 Who are Caodai Worshipers?.....	28
5.6 What are the Benefits of Attending Weekly Ritual Services (đi cúng) at The Caodai Temple?...	29
6. Conclusion .....	30
References: .....	31

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Disclaimer: The Truth has no limits in one's mind; the author has researched and developed this booklet about the Caodai Faith to the best of her knowledge in the present time based on her limited wisdom restricted in human form.

Nam Mô Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát,

Túy Ngọc Trịnh  
Jun 2014

# Introduction

Although not a Caodaist myself, I have spent decades studying this religion and as part of that work I have read many introductions to the faith written by the faithful. I can say with authority then that Mrs. Túy Ngọc Trinh has written the best of the short introductions in English. If you want a brief glimpse into why you should treat the Caodaist religion with the dignity and respect it deserves, (and perhaps even join it in its aims) then this small book will start you on the way. Here Mrs. Túy carefully explains the basics of the religion but she does more, she also gives some powerful reasons here for why the world needs Caodaism. Reading these pages once more reminded me that I was right to dedicate so much of my academic life to working with and understanding Caodaists and their faith, for in these pages lays the promise of a non-sexist, non-racist world, the hope for universal tolerance, democracy, world peace, justice for all and love towards all. I am not sure any earthly organization can pull this off, but how delightful it is that I get to work on a daily basis with people who believe that they need to try for these high ideals!

One thing that Mrs. Túy and other Caodaists are loathing to do is it mixes the discussion of religion and politics. Whereas I have no problem, the unspoken subtext of this small book is that overseas Caodaists are doing so much to spread news of their faith because Caodaists in Vietnam do not have the religious freedoms Westerners take for granted. Thus I often wonder that if the religion worked as the way the religious constitution of Caodaism demands that it work, without government interference in Vietnam, then the ideals of Caodaism might be even better understood around the world. At least with this small book that process of understanding and communication can continue.

Although I work at the University of Sydney in Australia, I am presently on a study tour of Ethiopia as I write this. Africa is one powerful example of what problems the future will hold. As the earth moves towards a population of 11 or 12 billion by the end of this century, 2 billion new humans will need to find themselves a home on this continent. Resources will be scarce, and perhaps tolerance and good will towards our fellow humans will also be in short supply. A religion such as Caodaism can ensure that we check our nastier sides, that the beastly attitudes inside us can be controlled by our humanity. That Caodaism as a religion and Caodaists as a community of faithful are doing their best to remind us of the duties and the joys of being humane to each other, I hope this little book permits you to find a place for Caodaism in your heart.

I offer my congratulations to Mrs. Túy and her companions and co-religionists for producing this clear and approachable guide to their religion.

Nam-Mo Cao- Dai,

Christopher Hartney

Addis Ababa

2 November 2014

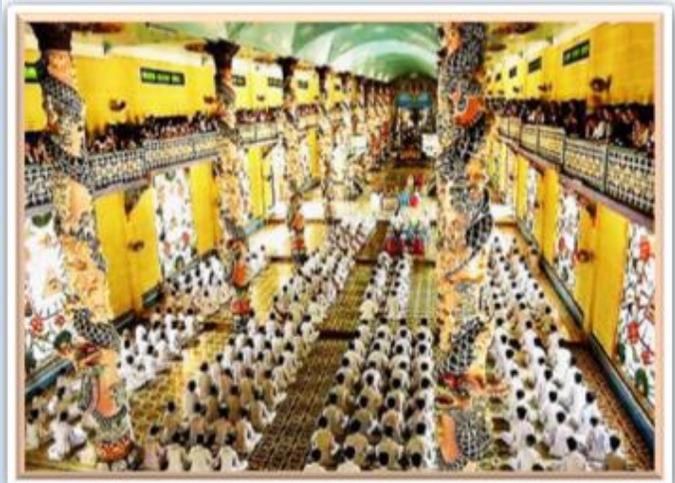
# 1. Introduction to Caodaism

The history of mankind will never stop its evolution of radical movements that makes us who we are today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 1926, one of these radical evolutions was born in a religious form in the province of Tây Ninh Vietnam, the Caodai Religion. Caodaism was created to promote cross-religious communication, it was sent to cross religious boundaries, and to endorse the wisdom of living in peace and harmony for all living beings that live in our one home, the Earth.

Caodaism was established through a spiritual technique that encompassed Western spiritism-séance and Eastern Taoist-Shamanistic tradition. Through this method of communication between God and other High Spirits and individuals, the Supreme Being created Caodaism. Since its establishment, The Caodai Religion has manifested in Vietnam and is currently spreading throughout the 4 continents of Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia. Today, there are over six million Caodaists and counting living across the planet.

“The noble effort of CaoDaism is to unite humanity through a common vision of the Supreme Being in order to promote peace and understanding of religions throughout the world. CaoDaism does not seek to create a gray world, where all religions are exactly the same; only to create a more tolerant world, where all can see each other as sisters and brothers from a common divine source reaching out to a common divine destiny realizing peace within and without.”[Ref 8, 9]

The term Caodai means “The Highest Spiritual Place” or “High Throne” where God reigns. Symbolically, it means “Kingdom of Heaven” or “The Center of The Universe”, or a place that is beyond what Man can even imagine; a place that holds and directs the energy which controls and keeps the galaxy in absolute balance.



## 1.1 What is the Basic Doctrine of Caodaism?

Many philosophers who have completed extensive research and study in the areas of religions have discovered in Caodaism a spiritual beauty, a philosophical truth, and a community of the religious who teaches Man the ultimate Science of Truth.

The basic doctrine of The Caodai Religion is that the Supreme Being was from One Divine Light (Thái Cực), the only One Being who existed before the existence of the universe when there was nothing and no space nor time (cỏi hư vô). The Divine Light was extremely dense in energy and was the origin of the universe. The Divine Light, referred to as The Monad, then formed Yin and Yang energy, the first form of protons and electrons, which interacted and created billions of other forms of energy, expanding, exploding, and signifying the beginning of the universe from the nothingness to where we are today in the galaxies...and it continues to expand . God created the universe, the people, the animals, and everything in this universe, material and spiritual beings. (Dựa theo thuyết "Thái Cực sanh Lưỡng Nghi, Lưỡng Nghi sanh Tứ Tượng, Tứ Tượng sanh Bát Quái, Bát Quái sanh ra càn khôn vũ trụ" [TNHT])

Thus, Caodai suggests that “Man and God are linked through sacred light. The Supreme Being is the Great Sacred Light while human being is a Little Sacred Light. According to Caodai Holy Scripture, God created the universe and passed His spirit (this Sacred Light) into all creatures, plants, and materials, which therefore all have the same element of electrons and protons (or Yin and Yang energies). Everything in the universe comes from His spirit and therefore has a life. Whenever there is life, there is God. God is the creator of life. God exists in each living being in the universe (Thầy là các con. Các con là Thầy)” [Ref 8 & 9]

Love is eternal sacred light, the brighter this light is the stronger the connection is between you and God!

