

THREE  
SERMONS  
BY  
Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc

Ban Túc Ký Toà Thánh Tây Ninh

Translators  
Christopher Hartney  
Từ Chơn

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Lunar Calendar: 14th - 2nd month - Year of the Dragon  
Gregorian Calendar: March 5th 1928.

**Speech by**

**His Holiness HỘ PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC**

**In the Tây Ninh Temple.**

Translators: Christopher Hartney and Từ Chơn

Reverend Divinely Ordained Dignitaries from the Cửu Trùng Đài<sup>1</sup> and Hiệp Thiên Đài<sup>2</sup>, ladies and gentlemen.

On the occasion of this convention, I would humbly tell you what I have learned from God for your knowledge. I think it is good for me to do so.

A lot of religious mysteries are hidden in God's poems, but their meanings are too secretive for us to gain insight into them. However, I was taught what is relevant to my responsibility because God wants me to fulfill it.

I should have told you about that earlier, but I was instructed to do the missionary work in Kiên Biên<sup>3</sup> for over 7 months. Therefore, it is a little late now.

First, I would like to elaborate on the Hội Thánh<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Caodaist Executive Body.

<sup>2</sup> The Caodaist Judiciary Body.

<sup>3</sup> Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

<sup>4</sup> The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

### **What the Hội Thánh is**

In the phú<sup>5</sup> given to the Phôi Sư Hương Thanh's aunt, God said, "*I use good people to save humanity*".

Hội Thánh is the group of good people gathered by God. God has taught them to have mercy on living beings as He does and uses them as temporal tools to save humanity.

Those people have to gather to form God's earthly body in the Third Universal Salvation so that God will not have to incarnate in the world as He did in the former salvations.

Through magical seances, God taught each of them so that they believe He is really God, who fairly reigns over the universe, who is powerful enough to protect His children alive and dead and who shows the differences between Heaven and Hell for them to make the right choice.

God has promised to give you the divine status in Bạch Ngọc Kinh (White Gem Capital), to clear the way to Nirvana and to close Hell in order to save all living beings, especially the 9.2 million original souls. Those promises can only be kept by God, who is mightier than any Buddhas.

Considering God's power and promises, those selected people (Caodaist Sacerdotal Council) completely trust Him.

Their belief spreads to others and develops throughout the world to improve it. To improve the world, people must practice religion until they achieve enlightenment, but it is hard for them because there are not proper

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<sup>5</sup> A dissertation in rhythmic prose.

instructions. Consequently, God has to found Caodaism to show people the way to practice.

### **What the Đạo<sup>6</sup> is**

Đạo is the sacred magic, which forms something like a path for people to take in order to escape the world of suffering and go to heaven.

*How to escape the endless cycle of rebirth?*

To do so, you must achieve the secret sacred magic of becoming a Divine Being. You can only pray God for that secret sacred magic, not anyone else.

Hence, Đạo is the secret magic that helps a temporal human achieve the divine positions of Genii, Saints, Immortals or Buddhas.

God came, uniting the old religions to show people the sacred magic for their mental cultivation.

However, why did not God found a new religion, but just uses the principles of the old religions?

What if the non-Caodaists say we just imitate other religions?

It is generally understood that Nhon Đạo (Confucianism) teaches how to train your body, Tiên Đạo (Taoism) to cultivate your mind and Phật Đạo (Buddhism) to achieve sacred nothingness.

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<sup>6</sup> Tao - the basic principle of the universe, according to Taoism.

## **Why three religions<sup>7</sup>?**

First, I'd like to say about why we follow the teachings of the three religions both in earthly life and in Heaven.

### **\* *In earthly life :***

All humans on earth have to follow the guidelines of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in order to fulfill their human responsibilities.

According to Confucianism, a person must act in accordance with the Three Bonds<sup>8</sup> and the Five Constant Virtues<sup>9</sup>. He should have responsibility for creating a peaceful human society, in which people live harmoniously, not fight against one another because that is against God's will.

For humanity to love and respect one another, Taoism teaches us to cultivate our minds to find out the way to protect each other. This 68th Earth is the Purgatory, where we are not only tempted by evils but also vulnerable to natural disasters. We have to face both violence and diseases. Alas! That is why lots of Western intellectuals spend their whole life doing research to save human life from destruction. They train their minds so much that some can attain some secret magics from God. Their science has gone beyond average human intelligence, so they deserve to be called the Địa Tiên<sup>10</sup>.

Now humanity is intelligent enough to create machinery, so they need mercy taught by Buddhism, or they will kill and get killed by their own intelligence. In addition to

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<sup>7</sup> Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism.

<sup>8</sup> Three Bonds: (ruler to ruled, father to son and husband to wife).

<sup>9</sup> The Five Constants: (humaneness, righteousness, proper rite, knowledge and integrity)

<sup>10</sup> Earthly Immortals.

the law of karma, whose effects you can see with your own eyes, mercy is what everyone should have, I suppose. Think about it. How chaotic a society will become if a dishonest person can manipulate all good people there! That is why life now resembles a lawless community, where the crafty people beat the honest ones easily!

A religious person is always self-respecting and in high spirits so that he can educate others to do the right things. That is what the three religions have taught.

A society will be in peace if everyone follows the doctrines of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. I wonder when all societies in the world can fortunately live in such peace.

Given the principles of our religion, you and I can believe that target will be able to be surely achieved in the future.

**\* *In Heaven* :**

There had been nothing before the Creation. Then the two masses of air called Hư Vô Chi Khí<sup>11</sup> from nowhere hit each other, which created God's Soul and His Throne called Thái Cực<sup>12</sup>.

The fiery globe called Thái Cực, which is the material mechanism, divided itself, under God's orders, into the Lưỡng Nghi<sup>13</sup>, then Tứ Tượng<sup>14</sup>, and then Bát Quái<sup>15</sup>. That is called the mechanism of Nhơn Đạo<sup>16</sup>. Next

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<sup>11</sup> Wu wei air - nothingness.

<sup>12</sup> Taiji, Tai chi, Absolute.

<sup>13</sup> Two forms, Yin and Yang.

<sup>14</sup> Four phenomena.

<sup>15</sup> Ba Gua, Eight trigrams,

<sup>16</sup> the Doctrine of Humanity, Confucianism.

millions of earths were produced throughout the universe. 72 of them are inhabited by humankind. That is the magic of Tiên Đạo<sup>17</sup>. After the Creation, the fiery Thái Cực returned to nothingness. That is the miraculous magic of Phật Đạo<sup>18</sup>.

The Bát Quái endlessly transform to produce earths and everything visible to us in the universe. That is the material process, which seems to follow God's orders. Everything can develop without fighting or harming each other, which is clearly the mechanism of Nhơn Đạo. Living on 72 earths, humanity also perfects them. Their societies become more and more civilized, which is the mechanism of Tiên Đạo. After that everything will be destroyed however civilized or how long their societies have been, which is the mechanism of Phật Đạo.

A person is nothing before becoming a fetus. Then the combined Yin and Yang change the fetus to a child body. Then the person is born and grow up. That is the magical mechanism of Nhơn Đạo. After that the person learns to be more knowledgeable and wiser. That is the magical mechanism of Tiên Đạo. At last, he becomes old and dies. His body is destroyed. That is the magical mechanism of Phật Đạo.

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<sup>17</sup> The Doctrine of Immortal, Taoism.

<sup>18</sup> The Doctrine of Buddha, Buddhism.



***Discussing the Ngũ Chi<sup>19</sup> (in forms) :***

Ngũ Chi are : Humanism, Shintoism, Christianity, Taoism and Buddhism. On this earth, a human should fulfill his personal responsibilities or practice Humanism. If he tries harder to help others, he practices Shintoism. If he does things much more beneficial to humanity, he practices Christianity. He follows Taoism if he can perfect what he learns and then teaches everyone. Being knowledgeable about everything, he knows that his mind is the boss and needs quietness for a rest before he passes away, so he practices Buddhism.

For the Nguyễn Nhân<sup>20</sup>, those five systems are considered a five-rung ladder to climb to the divine position equal to God (i.e. a Buddha). It is impossible to reach the top rung in only one attempt, but you can gradually climb that ladder to the top. Therefore, God uses those five religions as a five-class school for us to practice religion so that we can achieve our divine status. The divine positions you have got will be surely yours without anyone else's rejection.

Those who copy the exemplary behaviors of Genii will become Genii. Next, the Genii imitate the qualities of the Saints so that they can become Saints. Similarly, those Saints become Immortals and finally Buddhas.

Somebody may ask how can immoral humans become perfectly moral divine beings. You can answer that even the Hoá Nhân<sup>21</sup> have souls granted by God. For example, corals (materials), mimosa (plants), parrots, dogs, horses,

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<sup>19</sup> Five religious branches.

<sup>20</sup> The people whose souls come directly from God.

<sup>21</sup> The humans whose souls have evolved from lower level through lots of incarnations.

monkeys, whales (animals), humans, Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas.

As a result, we humans already have souls, so we can learn and practice the right doctrine in order to achieve the divine positions one day.

That is why God established religions for you to practice. Someone may wonder how human can achieve a divine status while a religion is only a secular community. The answer is without secular life there is no divine status, and without divine status secular cannot last. A similar thing is our body and soul. Without a soul our body is not alive and without a body there is not a human.

Hence, there surely is a material world if there is a spiritual one. The doctrine and the Sacerdotal Council are worldly bodies, which are in accordance with the Divine Law and which are equivalent to the Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa<sup>22</sup>. The Caodaist Law is also the Divine Law and the Sacerdotal Council is the Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas on earth.

### **Isn't it too confident to consider the Law we have established as the Divine Law?**

It is said by God that He has never punished us humanity since the Creation because of love and that the Law in Heaven is made by the Heavenly Assembly to keep themselves (i.e. Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas) from violating it, not to satisfy God. Also, God cannot amend the Heavenly Law presented to Himself after it has been made.

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<sup>22</sup> Cửu Thiên - nine Heavens, Khai Hoá - education.

The Caodaist Canonical Code was made by Giáo Tông<sup>23</sup>Li Bai and other Caodaist dignitaries without God's interference. Only after it was presented to God did it become equal to the Law made in Heaven.

Like a Heavenly Law, which is not influenced by anyone, even God, the Caodaist Canonical Code is unbiased. Let's have a look at the process of making it. The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council is composed of two body the Cử Trùng Đài (Executive Body) and the Hiệp Thiên Đài (Judiciary Body), but the Code for the former was granted by God first. However, the dignitaries under the latter are not the outsiders. They, together with the dignitaries under the Cử Trùng Đài, had to make the Code for themselves. Therefore, they have to observe the Caodaist Canonical Code like everyone.

The Thập Nhị Khai Thiên<sup>24</sup>made law and presented to God. Similarly, The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council made the Canonical Code and presented it to God. As a result, the two laws are considered equivalent.

If breaking the law, the Hộ Pháp will be summoned to appear in the Toà Tam Giáo<sup>25</sup> under the Cử Trùng Đài like an ordinary believer. In the same way, a lawbreaking Giáo Tông will also be summoned to appear in the court under the Hiệp Thiên Đài like a believer.

The divine beings (Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas) make the law in heaven while the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council makes the Canonical Code on earth. Consequently, they all are considered equal.

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<sup>23</sup> The Supreme Leader of Caodaism.

<sup>24</sup> The Twelve Heavens or Heaven.

<sup>25</sup> The Three-Religion Court.

By the way, I would like to elaborate on how the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council is organized and why it is considered equal to the divine beings.

The Sacerdotal Council is divided into three parts.

**1- Bát Quái Đài<sup>26</sup>** is the dwelling place for all Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas, which is led by God.

**2- Cửu Trùng Đài<sup>27</sup>** is where Caodaist divinely ordained dignitaries work. They are considered equivalent to the Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas on earth and led by the Giáo Tông.

**3- Hiệp Thiên Đài<sup>28</sup>** is the organization to protect the secular and religious law like the Ngọc Hư Cung<sup>29</sup> in heaven. It is led by the Hộ Pháp.

### **HIỆP THIÊN ĐÀI**

Hiệp Thiên Đài (Communion Tower) is the door to heaven. Hiệp - communion, alliance, Thiên - heaven. In other words, it is the ladder for humankind to go to heaven. The organization includes Hộ Pháp, Thượng Phẩm, Thượng Sanh and Thập Nhị Thời Quân.

#### ***\* Who are the thập nhị Thời Quân?***

The Caodaist Thập nhị Thời Quân<sup>30</sup> are considered equivalent to the Thập nhị Thời Thần<sup>31</sup>. They are the source of various souls. Similarly, everything in the universe created by God comes from the Thập Nhị Thời Thần. Traditionally, it is said that “*Heaven starts at*

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<sup>26</sup> Bagua Tower, Octagonal Tower or the Caodaist spiritual body.

<sup>27</sup> Nine-Level Tower or the Caodaist executive body.

<sup>28</sup> Communion Tower or the Caodaist judiciary body.

<sup>29</sup> Ngọc - jewel, Hư - nothingness, Cung - Palace.

<sup>30</sup> The twelve Zodiac Superiors - the dignitaries under the Hiệp Thiên Đài.

<sup>31</sup> The twelve Zodiac Lords - the Genii in heaven.

*Rat<sup>32</sup>, Earth ends at Ox<sup>33</sup> and Humans are born at Tiger<sup>34</sup>.”*

Whether the souls who incarnate on earth ascend or descend depends on the Thập nhị Thời Quân. Similarly, divine beings' promotion and punishment depend on the Thập nhị Thời Thần.

The Thập nhị Thời Quân are assigned to four branches: Pháp, Đạo and Thế<sup>35</sup>, each of which has four dignitaries.

***\* What is the Thượng Sanh?***

Souls come from two sources: before and after the Creation. The former are called the original and the other the evolutionary. All materials, plants, animals, birds and humans have evolutionary souls, of which humans are the highest level. In the Third Salvation, God saves all souls, especially helps the evolutionary climb to the level of humanity. Thượng Sanh is the one who is directly responsible for those promotions. Mastering secular laws, he leads all living beings in the religious path. He can bring anyone who hinders people from practicing religion to the Caodaist Court. He can request that the lawbreaking dignitaries causing people to shy away from Caodaism be immediately punished. He is the leading prosecutor, whose staff members are four Zodiac Superiors: Bảo Thế, Hiến Thế, Khai Thế and Tiếp Thế.

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<sup>32</sup> 23:00 - 00:59.

<sup>33</sup> 01:00 - 02:59.

<sup>34</sup> 03:00 - 04:59.

<sup>35</sup> Dharma, Tao and Secularity.

**\* *What is the Thượng Phẩm?***

Joining Caodaism, you can earn a divine status. Then God will help you reach the highest level. Thượng Phẩm is the one who is directly responsible for that job. He protects believers' statuses and helps them avoid breaking the law to get a divine promotion. He prevents Caodaists from fighting each other for a higher position, keeps the Cửu Trùng Đài in order and prevents them from retreating. Mastering religious laws, he defends Caodaist dignitaries and believers by preventing them from violating the laws. He is the Caodaist defense lawyer, whose staff members are four Zodiac Superiors: Bảo Đạo, Hiến Đạo, Khai Đạo và Tiếp Đạo.

**\* *What is the Hộ Pháp?***

Like the law in a secular society, Bí Pháp<sup>36</sup> is the magical power in Caodaism. Hộ Pháp is the one who masters both secular laws and Caodaist esoteric practice. He can judge Caodaist dignitaries and believers and request that someone be awarded or punished on earth.

Since the lawbreakers who have been punished on earth will not be punished again after death, Hộ Pháp punishes the sinners in accordance with the Canonical Code in their lifetime so that they still keep their divine positions after death. He takes all souls to the Bát Quái Đài to meet the Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas. Mastering secular and Caodaist laws, Hộ Pháp is the leading Judge of the Caodaist court<sup>37</sup>. His staff members

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<sup>36</sup> Inner Law, Secret Dharma, Esoteric Practice.

<sup>37</sup> After being judged by the Court of the Cửu Trùng Đài, the defendant can appeal to the Court of the Hiệp Thiên Đài if he/she finds it unfair.

includes four Zodiac Superiors: Bảo Pháp, Hiến Pháp, Khai Pháp và Tiếp Pháp.

The Hiệp Thiên Đài, a replica of the Ngọc Hư Cung<sup>38</sup> on earth, is the door for souls to travel to the Thirty Six Heavens, Nirvana and the Bạch Ngọc Kinh<sup>39</sup> to meet God. It is also the checkpoint to prevent the immoral souls from penetrating into heaven.

Due to His great compassion and expectation, God assigns Thượng Sanh, Thượng Phẩm and Hộ Pháp to save and take all of His children back to heaven.

Physically, the Hiệp Thiên Đài is a construction, where good people are selected and assigned to work with the Cửu Trùng Đài to help Caodaist believers obtain their divine positions. After the believers die, the Hộ Pháp will take their spirit tablets to the Bát Quái Đài to be worshipped with other Genii, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas.

## **CỬU TRÙNG ĐÀI**

The Cửu Trùng Đài<sup>40</sup> is a copy of the Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa<sup>41</sup> for the Cửu Phẩm Thần Tiên<sup>42</sup>. Joining Caodaism, you achieve one of those levels.

The Divine Beings in the Nine Heavens govern the earthly worlds and the Nine-Level Tower administers the Caodaist community, saves people and leads them back to God. The Toà Tam Giáo<sup>43</sup> established by God in the

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<sup>38</sup> Ngọc - gem, Hư - Nothingness, Cung - Palace. The place where God and His Divine Court reigns over the universe.