The ultimate goal of Caodai philosophies is true spiritual enlightenment and liberty for all through the most important concept “You and God are One!”

Caodai defines only ONE RACE (the Human Race) for mankind regardless of human-defined race, color, language, and sex. Every person on the earth has the same common Father God and everybody is brothers-and-sisters to each other, figuratively speaking. This includes every living being on the globe.

The most important manuscript of Caodai Religion is The Religious Constitution of Caodaism, which includes the Doctrine of New Code and the Religious Constitution (Tân Luật - Pháp Chánh Truyền) and The Divine Messages (Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển).

Caodaism upholds the concept of democracy, the respect for human rights, the respect for freedom rights, and the respect for equal rights that lead way to peace and harmony, freedom and liberty for all, through the declaration of Caodai’s doctrine, written in Vietnamese:

CAO THƯỢNG CHỈ TÔN ĐẠI ĐẠO HOÀ BÌNH DÂN CHỦ MỤC  
ĐÀI TIỀN SÙNG BAI TAM KỶ CỘNG HƯỞNG TỰ DO QUYỀN

Which can roughly be translated as:

THE GREAT WAY OF THE SUPREME BEING - PEACE AND HARMONY- DEMOCRACY  
THE THIRD AMNESTY ERA - FREEDOM AND LIBERTY - HUMANITY



## 1.2 What is the Essence of Belief in Caodaism?

The fundamental belief of The Caodai Religion is simply that people must treat each other with respect and equality, regardless of race or religion; that people do have one common Father, our God, The Supreme Being. In a globalized community, human beings need to promote global tolerance in cultural, political, social, and religious affairs.

Caodai promotes the common universal language, the Language of Love.

From a worship point of view, Caodai transmits the Virtues of God, and explains the massive connected structure that links everything in the perceptual world to the centre of energy of the universe that is God. Caodai recommends the adoration of all other religious figures and symbols, and the veneration of Superior Spirits and the worship of ancestors. Caodai implies that all religions are from the same origin of God Himself. [Ref 6]

From a moral point of view, the Caodai doctrine teaches that Man should have love and duties toward himself, his family, country, society, and in a broader essence, toward humanity and all living beings on Earth as a whole, thus promoting peace and tolerance.

[Ref 6]

From a philosophical point of view, Caodai preaches the concept of self-renunciation of excessive pride, excessive riches, excessive luxury, or excessive earthly pleasures, and endorses liberation from servitude and from materialism in the attainment of the spiritual tranquility of the soul. Personal honor, riches, luxury, and an excess of earthly pleasures must not dominate a culture. That does not mean Caodai would advocate a primitive or impoverished economy devoid of luxury and splendor, but caution that when earthly pleasures rule, men make abundant use of materials goods as means to make life in society dignified, upright, and agreeable to body and soul. This can easily lead to human beings being thrust into conflict and wars. When human beings can liberate themselves from servitude to materialism, and focus on spiritual attainment of tranquility of the soul, human beings will be less subjected to conflicts of interest and more deeply focused to peace and harmony. [Ref 6]

From a spiritual point of view, Caodai confirms, in harmony with other religions, the existence of the spirit and the soul, their survival beyond the physical body, and their evolution through successive reincarnations, which is in accordance to the Karmic Law. [Ref 6]

From the initiation point of view, Caodai calls for the synchronization of and acceptance of all religions. It authenticates the existence of the soul and the connection between Man and God. Caodai explains that each religion in this world is a “religious school created by God” that teaches mankind about life, about God’s Virtue, and about the Sciences of Truth. Caodaism validates that the ultimate purpose of each ”religious school” is to guide Man in cultivating Love, Wisdom, and Inner Strength, to believe in God, to believe in humanity, and to believe in Himself.

### 1.3 What is the concept "Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ"

"Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ" is the official name of the new religion. That is The Great Way for Salvation in the Third Revelation Period. "Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ" can thus be translated as “The Great Way of The Third Amnesty Era”.

Caodai divides the world’s five thousand years’ worth of religious histories into 3 revelation periods based on the development of mankind and the Earth itself.

First revelation period: [before 2500 BCE] During the development of the Universe, Earth, and life, Mankind was still under-developed. God revealed Himself to inspire selected religious leaders in different parts of the world to teach humans different ways to survive and

develop. He selected religious leaders (prophets/founders) for each religion: Abraham was the founder of Judaism in Middle East, Dipankara was for Hinduism in India, and Fu-His was for Yi King in China.

Second revelation period: [thousands of years later] When humans established the earliest forms of society, culture, and nationalism, God created Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, and more... to bring chaos to order, to teach human different concepts of humanity, societies, and different Sciences of Truth.

Third revelation period [third amnesty period]: in the 20th century and thereafter, when humans started to recognize the concept of democracy, globalization, worldwide communication, and shared knowledge, God started a new religion and called for religious unification and acceptance. In our modern days, however, people did not always live in peace and harmony because of the very multiplicity of religions. The Caodai Religion was announced with the purpose of solving religious conflicts and bringing all religions to their primordial unity. With that purpose, The Caodai Religion emphasizes that all religions are from the same origin: The Supreme Being. Caodai highlights that all religions teach humans the very basic need of love and justice. Caodai stresses that different religions are just different forms of the same truth. Caodai teaches humans to believe in God, believe in humanity, and believe in self, and the key to strengthen that belief is to build up Love, Wisdom, and Inner Strength.

#### 1.4 What are Primary Philosophies of Caodai Religion?

Caodai suggests that God is in you; the power of God is in you, small or large, depending on what you have learned and how you have developed that power, which is the power of Love, the power of Knowledge, and the power of the Inner Strength. These powers are the GIFTS from GOD to Man to make Man distinguished from animals and other living beings. These powers also exist to help Man overcome his inner evils, the seven-deadly-sins, and use that liberated power in order to advance himself into the higher level of philosophical and spiritual enlightenment.

In terms of practices of spirituality, Caodai teaches you to delve into your inner being, your higher self, your spirit, and to cultivate your Sacred Inner Light to unveil the “God within”. It is a journey of inner self-discovery. Your sacred mission is to unite the “God within” with the Great Divine Being.

When one can see the “God within”; one can also see the “inner God” in others: humans, animals, and other beings. With this understanding, one will gain incredible respects for life and nurture kind-heartedness for others.

Caodai declares Love is the master key that opens the doors to heaven on earth.

Caodai suggests that God is not bound with any ethnic backgrounds or skin colors. God represents the eye of all living beings, while the Prophets from other Religions of the world

are bound to human forms of who have certain ethnic background and cultures. On the other hand, Caodai suggests all Gods from all religions in the world are from the same Supreme Being, and that the same Supreme Being exists in every living being more than human beings can perceive in its existence.

Caodai, in simple terms, is that God exists in all living beings..., and that is why God is extremely powerful. He is full of love to give; possesses so much knowledge about each person and about each living thing in this world; has so much concern for the development of each individual's livelihood; has so much control of the development of the entire universe, because the progression and advancement of each living being in this universe is the progression of God Himself.

### 1.5 Is Caodaiism Biblical Monotheism or Inclusive Monotheism?

Caodaiism is a syncretic religion (that is, forming a spiritual and universal synthesis) in a context that Caodaiism recognizes and respects the Sciences of Truth, the traditions, the philosophies of all great religions from ancient history. Hence, as a syncretic religion, the origins of Caodaiism span the centuries. Its roots lie in the deepest beliefs and aspirations of all great religions, thus encompassing a religious heritage as old and as varied as Man himself.

On the other hand, Caodaiism is a new religion, one that has the uniqueness of inclusive monotheism in the perspective that it emphasizes the GODs from all other religions are from one source, The All That Is – the Supreme Being. Caodaiism offers the origin of God in a universal way, recognizes the similarity of many world belief systems, from Far East to Far West, and explains the massive connected structure that links mankind and all living beings to God.

### 1.6 What is the significance of the term “Tam Giáo Qui Nguyên - Ngũ Chi Hiệp Nhất”?

Caodai suggests that different religious belief systems simply represent the Science of Truth as seen from different perspectives, forms, structures, organizations, timeframes, and cultures of civilization. But all great religions are from one origin, The Supreme Being.

The Caodai Religion introduces the concept of the oneness humanity, equality of all men and women, the abolition of prejudice, the harmony of science and religion, the synchronization of all great religions, and the practices of Love and Justice without prejudice of religious background, that lead life to peace and harmony.

The Caodai Religion adores the three Asian religious traditions of Buddhism / Hinduism, Taoism, and Confucianism “Tam Giáo Qui Nguyên” and the religious philosophies of other great Western religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Caodai accumulates those “different” religious principles together under one roof “Ngũ Chi Hiệp Nhất.” On the adoration of those principles, Caodai doctrines teach the way of Buddha, the way of the immortals, the way of saints, the way of the High Spirits, and the way of humanity. The ultimate goal of Caodaiism is to bring different religions back to the primordial unity,

eliminate prejudice toward different religious schools, and promulgate the oneness concept of all.

From the principles of Confucianism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Humanity, which teaches Man three main duties (Tam Cang): the duty to his country (Quân Thần Cang), the duty to his parents (Phụ Tử Cang), and the duty to his spouse and his own family (Phu Thê Cang); and educates Man the five essential virtues: love/humanity (Nhân), integrity (Nghĩa), behavior (Lễ), knowledge (Trí), and loyalty (Tín).

From the principles of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Saints with regards to love, tolerance, forgiveness, and truthfulness.

From the principles of Taoism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Tao with regards to the three stages in human spirit and body (Tam Bửu): energy of physical body (Tinh), energy of spiritual mind (Khí), energy of transcendent soul (Thần) plus the 5 essential elements of material world (Ngũ Hành): mineral, plant, water, fire, and earth, and the Law of Yin and Yang (Luật Âm Dương).

From the principles of Buddhism and Hinduism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Liberation, which instructs Man to seek refuge in Buddha (Qui Y Phật), in Dharma (Qui Y Pháp), and in Shangha (Qui Y Tăng). Caodai upholds a system of basic morality, the five Prohibitions (Ngũ Giới Cấm): do not kill thus respect life (cấm sát sanh), do not steal thus respect what belong to others (cấm trộm cắp), do not commit sexual misconduct (cấm ngoại tình - tà dâm), do not be intoxicated (cấm say rượu), and do not commit sins through words (cấm vọng ngữ). [Ref 1 & 2]

“The Lord lives in the heart of every creature. He turns them round and round upon the wheel of Maya. Take refuge in Him. By his grace you will find supreme peace, and the state which is beyond all change.” [Hinduism]

“A Muslim is one who surrenders to the will of Allah and is an establishing of peace.” [Islam]

“The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace.” [Judaism]

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” [Christianity]

“Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.” [Buddhism]

“Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.” [Taoism]

“Everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it.” [Confucianism]

“Love is the safe haven for the entire universe!” [Caodaism]

## 2. Caodaiism: Its History and Development

### 2.1 What were the Vietnamese Cultural and Historical Setting during the Establishment of Caodai Religion in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century?

The history of Caodai Religion has been tied with the history of Vietnam since early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As for Vietnam, four thousand years of history is a four-thousand-year history of wars. The Vietnamese culture reflects the effects of wars on the people, the effects of colonial rules on the nation, and the effects of the foreign cultures/religions/philosophies into the Vietnamese education systems, religions, and philosophies.

For a thousand years, Vietnam was under Chinese occupation, thus Vietnamese Cultures have been significantly influenced by China, especially the famous Confucian philosophy written by Master Kong (Nho Giáo/Khổng Giáo). During that time, Buddhism also extended her wings over Vietnam, and thereafter, Taoism also enjoyed her stretch into Vietnamese culture. Surprisingly, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other original Vietnamese indigenous religious practices did not pose challenges to each other and were rather welcomed and fitted well into the culture of Vietnam.