<sup>39</sup> The White Gem Capital - the administrative center of the universe.

<sup>40</sup> The Nine-Level Tower, the Caodaist Executive Body.

<sup>41</sup> The Nine Heaven.

<sup>42</sup> The Nine-Level Hierarchy for divine beings.

<sup>43</sup> Three-Religion Court.

Nine-Level Tower is the authority God gives Divine Beings to manage the universe. The Canonical Code has already explained the authority of the Caodaist dignitaries.

I would like to comment briefly on the Nine- Level Hierarchy.

### **1- Genii :**

- Those who are non-Caodaists, but moral enough, can attain the level equal that of *Địa Thần*<sup>44</sup>.

- The Caodaist believers, who well practice Caodaism, *Nhơn Thần*<sup>45</sup>.

- The *Lễ Sanh*, *Thiên Thần*<sup>46</sup>.

### **2- Saints:**

- *Giáo Hữu*, *Địa Thánh* or *Earthly Saints*.

- *Giáo Sư*, *Nhơn Thánh* or *Human Saints*.

- *Phôi Sư*, *Thiên Thánh* or *Heavenly Saints*.

### **3- Immortals:**

- *Đầu Sư*, *Địa Tiên* or *Earthly Immortals*.

- *Chưởng Pháp*, *Nhơn Tiên* or *Human Immortals*.

- *Giáo Tông*, *Thiên Tiên* or *Heavenly Immortals*.

What I just said is to mention the equivalence of Caodaist dignitaries and the divine statuses.

According to the Divine Messages, God says He chooses one Buddha, three Immortals, thirty six Saints, seventy two Sages and three thousand disciples in this Third Salvation. That is, God mentions the Caodaist dignitaries under the *Cửu Trùng Đài* or the divine beings He has assigned to incarnate on earth to establish Caodaism.

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<sup>44</sup> Earthly Genii.

<sup>45</sup> Human Genii.

<sup>46</sup> Heavenly Genii.



The one Buddha, two Immortals and twelve Saints under the Hiệp Thiên Đài, who have previously served God in heaven, now continue to do so on earth.

There are lots of Divine Beings having incarnated on earth who are still among Caodaist believers. God is teaching them for their assignments in the future.

As for the Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm<sup>47</sup>, who represent God to administer the Cửu Trùng Đài, they are Buddhas. All souls have to join the Cửu Trùng Đài to attain those mimetic positions in order to achieve the real divine positions after death. Without the Cửu Trùng Đài, you cannot enter the Cửu Trùng Thiên.

## **BÁT QUÁI ĐÀI**

The Bát Quái Đài<sup>48</sup> is where Genii, Saints, Immortals, Buddhas, late Caodaist dignitaries and believers are worshipped. That is in accordance with the principle “God and humanity unite”.

It is miraculous that God only opens the door of Bát Quái Đài for the souls who attain the highest level of the Cửu Trùng Đài and let them unite with other divine beings.

There is only a door between the highest level of the Cửu Trùng Đài and the Bát Quái Đài, so between the earthly world and the divine Nirvana there is only one thing: the material body. If that door can be opened, you can get enlightenment right here on earth.

In conclusion, I would like to say:

- The Hiệp Thiên Đài is the opening door to heaven, where there are devoted helpers available for the original souls to return to their previous divine

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<sup>47</sup> Three Heavenly Governors.

<sup>48</sup> Bagua Tower, Octagonal Tower, Caodaist Spiritual Body.

positions and for the evolutionary souls to compete for a higher divine position, even the one equal to God's.

- The Cửu Trùng Đài is the divine positions God grants you on earth. It is like the barometer to show you what your divine position will be after death in advance.
- The Bát Quái Đài is the Bạch Ngọc Kinh on earth.

Unfortunately, most of us do not respect our ranks. Some even degrade Caodaism. O! What a terrible sin!

God has revealed all secrets of heaven to you, so be alert to be able to escape the cycle of rebirth.

Caodaism is a religion, thanks to which we can persuade and save people. To do so, we have to be perfectly moral to administer the Caodaist community. Frankly, we are still not moral enough!

His Holiness Giáo Tông always criticizes us, complaining that we have been chosen because God loves us too much while we are, actually, terribly unworthy. That complaint always makes me ashamed of myself for not finishing my responsibilities due to my inability. Having tried hard, I am still like a firefly at night, which is not luminous enough to show the way for believers.

Therefore, I think you and me have to try a lot to keep ourselves worthy of God's love, brothers and sisters. The higher the rank, the more moral we should be. That is something we should do to repay God for His love, not to achieve something like a divine status. We should try and happily accept what God grants.

We have to trust and worship God all the time.

I can foresee some punishment awaiting us. Therefore, why don't we wholeheartedly repent together to see whether we will be forgiven?

Lunar Calendar: 15th - 7th month - Year of the Monkey  
Gregorian Calendar: August 16th 1932.

**Sermon by**  
**His Holiness HỘ PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC**  
**In the Tây Ninh Temple.**

Translator: Từ Chơn

Caodaist brothers and sisters,  
For a year, Caodaism has been in trouble, which degrades its noble purpose assigned by God.

I have not made any apologetic explanation, so some may think I have favored some current Caodaist senior dignitaries. Such a slanderous rumor has recently been spread around by some rebellious Caodaist schisms. I do not need to elaborate on or object to it. Let it be judged by people with a clear conscience. However, there is one thing that I am sure about: I am certain that I have never been partial.

Generally, people are partial because they want to attain something from somebody such as sharing power, benefit, friendship or even a plot. Obviously, Caodaism has no fame, benefit or power for you to pursue. Some may say yes, but they are fake priests who only live on stealing from others.

In real life, no-one dares to crazily declare that they pursue power and benefit because they will be shied away. Conversely, they pretend to be moral to seduce the honest ones. Then, they can have authority and steal what those honest people have.

Furthermore, they use virtues as their slogan. Commonly, they begin their campaign by criticizing others and show off how righteous they are.

Righteousness! Righteousness! It is righteousness that helps lots of heroes become kings of a nation.

King Jie was too immoral, so Tang of Shang could overthrow him and started the Shang Dynasty.

King Zhou of Shang was too immoral, so Wu of Zhou could overthrow him and became King Wu of Zhou.

King You of Zhou was too immoral, so other nobles could defeat him.

The six States were too immoral, so Ying Zheng could unite China and became the King of Qin.

The Qin Dynasty was too immoral, so Liu Bang could start the Han dynasty.

Emperor Xian of Han was too immoral, so Cao Pi could overthrow him and became the King, etc.

Righteousness is so powerful that all bad guys always take advantage of it for their own benefit. Nevertheless, a wise person never lets them play tricks on himself. Therefore, when Zhuge Liang gave a flattering eulogy in Zhou You's funeral, Shiyuan, who knew Zhuge Liang's true intention, did not show any grief.

Like Shiyuan, I have turned a deaf ear to the rumors spread by the rebellious Caodaist schisms. I just chuckled to myself while they tried to speak ill of myself behind my back.

The only thing I fear is they use the slogan of righteousness, which is both a Confucian and Caodaist principle, to trick others into believing that they are genuine priests. Fortunately, everyone knows that they are only fake priests.

Now, I am going to discuss what the ĐẠO is with you first.

### **What the ĐẠO is ?**

“Đạo”<sup>49</sup> is a term temporarily used to identify or mention the spiritual realm. Our Confucian forefathers said: *“It is the mystery of the relationship between God and His creatures”*.

Confucians promote and consider the principle of *“God and Man rule the world together”* the secular law for human societies. Therefore, there should be a mutually supportive relationship between religious life and secular life. Man has to cultivate themselves to be as righteous as God and how to practice it is also called *“Đạo”*.

Shintoists worship nature spirits and promote the principle *“Sincere prayers will be granted”*. Its practice is also called *“Đạo”*.

Christians aim at saving people, saying that God is inside Man. Therefore, love for people equals to love for God. Its practice is called *“Đạo”* as well.

Taoists try to achieve calmness by retreating to a quiet place, saying your mind is dull because of life disturbance and the way to achieve calmness is also named *“Đạo”*.

Buddhists hold that consciousness, which allows you to reason, keeps you in the secular world. It should be eliminated so that you can gain enlightenment. How to do that is also called *“Đạo”*.

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<sup>49</sup> The utmost principle of the universe, a religion, the way to practice a religion.

According to Zhongyong<sup>50</sup> (Doctrine of the Mean), “*What God confers is called the Nature; How to live in accordance with this Nature is called the Path; the regulation of this path is called Instruction*”.

*What God confers is called the Nature:* God grants us humanity both our nature (or souls) and destiny. Not only humanity but also other living beings have souls granted by God. How much spiritually advanced a soul is decides how good or bad a person’s destiny is.

*How to live in accordance with this Nature is called the Path:* most humans have to struggle for food and clothes in their community, so they sometimes becomes too materialistic to know the Path. Nevertheless, a few of them, who are so wise, know they have to live in accordance with the Path in order to unite with God.

*The regulation of this path is called Instruction (education or religion):* those who follow the Path either teach themselves or learn from wiser persons. Those wiser persons’ techniques gradually form communities called religions. Thiệu Khương Tiết<sup>51</sup> added, “*Superior people are instinctively good, so they do not need any education. They are Saints; Average people will become good if properly educated. They are virtuous people; Lower people will never become good though properly educated. They are morons*”. Therefore, only Saints can teach themselves to become virtuous people. The others all need education or religion.

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<sup>50</sup> A Confucian Classic, by Zisi, a grandson of Confucius.

<sup>51</sup> Or Thiệu Khang Tiết, a Chinese poet and researcher (1011-1071)

## **Who is God?**

God is the High and Lofty One, powerful enough to create the universe, humankind and all living beings. He is the Father of life, the Lord of all souls and the King of all divine beings. He is the Supreme Being all peoples on earth worship.

He is as mysterious as the infinite space He creates. His nature is as incomprehensible and unknowable as the universe. You can partly understand that when you look at what humanity has created so far. The more you ponder over the nature of God, the more scarily miraculous you find it.

In both Europe and Asia there have been lots of highly educated people who do not believe any religions and who want to seek the answer to that question on their own. They have thoroughly examined the material world in order to find out who God is. The more they study, the more confused they are. At last, they have to exclaim: *“God is absolutely high! God is infinitely great!”*

So disappointed, they sometimes want to give up. However, they are still pushed into searching for the answer for two reasons: first, they want to know the system to which they belong; second, the evolution of the universe inspires their desire for more knowledge. Due to the difficulty while researching on their own, they, at last, resign themselves to joining a religion like ordinary people in spite of its weird regulations. They accept whatever the new religion says about God though it may sound scientifically unacceptable because they know that their so-called high education has been ineffective in studying God so far.

Sometimes those highly educated, but indecisive people have to give in to more powerful political forces, for

example, Galileo Galilei, an Italian mathematician, physicist and astronomer from Pisa, who has been called the father of modern science. Having seen the swaying chandelier in the cathedral of Pisa, he created the pendulum. He also developed the thermometer, the hydrostatic balance, the law of gravity, etc. In 1609 he made a telescope to watch the heavenly bodies. Using that telescope, he could present supporting observations and prove heliocentrism by Copernicus (the astronomical model in which the Earth and planets revolve around the Sun at the center of the Solar System).

His work shocked the Catholic Church in Rome, who supported geocentrism, saying the earth is the center. The Church wanted to ban him, so they decided that the theory by Copernicus was heresy and ordered him not to support it.

He promised, but later wrote a book, arguing for heliocentrism in Florence. Therefore, he was tried by the Inquisition and forced to recant when he was 70 years old. After signing to recant his theory that the Earth moved around the Sun, Galileo allegedly muttered, "*And yet it moves*". He was then placed under house arrest. He went blind and died in 1642. Alas! What brutal repression against such a talent! The reason is ordinary people do not possess enough intelligence to perceive the grandeur of the universe, much less Galileo's evidence.

So, who held the truth, the Inquisition or Galileo? As you can see now, the one who held the truth suffered a great deal because no one understood his evidence! Now, our religion (Caodaism) has the same suffering as Galileo did: we can hardly provide the evidence for the existence of God.



Since the Creation, nobody has ever seen God, the mighty invisible Creator. It is a precious award for someone, even the leading divine beings, to be with God. That is commonplace! Everyone always wants to have close companionship with a good intellectual, not to mention the fact that they can with the Supreme Being. However, there has been no evidence for such a meeting! Some fear Him because they witnessed “*for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap*”. Therefore, they guess there must be someone who rules the world.

Some love Him because they see everything in nature is for people’s benefit.

Some admire His talent because He unbiasedly reigns the universe without missing anyone out.

However, there are people who hate and blaspheme God. They are too unworthy to be mentioned here.

There are some religious founders, who are instinctively religious, who used to be close to God in heaven or who have attained enlightenment. On earth they naturally believe God although they just heard of Him once. They even cry tears of love when someone mentions His name. It is almost impossible to describe that affection.

Except those religious founders, most people are only the curious ones, some of whom think God is only an imaginary Being. (I do not dare judge these people. Think twice and judge them for yourselves, please!). They may follow some doctrine which takes advantage of God’s name for their secret benefits. They never believe God at all, but may form a weird kind of religion! It is acceptable if they act based on their conscience and it is fine if they ignore the boss of their conscience (i.e. God), but it is never fair if they judge themselves.

Thus, a few people contend that God does not exist. They say their bodies are controlled by their brains and there is nothing left after they die. Therefore, they do not believe any religious doctrines. They respect the progress of the material world and their target to hit is earthly happiness. To this point, you might be really upset and question:

- *Where do those people come from and why do they reject their origin?*

Then, there might be an endless argument, in which we humans can exchange what we think is the most logical. Till the cows come home, the argument will get us nowhere.

Why? Because what we think and what knowledge we gain appear after God and His plan. How much knowledge about God we gain was already determined by Himself. Our finite mind can never comprehend the Infinite or God. We are like a frog at the bottom of a well who thinks the sky is a small circle like the mouth of the well.

Consequently, brothers and sisters, you should know that matter is beyond belief and tolerate what others say about God. You Caodaists are so lucky to be taught by God by means of magical seances, which are also too miraculous for the lay public to understand.

O! It is hard to tell whether ghosts, Buddhas, Satan or God come through those seances, isn't it? Some say ghosts, we say Buddhas; some say Satan, we say God, yet no one can present convincing evidence!

Lots of times God instructed us that we should be very cautious about distinguishing between genuine and fake seances. In addition, He said you can have a successful seance only with the contribution of a medium.

Hence, were the divine messages from God or the medium, from Buddha or the medium, from Satan or the medium, from ghosts or the medium? Actually, there are no ways to tell which one. That is why some believers, who have not been taught the Caodaist esoteric practice because of its too difficult techniques, got “fake messages” from the seances they held without the permission of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council. Look! Even in the Caodaist Inaugural Celebration, some evils could enter our seance, so their unauthorized seances were surely controlled by Satan!

That is why the Caodaist dignitaries under my Hiệp Thiên Đài, who had been chosen to be the Caodaist mediums by God, had sometimes to be ashamed and bear the humiliation of supposedly producing fake messages. That means they have not been trusted enough by other Caodaist believers, so be generous enough to put up with them like God does, brothers and sisters!

Unlike Caodaism, some religions maintain that God has no image, has infinite power and can do what He wants. Those contradictory opinions can confuse you all. Therefore, I would like to literally quote the poem from a divine being, who incarnated as the great poet Victor Hugo in France and who is the Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn<sup>52</sup> in Quảng Hàn Cung<sup>53</sup>. He taught me the nature and the authority of God in creating the universe and living beings.

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<sup>52</sup> Nguyệt Tâm - lunar spirit, Chơn Nhơn - enlightened person.

<sup>53</sup> The moon.

**20 Avril 1930 (1 heure du matin).**

Mes respects Hô Pháp,  
Ils sont en train de vous médire  
Pour pousser derechef nos frères dans le pire.  
Ils comptent à vous faire malheur,  
Ils agrandiront, au contraire, votre honneur.  
Oh ! qu'il est gênant d'être près des traytres !  
Mais c'est juste pour eux qu'on est né Maytre.  
Hô Pháp - Enfin passons,  
Poser moi vos questions.

**HÔ PHÁP :** - *Je veux être instruit sur l'origine de  
notre Maytre et sur sa puissance.*

Il n'est pas aisé de connaytre ce mystère,  
L'enquête éternelle sur ce point n'est plus claire  
Il peut bien avoir, d'après mon avis,  
D'autres Univers que le nôtre, dans l'infini.  
Ils seraient plus ou moins énormes,  
Mais la vie et les êtres auraient les mêmes formes.  
L'un de ceux-ci serait donc plus avancé,  
Au point de vue d'Esprits et d'Humanité,  
A une étape, il ressemblerait bien au nôtre,  
Avec le progrès, il deviendrait apôtre.  
Dans tous ses Cieux, règnerait la Beauté.  
Ses êtres auraient une grande part de Divinité.  
La Paix et l'Harmonie dirigerait ses terres,  
Ses créatures ignoreraient le mot Guerre.  
Rien n'est relatif, tout est absolu;  
Des grandes âmes se rivaliseraient en vertu.  
Toute production serait Science et Sagesse.  
La force d'âmes maytrise l'humaine faiblesse,  
Ses derniers mondes vivraient sans Loi,  
L'Union se ferait sous la Divine Foi.

La Mort serait vaincue par la haute conscience.  
Morts et vivants n'auraient pas de différence.  
L'amour des êtres est partout proclamé,  
Âmes et hommes seraient tous en sainteté.  
Il y a chez nous, dans un certain monde,  
Où cette sorte de vie est féconde.  
Vous pourrez, un jour, apprécier sa grande valeur,  
Quand notre terre passera au degré supérieur.

HÔ PHÁP : - *Quand la terre aura-t-elle ce profit ?*  
Pour que vous ayez conscience en votre mérite,  
Je me servirai d'une expression spirite.  
Des purgatoires, elle débute au rang des bienheureux,  
Il faudra longtemps pour qu'elle soit le pays des dieux.  
Si l'on veut connaître l'origine de notre Maître,  
Il faut qu'on soit avec lui ou on le pénètre.  
Aucun esprit n'a une très nette opinion,  
Bouddha lui-même ne fait que des suppositions.  
Ne prenez pas mes instructions en importance,  
Je ne répète que ce que les esprits y pensent.  
Supposons que notre Créateur, à ses débuts,  
Dans un de ces Univers, a vraiment vécu,  
Son esprit devait faire aussi un long stage;  
De la matière, il devenait homme et sage,  
Dans les classes d'Esprits, il passait les échelons;  
Il entre enfin dans le mystère de la Création.  
Par ses vies successives, il a une puissance,  
Qui le fait Maître de la Sagesse et de la Science.  
Il sait aussi s'entourer des meilleurs esprits,  
Qui forment sa Cour de serviteurs et d'amis.  
Une fois que son Ciel avait assez de force,  
Il parcourait l'infini avec son escorte.

HÔ PHÁP : - *Il avait donc un Ciel à lui ?*  
Oui, chacun de nous a un domaine défini,  
Que nous fabriquons avec notre force d'esprit.  
Âmes et êtres provenant de notre état karmique,  
Forment ainsi notre ciel ou notre république.  
Ceux qui le peuplent ne nous sont guère fidèles,  
Beaucoup d'entre nous viennent de notre erreur  
originelle.  
Tant qu'on néglige ses secrets de purification,  
Tant qu'on ouvre son ciel à ces terribles démons  
D'où vient alors notre Satan, le grand diable,  
Si nous cherchions la Vérité et non les fables,  
Il provient sûrement du cortège divin,  
Que notre Créateur n'a pu le rendre vraiment saint.  
Il est donc de règle que nos proches nous trahissent  
Par jalousie, par envie ou par purs caprices.  
Vous avez, Hô-Pháp, une crampe à la main,  
Renvoyons notre causerie pour demain.

### ***21 Avril 1930***

Savez-vous que les mêmes médisances se continuent,  
Maintenant notre Divin Maître est porté en vue  
Ne vous souciez pas des méchantes gens;  
Ils se reviendront quand ils auront du bon sens.  
Je continue mon point de vue sur la genèse,  
Tout en respectant ceux qui vous plaisent.  
Il arrive alors dans un endroit ténébreux.  
Stagnant, tranquille, paisible que rien ne meut,  
Dans un gaz qui n'est ni vapeur ni liquide,  
Dorment des germes à un sommeil léthargique;  
Enveloppé enfin dans un effroyable froid.  
Nulle créature ne vit, nulle matière ne croît.

HÔ PHÁP : - *Est-ce bien la forme de l'eau parlée dans  
la genèse chrétienne ?*

Oui, c'est cette sorte de gaz qu'on appelle hydrogène,  
Plus ou moins dense qui fait la partie la plus saine.  
Dire que l'Esprit de Dieu nage au-dessus des eaux.  
C'est à ce sens qu'il faut comprendre le mot.  
Avec son astral qui est de lumière,  
Il anime par sa chaleur ces inertes matières.  
Une couche d'oxygène produit, se met en action.  
Le contact des deux gaz donne une détonation;  
Le feu divin est né et l'eau sacrée se forme,  
Sous l'effet des deux éléments tout se transforme :  
Des matières brûlées forment des gaz, des gaz brûlés,  
Produisent des fluides, des fluides purs sont vitalité.  
La dite vitalité a une puissance,  
Se donner aux esprits la mort et la naissance.  
Quelles merveilles qu'elle nous a fait constater,  
Quels mystères qu'elle ira encore nous conserver ?  
Tout ce qui vient de la main de notre Maître,  
Il nous est bien difficile d'en connaître.  
Ce feu divin alimenté, s'est agrandi,  
Jette ses nébuleuses jusqu'à l'infini.  
Dans tout l'Univers ce feu se sème;  
Il se répartit tant qu'il se décompose lui-même.  
Ses nébuleuses s'agrandissent sous forme de soleils,  
Créent des mondes et des mondes avec tous leurs détails  
Où la conscience de Dieu et sa lumière anime,  
Les êtres sont tous pénétrés, mêmes les plus infimes.  
L'esprit divin s'est répandu partout,  
Ceux qui ont vie proviennent de ce Tout.  
De ces fluides rayonnées de sa divine lumière,  
Les plus impurs se métamorphosent en pierres,  
En terres, en végétaux, en animaux ou en chair;

Les plus denses en air et les purs en éther.  
L' intellect est donc donné à toutes créatures,  
Suivant leurs états, une dose plus ou moins pure.  
L' âme est ainsi créée, tandis que le corps,  
C' est la vitalité qui détermine leurs sorts.  
Vous avez compris le reste,  
C' est ici que je m' arrête.

HÔ PHÁP : - *Pardon, si tout vient de notre Maître,  
tout doit être parfait. Pourquoi pouvons-nous  
encore constater les imperfections  
de la nature ?*

Quelles sont ces imperfections ?  
Pourrai-je vous donner des explications ?

HÔ PHÁP : - *La méchanceté et l' inutilité des êtres.  
Aussi bien les hommes que les animaux  
ou les végétaux, leur morale ne peut être  
raisonnablement appréciée.*

Rien n' est méchant ou inutile dans la nature,  
Pour se conserver, il faut la nourriture.  
Notre Bon Dieu aime ardemment ses enfants.  
Dans son grand amour, il leur procure des moyens.  
Pour leur progrès, il leur crée des souffrances;  
Il leur faut également des moyens de défense.  
Avez-vous vu en ce monde un homme vraiment pieux ?  
S' ils sont méchants pour nous, ils sont utiles pour eux !  
Comment peuvent devenir nos grands sages ?  
Que contient l' histoire humaine dans ses pages ?  
Une lutte acharnée entre faibles et puissants,  
Les plus forts sont souvent les plus grands.  
L' opposition des deux donne la marche ascendante,  
Des idées et des réalisations savantes.



Notre cher monde est purement relatif,  
Méchants et inutiles ne sont que qualificatifs.  
Sur ce globe, chacun de nous a une place;  
Les mondes des autres cieux sont des classes.  
L' Univers est donc une école pour les esprits,  
Qui la fréquentent pour être encore plus érudits.  
Ceux qui font souvent l'école buissonnière,  
Doivent doubler leurs années et reprennent leurs  
matières.

Toutes les âmes espèrent lire ce livre éternel,  
Qui contient le secret à se faire immortel.  
Le but est d'achever notre rude carrière;  
Il faut de temps, des conditions et des manières.  
De l'immonde matière à la pure divinité,  
On fait son chemin en tenant l'éternité.  
Le résultat est d'apprendre à se connaître,  
Et connaître ensuite, par conscience, l'Homme qui doit  
être.

La différence des caractères a sa raison,  
Elle nous aide à faire la comparaison.  
Mettez une large tolérance dans vos études,  
Classez les esprits suivant leurs aptitudes.  
Séparez simplement ceux qui sont humains,  
De ceux qui sont déjà un peu divins.  
Donnez au sacerdoce des meilleurs modèles,  
Enseignez par tous vos moyens vos infidèles,  
Ne les détestez pas parce qu'ils sont infâmes.  
Et ne regardez que le salut de leurs âmes !  
Aimez toujours pour donner à L'Humanité,  
Ces deux Vérités : AMOUR et ÉTERNITÉ.

Tệ đệ xin lược dịch ra đây, nhờ mấy vị cao minh chỉnh lại giùm những điều sai sót :

*Ngày 20 tháng 4 năm 1930 (1 giờ khuya).*

Kính chào Hộ Pháp,  
Người đương xúm nói hành quý vị,  
Dục chư huynh quá lý từ đây.  
Tưởng là mưu hại đặng Ngài,  
Nào dè xúm đỡ danh Ngài thêm cao.  
Gần kẻ phản biết bao khó chịu,  
Gẫm thật ra bởi đày mình Thầy,  
Thôi thì ta cũng bỏ khuây,  
Hỏi chi xin khá tỏ bày cùng tôi.

*HỘ PHÁP : - Xin cho tôi hiểu nguyên thủy của Thầy  
chúng ta và quyền hành của người.*

Hiểu cho đặng huyền vi khó nổi,  
Tra khuôn hồng tử mỗi không minh.  
Theo tôi nghĩ thế giới mình,  
Ngoài ra còn có lắm hình càn khôn.  
Nhiều thể khác biệt phân lớn nhỏ,  
Sinh tồn loài vật rõ y nhau.  
Một ngôi nào đó nên cao,  
Về thần hồn với về loài Nhơn sanh.  
Cũng có lúc giống mình như hệt,  
Tấn hóa nâng khí phách nên hiền.  
Mấy trời đẹp vẻ thiên nhiên,  
Vật loài đều hưởng trọn quyền Chí Linh.  
Các địa quả thái bình an tịnh,  
Cả chúng sanh dốt tánh can qua.  
Tương đối dứt, tuyệt đối ra,  
Chơn hồn tranh đấu về khoa tánh lành.  
Sanh chi cũng ngoan minh cách trí,

Quyền linh hồn chủ quỷ phạm tâm.  
Thế hèn luật cũng không cần,  
Tương thân chỉ cậy nhờ phần đức tin.  
Cái chết bị tâm linh đánh bại,  
Sống chết dường trái phải không phân.  
Thương sanh truyền phép xa gần,  
Hồn và người vốn Thánh Thần hiển nhiên.  
Nhiều thế giới cần khôn ta có,  
Sanh hoạt này quả có nên nhiều,  
Địa cầu chừng đặng cao siêu,  
Các Ngài rõ giá những điều phân phô.

*HỘ PHÁP : - Chừng nào trái địa cầu này đặng hưởng điều ấy ?*

Thần linh dụng tiếng làm Ngài hiểu,  
Cho tỏ tường phạm hiệu dường bao.  
Qua luyện tội Thánh cảnh vào,  
Còn lâu nữa mới làm trào Phật Tiên.  
Muốn biết đặng căn nguyên Từ Phụ,  
Ở cùng người hoặc đủ hiểu Người.  
Chẳng hồn nào quyết định lời,  
*Thích Ca thì cũng để lời phỏng ngôn.*  
Chớ coi trọng lời tôi bày tỏ,  
Tôi thuật lời tường ngữ như linh.  
Tỷ như lúc trước Chí Linh,  
Có sanh ở một cảnh hình càn khôn.  
Người cũng đứng phạm hồn hậu bổ,  
Vật nên người, người trở nên Hiền.  
Lần hồi lên phạm thiêng liêng,  
Khai Thiên người mới đoạt quyền Chí Linh.  
Đã chịu lắm sinh sinh tử tử,  
Đủ huyền linh làm chủ trí khôn.  
Lại hay thấu phục chơn hồn,

Đặng làm Thần đệ vĩnh tồn triều nghi.  
Đài Thiên cảnh vừa khi đặng lớn,  
Dắt triều đình vào chốn không trung.

HỘ PHÁP : - *Vậy chớ khi ấy Người đã có Thiên cung  
riêng của Người rồi hay sao ?*

Phải, mỗi đũa riêng trong cảnh giải,  
Của chúng ta tạo tại linh hồn.  
Hồn, người, do bởi giác hồn,  
Tạo nên cảnh giới cộng làm chánh chung.  
Trong các Đấng lòng trung vẫn ít,  
Phân đông do kẻ nghịch oan khiên.  
Tu chơn bỏ máy diệu huyền,  
Thì ta mở lối cảnh Thiên quý vào.  
Quý vương hỏi nơi nào mà đến,  
Cứ tầm chơn đừng đếm giả truyền,  
Chắc do trong đám triều Thiên,  
Chí Linh khó sửa cho tuyền Thánh tâm.  
Ta hằng bị tình thâm phản nghịch,  
Đố kỵ, cùng vui thích hại ta.  
Hộ Pháp, tay Ngài tê quá thay là,  
Đêm mai tôi tiếp nói qua việc này.

***Ngày 21 tháng 4 năm 1930 (10 giờ tối).***

Lời ác cảm ngày nay còn tiếp,  
Bây giờ đây cậy pháp danh Thầy.  
Đừng lo kẻ dữ làm chi,  
Biết khôn đó cũng có ngày ăn năn.  
Tôi tiếp chuyện khai Thiên tôi nhận,  
Cũng kính phương học vấn của Ngài.  
Chí Tôn tới chốn dạ đài,  
Bình an phẳng lặng không loài động sanh.  
Trong thứ khí không danh mây nước,

Vật chất sanh ngũ ước vô chùng.  
Hào quang bao phủ mấy vàng,  
Vật không biến hóa, thú ngừng không sanh.

HỘ PHÁP : - *Thưa phải là hình ảnh của nước trong  
Sám truyền đạo Thánh đã có nói đó hay không ?*

Phải, thứ khí kêu danh thủy khí,  
Đông đặc nhiều xem kỹ đứng đầu.  
Rằng Trời mặt nước ngự châu,  
Thì là phải hiểu cao sâu thế này.  
Chơn thần người đầy đầy ánh sáng,  
Lấy dương quang áp đảng vô năng,  
Sanh lẫn hỏa khí bao giăng,  
Âm Dương tương khắc nổ lẫn Thiên thanh.  
Thái Cực nở với hình gương thủy,  
Hai quyền năng dục khí hóa cơ.  
Vật tiêu hóa khí, khí nhơ,  
Tiêu thành gương khí bấy giờ sanh quang.  
Khí sanh quang ấy toàn linh cảm,  
Định linh hồn chết sống nơi tay.  
Dị thường sanh hóa rất hay,  
Sau này ta cũng thấy hoài huyền linh.  
Vật chi tại tài tình Sư Phụ,  
Ta không phương hiểu thấu cho cùng.  
Lửa Thái Cực lớn vô chùng,  
Rảy cùng thế giới muôn trùng hỏa tinh.  
Phân phát quá rồi hình phải tuyệt,  
Cùng càn khôn rảy riết không ngần.  
Hỏa tinh lớn hóa nhứt quang,  
Nhứt tinh nguội lập cả hàng thế gian.  
Nơi nào ánh linh quang chiếu diệu,  
Vạn vật toàn đại tiểu đều thông.  
Chí Linh tánh đức bao trùm,

Hữu sanh ai cũng do cùng Nhứt Linh.  
Các nguơn khí ánh linh chiếu thấu,  
Chi trực ngưng thứ xấu biến thạch hình.  
Thổ, mộc, thú, nhơn, vạn linh,  
Bán thanh sanh khí, thanh thành hạo nhiên.  
Khôi linh cảm ban tuyền vạn loại,  
Tùy theo hàng phẩm thủy vừa chừng,  
Hồn linh sanh hưởng hồng ân,  
Còn bên thể phách về phần sanh quang.  
Ngài đủ rõ hành tàng sót lại,  
Tới đây tôi đành phải ngưng văn.

*HỘ PHÁP : - Kiếu lỗi Ngài, nhưng quả mọi việc đều do nơi Sư Phụ thì tức nhiên nó phải tận thiện tận mỹ mới phải, có sao chúng tôi lại còn thấy đặng nhiều điều sai sót của cơ Tạo hóa vậy ?*

Những điều chi sơ sót gọi rằng,  
Hoặc khi tôi có cơ bằng giải khuyên.

*HỘ PHÁP : - Sự hung ác và sự vô ích của cả loài người loài vật và thảo mộc. Cái tánh đức của vạn loại khó lấy trí khôn người mà định khen cho đặng.*

Không vô ích dữ hiền mặt thế,  
Sống phải toan kiếm kế nuôi thân.  
Chí Tôn con cái đều cần,  
Lòng thương kia phải dành phần lợi sanh.  
Cho tấn hóa, người hành đau thảm,  
Người phải cho mô phạm bảo thân.  
Dưới đời mấy mặt hiền nhân,  
Vớ ta gọi dữ họ cần ích riêng.  
Sao đặng tiếng Thánh hiền các Đấng,

Sử nhờn gian nào chúng chép ghi.  
Đấu tranh mạnh yếu thường khi,  
Xem ra thấy mạnh cũng thì phần hơn.  
Lẽ mạnh yếu thiết hơn chiến đấu,  
Nâng trí mưu cơ xảo nên hay.  
Cảnh phạm tương đối là đây,  
Dữ, vô dụng, ấy là lời bia danh.  
Nơi hoàn vũ cá nhân có chỗ,  
Các Trời kia lớp ngõ học đường.  
Cần khôn thế giới là trường,  
Chư hồn đến học cho thường mới hay.  
Kẻ nào nhặng bỏ bài trốn mãi,  
Không đặng lên, học lại bài xưa.  
Các hồn ai cũng mến ưa,  
Sách thiêng liêng đọc mấy tờ vĩnh sanh.  
Ai cũng ước công thành danh toại,  
Phải nhiều thời nhiều phép nhiều kinh.  
Vật hèn tới phẩm tối linh,  
Con đường đi biết mấy nghìn thời gian.  
Chung cuộc hiệu hành tàng ta đã,  
Sau mới tường căn quả Chí Linh.  
Biệt phân đẳng cấp tánh linh,  
Là phương dành để cho mình sánh cân.  
Trong học thức Ngài cần quảng đại,  
Phân tánh người tùy cái tài ba.  
Đem người phạm tánh cho ra,  
Ngoài vòng Thánh chất, chánh tà phân minh.  
Lấy gương tốt để dành Hội Thánh,  
Năng dạy khuyên các nhánh bất trung.  
Đừng thềm ghét kẻ gian hùng,  
Coi phần hồn trọng độ giùm là hay.  
Cứ thương mãi đặng cho nhờn loại,  
Chơn lý kia cạn giải đôi lời :

TỪ BI, BÁC ÁI và TRỜI.