By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, after three decades of war, Vietnam was completely conquered by French colonial forces and by 1906 the new alphabet similar to the romance language was introduced into Vietnam “Chữ Quốc Ngữ” by the French missionaries. The French divided Vietnam into three separated states: CochiChina (South Vietnam) as a colony; Annam (Central Vietnam) as an autonomous kingdom under the Nguyễn dynasty; and Tonkin (North Vietnam) as a French protectorate. Thus in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam became increasingly influenced by the West: the character set of the Vietnamese language “Chữ Quốc Ngữ” became the national language and Vietnamese people became familiar with Christianity’s concepts and religions.

The people of Vietnam, surrounded by diversified religions and western influences, and having endured the sufferings of war under her thousand-year history, complete with a vase corpus of historic heroes and myths, adapted surprisingly well to the new concepts and philosophies of the new religion “Caodai”, as a faith that affects a union and summation of five thousand years of religious development from the East with the potent religious influences from the West. The Caodai Religion recognizes the greatness of all major religions around the world and at the same time introduces the concept of one Supreme Being representing the God of all great religions. With that idea, Caodai offers a resolution for the conflicts of religious differences, and proposes religious globalization for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## 2.2 Why was The Caodai Religion born in Vietnam? What are its Historical Milestones?

After centuries of conflict, the Vietnamese people understand the effects of wars on human condition and the sufferings endured during wars. They want Peace more than anything else in the world. They understand and appreciate the value of Peace. They would adapt easily to everything that offers Peace, Happiness, and Love to our planet. That was probably why Vietnam was chosen to be one of the places for God to create His Third Amnesty of Universal Salvation to humankind, and The Caodai Religion will spread its wings to the West at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Caodai Religion was founded in 1926. The Caodai Temple Holy See was constructed from 1931, was completed in 1947, and was inaugurated in 1955, and started to set its first steps into the Western countries from 1975.

In 1975, after the end of the war in Vietnam, the communists took control of the Vietnamese government. Often under extreme conditions, thousands of Caodai followers emigrated to America, Europe, Australia, Canada, France, and others, to begin the new era of Caodai Religion in the Western world.

## 2.3 Who established Caodai Religion?

Caodai history records three historical figures that aided Caodai's manifestation into the Earthly world: Ngô Minh Chiêu born in 1878, Phạm Công Tắc, born in 1890, Lê Văn Trung, born in 1876. All three came from very different backgrounds, were highly educated, and all three were communicating with the Supreme Beings through the spiritual medium at different times and places in Vietnam. The three found each other, cooperated and arranged meetings, and followed orders of highly authoritative messages from the Supreme Being through a spiritual medium by a holy spiritual name "Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát". Under the Supreme Being's guidance, Ngô Minh Chiêu, Phạm Công Tắc, Lê Văn Trung, and others such as Cao Quỳnh Cư, Cao Hoài Sang, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, and Lâm Ngọc Thanh, etc. worked together to establish the new religion of 'Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ'.

# 3. Caodaism's Social Influences.

## 3.1 What Benefits does the Caodai Religion have to Offer to Individuals who want to Learn about the TRUTH (about GOD)?

Despite the fact that Caodaism draws on the wisdom of thousands of years, Caodaism is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century religion. It has isolated fundamental laws of life that can be applied to help people achieve a happier and better spiritual existence not only in the past, but also in the present, and the future. Therefore Caodaism is tremendously beneficial for people of all walks of life and ages.

Caodaism answers the most ancient questions about “Who are we? What do we consist of? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we doing?”

Caodaism not only provides answers to these questions but also supplies workable methods of application that make it possible for Man to reach the ancient goal he has been striving toward for thousands of years: to know himself and in knowing himself, to know and understand other people, and ultimately, understand life itself, understand the universe, and understand God.

Your mind cannot possibly understand God, however, your “inner God” knows God. The role of spiritualism in The Caodai Religion is very simple. It provides human beings with a spiritual inspirational passage; the passage of self-discovery that awakes the “God within”. Man needs to be aware that God is within himself, that the inner spirit in Him is linked to GOD. Man needs to be aware that the development of the inner spirit is the path toward the incredible spiritual journey of self-discovery...the journey in which Man shall make the world around him a better place to live, for him and for all future generations.

The progress of discovering the inner God shall give Man inner peace even if the whole world around him seems in chaos. The development of that inner peace is the development of Man’s capacity for Love, Wisdom, and Courage.

“When your life is filled with the desire to see the holiness in everyday life, something magical happens: ordinary life becomes extraordinary, and the very process of life begins to nourish your soul!” [Rabbi Harold Kushner]

### 3.2 What are the Influences of The Caodai Religion for Creating a New Order for life?

The Caodai Religion upholds the Law of Balance (Luật Cân Bằng), the Law of Justice (Luật Công Bằng), the Law of Love (Luật Yêu Thương), the Law of Cause and Effect (Luật Nhân Quả), and the Law of Yin and Yang (Luật Âm Dương). These laws serve the purpose of life itself, the Law of Development and Evolution (Luật Tiến Hóa), for each living being and for the universe as a whole. Everything that happens in this world should serve this purpose.

From the Law of Balance (Luật Cân Bằng), Caodai teaches Man to live life in balance, and explains how the universe sustains an astonishing harmony and balance.

From the Law of Justice (Luật Công Bằng), Caodai teaches Man the equality, the accountabilities, the responsibilities, and the consequences of his actions not only in this life but also from his previous lives of revolution in the reincarnation cycle.

From the Law of Love (Luật Yêu Thương), Caodai teaches man to love others and to love himself. Caodai declares that Love is the key to opening the gates of heaven and enlightenment.

From the Law of Cause and Effect (Luật Nhân Quả), Caodai teaches Man to carry out good deeds because good deeds bring good results and bad deeds bring bad consequences.

From the Law of Yin and Yang (Luật Âm Dương), Caodai teaches Man the concept of the balance of power based on complementary opposites. The negative pole is equated with the positive pole. One pole could not exist without the other, just as it is impossible for a molecule to form without a proton (+) or an electron (-); it is impossible for men to form a child without women; and it is impossible for women to form a child without men. The positive and negative can never exist in total isolation from one another; both are constantly interacting and this inseparable tandem persist through all things: Man, food, attitudes, personal characteristics, thoughts, etc. Yin and Yang are the two opposite forces of energy that are needed for the development of all things in the universe.