### **English Translation**

April 20, 1930 (1 a.m.).

Your Holiness Hộ Pháp,

Some people are slandering you

To push our brothers into the worst again.

They intend to make you unhappy,

They will, on the contrary, enhance your honor.

Oh ! how embarrassing it is to be near traitors!

But they are also children of our Master.

Hộ Pháp, let's move on,

Ask me your questions.

*Hộ Pháp - I want to be educated on the origin of our Master and His power.*

It's not easy to know this mystery.

Eternal investigations into this point have proved fruitless.

He may have, in my opinion,

Other universes than ours, in the infinite.

They would be more or less huge,

But life and beings would have the same forms.

One of these would be more advanced,

From the point of view of souls and humanity.

At one stage, it looked very much like ours,

With progress, it then becomes more advanced.

In all its heaven, beauty would reign.

Its beings would have a great deal of divinity.

Peace and harmony would rule its lands,

Its creatures would ignore the word "war".

Nothing is relative, everything is absolute;



Great souls would compete in virtue.  
Any production would be from science and wisdom.  
The strength of souls overcomes human weakness,  
Its worlds would need no law,  
The union would be done under the divine faith.  
Death would be defeated by high consciousness.  
Dead and alive would have no difference.  
The love of sentient beings is proclaimed everywhere,  
Souls and men would all be saintly.  
There are such worlds,  
Where this kind of life is fruitful.  
You may one day appreciate its great value,  
When your earth goes to the next level.

HỒ PHÁP: - *When will the earth have this profit?*

To make you aware of your merits,  
I will use a spiritistic expression.  
A purgatory, which begins with the rank of the blessed,  
Will take a long time to be the land of gods.  
If we want to know the origin of our Master,  
We have to be with or understand Him.  
No one has ever had a very clear opinion,  
Buddha himself only makes assumptions.  
Don't consider my instructions important,  
I only repeat what other divine beings think of.  
For example, our Creator, at the beginning,  
Really lived in one of those universes.  
His soul also had to do a long internship;  
From matter, he became a man then a sage,  
In spiritual classes, he climbed the ladder;  
He finally entered the age of Creation.  
Through his successive lives, He had enough power,

Which makes Him master of wisdom and science.  
He also knows how to surround Himself with the best  
souls,  
Who formed his court of servants and friends.  
Once His heaven was strong enough,  
He traveled endlessly with His escorts.

HỘ PHÁP: - *So He had a heaven of His own?*

Yes, each of us has a defined domain  
That we make with the strength of our soul.  
The souls and beings from our karmic states  
Form our sky or our republic.  
Those who populate it are hardly loyal to us.  
Many of them come from our original mistakes  
As long as we neglect the right process of purification.  
Or as long as we open our sky to these terrible demons.  
That is how Satan, the great devil, comes in.  
If we were looking for the truth and not the fables,  
We'll see that Satan surely comes from the divine beings,  
That our Creator could not make truly holy.  
It is, therefore, the rule that our loved ones betray us  
Out of jealousy, envy or pure whim.  
You have, Hộ-Pháp, a cramp in your hand<sup>54</sup>,  
Let's postpone our chat until tomorrow.

April 21, 1930

Do you know that the same backbiting continues,  
Now our Divine Master is brought into view?  
Don't worry about bad people;  
They will come back when they have common sense.

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<sup>54</sup> Hộ Pháp is performing chấp bút (i.e. automatic writing, one of the ways to communicate with the spiritual world).

I continue my point of view on the genesis  
While really respecting the knowledge you have.  
God then arrives in a dark place  
So stagnant, tranquil and peaceful that nothing moves,  
In a gas that is neither vapor nor liquid,  
Germs are in a lethargic sleep;  
And finally wrapped in a frightful cold.  
No creature lives, no matter grows.

HÔ PHÁP: - *Is this the form of the water mentioned in the Christian genesis?*

Yes, this is the kind of gas we call hydrogen,  
More or less dense, which is the healthiest part.  
It is often said that the Spirit of God is swimming in the water.  
It is in this sense that we must understand the word.  
God's astral body is made of light  
And the light animates these inert materials with its warmth.  
A layer of produced oxygen is put into action.  
The contact of the two gases gives a detonation;  
Divine fire is born and sacred water is formed,  
Under the effect of the two elements everything is transformed:  
Burnt materials form gases, burnt gases  
Produce fluids, pure fluids are vitality.  
That vitality has a power  
To give all beings death and birth.  
What marvels we witnessed  
And what mysteries will be kept for us  
come from the hand of our Master.  
And it is very difficult for us to know them all.

This divine fire fueled, grew,  
And threw its nebulae into infinity.  
Throughout the Universe this fire is sown;  
It is distributed until it decomposes itself.  
Its nebulae are growing in the form of suns,  
Creating worlds and worlds with all their details  
Where the consciousness of God and His light animates,  
The beings are all created, even the most minute.  
The divine spirit has spread everywhere,  
Those who have life all come from this.  
From these fluids radiated from His divine light,  
The more impure transform into stones,  
Dirt, plants, animals or the flesh;  
The denser into air and the purer into ether.  
Intellect is then given to all creatures,  
Depending on their condition, a more or less pure dose.  
The soul is thus created, while the body,  
It is vitality that determines its destiny.  
You understood the rest,  
This is where I stop.

HÔ PHÁP: - *Sorry, if everything comes from our Master, everything must be perfect. Why can we still notice the imperfections of nature ?*

What are these imperfections?  
Can I give you an explanation?

HÔ PHÁP: - *The wickedness and uselessness of sentient beings. As for humans, animals and plants, their morality cannot be reasonably appreciated.*

Nothing is mean or useless in nature,

To be alive, you need to fight for food.  
Our Lord ardently loves His children.  
In his great love, He provides them with means.  
For their progress, He makes them suffer;  
He must also give them means of defenses.  
Have you seen a truly pious man in this world?  
If someone is mean to us, he is useful to himself!  
How can our great sages become?  
What does human history contain in its pages?  
A fierce struggle between the weak and the powerful,  
The strongest are often the winners.  
The opposition of the two gives the upward march,  
Scholarly ideas and achievements.  
Our dear world is purely relative,  
Evil and useless are only qualifiers.  
On this globe, each of us has a place;  
The worlds of other heavens are classes.  
The universe is therefore a school for souls,  
Who frequent it to be even more erudite.  
Those who often skip school,  
Must double their years and resume their subjects.  
All souls hope to read this eternal book,  
Which contains the secret to make yourself immortal.  
The goal is to end our rough career;  
It takes time, conditions and manners.  
From filthy matter to pure divinity,  
We make our way holding on to eternity.  
The result is to get to know each other,  
And then to know, by conscience, the Man who must be.  
The difference in characters has its reason,  
It helps us make the comparison.  
Put a large tolerance in your studies,  
Rank the souls according to their abilities.

Just separate those who are human,  
From those who are already a little divine.  
Give the priesthood the best models,  
Teach your infidels by all your means,  
Don't hate them because they are infamous.  
And look only at the salvation of their souls!  
Always love to give humanity  
These two truths: LOVE and ETERNITY.

Reading these verses in depth, we realize that no divine beings have comprehended the origin of God. Even the Buddha could only take a guess! Therefore, you will commit the sin of pride, thinking yourselves more knowledgeable than the Buddha if keeping discussing that issue.

However, we further understand the secret message from God "*Children, I am you; you are Myself*" and "*You can evolve up to My level*" or "*I would demean Myself so that you can climb even higher*".

Oh! How great the grace of God! The more I ponder, the more I love God. He always wants to share His divine power with His children, even the traitors.

No wonder a human father also does the same for his children. Despite difficulties and suffering, he just wants his children to grow up to become good adults, who can develop the family career.

One day, I asked His Holiness Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn<sup>55</sup> why God the Father calls Himself Master. That's confusing because father and master are different.

He answered:

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<sup>55</sup> Nguyệt Tâm - lunar spirit, Chơn Nhơn - enlightened person.

Il est même temps Père et Maître,  
Parce que c' est de LUI vient tout notre être.  
Il nourrit notre corps de ce qui est sain,  
Et fabrique notre esprit de ce qui est divin.  
En LUI tout est Science et Sagesse;  
Le progrès de l' âme est son oeuvre sans cesse,  
Les viles matières sont joyaux à ses yeux;  
De vils esprits, IL en fait des dieux.  
Sa Loi est Amour, sa Puissance est Justice.  
IL ne connaît que la vertu et non le vice,  
PÈRE : IL donne à ses enfants sa VITALITÉ,  
MAÎTRE : IL leur lègue sa propre DIVINITÉ.

***Vietnamese :***

Người cũng vẫn Cha Thầy luôn một,  
Cả chơn linh hài cốt tay Người.  
Nuôi mình dùng vật thanh tươi,  
Tạo hồn lấy phép tốt vời Chí Linh.  
Nơi Người vốn quang minh cách trí,  
Tấn hóa hồn phép quý không ngưng.  
Vật hèn trước mắt thành trân,  
Hồn hèn Người lại dành phần Phật Tiên.  
Luật thương yêu, quyền là ngay chánh,  
Gần thiện cần xa lánh phạm tâm.  
Làm Cha nuôi sống âm thầm,  
Làm Thầy lại nhượng phẩm Thần ngôi Thiên.

**English**

He is Father and Master at the same time  
Because it's from Him that our soul and body comes.  
He nourishes our body with what is healthy,  
And makes up our mind from what is divine.  
In Him everything is science and wisdom;



The progress of the soul is unceasing work,  
The vile materials are jewels in His eyes;  
He makes gods out of vile spirits.  
His Law is Love, his Power is Justice.  
He only knows virtue, not vice,  
As a father: He gives his children vitality,  
As a master: He bequeaths them his own divinity.

Generally, it is common for parents on earth to consider their children's education a top priority. They always think it is lucky if their children are more educated than they are. As a result, they select the best school with the most qualified teachers for their children.

Similarly, the universe is the school of God for souls to attain more knowledge. They need to learn, first, in order to know themselves, second, to know others and finally to evolve by means of rebirths in the world of suffering. When they achieve the highest level of divinity, they will gain a thorough insight into the divine secret of the universe and achieve eternal life.

It is not unrealistic for you, one day, to achieve what God has achieved today by the process of self-perfection. The space is vast enough for all souls to establish what is called the personal realm.

Both the divine and the earthly laws are alike. They are the cycles of birth and death and of establishment and destruction. In order to become a Creator, souls have to incarnate on earth numerous times. They build their material world to achieve their spiritual world.



That rule is very much in force among souls, who incarnate on earth, without any exceptions. Souls have to keep learning the lesson of God eternally though they know the material world will be destroyed sooner or later. As long as they still breathe, they keep trying harder and harder.

If asked whether someone has mastered that secret power of creation or whether everyone has to be subjected to it, God will answer, *“Everyone should share the suffering of life so that the next incarnations will be better. That is why everyone is forced to learn to become a Creator although they might not achieve it”*.

If God, the Being of Infinite Love, decides that we are responsible for people’s souls, that is too difficult for us. Being a common father, you can make any sacrifices, even your life, so that your children can have a better life. Being a Creator or a God (Father of all souls) can be more miserable because you want your children to become Buddhas or Gods, but they only want to be ghosts or evils. How disappointed!

Think about it! You and your spouse day and night worry about your children’s future. You always hope they will work as a governmental official or become a well-to-do person. Unfortunately, they grow up to become bad people in the lower class. It is terribly disappointed, isn’t it?

Similarly, our Master expects humanity will have a really bright future by painfully sending them to the world of suffering to learn. He only wants humankind to pass the examination of morality and achieve the position of the Divine Beings. It would be so painful for Him to know they are hopelessly trapped in the sea of suffering.

Establishing Caodaism here, God the Father resembles a human father, who sends his son abroad for higher education. He hopes the boy will graduate, returning home to continue the ancestral line. Unexpectedly, the boy only parties instead. Spending too much, he even asks for more money. If visited, he pretends to study hard. Staying abroad for a long time, he has neither got any worthy qualifications, replied to his mail nor returned home. Being so angry, the father wants to disown his child.

However, seeing the boy's belongings around, the father misses him so much that he, at last, has to go overseas to visit him.

Nỗi đường trường diệu viễn nước non,  
Ai biết mặt phòng toan kính trọng,  
Lại sang cả danh nêu lọng lọng,  
Xung thiệt danh người cũng không tin,  
Nương gậy lê lũ thứ một mình,  
Đòi phen chịu người khinh kẻ nhục.  
Nào dè đâu !

Nghe tin trẻ trong vòng khổ cực,  
Nỗi thê nhi đùm bọc dặt dìu,  
Nỗi gia đình chẳng đủ chi tiêu,  
Làm thuê mượn mơi chiều thiếu bữa.  
Mảng nghèo khó xứ người lận đận,  
Phải làm thân trâu ngựa người dùng.  
Sự học hành xưa chẳng chí công,  
Thả trôi chảy theo dòng khổ thủy.  
Lại thêm nhiễm những lời ma mị,  
Oán thân sinh chẳng nghĩ thâm tình,  
Đói khó thân dầu phải ăn xin,  
Cũng chí quyết không nhìn đến ổng.  
Nơi đất khách đã đành gọi sống,

Nào kể chi cái đống xương tàn.  
Oán anh em, oán họ oán hàng,  
Oán xứ sở, oán làng oán tổng.  
Nghe quê cũ như dường nằm mộng,  
Nợ nần thân thân sống chẳng cho về,  
Thôi đã đành bỏ dứt từ quê,  
Còn chi kể lời chê tiếng nhục.  
Ởn sanh đục dầu còn biết Đạo,  
Muốn lo đèn hiếu thảo cũng vô phương,  
Ngày những đêm khổ não đoạn trường,  
Đã quên hẳn Tông đường sang cả.  
Lại đành chịu làm ma xứ lạ,  
Phú thân hồn đày đọa tại tay người.  
Áo Tô Tần một mảnh tả tôi,  
Chịu lao khổ sương mơi nắng tối.  
Già khi đã dò đon lặn lội,  
Nương gậy lê đến tới nhà con.  
Thấy hình hài con đã hao mòn,  
Thêm nỗi vợ nỗi con đói khát.  
Ăn thiếu bữa cơm không đầy bát,  
Uống nước cho đã khát chén không đầy.  
Thân không nhà rày đó mai đây,  
Ở chung chạ cùng bầy trộm cướp.  
Con dò dọc tèm lem tuốc luốc,  
Học nói năng nhơ nhớp thấy mà kinh.  
Nỗi bất hòa chồng vợ không tình,  
Nỗi bạn tác chê khinh đều lánh.  
Gần hung ác tập rèn quen tánh,  
Chỉ lấy thân yếu mạnh so đời.  
Không lương tâm nào biết ngó Trời,  
Theo thân thể trọn đời thờ quỷ.  
Thấy như thế, Già tuôn giọt lụy,  
Lại hiểu con chẳng nghĩ đến mình,

*Gạt lụy rơi về tạm Khách Đình,  
Chẳng cho trẻ biết hình biết dạng.*

Thấy con trẻ làm nhà buôn bán,  
Đem tiền ra lập hăng lập chành.  
Nghe con làm thợ đá có danh,  
Lập hăng lãnh cất dinh cất phủ.  
Nghe con có làm bồi nhà ngủ,  
Lập nên nhà khách ngụ nhà hàng,  
Nghe con hay làm mướn nhà quan,  
Cho con đặng vào hàng âm tử.  
Lập gia nghiệp cho con vừa đủ,  
Dạy, khuyên, nuôi dưỡng lũ cháu thơ,  
Bèn làm cho đủ giấy đủ tờ,  
Cả của cải đều cho con hưởng.  
Thơ một bức dặn con thương tưởng,  
Phải giữ căn bèn hưởng ân hồng.  
Nhớ cội nguồn đừng phé đừng vong,  
Nơi quê cũ Cha trông thấy trẻ.  
Nay đã đặng giàu sang đủ lẽ,  
Gắng giữ gìn danh thê Tổ tông.  
Gia tộc con cả giống dài dòng,  
Đều sang cả chớ không hèn hạ.  
Ở xứ lạ dầu nên nghiệp cả,  
Học hành thêm để dạ cần chuyên.  
Nhà cửa ta chẳng kể của tiền,  
Duy trông trẻ nên Hiền nên Thánh.  
E con thẹn nên Cha phải lánh,  
E trẻ phiền Cha tránh mặt con.  
Con khá nhìn lấy nước lấy non,  
Còn non nước Cha con còn gặp. *(là Thầy muốn độ mình  
hồi cựu vị.)*

## English

Being a stranger in a distant country,  
The father is respected by no-one  
Though in his native home  
He is a top political leader.  
Traveling alone,  
He is sometimes scorned by some people.  
He is so surprised  
To find out his son is living in poverty,  
Everyday struggling with the family.  
The son is usually broke,  
Having a part-time job here and there.  
Sometimes he has to fight  
For a filthy manual work.  
He didn't study hard at college,  
Dropping out only after some months.  
Yet persuaded by some bad guys,  
He blamed his dad for his bad situation  
And vowed to reject the father despite his poverty.  
He decided to live far from home  
And to die abroad.  
He blamed his brothers, relatives,  
Country and hometown.  
He never dreamed of his distant hometown  
Because of his too many debts to return.  
Resigning himself to being exiled to a foreign country,  
He tried to ignore all insults.  
Now he knows he has to offer  
Due compensation to parents, but he cannot.  
Day and night he suffers  
Because he had to leave his wealthy clan.  
In the future  
He will surely die miserably far from home.

Wearing raggedy clothes,  
Walking in the bad weather  
And asking everyone for directions, the father  
Comes to the boy's house with a walking stick.  
He then finds out that the son is too scrawny  
And that there is not enough food for his family,  
Not enough rice  
Nor enough water.  
Being homeless,  
The son has to live among bandits.  
The grandchildren are both dirty

And terribly foul-mouthed.  
Having frequent disagreements with his wife,  
He is also shied away by his friends.  
Frequently living among scoundrels,  
He is used to solving social problems with muscles.  
Ignoring conscience or God,  
He worships Satan instead.  
Seeing that, the father cannot help but cry  
And thinks the son has abandoned his dad.  
He secretly returns to the hotel  
Without letting the son know he has come.  
If the son can do business,  
He helps build a large firm.  
If the son is a builder,  
He helps build a construction company.  
If the son is a bellboy,  
He helps build a hotel.  
If the son is a part-time worker,  
He gives him a happier life instead.  
He gives the son a good career  
So that the grandchildren can live better.

He even files to get enough required documents  
For the son to be the official boss.  
Finally, the father writes a letter  
Telling the son to work hard to develop that career  
And not to reject his origin.  
In the original hometown, the father hopes  
The son, now being well-to-do enough,  
Will try to live so as to be worthy  
Of the names of his ancestors,  
Who were all wealthy and reputable,  
And, will try to further his education  
Though being a boss now  
Because the family only wants sages,  
Not the money.  
Being afraid that the son can feel embarrassed,  
The father decides to avoid public appearances,  
But tells the son to remember that  
The father will see the child again in their hometown.  
(i.e. God wants us to reattain our previous divine  
positions)

Caodaist believers, try to think twice to comprehend the  
meaning of the above poem, please!

I have just told the story of a human father, who is so  
wise and who ardently loves his children. He makes plan  
to help his son succeed in life. That is absolutely similar  
to the story of our God the Father, who established  
Caodaism in the Third Age of Salvation to help the  
original souls reattain their former divine positions.

If witnessing such a father on earth, you must really be  
so fond of him and, conversely, seriously criticize the  
son. That father is our God the Father and the son  
represents all living beings, or more exactly humanity.

Understanding that, you now know how much serious the sin you commit is. I myself cried while writing this sermon.

Oh! My colleagues and I (i.e. the current Caodaist dignitaries) have been frequently and diligently taught by God since the beginning of Caodaism. We have not seen His face, but had abundant evidence for His existence, which are the lessons on the noble ideas of justice and love.

While teaching us, He only made appeasements or lamented, but never get mad. Since we used to struggle for life in society, not practice a religion, we did not understand His lessons at all. What bad students!

The incident in the Gò Kén Pagoda<sup>56</sup> happened due to our stupidity, but, fortunately, God only lamented, not punish. He knows for sure we are still foolish and unfamiliar with practicing a religion. Since then He tried harder to teach us until we are assigned to His Holiness Li Bai<sup>57</sup>. Thanks to those lessons, we fairly understand what the Đạo is and can spread Caodaism to the public.

Actually, we only took orders from God, but not spread Caodaism for our own power or higher ranks. We all try to fulfill our responsibilities, ignoring any criticism and slander.

I myself least believed in spiritualism, so I curiously tried to test the mediums several times. Being afraid that I could fall into sin, I prayed that I would be punished by God. God, however, would never punish me, but just smiled.

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<sup>56</sup> Also Từ Lâm Tự, Tây Ninh, VN, where Caodaism's Inaugural Celebration was held.

<sup>57</sup> The spiritual Pope of Caodaism.



Doubting the honesty of the mediums, furthermore, I decided to perform automatic writing by myself at home. Sitting alone at night, raising a pen, I waited for God. At last, I was moved to tears when God came and taught me lots of things. At the beginning of Caodaism, I usually judged someone because God said I am responsible for the scale of justice on earth<sup>58</sup>. I still do not know how to use that scale! Especially when there was a disagreement between the Hiệp Thiên Đài and Cửu Trùng Đài or when the Thập Nhị Thời Quân<sup>59</sup> did not complete their assignments, I presented a petition with the names of the failing dignitaries to God, requesting that they be punished.

Here is His answer: *“Being a human, you have a divine responsibility. I assign each of you a different task according to your ability. I do not force the talented to carry out the easy tasks and vice versa. Even the untalented are necessary. I have innumerable ways for task assignment because I know you all, but you cannot. If you assign the weak a heavy workload, you’ll be responsible for their failure, even their death sometimes.”*

Now, brothers and sisters, what would you do with my “scale of justice”?

Once, our doctrine was criticized by non-Caodaist people. They even wanted to destroy Caodaism. Again, I presented another petition to God, asking Him to punish them.

God then asked me, *“Supposing you had some children, the older of whom are so wise and pious and the younger*

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<sup>58</sup> According to Caodaist Canonical Code, Hộ Pháp is the Judge of the Caodaist Tribunal.

<sup>59</sup> The Twelve Zodiacal Superiors – 12 dignitaries under the Hiệp Thiên Đài who assist in the direction of souls.

*of whom are too cheeky and immoral due to their stupidity, then what would you do?"*

I answered, *"I'd resort to advice and punishment. If failing, I'd resign myself to disown them"*.

He said, *"Disown?"* Smiled He, *"While they are too young? You can't because you are a good father!"*

After some seconds of silence, He asked, *"Why don't you say 'Kill them!'"*

I immediately recalled what I have written in my petition and felt really frightened. Seeing that, He further explained, *"Whenever I come to earth to establish a religion, they always satirically criticize myself, even kill myself. However, they, afterward, recognize their fault and join the religion. They always do! So, don't be angry! They blaspheme just because they don't know what they're doing."*

Brothers and sisters, you can see how much mercy God have on mankind and how hard it is for me to work as the Judge of the Caodaist Tribunal.

Oddly enough, the religion established by such a Being (i.e. Caodaism) can result in a schism<sup>60</sup> whose "God" rebukes other people. I'll let you judge whether those words are spoken by a genuine or a fake God!

Hence, we consider God the Supreme Being based on our belief. You Caodaists may give more explanations, for example other peoples also worship God, who they call various names, and everyone acknowledges that the Supreme Being, the Lord of all souls, surely exists.

All souls evolve on the divine hierarchy until they get to the highest rank, which is as high as that of God. They have to pass lots of hells, innumerable levels, and

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<sup>60</sup> He implies a Caodaist schism, but not say which one.

various incarnations in different earths before entering the spiritual realm for a position of Genie, Saint, Immortal or Buddha.

Each soul independently evolves for his own higher divine status. Only after death will you be able to know whether your divine rank is high or low. Thus, it is too late for those who did not lead a moral life or who did not believe in God while living on earth. Not having attained any divine positions, they have to reincarnate, telling themselves to fix things this time. However, they forget everything after coming down to earth. Like ordinary earthly people, they keep pursuing fame and benefit so much that they sometimes ruin the religions established by God!

It is miraculous that everyone forgets their previous lives, which is the keystone of rebirth. Otherwise, there would be no people on earth or no Đạo (religions) for salvation.

The divine mechanism or Đạo is powerful enough to give birth to Siddhartha Gautama<sup>61</sup>, who taught people how to free themselves from the cycle of rebirth. It might help the advanced souls, who are about to become Buddhas, not all living beings. As a result, there are still people on earth.

According to what we think of God's divine mechanism, or Đạo, it can be described as: Thanks to the sun heat, water transforms into clouds. Clouds freeze and transform back into water, which fills the earth, seeps into the ground and dissolves salt. The salty solution then moves to springs, rivers and oceans to nourish all beings. In this cycle, the sun heat is God, water is humanity, clouds are divine beings (Genii, Saints, Immortals and

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<sup>61</sup> The Buddha.

Buddhas), springs and rivers are religions, oceans are the universe and salt is life.

According to their responsibilities, all living beings create and perfect the world so that it can be the classrooms for souls to evolve and evil spirits to do penance.

Karmic debts run this divine mechanism. It is similar to what the ancient Vietnamese Kings did. They allowed prisoners to explore, develop wasteland and become residents there afterwards.

The souls incarnating in this world are of many kinds, most of whom have lots of karmic debts to pay. Only a minority of them are volunteers, who come to get a higher divine status. Thanks to them the earth can develop into a more advanced planet. All souls have contributed to develop the earth in order to reduce human suffering no matter why they incarnate.

According to their own levels, each soul incarnating on earth has different level of intellect that is predetermined by God.

Therefore, since time immemorial the only thing divine beings have tried to do is to help living beings become more advanced or more moral though they committed lots of sins.

Consequently, we Caodaist dignitaries always tell ourselves that we have an important responsibility assigned by God. God usually instructs: *“People suffer because I use unhappiness to make their minds evolve. You should praise the successful people and pity the unsuccessful ones because even the worst ones can help me perfect life.*

*It’s good to fulfill your responsibilities without committing a crime and it’s good to do the right things*

*with a clean conscience. You should act based on your good mind. I hope you will return to me one day while people love each other, which satisfies me most”.*

God wants us to have mercy on living beings as He does. Though observing the Caodaist law, we should pity the people who have the lower social status by treating them fairly.

Being reincarnated on earth, people have a body, which is materially equal. If we want to be Caodaist dignitaries, we have to try to become sages all our life. That is so difficult while struggling to survive those earthly societies. We always examine and ask ourselves not to lie to others. To perfect ourselves, we do not lie to, criticize or mock anyone.

We Caodaists practice Caodaism based on faith in God while other political parties worship intellect and conscience. That is just another version of the Đạo. God knows that, so He provides His eye (the Divine Eye) as their Conscience God. Our Divine Eye and theirs are actually not alike.

Reasoning that the created statues of Divine Beings, including Buddha and God, can control people’s mind, they make lots of such statues to cheat people while they themselves never believe in those Divine Beings. Based on their earthly thoughts, they mold the shape of God. As a result, their “God” resembles a human in both form and characteristics. That is why their “God” can get mad, hate, grumble, scold, imitate, etc. We Caodaists cannot believe such a God, can we?

Some rebellious Caodaists, who left and formed Caodaist schisms, used to be our incompetent senior dignitaries. They have gone, but left a debt of some thousand đồng<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> A rather large sum of money at that time.

for the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council to pay. The evidence is still kept here. They surely know that the Caodaist believers' donation is not very generous because Vietnamese are generally poor. Yet the Sacerdotal Council has to feed believers and people, especially the Cambodian adherents. A rough calculation shows we have spent approximately 200,000 đ so far.

In addition, the expense on missionary work, especially in France, cannot be publicized for some unspeakable reason. The leaders of the Minh Chơn Lý<sup>63</sup> know that is our Achilles heel, so they falsely charged the Sacerdotal Council with stealing believers' money. They also insulted the current senior dignitaries and urged people to boycott the Tây Ninh Temple.

In fact, the Caodaist Temple in Paris, France is about to inaugurate with two Giáo Hữu, Bellan and Abadie, as the managers. Though it is still financially supported partly by the Sacerdotal Council, it can work effectively now. Therefore, I am so confident to tell you about that. There are several other Caodaist temples overseas I cannot tell because they have not been finished yet.

Hence, the slander of the rebellious schisms will be fairly judged by people's conscience.

The budget of our Caodaism is still very tight. It mostly comes from the donations of our elder brothers, some of whom had to sell their houses or rice fields. Fellow believers, be cautious about the rebellious schisms' craftiness, please! They viciously intended to cut the financial support of Caodaism, but as the saying goes "Man proposes, God disposes", they have failed. I can conclusively say that the Satan's incitement has failed.

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<sup>63</sup> A Caodaist schism that severely attacked the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council in Tây Ninh.

Personally, I would like to say something to those rebellious schismatic Caodaists. When I previously led a secular life I never exploited anyone, took a bribe or sabotaged any religions. In my free time I always tried to support as many fellow countrymen as I could. I would like to give some explanations here because their accusation against myself seemed reasonable.

They accused myself of establishing Phạm Môn, Phạm Từ and Phạm Nghiệp. Fortunately, everyone knows that I am really honest. What I have done is for the underprivileged, not a richer Sacerdotal Council. I have put all that in my will and send to the Sacerdotal Council.

At the beginning of Caodaism, His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm and I tried hard for our community to have a rather large budget and the properties are now obviously seen. I can now swear to the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council I have never wrongly taken any money. I have never interfered in the Caodaist administration and finance, which are the responsibility of the Cửu Trùng Đài<sup>64</sup>.

Since I quit my job and went to Tây Ninh to join Caodaism, my family expenses have been covered by my personal savings. However, there were anonymous letters insulting myself, saying my family becomes well-to-do thanks to Caodaism! They wanted to drive myself out of the Holy Temple as they had done to His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm. Worse than that, I have received 14 anonymous letters. Had I not been a Caodaist priest, I would have looked for another means of livelihood and moved out.

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<sup>64</sup> **Cửu Trùng Đài**, (九重臺 - Nine-sphered palace): The executive body of Caodaism which takes charge of the administration of the religion and its missionary activities. It also refers to the temple of nine degrees of evolution or nine spheres palace. The palace of nine divine planes, or the palace of nine degrees of evolution.

Those dishonest people even took me to court over my properties, which I bought with my own money. For example, I established Phạm Nghiệp<sup>65</sup> with my own money and some loans from my relatives. It is used as a vocational school for everyone. Phạm Từ<sup>66</sup>, an ancestral temple of my family in Cẩm Giang<sup>67</sup>, was built with my brothers' money. The money left over from this construction was used for a small Caodaist Temple in Cẩm Giang, which is also the wharf for Caodaist believers from the Southern provinces.

Additionally, God usually tells me to take care of the elderly, disabled, homeless, orphaned, poor, jobless, etc. Therefore, I established a nursing home called Phạm Môn on a 3-acre plot of land offered by the Chánh Phối Sư<sup>68</sup> and bought another 8-acre plot of land for the Hiệp Thiên Đài dignitaries to build their homes. The term Phạm is supposedly said to be my family name by the Caodaist schismatic critics, but it is not. Phạm Môn (梵門 in Chinese) is the entrance to Buddhism. Below is some more work I have done for our community.

I have established an orphanage called Cấp Cô Độc Viên<sup>69</sup>, but it has not finished due to a lack of money.

I also built a vocational school called Quảng Nghệ<sup>70</sup> for poor children on the 80-acre plot of land called Thái Bình Thánh Địa<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> Phạm - his family name, Nghiệp - career.

<sup>66</sup> Phạm - his family name, Từ - an ancestral temple.

<sup>67</sup> A village 10km from Tây Ninh.

<sup>68</sup> A senior dignitary under the Cửu Trùng Đài.

<sup>69</sup> The garden of Anathapindika, a generous Buddhist philanthropist.

<sup>70</sup> Quảng - publicizing, Nghệ - job.

<sup>71</sup> Thái Bình - peace, Thánh Địa - Holy land.



I bought another piece of land from Lê Sanh Cẩn, who is a dignitary under the Sacerdotal Council of Kiêm Biên<sup>72</sup> and built what was called Nữ Công Nghệ<sup>73</sup> for female believers to earn a living.

Having begged the Cửu Trùng Đài Sacerdotal Council to build a Khách Đình (bungalow) for the wealthy intellectuals to stay while studying Caodaism in vain, I had one built for Vietnamese and one for Cambodian. I think we should not let the intellectuals live among the uneducated dignitaries because they might think poorly of our community.

I had to resort to various loans for those constructions without any support of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council. All of them are for people's benefit, but the rebellious Caodaists deceitfully accused me of "stealing from people". Let it be fairly judged by everyone!

In whatever way they could, they tried to discredit me. They even falsely accused me of committing adultery!

Nevertheless, do not be annoyed, brothers and sisters! Everyone practices a religion in their own way. At last, we have to admit that our God is different from theirs, perhaps and beg them for no more false accusations.

In this age of salvation, people have to struggle for life, so there is a lot of hatred of all kinds in the world. People are very good at inhumanly fighting with each other. Whenever they take a break or encounter a sad situation, they ponder over their fate and know this struggling age is going to an end.

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<sup>72</sup> Kiêm Biên - Phnom Penh.

<sup>73</sup> An handicraft shop for women.

That is why God taught us to have mercy over and love people when He came. Mercy and love have been what all people worship, so Caodaism attracted a large number of followers at that time.

Unfortunately, the appearance of the Minh Chơn Lý<sup>74</sup>, who promote rebellious techniques to gain their power, caused disagreements among Caodaist believers. As a result, anger and hatred have dominated our religious community. They have ruined the organization God established. What a sabotage! You will see their appropriate punishment in the future.