As for Man, Caodai suggests that Yang represents the inner goodness that stands for Love, Wisdom, and Courage while Yin stands for inner evil also known as the seven deadly sins. The inner goodness and evilness in Man are always in constant battle against one another to either push him upwards to the enlightenment stage or pull him downwards to darkness and unrighteousness. Man goes through life facing many challenges; God gives Man the Gift of Love, Wisdom, and Courage, but also gives man much needed challenges, the stronger the challenge the stronger the man will be if he can conquer it.

The Law of Development and Evolution (Luật Tiến Hóa) is the law of enhancement and progress for all things in the universe. All laws (natural laws, human laws, and religious laws) serve one purpose: The Development and Evolution of the universe!

### 3.3 What Benefits are offered by The Caodai Religion in providing Global Religious Development for Human Welfare in matters of Religious Beliefs?

Caodai philosophies and theories have been contributing to global religious development...

In the thousand years' history of mankind, religious wars have become the norm. Conflicts created by humans because of religious differences go back even before the birth of Jesus Christ. Until World War II, with the introduction of Nuclear War and the results of Holocaust, in these darkest days of human history, modern humans began to understand the lesson of Love and Acceptance. Modern humans began to realize that HATRED can lead to the destruction of mankind and thus people MUST accept each other's differences, races, skin colors and people MUST nurture Love instead of Hatred. Thus the acceptance of each other's differences and the Love for people is no longer a "Should" but it is a "Must" in order to survive. Caodaism promotes that concept and promotes the concepts of religious unification and religious acceptances. The Caodai Religion broadens the concept of respect for different religions, and upholds the perception of oneness to all great religions in the world.

When people see there is no difference in God but only difference in other religions, there will be fewer conflicts; people will gain respect for each other's religions and belief systems. When people see there is no difference in term of the origin between the core Western religious belief systems and the core Eastern religious belief systems, there will be more

support and understanding between the East and the West. The Caodai Religion will create harmony for different schools of beliefs by introducing a startlingly new theory and concept; there was only one God; and the same God revealed himself as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, and Moses from the West, and as Sakya Muni, Lao-Tzu, Nhiên Đăng Cổ Phật, Thái Thượng Lão Quân, Khương Thái Công from the East... And the same God is in the Divine Eye of The Caodai Religion, a religion, which is from a country that has endured war for more than four thousand years, a country where people can easily understand the term “Desperation for Peace”, and a country where “multiple religious belief systems from far East to far West can coexist” in peace through war-time.

This new concept reveals to humans the fundamental truth and answers most of the questions Man has been asking himself since time immemorial. That is why all religions, at their heart, teach LOVE and ACCEPTANCE.

From the perspective of humanity, The Caodai Religion teaches you to love your family, your friends, the people in your community, and the people in your country. Additionally, Caodai teaches you the love for mankind, the love for the people who endorse you, love for the people who hate you, love for the people who are different from you, love for your enemies, and the acceptance of the differences and similarities of each different individual.

From the perspective of existence, Caodai teaches you to love all animals and develop respect for the life of all living beings in this world.

Caodai announces that Love is the safe haven for the entire universe!

### 3.4 What Contributions has The Caodai Religion made to the Development of Religious Beliefs and the Global Spiritual Connection in the 21st century and thereafter?

The Caodai theory of primordial unity introduces the concept of the Supreme Being as a force that always exists within each person (Thuyết Thiên Nhơn Hiệp Nhất). In broader terms; God exists in any form of body as small as a molecule of any substance that forms the body. God is the creator of everything and at the same time, God exists in everything (Dựa theo thuyết Thiên Địa Vạn Vật Đồng Nhất Thể hay là Nhất Bản Tán Vạn Thù và Vạn Thù Qui Nhất Bản).

Because GOD exists everywhere in any form and in anything living in the physical and spiritual world, everything links to GOD through a massive interconnected divine network where the cause and effect of everyone’s doings will ultimately lead to a balanced state.

When this theory becomes widespread, the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will understand it effortlessly and may apply it to comprehend their daily spiritual practices and physical activities.

Only the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can understand the concept of this divine network through the understanding of the internet or the global satellite network, which are elementary examples of how this massive divine network functions. That is probably why The Caodai Religion was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and proudly making her first international steps into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this divine network, at some point in time, in certain areas, there can be an imbalance, but the imbalance of one place will force an offsetting of balance in another place; thus as a whole, this network is always seeking balance. The out-of-balance area can always regain its connected powers and therefore the massive interconnected network to God is perfect. The stronger the bond of this massive network, the better the universe will be. Only the practices of love and compassion, respect and democracy from mankind will bring peace and harmony to all living beings, which will strengthen this interconnected structure that is controlled and supported by the central energy of the universe, our God.

## 4. Divine Symbols in Caodai Temple - Tay Ninh Holy See

The Caodai Holy See is a vast sacred city that was built in Tây Ninh Vietnam. In the center of this city is the Great Divine Temple. Its architecture, symbols and construction were directed by God through spiritual mediums, and it has become a beautiful national landmark for Vietnam. Currently, there are many smaller versions of this Caodai Temple with similar architecture and design being built in the many towns of Vietnam and in cities in Texas, California, Louisiana, Australia, Canada, etc. These Caodai Temples, once completed, will typically become landmarks for the respective city/town in which they reside because of their unique characteristics of housing thousands of different spiritual religions under the one roof.

### 4.1 What is the Philosophy behind the Symbol of “The Divine Eye” (Biểu Tượng Thiên Nhân)?

The Divine Eye with beams of light radiating from it is the iconic symbol of God’s wisdom. It represents the ultimate truth at center of the universe, the enlightened mind in each individual, the inner God that exists in the mind and the heart of each living organism. God also exists even in the smallest nucleus proton of a molecule, which is the foundation that makes up of every physical form of life.

### 4.2 The Symbol of Celestial Sphere (Biểu Tượng Quả Cầu Khôn)

The Universal Globe that has the Divine Eye on the Celestial Sphere has a perfect spherical shape, with a diameter of three meters, three decimeters, and three centimeters representing God’s chamber. The Globe Sphere has the constellation of the Big Dipper and the 3072 stars representing Caodai’s cosmology of 36 heavens, 3000 worlds, 4 Great Cosmic Regions, and 72 planets.



Symbol of Celestial Sphere

#### 4.3 What does “The Image of Caodai’s Three Saints” (Biểu Tượng Tam Thánh) imply?

Victor Hugo, Sun Yat Sen, and Nguyễn Bình Khiêm are the three Saints that are spiritual representatives for Caodai Religion.

- Victor Hugo - the most famous figure ever to have lived in France. He is also a Great Poet, a political celebrity, and had a great influence in French literature history. Victor Hugo is a symbol of Western cultures and beliefs.
- Sun Yat Sen - a revolutionary and political Leader, the founder of modern China. He established the first ever Chinese democratic government. He is a great symbol of Eastern values.
- Trạng Trình aka Nguyễn Bình Khiêm - a great Writer and Poet, a physiognomist, and the most famous prophet from Vietnam. He is symbol of Vietnamese Principles.

Victor Hugo, Sun Yat Sen, and Nguyễn Bình Khiêm are the three Saints of Caodai. They declare the treaty between GOD and HUMANITY symbolizing a visible connection between human beings and the Supreme Being. The treaty delineates the two basic principles LOVE and JUSTICE that humanity has to fulfill in order to be saved and to become one with GOD. The

Three-Saints are a symbol that also characterizes the bridges between Eastern and Western philosophies.



Image of Caodai's Three Saints

#### 4.4 What is the Meaning of the Statue of Maitreya on the Tiger (Tượng Phật Di Lạc cỡi cọp)?

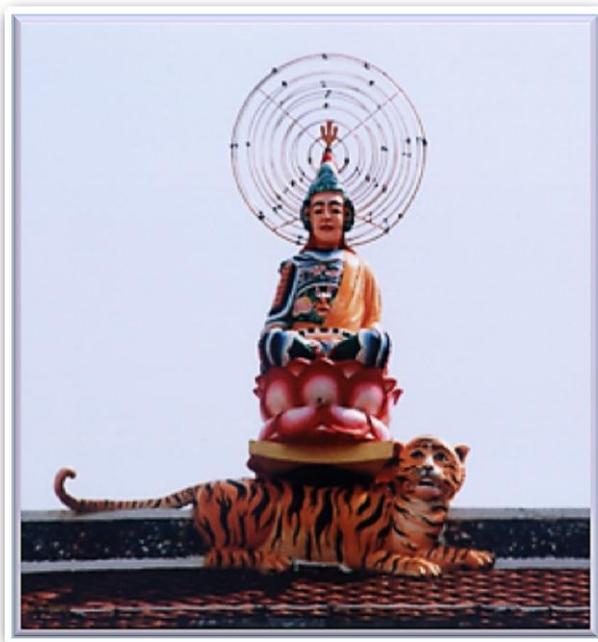
The image Maitreya Buddha riding the tiger signifies the unforgettable anniversary that Caodai Religion was born in the year of the Tiger (1926).

This symbol also implies another spiritual philosophy. According to the Caodai Doctrine, Man is born with a special gift from God that gives him the protection from Seven Deadly Sins from himself and from others.

The image of Maitreya (Đức Phật Di Lạc) wearing armor implies a distinguished individual who has reached the stage of enlightenment, a figure that is, who has reached the highest levels of happiness and can offer the highest love to all living beings. The armor that he is wearing represents the gift from God, which is His capability of Love, Wisdom, and Courage.

The tiger implies the power of inner Evil (the Seven Deadly Sins) that exists in each person. The image implies that Maitreya is using His Love, Wisdom, and the Inner Power to conquer his own inner evil desires and also neutralize others' inner evil desires to prevent them from harming Him.

The image also suggests that He observes the level of Love, Wisdom, and Courage of each person who enters the Caodai temple to attend the ritual services, and most importantly, He has the responsibility of presiding Convention of The Judgment Day (Hội Long Hoa).



Statue of Maitreya riding the Tiger

#### 4.5 What are The Meanings of the Iconic Dragon Columns (Biểu Tượng Cột rồng)?

Spiritually, the twenty-eight dragon columns that line the nave of the Divine Temples symbolize the Immortals, the High Spirits, the Saints, and the Buddha in attending the spiritual congregation with God.

From the perspective of construction, only columns that have enough strength can be used to build the House of God, thus dragon columns are essential in building a Caodai Temple because they symbolize power, prestige and strength.

From the perspective of religious cosmology, the Caodai temple symbolizes the universe, and the dragon columns symbolize the powerful core functions that will keep the universe in balance. Caodai's cosmology addresses questions about the universe which are beyond the scope of science.



Dragon Columns

#### 4.6 What Messages are Conveyed The Symbols of “Brahma Buddha (Thế Phật Brahma), Shiva Buddha (Thế Phật Shiva), and Krishna Buddha (Thế Phật Krisna)”?

The Holy Embellishment of Brahma Buddha, Shiva Buddha, and Krishna Buddha on the roof of Caodai Temple, symbolizes the “Three Life Cycles of Progress”. Each Buddha symbol characterizes an important natural function of Life.

- Brahma Buddha (West-facing) - symbolizes The First Cycle, the Cycle of Creation – this is when something is born (Tượng Trưng cho Tạo Hoá). It is also called the Cycle of Innocence (Chu Kỳ Thánh Đức).
- Shiva Buddha (North-facing) – symbolizes The Second Cycle, the Cycle of Struggle and Destruction – this is when something has matured and will inevitably die (Tượng Trưng cho sự trưởng thành, già nua, và diệt vong).
- Krishna Buddha (South-facing) – symbolizes The Third Cycle, the Cycle of Conservation (Bảo tồn) and Reproduction (Tái tạo) - (The Stage of Krishna Buddha) - this refers to something that reborn in different form(s), also known as reincarnation. All Cycles are applicable to all things in all forms that exist in this universe.



Brahma-Shiva-Krishna  
(Three Stages of Buddha)

#### 4.7 Why are Divine Symbols from Other Religions Engraved in Caodai Temple?

Caodai believes in the concept of “Unity of Gods”. Caodai implies that all iconic symbols of Gods in different religions that were created in different times and at different places in different cultures are from the same source The All That Is. At the Caodai Temple, the central canopy over the Alta area is a celebration of many of the great religious influences on Caodai.