For some years, we Caodaist dignitaries have endured that sabotage, thinking whatever they did is a way to spread Caodaism and glorify God's name. We were ready to suffer unjustly and only begged them to reduce their hatred. Contrary to our wish, they increasingly hated us and used every cunning means to attack us. They even sued us.

Fortunately, God has granted Caodaist believers enough intelligence to judge, so only a few believers have followed them. In addition, the French government, who respects democracy, has judged everything based on law. Therefore, they realized that we are religiously honest. If we had been under the Nguyễn Dynasty, we would have been beheaded.

Brothers and sisters,

Why did the rebellious schisms want to ruin Caodaism?

Why did they form schismatic groups?

Why did they falsely accuse Caodaist dignitaries?

What did they denounce the doctrine of Caodaism for?

Who did they work for?

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<sup>74</sup> A Caodaist schism founded by Phôi Sư Thái Ca Thanh (Nguyễn Văn Ca) in 1931 in Mỹ Tho.

It is impossible to bring them to a Caodaist trial because they themselves made Caodaist laws and a special exception for themselves at the same time. They already had a plan to avoid being convicted. Hence, we Caodaist dignitaries are unable to bring them to a Caodaist trial. The case will be left to the next generations.

Take care of yourselves and keep practicing Caodaism to keep the oath you swore to our God the Father, brothers and sisters.

Tây Ninh, July 27th 1932

PHẠM CÔNG TẮC

Signature

Instinctive goodness - Sermon by His Holiness Hộ-Pháp  
15th of the 8th lunar month, Year of the Rooster  
Gregory Calendar: 4th October 1933

## **Sermon**

**By His Holiness Phạm Hộ Pháp**

**In Tây Ninh Temple.**

Translator: Từ Chơn

Generally, earthly mortal beings are born by God and the natural law forces them to morally evolve till the end of their life. Consequently, life gets better and things become more beautiful. Though the law of conservation makes animals kill each other for survival, they only do so when they are grown-up. They are, however, instinctively good when they are newborn babies.

Except nonintellectual materials and plants, both animals and human beings are not killers when they are at birth. That is why our sages said, “*People at birth are instinctively good*”<sup>75</sup>.

Where does that human instinctively goodness come from? From each individual conscience.

Being the wisest in the world of animals thanks to the instructions of conscience, human beings know what life-and-death is. They know they come from emptiness. Life is sắc (form) and death is không (emptiness). Those two states come consecutively and endlessly. Life is so short and only a few can live up to 100 years.

In life, you always get more pains than joys. The longer you live, the sadder you feel. Only when you understand

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<sup>75</sup> “*Three Character Classic*”. A Chinese textbook for children.

that death ends all unhappiness can you realize the divine scales of justice is always precise.

Being alive, you have to struggle for life, but you become an inanimate thing when you stop breathing! That is why everyone thinks about life and considers it a street market, crowded with people in the early morning, but empty at noon day in day out. Years, centuries and millenniums elapse and the street market still operates. Humankind is like the vendors of all kinds, who go to great lengths to obtain profits. Alas! How hard you struggle for life, you surely die empty-handed. Then the fame and fortune earned while you are alive will gradually die down and vanish without a trace.

Therefore, great people, who thoroughly examined life, have bequeathed humankind lots of models, which can be summarized as “good and evil behaviors”. We can see there are more evil behaviors than the good ones because material desires usually overpower spiritual ones. As a result, there are always fewer moral people than the evil ones.

Whether one’s behaviors are good or bad can only be judged when he/she is about to die. That is God’s time of judgement. Since most evil behaviors come from the struggle for survival in the society, you need to avoid that struggle if you want to preserve your instinctive goodness. Only a few people, especially the Saints or religious founders, can do that. Therefore, their doctrines mainly focus on “*Waking people up and telling them to preserve their instinctive goodness*”.

I do not suggest a retreat from reality, doing esoteric practice or performing magic things. Those practices have proved so impractical and superstitious. What I

mean is that you should follow your conscience and preserve your instinctive goodness all your life.

Beat your material desires  
To keep morally clean and worthy.  
Help the sufferers  
And create more ethical people.  
You should sail the Prajna boat  
To save people in the sea of sorrow.  
Perfect your religious spirit,  
Clear the earthly ways for people to walk,  
Give sad people happiness,  
Beat suffering with your goodness,  
Spread the holy water the world over,  
And cut the karmic debts with the Prajna sword.  
Endure earthly pains to save people,  
Overcome all hardships to teach them all.  
You should consider fame and fortune a game,  
Riches the harmful bait,  
Love your religious poems,  
And humaneness your prayers.  
You should imitate the way God reigns the universe  
And treat all humans like your brothers.  
Give the sufferers some happiness  
And bless the underprivileged.  
Respect life and build a harmonious world.  
Respect animals and save the world.

In the whole world, all famous great people of whatever races are the ones who lead an ethical life without a religiously moral education. They know what instinctive goodness is and try to perfect themselves to have a clear conscience. They live in accordance with that and become Saints.

With their instinctive goodness, they know themselves and others, so they cannot be blind to others' unhappiness or hurt others. They always want to live among and share sorrows with others. Their principle of life is "*What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others.*"<sup>76</sup>

Instinctive goodness is always with everyone, but whatever you do depends on whether you follow your conscience or not. However good or bad they are, the secular laws to rule a human society mainly concentrate on one basic thing: following human conscience. Politics means forcing people to follow that instinctive goodness. With conscience, you know what responsibilities you have in life are. With instinctive goodness, you love other people. Without them, you only selfishly protect yourselves, ignoring others. Life would then be a tough battle, where people could kill each other for their own benefit.

The harder life is,  
The more powerful material temptations are.  
It is more difficult for you  
To survive the chaotic world.  
You have to work hard for food  
And fulfill moral responsibilities as well  
While the body you try to keep alive  
Is nothing in the struggling world.  
You must try to survive  
Though you cannot have a better life.  
Busy working all your life,  
Have no time to ask where you're from  
Or to study the law of the Creator,

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<sup>76</sup> 己所不欲，勿施於人。(Confucius)

You must keep surviving the changing world.  
Life and death is now not very important.  
They are all handled in the material world.  
Money and social status  
Are what you try to pursue,  
So you quickly accustom yourself  
To hatred and anger.  
Getting caught up in the rat race,  
You get more and more karmic debts.  
So busy pursuing fame and fortune,  
You forget your instinctive goodness.

Although you are frequently overwhelmed by material desires, the seed of instinctive goodness that has been sown in your mind ever since is still waiting to sprout. Under favorable conditions, it will sprout and grow up to become an old tree providing shade for people.

**Siddhartha** (also called Shakyamuni or the Sage of the Shakyas), who promotes humaneness, discovered the truth of life and founded Buddhism to help people escape the cycle of rebirth. Thanks to witnessing the suffering from birth, aging, illness and death, he, based on his instinctive goodness, discovered the path of liberation for humanity.

**Laozi** (also Lao Tzu or Lao-Tze) has mercy on mankind, so he discovered and taught people the way to overcome the material desires by fully retreating from the messy society. It is the frightening warfare in the Chinese Warring States period that helped wake up his instinctive goodness.



**Jesus of Nazareth** or Jesus Christ wanted to save the world, so he founded Christianity. On behalf of God, he teaches people the truth, helps the poor and corrects the villains. He always instructs that earthly pain is what humankind has to bear in order to have the true liberation.

At his time, Joseph ben Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, was very powerful, but there were lots of cults that spread heresies in the Jewish society. Furthermore, Jewish people suffered greatly under the harsh totalitarian rule exercised by Roman authorities. The situation woke up Jesus' instinctive goodness, so he voluntarily endured the pain of humankind by facing execution.

**Ziang Ziya**, who was bestowed upon by Yuanshi Tianzun<sup>77</sup> (*the Celestial Venerable of the Primordial Beginning or the Primeval Lord of Heaven*) to help kings Wen and Wu of Zhou (good) overthrow the Shang (evil) in ancient China and who was responsible for the Fengshen Bang<sup>78</sup>, showed how people were praised for loyalty and punished for wickedness by the divine power. That helps people perfectly rule their world. He shows that villains can never get away with their crimes, even after death. Besides, investing the gods of Heaven, he fairly deified not only the heroes of Zhou but also some of their fallen enemies from Shang. Therefore, everyone recognizes the justice of the Fengshen Bang though there are lots of superstition in the story. That

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<sup>77</sup> 元始天尊; *pinyin*: Yuánshǐ Tiānzūn, one of the highest deities of Taoism.

<sup>78</sup> The Investiture of the Gods.

earned him the title of the Founder of the Doctrine of Genies.

Witnessing the cruel chaos of the Chinese society in the Spring and Autumn period, **Confucius** set out the fundamental ethical norms of the human society. Being enlightened, he knows that everyone and everything in the universe have to evolve to the highest level of goodness and beauty respectively. His doctrine relies on practical human actions, not the magical practices too incomprehensible for ordinary people.

According to him, a human society should be ruled by a king, a queen or a political force. Similarly, the spiritual world is ruled by the Supreme Being called *Nhứt Đại*<sup>79</sup>, who has authority over both your body and your spirit. That is where the doctrine of “Man and God reign the world together” comes from.

Due to people’s corporal and mental activities, he decides that a law system is used for social security and the doctrine of righteousness to control people’s mind. He tried to spread that doctrine throughout China at that time. Despite his hard work, the Chinese kings, who preferred armed forces, ignored it. Finally, he had to retreat to his hometown and worked as a teacher. So disappointed was he that he wrote the poem of self-pity “*Chi Lan*”<sup>80</sup> that has touched people’s hearts.

Fortunately, *Khổng Cấp*<sup>81</sup>(*Tử Tư*), his grandson, had a student named *Mạnh Tử*<sup>82</sup>, who is described as the

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<sup>79</sup> *Nhứt* - First. *Đại* - Greatness.

<sup>80</sup> The name of an orchid representing the sages.

<sup>81</sup> 孔伋

<sup>82</sup> Mencius (孟子 *Mèng Zǐ*) (372 BC – 289 BC)

“second” Sage, only after Confucius. He kept on developing and spreading Confucianism throughout China. His philosophy is “Đại học chi đạo, tại minh minh đức, tại thân dân, tại chí u chí thiện”<sup>83</sup>. “A gentleman should morally perfects himself, loves people and achieves the highest level of ethics”. Actually, most societies in East Asia have acknowledged his thought a lot.

Here is the conversation between Mạnh Tử and Tề Tuyên Vương<sup>84</sup> that shows how he taught his philosophy to the ancient Chinese rulers.

**In Sino-Vietnamese:**

“Thần văn chi Hồ Ngột viết : Vương tọa u đường thượng, hữu khiên ngư nhi quá đường hạ giả, vương kiến chi, viết : “Ngư hà chi ?”

Đôi viết : “Tương dĩ hân chung”.

Vương viết : Xả chi, ngô bất nhẫn kỳ học tốc, nhược vô tội nhi tự tử địa.

Đôi viết : Nhiên, tắc phé hân chung dư ?

Viết : Hà khả phé dã ? Dĩ dương dịch chi. Bất thức hữu chư. Viết : Hữu chi.

Viết : Thị tâm túc dĩ vương hỷ ! Bá tánh giai dĩ vương vi ái dã, thần cố tri vương chi bất nhẫn dã.

Vương viết : Nhiên. Thành hữu bá tánh giả. Tề quốc tuy biên tiểu, ngô hà ái nhất ngư ? Túc bất nhẫn kỳ học tốc nhược vô tội nhi tự tử địa, cố dĩ dương dịch chi dã.

Viết : Vương vô dị u bá tánh chi dĩ vương vi ái dã. Dĩ tiểu dịch đại, bỉ ô tri chi ? Vương nhược ản kỳ vô tội nhi tự tử địa, tắc ngư dương hà trạch yên ?

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<sup>83</sup> 大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善。

<sup>84</sup> King Xuan of Qi (齊宣王; *Qí Xuān Wáng*; died 301 BC) was from 319 to 301 BC ruler of Qi, one of the seven major states of the [Warring States period](#) of ancient China.

Vương tiếu viết : Thị thành hà tâm tai ? Ngã phi ái kỳ tài, nhi dịch chi dĩ dương dã. Nghi hồ bá tánh chi vị ngã ái dã.

Viết : Vô thương dã ! Thị nãi nhân thuật dã ! Kiến ngu vị kiến dương dã. Quân tử chi ư cầm thú, kiến kỳ sanh bất nhân kiến kỳ tử, văn kỳ thanh bất nhân thực kỳ nhục. Thị dĩ quân tử viễn bào trù dã.

Vương duyệt viết : Thi vân : Tha nhân hữu tâm, dư thôn đặc chi. Phu tử chi vị dã. Phù ngã nãi hành chi, phản nhi cầu chi, bất đặc ngô tâm. Phu tử ngôn chi, ư ngã tâm hữu thích thích yên. Thử tâm chi sở dĩ hợp ư vương giả, hà dã ?

**In Vietnamese :**

Hạ thân nghe ông Hồ Ngột nói chuyện lại rằng:

Một ngày kia vua đương ngồi nơi thềm nhà, có kẻ dắt trâu đi ngang qua. Vua thấy liền hỏi rằng : Dắt trâu đi đâu ?

Kẻ kia thưa rằng : Dắt đi giết đặng bôi chuông.

Vua bảo rằng : Tha đi, ta không nỡ thấy nó sợ hãi vì vô tội mà đến chỗ chết.

Kẻ kia thưa lại rằng : Vậy phải bỏ phép bôi chuông chăng ?

Bệ hạ lại nói : Bỏ sao đặng, phải bắt dê mà thế cho nó.

Chuyện ấy chẳng biết có không ?

Tuyên Vương nói : Có.

Mạnh Tử lại rằng : Một tấm lòng ấy cũng đủ làm đạo vua rồi. Trăm họ đều cho Bệ hạ tiếc con trâu, nhưng hạ thân đây thì lại biết Bệ hạ vì thương không nỡ giết.

Tuyên Vương đáp rằng : Phải, trăm họ cho như vậy cũng thật, nhưng nước Tề này dầu bé nhỏ, Trẫm lại tiếc gì lấy một con trâu.

Mạnh Tử nói : Bệ hạ cũng chẳng nên lấy làm lạ rằng, bá tánh cho Bệ hạ tiếc của, vì đem dê nhỏ mà đổi trâu lớn

thì biểu bá tánh hiểu sao ? Nếu vua thương là vô tội mà phải bị chết thì trâu với dê có khác gì nhau.

Vua Tuyên Vương cười rằng : Nào bụng Trẫm có gì khác nữa đâu, nhưng nếu không phải là tiếc của thì sao lại biểu đem dê mà đổi, trách sao bá tánh không cho Trẫm như vậy.

Thầy Mạnh Tử lại rằng : Không hại gì, vì đây cũng là một điều nhơn. Trông thấy trâu sợ mà chưa trông thấy dê nên mới vậy. Người quân tử đối với thú cầm, thấy sự sống mà không nỡ trông thấy chết, nghe tiếng kêu la rên siết nên không nỡ ăn thịt. Bởi có nên người quân tử hằng lánh xa lò bếp.

Vua Tuyên Vương rằng : Ở trong Kinh Thi có câu : Người khác có lòng ta đo đặng đây, ấy chính thầy như thế đó. Than ôi, việc ấy Trẫm làm đã đặng xong rồi, mà đến lúc hỏi lại, bụng Trẫm thì thật không biết tả tại làm sao. Nay khanh nói như vậy, lòng Trẫm thỏa thích vô cùng, nhưng không biết rằng, tâm lòng ấy sở dĩ đã hiệp với vương đạo nơi đâu ?

Tiếp sau thì Đức Mạnh Tử luận qua Vương đạo.

**In English:**

- Mencius: Your Majesty, I've heard a story about you. Once you asked a man taking a water buffalo while sitting on the doorsteps, "*Where are you taking the water buffalo to?*". The man answered, "*To be sacrificed, Your Majesty.*" You said, "*Set him free. I can't bear you killing that innocent frightened animal.*" "*The ritual should be abandoned then?*" Asked the man. "*No, it shouldn't. Sacrifice a goat instead.*" You said. Is that story true, Your Majesty?
- King Xuan of Qi: Yes, it's true.

- Mencius: Such pity is what a noble king needs. They say that you were thrifty, but I know you had pity on the water buffalo.
- King Xuan of Qi: People may think so, but I'm not too thrifty though my kingdom is small.
- Mencius: It's not strange that your subjects say you are thrifty because you wanted to replace the water buffalo with a smaller goat. Both animals should have been equally pitiful.
- King Xuan of Qi smiled: Pity was my only feeling then. Now I know why they say I am thrifty, so I don't blame them at all.
- Mencius: It doesn't matter. You love animals after all. The trouble is you may have seen a frightened water buffalo before, not a frightened goat to show your mercy. Gentlemen cannot have the heart to witness the death of an animal or eat its flesh. That is why gentlemen always stay away from kitchen stoves.
- King Xuan of Qi: I've read in the *Kinh Thi*<sup>85</sup> that there is someone who has profound insight into human hearts. You are such a man! I did take pity on animals, but cannot describe it to others. What you just told me satisfies me most, but I still don't know how I can be a good king with that pity.

(Then Mencius tells the King how).

It is so hilarious to think about Tề Tuyên Vương's situation. He dared not abandon the sacrifice, but told the man to kill a goat instead because he had pity on the water buffalo. What would he have done if he had known the goat was also frightened? That is why his subjects considered him a miser.

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<sup>85</sup> Shijing or *Shih-ching* 詩經 Book of Songs, one of the "Five Classics" traditionally said to have been compiled by Confucius.

Oh! It is hard to rule a country, isn't it? Without law, a country cannot be kept in order, but hard and fast rules may dissatisfy some subjects. As a result, great people much prefer education to politics. All current and ancient religious doctrines try to teach people how to lead a moral life to fit their innate virtue, which religions call the *Đạo*.

Whenever the innate goodness overwhelms your mind, you can build a good family, contribute to develop your country and even create the Great Unity<sup>86</sup>.

In ancient India, polytheism was the major belief because nature was comparable to a human society. Consequently, divine beings have the same characteristics as humans do. Later, that changed to monotheism, which is the fundamental doctrine of the *Bà La Môn*<sup>87</sup>, who worship the Trimurti, the triple deity of supreme divinity (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer). According to this doctrine, reincarnation is imperative so that all souls can evolve until they attain the highest level. The *Bà La Môn* teaches its adherents noble thoughts, modesty, patience, tolerance, politeness, etc. Unfortunately, there was a schism within such a noble religion and then the Buddha came and founded a new religion, Buddhism.

**Zoroaster**, the founder of Zoroastrianism in Ancient Persia, did not believe there is only one God's power that creates the universe. Life and the universe come from dualism, which includes light and darkness, truth and

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<sup>86</sup> A Chinese utopian vision of the world in which everyone and everything is at peace.

<sup>87</sup> Brahmin (later Hinduism)

untruth or good and evil. These two powers combine to transform into everything. Ormuzd and Ahriman are the respective representatives of good and evil. Ormuzd must improve until it beats Ahriman at last.

Based on that thought, Zoroastrianism maintains that goodness is the truth that is represented by good deeds and good words. That is why the people in Ancient Persia respected honesty and fire was chosen to be the symbol of their religion.

In ancient Celtic cultures, religious leaders called **Druids** were respected. They spread the philosophy that promoted the Gaulish qualities, such as humanity, compassion and knightliness. These resemble some parts of the contemporary Confucianism.

The **Hebrew** people, an ancient race of people living in what is now Israel and Palestine, believed God is personal and omnipotent. God intentionally creates the universe. Similarly, humans can choose to obey or disobey Him. Everything is, however, predetermined by God. The Hebrew philosophy teaches people love, humanity and justice based on the principle “*What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others*”.

In ancient Greece there were sophists, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Zeno of Citium, the School of Alexander and Christians.

Among the philosophers of the Ionian School<sup>88</sup>, who tried to explain the nature of matter, using abstract

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<sup>88</sup> The **Ionian school** of Pre-Socratic philosophy was centred in Miletus, Ionia in the 6th century BC. The Ionian School included such thinkers as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, and Archelaus.



reasoning, Heraclitus believed that change is real, and stability illusory. For Heraclitus "Everything flows, nothing stands still." He is also famous for saying: "No man can cross the same river twice, because neither the man nor the river are the same."

Our soul, a spot of spiritual light from God, can reason and represent the truth when attaining the same level as that of the universe, or God. We humanity are told to be patient and suffer. That is the natural way to deal with life. Our physical bodies die on earth, but our souls eternally live in heaven. All earthly laws should be made based on the political situations of the universe.

**Anaxagoras**<sup>89</sup>asserted that mind or reason is independent from matter and can rule all the forms of life. Mind is intelligent enough to know all present and future facts, so he said it is possessed of all knowledge and power.

**Pythagoras**<sup>90</sup>taught people how to think properly. He held that the endless number of things has been accumulated for a long time. Souls, which are parts of it, can be active independently. Ethics is good behaviors, laws are mutual agents and friendship is equality.

The sophists' philosophy replaces relativity and regulations with absolutes and truths. They asserted that the truth is made by people who know how to make it true. In fact, there is no truth. As for customs and cultures, they replace absolute morality with relatively nice behaviors. In politics, they replace absolute power

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<sup>89</sup> A Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher.

<sup>90</sup> (c. 570 – c. 495 BC) an ancient Ionian Greek philosopher and the eponymous founder of Pythagoreanism.

with relatively forced execution. The sophists were led by **Protagoras** and **Gorgias** <sup>91</sup>.

Like Anaxagoras, **Socrates**, who had been a chemist and astronomer during his younger years, held that the reality of the universe is created by mind, not facts. More profoundly than Anaxagoras, he affirmed that intelligent people only find the source of goodness. That is also his fundamental philosophy and his spiritual practice includes two ways of practice:

- Comparing the weirdness of fake doctrines and the excellence of genuine ones.
- Practicing what is called **Thần Sản** (mental development).

The latter teaches people how to learn so that one's hidden mind shows by self-investigating or having someone question oneself. This can be achieved by publicly tests and summations.

Being a great thinker, Socrates attached great importance to thoughts. Thoughts create actions and then build social customs and cultures. Those who act appropriately based on their thinking will never oppose thoughts in daily activities. Consequently, they always follow their own thoughts in any judgment.

He affirmed that everything in life is caused by mental ability and no one really wants to become evildoers. He always advised people to learn from moral role models and thought good education can produce good people.

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<sup>91</sup> Pre-Socratic philosophers.

In spite of various forms, Đạo<sup>92</sup> comes from only one source. Only wise and intelligent people are brave and moderate enough to have a sense of justice. Those people then do charity work (Đạo for human society) and gradually develop humanity (genuine Đạo).

He also held that governing laws should be based on natural or spiritual laws, which are decided by God. As a result, they are hardly erroneous. That is why the sophists always create human laws based on the laws of the universe.

True laws are natural life or one's wisdom. Philanthropy comes from fair judgment. Evil should not be oppressed by another evil, but by morality. Humanity should be considered our best friends.

In a family the wife and the husband should be equal partners. Though having different responsibilities, the wife knows how to morally behave better than the husband.

In ancient times, manual work had been considered lowly jobs, but he thought it was noble and admirable. This thought later led to the emancipation of slaves.

Politics should be for justice and public services. Only moral and talented people should work as political leaders. Evils and luck-seekers can ruin good politics. Wise people should not rule others with power, but convince them (i.e. he promoted democracy).

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<sup>92</sup> According to Asian religions, Đạo (Tao) is the natural order of the universe whose character one's human intuition must discern in order to realize the potential for individual wisdom.

**Plato** <sup>93</sup>asserted that earthly desires are unrealistic. The seven emotions<sup>94</sup> only show us unreal facts. Only the mind gradually develops from the unreal mortal world to the real spiritual world. (Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Likewise feeling, perception, mental imaging, and consciousness are equally empty)<sup>95</sup>.

According to Plato, activities come from thoughts. People act to satisfy their thoughts. Everyone lives, following what the whole humanity think as if they are the copies of a document.

He also held that beautiful appearance results in love and a beautiful mind results in nobility.

In morally perfecting someone, he said the mind should follow the soul, creating proper characteristics because the soul naturally resembles God. Kindness, courage and peacefulness produce a calm soul, which he called fairness. Fairness results in humanitarianism.

According to him, politics should make people kind and happy. That is why he affirmed that national power should be more important than the rights of citizens. The citizens should sacrifice their benefits for their country. (His thought sounds like communism!).

At last, he thought law is made for punishment.

Unlike Plato, **Aristotle** <sup>96</sup> said human life does not come from a universal principle, but from itself. Humans produce thoughts which explain facts and show themselves how to act. One's genuine activities not only

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<sup>93</sup> An Athenian philosopher during the Classical period in Ancient Greece.

<sup>94</sup> Joy, anger, grief, worry, fear, sentiments and affection.

<sup>95</sup> Heart Sutra (Buddhism).

<sup>96</sup> Greek philosopher and scientist. A student of Plato and tutor to Alexander the Great.

benefit himself and produce common happiness but also carry out what his mind decides.

Aristotle's doctrine includes:

1. Consideration. First, people need to consider facts.
2. Action. Then, they need to act according to social regulations. They should choose the moderate way, for example courage is the centrist course between boldness and cowardice. This virtue forces people to struggle for survival and helps experience facts peacefully.

As for society, he held that love and human relations are very important. It's better to love people than to wait for them to love yourself and to do the right things than to wait for others to do them. He preferred friendship to justice.

According to him, there are two kinds of justice. First, justice in distribution is used to give assignments to people according to their talent and morality. Second, justice in trade is used in commerce.

As for politics, Aristotle held that nation is the union of free and equal subjects. He disproves Plato's communism, saying communists' assets are hardly preserved because they are not so many as those of bourgeois'.

According to him, the society includes free people and slaves. Slaves are predetermined by God. To include, he said authority belongs to everyone. Hence, whether there is true equality or not will lead to either democracy or anarchism.

**Pyrrho of Elis**<sup>97</sup> held skepticism, saying it is wiser not to frequently make judgement or adopt any attitude towards facts.

**Epicurus**<sup>98</sup> maintained that human five senses result in emotions, so life comes from materials. Goodness is created by sustainable happiness, not temporary one or death. Divine beings are excluded from the universe. He taught you'd better know how to attain happiness.

**Zeno of Citium**<sup>99</sup> and students spread Stoicism, saying that spirit and intellect are active, but matter is not.

Their teachings include:

- Freedom: everyone is instinctively free, so they really want to overcome what prevents freedom. One of those obstacles may come from ourselves, for example our great will which contains our innate virtue. Our desire will decide which one is good. Some, however, do not come from ourselves, for example wealth, health and thoughts, which we prefer. We cannot decide which one of those is good.
- Fellow citizens and justice: freedom or intelligence belongs to everyone's virtue. That can unite the whole humankind, which is like a big family. Authority is the foundation of justice and is created by intelligence. Bad application of authority can cause over-authority and slaves.

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<sup>97</sup> A Greek philosopher of Classical antiquity and is credited as being the first Greek skeptic philosopher and founder of Pyrrhonism.

<sup>98</sup> An ancient Greek philosopher and sage who founded Epicureanism, a highly influential school of philosophy.

<sup>99</sup> A Hellenistic philosopher of Phoenician origin from Citium (Κίτιον, *Kition*), Cyprus. Zeno was the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy, which he taught in Athens from about 300 BC.

- Goodness: everyone should find happiness themselves. Only a sage is free from unhappiness like a divine being.

The doctrine helps people stay away from earthly desires and passions. Zeno's friends and supporters were Gléanthe and Chrysippe, who collaborated to build churches like Ariston in Ohio, Hérille in Carthage, Diogène in Sélencie, Sénex, Epictète and Marc-Aurèle.

In the West there are more philosophers in France, England and Germany such as Descartes, Pascal, Diderot, La Mettrie, Voltaire, Buffon, Montesquieu, Turgot, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Condorcet, Auguste Comte, Saint Simon, Fourier, Léon Bourgeois, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Adam Smith, Bentham, Stuart Mill, Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Luther, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Goethe, etc.

In the East, especially in Vietnam, whose culture comes from Confucianism, Confucius' students, such as the Thirty Six Saints and the Seventy Two Sages are widely known. Besides, Laozi, Mozi, Zhuangzi and Zhu Xi also spread teachings to contribute to the world.

All sages in the world have been studying to find out how humanity deal with everything in the universe. They investigated their own emotions to know those of mankind, so they know that everyone must finally become virtuous by following their inherent goodness. Therefore, despite their differences in thoughts, they all want to find out what instinctive goodness is and build their temples on righteousness for everlasting beliefs.

***What is instinctive goodness?***

It is our conscience. Commonly, it is impossible for people to know the spiritual light and instinctive goodness are the two special functions of a soul, so they call both of them conscience.

Philosophically, conscience is our instinctive fast awareness and other secret activities of our soul. All of our characteristics, emotions, thoughts and virtues come from our conscience.

Conscience is granted by God to instruct and help us humans survive. Sometimes we are given lots of instructions too confusing (sometimes less intelligent) to follow. That is because we do not know how to act based on its changes. If we wholeheartedly pay attention to each situation, we will know what to do. Watching something, or understanding something we should put our whole mind into it so as to memorize it.

With conscience, we can naturally understand an idea, fact or emotions without any physical contacts. Conscience does not show us something magical like the anticipation of an accident. Conscience helps us deal with an obvious situation ourselves. Thus, conscience is our real self.

Thanks to conscience, we know both our exterior and interior and we can intrude on and actually unite with it.

If we ignore the advice of conscience due to suspicion, nothing else can give us a better one.

Conscience alone, however, cannot give you perfect advice, but needs your five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) to communicate with the outside. The advice given will be perfect unless the outside is kept unchanged.



The function of memory is to keep and recover things as they originally appeared. All memories are then categorized according to priority, which is another function of thought: arrangement. Next, intelligence creates consciousness including speculation, enlightenment, consideration, etc.

Whether they are emotional or intellectual activities, they should follow intelligence, the principle of mortality, the principle of retribution, the ties of characteristics and the truth.

Finally, after one gets through those processes, one will transmit information by means of gestures, signs and languages.

What other religious doctrines usually call, such as “Linh Tâm”<sup>100</sup>, “Linh Quang”<sup>101</sup>, “Tánh Linh”<sup>102</sup> or “Thiên Mạng”<sup>103</sup>, is called “Chơn Linh”<sup>104</sup> by Caodaism.

Our soul is wise enough to guide, protect, instruct, deter, and control our body so that we can live righteously. (That is why Christians call it angel). That wisdom comes from what we could accumulate from all of our past reincarnations. We have had numerous times of birth and death in order to train our soul for the union with God.

Both comprehensible and incomprehensible supernatural forces are for the purpose of helping all souls evolve until they achieve the position equal to that of God.

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<sup>100</sup> Spiritual mind.

<sup>101</sup> Spiritual light.

<sup>102</sup> Spirit.

<sup>103</sup> Destiny.

<sup>104</sup> Soul.

Thus, God the Father said, “ Children, I am you and you are Myself”.

Buddhism says, “Everyone will become Buddhas”. That quotation with a deep meaning can be understood as:

We have inherited a soul from God, so we have to practice religion, training that soul to be as great as God Himself. What God has is ours and what we have is God’s.

Hence, the Highest or God the Father extracts a spiritual spot (our soul) from Himself for us, so we are God and God are ourselves provided we do not commit moral mistakes that can completely destroy us.

Our soul can never be overpowered by our body because the soul really is the owner whose activities are independent. It is the soul that helps our body evolve from the level of animals to that of humans. Without a soul our body is an animal.

Despite our body’s aggressiveness and stubbornness and lots of earthly temptations, our soul never gives up. Alas! Those who have been punished by conscience once will understand how mighty God is. No judges on earth are stricter and more powerful than conscience who returns an exact verdict without examining the case or the evidence. In a usual trial on earth, your lawyer helps defend yourself, but there are no lawyers in a trial where you yourself are the judge!

A human always has two powers:

1. The goodness of his soul.
2. The violence of his body.

If the soul wins, he becomes saintly. Otherwise, he will be punished. All religious doctrines on earth are based on the victory or failure of soul. Soul keeps following the

instinctive goodness in order to reach the destination that is the highest level in heaven.

Generally, religions describe soul as gaseous, light, shaped or shapeless. Their descriptions are partly true. In fact, soul is a mass of human thoughts (mind) that has been developing through innumerable incarnations. Soul exists either on earth or unites with the universe.

If we practice religion successfully, we have enough power to create the spiritually gaseous human form, which the soul can enter to make a divine body. How the soul enters the body in rebirth resembles how it enters the divine body. That process is called “heavenly resurrection”. (Jesus Christ was resurrected on earth). According to religious history, the Buddha and Laozi could be resurrected like that.

Soul comes from God, so a human is often spiritual. Animals are less spiritual than humans and the spiritual levels are used to categorize all living beings. Thanks to it, soul can see what your naked eyes cannot.

Knowledge, which is the fundamentals of human spirit, is accumulated by your eyes and your mind. Hence, conscience (also called spiritual mind or soul) is the Divine Eye for humanity. That is why God instructs us to worship the Divine Eye. It represents the conscience of humanity, which is the foundation of Caodaism. It is the divine temple or the great belief in God on earth, like what was said in Victor Hugo’ verses:

**L’ oeil mystique seul verra la religion nouvelle,  
La grande foi gite dans la conscience universelle.**

*Có Thiên Nhân mới tởng chánh giáo,  
Tin Cao Đài do đạo lương tâm.*

*The Divine Eye represents the new religion,  
Which is the great belief in conscience or God.*

Thus, worshipping the Divine Eye or your life and God is worshipping all humanity's conscience.

Like I said, religions chiefly teach humans to follow their instinctive goodness. However, humanity's instinctive goodness is now too weak due to earthly temptations. People seem too sluggish as if they are in an unrealistic dream though all religions have gone to extraordinary lengths to wake them up.

God the Father now comes to found Caodaism, holding a brilliant lamp and waking everyone. Unfortunately, there is too much long-standing evil, deceitfulness, violence, cruelty and hatred for people to become righteous again.

God comes, showing us how to watch our life, telling us to ease people's suffering by following our instinctive goodness, instructing us to learn love and humaneness from Him and giving us divine positions as awards provided we spread Caodaism on earth.

Consequently, God instructs me to prepare the Caodaist merit badges to encourage people to do charity work. The awards will be granted to whoever (Caodaists or non-Caodaists) wholeheartedly does charity work. The Council of Vạn Linh<sup>105</sup> will be assigned to take care of it with an exception: some Caodaist leaders, who sacrificed their lives for Caodaism, will be rewarded by the Giáo Tông and the Hộ Pháp<sup>106</sup>.