Across the top from left to right is the God of three main religions of Asia (Tam Giáo).

- Lao Tzu (Đức Lão Tử còn gọi là Thái Thượng Đạo Tổ), a historical figure that is the foremost master of Taoism
- Sakya-muni Buddha (Phật Thích Ca còn gọi là Tây Phương Giáo Chủ), a historical figure who represents the master of Buddhism.
- Kong Zi (Đức Khổng Tử còn gọi là Khổng Thánh Tiên Sư), a historical figure, the master of The Great Way of Humanity. He represents Confucianism

On the next row down, from left to right, are:

- Kuan Yin (Đức Phật Bà Quan Âm), the Goddess of mercy and guardian angel, is a figure of compassion in Buddhism.
- The Immortal Li Po (Đức Lý Thái Bạch), the spiritual Pope of The Caodai Religion
- Guan Gong (Đức Quan Thánh Đế Quân còn gọi là Quan Công), the famous Chinese Image of a war hero and figure of profound loyalty. He is the High Spirit who guided the establishment of Caodai Religion for early Caodai followers through spiritual mediumship.

On the next row down is:

- Jesus Christ (Đức Chúa Jesus), historical figure of God. He represents the Christian belief system ( and more widely the monotheisms of the West including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

At the bottom Centre is:

- Jiang Taigong (Đức Khương Thượng còn gọi là Khương Tử Nha), represents the Sini-Vietnamese tradition of Geniism.



#### 4.8 The Flags of The Caodai Religion (Cờ Phướn và Cờ Vàng, Xanh, Đỏ)

There are two flags of Caodai.

- The Spiritual Flag of Lá Phướn is the symbol of God's Guidon, which signifies that God is the commander-in-chief. This Guidon is displayed wherever the commander-in-chief is present. The Guidon symbolizes the ultimate spiritual supremacy and signifies the operation of the cosmos. Wherever this flag is standing, that place is filled with blessings from "the commander-in-chief". The Flag is hung on the thin tower of the triangular pole in the front of Caodai Temple. The top of the flag has the shape of a dragon. At the four corners of the pole are the four spiritual lions. The pole is 40-feet high while the length of the flag is 36-feet tall.
- The Institutional Flag of Caodai Religion represents the Great Religion for the Third Amnesty of God. The Chinese text on the yellow section means Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ.

Both flags are color-coded; Yellow stands for Buddhism; Blue stands for Taoism; and Red stands for Confucianism. The three colors in the Flags symbolize three religion institutions are under one religion.



The Spiritual Flag of  
Caodaism, God's Guidon  
(Lá Phướn)



The iconic figure on the  
Flag represents three  
sacred symbols of three  
religious traditions.  
The Alm Bowl (Bát Vu) -  
Buddhism  
The Book (Xuân Thu) -  
Confucianism  
The Whisk (Phất Chủ) -  
Taoism



The Institutional Flag of  
Caodaism

#### 4.9 What are The Meanings of the Statues of God's Altar's Custodians (Ông Thiện / Ông Ác)?

On the left side of the Caodai temple is the statue of the custodian of goodness for God's Altar while the statue on the right is the custodian of evilness for God's Altar. These two statues symbolize good and evil, and imply that Caodai welcomes all different human personalities regardless of whether they are moral or immoral. Anyone who has committed sins in the past who wishes to redeem himself is always welcome at the Caodai Temple.

The fact that the guardians of the House of God consists of both good and evil implies an important concept of Caodai philosophy: the process of judging whether an act is moral or sinful. This process is very complex, because the perception of goodness and evilness would depend relatively on the perception of time, ethnic background, personality, location, etc. An act of evilness in a right place, at a certain time, for a certain purpose, may be perceived as an act of goodness at another time, another place, or another purpose. An example of this perception can be illustrated in the United States atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. To many Americans, this was an act of goodness since it helped ended WWII and thus potentially saved millions of lives and property damages. The Japanese and many other people, on the other hand, may consider it as an act of "evilness" because the bombing resulted in over 100,000 deaths and mass destruction of the two cities. Thus the perception of good or evil is very relative to the perception of a person.



Custodian of Evilness



Custodian of Goodness

## 5. Structure of Caodaism

The structure of Caodaism consists of three main holy palaces which govern all of Caodai's religious affairs.

### 5.1 The Bát Quái Đài

The Bát Quái Đài is the holy spiritual Eight Trigram Palace. This serves as the Council of the Great Spirits. Bát Quái Đài is Supreme Holy Body that directs and creates all activities of the religion under the leadership of God and the Holy Spirits such as Sakyamuni Buddha, Lao Tzu, Kong Zi, Kuan Yin, Li Po, Guan Gong, Jesus Christ, Jiang Taigong. The Bát Quái Đài represents the holy invisible government of the new religion (Tượng Trưng cho THẦN - Vô Hình). [Ref 4]

### 5.2 The Hiệp Thiên Đài

The Hiệp Thiên Đài is the sanctuary of the Divine Alliance which is also referred to as the Heaven-and-Earth-Union Palace. Its main purpose is to serve as the Legislative Body that has the duty of communicating with the occult/esoteric powers of the cosmos to receive divine

messages to preserve and enforce religious laws. This hybrid palace is used by the spiritual and physical worlds to establish communication (Tượng Trung cho KHÍ - bán hữu hình)

The Hiệp Thiên Đài is placed under the authority of the His Holiness Hộ Pháp, who is the Head of Religious Legislative Affairs. He is assisted by the Head of the Spiritual Realm/Religious Affairs (Đức Thượng Phẩm) and the Head of the Temporal Realm/Secular Affairs (Đức Thượng Sanh). [Ref 4]



The Dharma Protector: Phạm Công Tắc  
(The Head of Religious Legislative  
Affairs - Hiệp Thiên Đài)



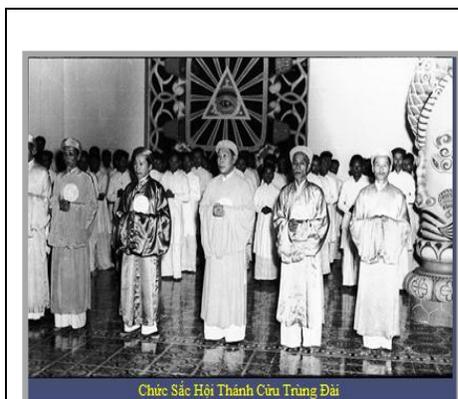
The Acting Pope: Lê Văn Trung  
(The Former Head of the Executive  
Administration and Church Program -  
Cửu Trùng Đài)

### 5.3 The Cửu Trùng Đài

The Cửu Trùng Đài is the Temple of Nine Degrees of Evolution that is also known as the Nine-Sphere-Palace. This physical entity (Tượng Trung cho TINH - hữu hình) serves as the Executive Body of Caodai which is in charge of the administration of the religious and missionary activities such as training disciples and organizing and controlling the Church program. The Head of Cửu Trùng Đài the spiritual Pope (Immortal Li Po- Đức Lý Giáo Tông), who has the duty to teach God's virtues to his Disciples. This administrative body is made up of male and female dignitaries.

For dignitaries in the College of Men, the Executive Body actually has three branches corresponding to the three religious traditions; each of these branches also has a name and a color: Buddhism is “Phái Thái”, color-coded in yellow, Taoism is “Phái Thượng”, color-coded in blue, and Confucianism is “Phái Ngọc”, color-coded in red. The Cửu Trùng Đài's hierarchy

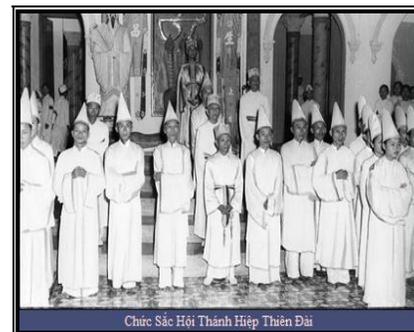
is ranked in nine levels and the number of dignitaries in the College of Men is very limited. [Ref 4]



Dignitaries of Cửu Trùng Đài



Buddhism - Yellow  
Taoism – Blue  
Confucianism – Red



Dignitaries of Hiệp Thiên Đài

#### 5.4 There are Three Bodies or Councils governing the Holy See:

- The Council of People (Hội Nhơn Sanh)
- The Council of Sacerdotium (Hội Thánh)
- The Council of Highest Authorities (Thượng Hội)

All plans made by the Council of People must be submitted to The Council of Sacerdotium and The Council of Highest Authorities for approval. [Ref 4]

#### 5.5 Who are Caodai Worshipers?

Caodai worshipers are ordinary people who dress in a white outfit (Áo Dài) when attending the ceremonial service at the Caodai temple on a weekly-basis or during self-conducted prayer services at home 4 times a day (12:00am, 6:00am, 12:00pm, 6:00pm). A Caodai worshiper may adopt a vegetarian diet six days or 10 days a month and learn Caodai's doctrine and philosophies.



Ritual Service at Caodai Temple

### 5.6 What are the Benefits of Attending Weekly Ritual Services (đi cúng) at The Caodai Temple?

Attending the weekly ritual service at The Caodai Temple is similar to attend a training session, which is a combination of both physical and spiritual exercises; an exercise of physical endurance, and an exercise of making transcendent connection between Man and God or other High Spirits. During this exercise, an individual, while silently listening to the rituals of music and singing, would learn to be more patient, would be trained for physical endurance, would learn to listen to the inner mind, would learn to relax the mind and the body, would learn to direct the mind toward the positive energy, would feel the increase of confidence in dealing with challenges in life, would sense the spiritual love that encircles the surroundings, and would feel the strong connection to the center energy of the universe...that is God... thus cultivating the realization that you and God are one (trạng thái của Thiên Nhân Hiệp Nhất). From this one would feel the salvation of the soul and the energy of the love spreading to the surroundings and to all the people in one's world.

The ritual service is filled with prayers. Prayers are the most powerful form of abstract energy that one can generate. It gives one a sensational power that is hard to fully perceive.

If a young child attends the ritual often, he/she will be more likely to have an open heart, care for others, do well in school, see life in positive perspectives, have respect for others, respect life, live attentively, be less selfish, and never dare to commit a crime that may deeply hurt or kill other person(s) for personal gain.

Prayer is miraculous. "There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." [Albert Einstein]

“Open yourself to the miracle of life going on around you. Sense your intimate part in the great scheme of it.” [Kristen Zambucka]

## 6. Conclusion

Caodai announces that God created the universe from nothingness, and while creating the universe God put His spirit into all lives, all living beings: humans, creatures, plants, and materials.

The Caodai Religion suggests that your sacred mission is to bring peace and harmony to humanity (nhơn đạo thái bình) and to unite the “God within” with the Great Divine Being to achieve true enlightenment and liberty (thiên đạo giải thoát).

Caodai declares all Great Religions in the world are from one origin, The Supreme Being.

Caodai defines only ONE RACE for all mankind, regardless of human-defined races, skin colors, languages, genders, or geographical locations within the globe.

Caodai preaches that upon birth, GOD has given each one of us the gift to protect ourselves and our loved ones. These three simple yet powerful gifts are: the ability to express Love and Compassion, the ability to obtain Knowledge and Wisdom, and the Inner Power to withstand life’s tough challenges. The level of power of these three capacities will increase as an individual will continue to work and study hard and self-train to be a better person.

Caodai’s iconic symbol, The Divine Eye (Thiên Nhãn), represents the inner God that exists in the mind and heart of each individual human being regardless ethnic background, sex, skin colors... and symbolizes the concept that the eye not only represents human beings but also all other living beings.

Caodai theories and concepts do not conflict with the development of natural sciences: physically and spiritually. It explains in a simple way why God possesses so much knowledge, power and love simply because God does exist in each living being in the universe, and every living being connects to God. God can understand each individual’s heart, read each individual’s mind, recognize each individual’s reason for existence, and has the utmost concerns for the development of each living being because the development of each individual being will lead to the development of his Virtues.

When Man achieves the highest level of Love, Knowledge, and Courage, he shall find himself capable of dealing the most difficult situations in life, shall have a better understanding of the Truth, shall possess extraordinary beliefs in God, in humanity and in himself, and thus, shall have much greater inner peace and satisfaction.

May you all achieve a higher level of Compassion, Wisdom, and Inner Strength each and every day!

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