The awards includes these Caodaist titles:

1. Thính thiện. (Ethic Learner)
2. Hành Thiện. (Ethic Practitioner)
3. Giáo Thiện. (Ethic Teacher)

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<sup>105</sup> A group of Caodaist dignitaries responsible for some legislative tasks.

<sup>106</sup> The two top leaders of Caodaism.

4. Chí Thiện. (Really Ethical Person)
5. Đạo Nhơn. (Religious Person)
6. Chơn Nhơn. (Enlightened Person)
7. Hiền Nhơn. (Sage)
8. Thánh Nhơn. (Saint)
9. Tiên Tử. (Immortal)
10. Phật Tử. (Buddha)

Thính Thiện, Hành Thiện, Giáo Thiện, Chí Thiện, Đạo Nhơn and Chơn Nhơn are responsible for practicing exoteric doctrine, helping the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council spread Caodaism. They do have the same executive powers as those of the Dignitaries of the Cửu Trùng Đài <sup>107</sup>if recognized by the Council of Quyền Vạn Linh.

Believers from other religions, even the Caodaist sects, can have the same power and status as those of Caodaist dignitaries of the Cửu Trùng Đài if they are recognized by the Council of Quyền Vạn Linh or Quyền Chí Tôn<sup>108</sup>. Hiền Nhơn, Thánh Nhơn, Tiên Tử and Phật Tử take care of the Caodaist esoteric practice together with the Hiệp Thiên Đài<sup>109</sup>. They do have the same executive powers as those of the Dignitaries of the Hiệp Thiên Đài if recognized by the Council of Quyền Vạn Linh in spite of their different religious origins.

That is what we hope to be in theory. In reality, the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council will officially started the program after the approval of the Council of Quyền Vạn

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<sup>107</sup> The Executive Body of Caodaism.

<sup>108</sup> The combination of two powers of the Giáo Tông and the Hộ Pháp.

<sup>109</sup> The Legislative Body of Caodaism.

Linh or God (the unanimous decision of the Giáo Tông and the Hộ Pháp).

Hence, God the Father has come to establish Caodaism. He guides good people to a glorious place, telling them to climb to the top to see the whole world, ponder to reach their own final decision and then change the world, together with Himself. He also grants us material awards and His divine power and says, “This is attractive enough to convince humanity to follow their instinctive goodness. Children, you can give the greedy people, who only pursue earthly fame and fortune, divine statuses in order to wake them up. That is how to save them”.

Looking at the Five Religious Branches (Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Shintoism and Confucianism), we can see that they seem to be the five horses struggling for the leading position, yet God tells us to be the judge. As a judge, we do not follow any religions, but practice what God has taught and raise the value of true Buddhism.

In the past, we already knew the advantages and disadvantages of the Five Religious Branches and whether the religious leaders are good or bad. Any good doctrines which were slightly varied by some human beings become less saintly and the evil sects are the worst. As the judge, we should try to be fair enough in all activities to unite those religions.

We have seen lots of bad results from fake religions. Some people followed Confucianism, but they buried their subjects alive or forced them to work in cold weather instead of supporting them. Others Shintoism, but made war instead of waking up people. Others Christianity, but criticized people instead of loving them. Others Taoism, but aided and abetted fights instead of

reconciliation. The others Buddhism, but made people suffer more instead of saving them. Alas! It was like a rat race!

Tired of those situations, we chose to follow God to discover the truth. However, I can hardly understand why some Caodaist Senior Dignitaries, who had a chance to communicate with and learn from God, changed their mind to join those fake religions. I am so surprised that they only wanted to be a servant instead of a boss. God has selected good people, forming the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council, which represents Himself. It possesses enough power to govern the Caodaist community in order to protect God's children and prevent schisms. (God said, "Those who cause a schism within Caodaism are My enemies") God's enemies are also the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council and humanity's adversaries. Generally, people behave badly towards their enemies, so it is commonplace to see some disagreement between some Caodaist dignitaries. Forgive them, please!

It is unexpected that the Caodaist Law, which creates attractive authority to some fame-seekers, causes fierce fighting among believers instead of encouraging all Caodaist followers to unite. Oh! You do not know how much disappointed God now feels!

Since we, unluckily, have been spreading Caodaism for 8 years, followers are not informed enough of the Caodaist Law. Consequently, they are tempted by dishonest people to follow fake doctrines.

In fact, people have not really follow God. They only listen to the Caodaist dignitaries' sermons without understanding what Đạo is. That is why there is schism within our community.

Worst of all, some Caodaist dignitaries only want to pursue fame and title without caring whether or not the religion develops. I still wonder whose responsibility it would be if Caodaism failed!

Now, true Caodaist believers, what do you say?

Remember to ignore what the adversaries have done to sabotage our religion. Those saboteurs, who are a senior Caodaist dignitary and his partners, will be the sinners to humanity! You know who they are, don't you?

I have heard some Caodaist renegades go around, criticizing the Caodaist Canonical Codes in southern provinces. They say the codes contain lots of disadvantages. They, however, cannot point out what they are if asked.

Similarly, I also want to know those disadvantages. Are they disadvantageous because all followers are given the right to oppose the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council? Why should I let them have it if I want to impose my dictatorial views??

Actually, according to the codes, Chánh Trị Sự, Phó Trị Sự and Thông Sự<sup>110</sup> are allowed to act as Đầu Sự, Giáo Tông and Hộ Pháp<sup>111</sup>, respectively, in their villages.

Additionally, there are three different powers that make laws for the Caodaist community:

1. The Council of Quyền Nhơn Sanh<sup>112</sup>. This council includes Lễ Sanh, Chánh Trị Sự, Phó Trị Sự, Thông Sự and Caodaist representatives. This council makes Caodaist Laws and is presided at by the Thượng Chánh Phối Sự.

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<sup>110</sup> The Caodaist petty dignitaries in a village.

<sup>111</sup> Three top dignitaries in Tây Ninh Temple, the Administrative Center of Caodaism.

<sup>112</sup> Power of People.



2. The Council of Quyền Hội Thánh<sup>113</sup>. This includes Thập Nhị Thời Quân, Chánh Phối Sư, Phối Sư, Giáo Sư and Giáo Hữu. Caodaist Laws are executed by these dignitaries under the Thái Chánh Phối Sư.
3. The Council of Quyền Thượng Hội<sup>114</sup>, which is presided at by both the Hộ Pháp and the Giáo Tông. This council includes Hộ Pháp, Thượng Phẩm, Thượng Sanh, Giáo Tông, Chưởng Pháp and Đầu Sư, who govern the Caodaist community according to the Caodaist Law. This council can only execute the laws, not punish anyone. An exception is the Đầu Sư may be the Caodaist top leader if allowed by the Quyền Vạn Linh, Giáo Tông and Hộ Pháp if there is an unsolved disagreement between the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council and Hội Nhơn Sanh.

A Caodaist law will be executed if it is unanimously approved by the three councils with an exception: the Giáo Tông, together with the Hộ Pháp, can represent God and decide some law on earth.

Hence, there is only **Quyền Vạn linh** (Power of Living Things), not **Hội Vạn linh** (Council of Living Things). With this knowledge, you Caodaists may think it is too ridiculous that the Đầu Sư Ngọc Trang Thanh <sup>115</sup>held what he called Hội Vạn Linh once<sup>116</sup>.

In addition, the Hội Nhơn Sanh, which is one of the three powers of the Quyền Vạn Linh, should be strong enough to protect Caodaist law.

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<sup>113</sup> Power of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

<sup>114</sup> Power of the Caodaist Senior Dignitaries.

<sup>115</sup> Mr Lê Bá Trang, a senior Caodaist Dignitary, who later left Caodaism and formed a schism.

<sup>116</sup> Đầu Sư Lê Bá Trang held a meeting he called the Hội Vạn Linh once in order to overthrow the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

Alas! Many religions have looked down on people and people have belittled religions because there are no similar organizations.

I remember lots of senior Caodaist dignitaries of the Cửu Trùng Đài were very disappointed when the Caodaist Constitution was introduced. Especially, Cự Lớn<sup>117</sup> had someone found a sect to criticize the Caodaist Law, wanting to eliminate the authority of Chánh Trị Sự, Phó Trị Sự and Thông Sự or the power of people. Fortunately, thanks to God's support, they failed and the sect broke up.

I find it humorous that they, at last, found out how to cheat people. Actually, they tricked Caodaist believers into committing suicide. That sect was bold enough to strip a petty Caodaist dignitary of his badge and sash while he was performing a ritual without being prevented!

The harder I have tried to protect those dignitaries' authority, the more I have been attacked by them. O! How ungrateful those coreligionists are!

They ignore the fact that there are laws, titles and power when they practice exoteric practice, but everyone is spiritually equal when practicing esoteric practice. All souls are at the same level.

I heard some Caodaist petty dignitaries in the South say that they get such humble statuses that they dare not argue with the Caodaist senior dignitaries. This is my point: it is those junior dignitaries that make a significant contribution to Caodaism, so they have their right to freedom of expression. Brothers and sisters, read Caodaist Law more frequently and try to understand it,

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<sup>117</sup> No information who he was. Cự Lớn (old man) may have been a top Caodaist leader.

please! Without the knowledge of Caodaist Law, you easily permit Caodaist senior dignitaries to do what they want.

As for the level of importance, we never think what part of our body is more important. Similarly, all Caodaist believers are equally important. No ranks are more important. Those ranks are created to satisfy the people's strong desires for power and fame.

God instructs us to spread Caodaism according to different cultures on earth. God grants divine titles (Immortal, Buddha, etc.) because humans like them.

Once, God lamented that He has no other ways to communicate with humanity except ouija board and automatic writing, through which He teaches the true doctrines of the Five Religions<sup>118</sup> so that people can understand what Đạo is. However, ouija board and automatic writing are both advantageous and disadvantageous. For those who prefer titles and superstition, they are extremely disadvantageous<sup>119</sup>. God's prophecies are now fulfilled. Lots of people in the Caodaist sects are called Immortals, Saints and Buddhas! So brothers and sisters, let's ponder what God really wants us to do. Certainly, the answer is God wants us to become righteous and to practice the true religions in order to be the role models for society to aspire to. Otherwise, we follow Satan, not God.

It is hard to practice religion and it is extremely hard to prevent a doctrine from being varied, so the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council has a very essential responsibility.

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<sup>118</sup> Confucianism, Shintoism, Christianity, Taoism and Buddhism.

<sup>119</sup> According to Caodaism, there are three kinds of ouija board: human (write down what humans want), evil (encourage fights or killing) and divine (teach true religious doctrines)

There are always gaps between the Caodaist Law and people's desires. You cannot both execute the law and meet the followers' demands. Thus, what should the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council do? I do not answer this question, but let you do it.

Many religions have failed because they wanted to create satisfaction for people. Should we avoid or do the same thing? That is the problem too hard to solve.

You should be intelligent and wise enough to balance the two opposite extremes without messing up the whole system. If security is not improved, the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council cannot do anything despite how powerful their authority granted by God is. Thus, Caodaist Law is created for security so that dignitaries can improve the religion.

What did those saboteurs really want to do? I am sure you Caodaists will unanimously agree with me that they deliberately wanted to eliminate our religion. Indeed they did! Since the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council will be powerless if Caodaist Law is nullified, they went to extraordinary lengths to ruin that law system.

Should the Hiệp Thiên Đài, which is responsible for protecting the Caodaist law, allow those dignitaries to despotically nullify the law? I will let the right-minded believers answer that question. Caodaist senior dignitaries have responsibilities to execute the law, not to abuse it and gain more power for themselves.

There is lots of backbiting without any strong evidence that I stand by someone. I have been slandered twice, when, together with Cao Thượng Phẩm<sup>120</sup> and Quyền

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<sup>120</sup> Thượng Phẩm Cao Quỳnh Cư, one of His two assistants.

Giáo Tông<sup>121</sup>, I was accused of connivance and injustice. O! How malicious those rumors are! Yet people usually judge a book by its cover without knowing which is the right thing!

My duty is to protect the Caodaist Law for the security of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council, so those Caodaists abusers have to walk over my dead body before wrecking havoc on our religion.

Unluckily, there were lots of Caodaist followers, who not only are evil-doers but also take advantage of my legislative protection. They have damaged my credibility many times.

Alas! It is never easy to dispense equal spiritual justice to all people on earth based on God's instructions. If you respect the spiritual side, you should impose more corporal punishment, which causes anger and hatred. Conversely, all souls cannot be saved, which is a sin to God.

That reminds me of the beginning of Caodaism when God instructed us to open the door to everyone. Other religions and cults were also so excited, but they just peddled their esoteric practice or chanted prayers for money. That partly harmed the prestige of Caodaism for some time! We had to spend some years trying our best to set all things straight because the Vietnamese are so superstitious that they easily believe charms and amulets. Having returned to the Tây Ninh Temple from Thủ Đức, I witnessed a chaotic situation. Some Caodaists followed Mr Ngọc Lịch Nguyệt<sup>122</sup>, practicing Zen and sleepily holding rosary beads. Others became pupils of Giác Hải

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<sup>121</sup> Quyền Giáo Tông Thượng Trung Nhật, (Lê Văn Trung) the Acting Top Leader.

<sup>122</sup> Đầu Sư Ngọc Lịch Nguyệt or Lê Văn Lịch, a Caodaist senior leader. He later left Caodaism and returned to his previous pagoda.

(Monk Như Nhãn)<sup>123</sup>, hitting bamboo tocsins and bells and chanting Buddhist prayers. Outside the Holy Land, numerous mediums claimed that they could communicate with the dead and some Caodaist dignitaries were fighting for their own properties. I tried to fix everything, but then some Caodaist dignitaries began to fight for more authority.

No compliments or criticisms can affect me anymore because I have had enough of them in life. I have offered my life to God, so I do not need to treat anybody with particular respect.

Usually, it cannot be absolutely fair for a human to judge another unless he thoroughly knows that person. My story can be an example for that point. Once I was transferred to a new position in Qui Nhon<sup>124</sup>. After some months in Bình Định, I knew a man, who was very handsome, educated, kind and talented. He could play musical instruments, compose poetry and talked convincingly. Growing quite fond of him, I buddied up with him.

One day he came to my house and we stayed up late, talking. Suddenly he confessed that he had been a thief! So surprised was I that I thought he was making a joke, but he then told me the truth. He had been from Thanh Hoá<sup>125</sup>. His father was an ex-government official. He lived with his father and sister because his mother died young. His father remarried a widow from Quảng Nam, who had had five children. They soon had three more

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<sup>123</sup> The owner of Pagoda Gò Kén, where Caodaist inauguration ceremony was held. He was divinely ordained by God, but later left.

<sup>124</sup> The capital city of Bình Định, a midland province in Vietnam.

<sup>125</sup> A northern province in Vietnam.

children. His stepmother treated him and his sister brutally, but his father was too henpecked to defend them. As a result, he had to go to work as a servant to stay away from her. Fortunately, his boss was a good man, who taught him Chinese. Besides, he taught himself French and Vietnamese. Thanks to his intelligence and patience he was good at them all.

When he was nineteen, the stepmother told his father to force him to marry a girl. Her real purpose was to have another free female servant. It was too unlucky for his wife, but they loved each other very much. After three years, they had three children. Then they ran into trouble because the stepmother wanted them to move out.

Consequently, his family and his sister had to live in poverty. He went to work, but got no wages because of a quarrel with his boss. Everyone had to go without any food for five days or so. Had it not been for his wife's prevention, he would have committed suicide.

After seven days without food, he had an idea. He began to break in some houses and steal things. Thanks to his talent, he could gradually overcome the difficulties and became wealthy. However, he said his wealth was valueless because it was created immorally.

He said he had stopped stealing four years ago and moved to Bình Định due to great shame. So unhappy was he that he cried and cried. I tried to comfort him, blaming his bad situation and saying that was not his fault. It is commonplace that good people sometimes have to do something bad to survive!

At first, I did not believe what he said, so I managed to talk to his wife. His sister had got married and also lived in Bình Định. Hence, I came to his house, which became a high society then. He held a party and everyone greatly

enjoyed themselves. After the party, I got a little drunk and managed to ask his wife. Weeping uncontrollably, she told me that was true and added that he had run back home one night, bleeding a lot. He had been hacked while breaking in some house. Luckily, he had survived that injury. That was when she gave birth to the seventh son. She said there was still a long deep scar on his back. It had taken him over two months to get well again. She might have become a widow! Her story frightened me a lot. What would she and her seven children have done if he had been killed? Had the house owner known this, he would not have hacked him like this.

This story can be controversial because some people may think he was too incompetent to support his whole family. He became a burglar because he was unable to get a job. My answer is the employment in Thanh Hóa may have been too tough for him. Others may say he should have worked as a servant instead. Yes, he did, but the boss was a deadbeat and he got no help from anybody. Others say he should have become a beggar instead. O! There were few philanthropists and he could hardly earn enough for his crowded family. Others, who might not have experienced poverty, say they'd rather starve to death than become a thief. Yet, how about his family?

Those who want a caring and humane society may think their fate is not different from that of the miserable thief mentioned above. Similarly, the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council now is in the same trouble. No one sympathizes with Caodaist Senior Dignitaries, who work only for God instead of personal benefits. They are oppressed by



earthly powers, but have great responsibilities to take care of millions of lives.

Glancing and checking those evildoers, I can see that they are only shirkers both in Caodaism and in their life. They just gang together to hurt nice people because of jealousy. They can also be the Caodaist dignitaries who really pursue fame not only in life but also in our religious community. They have never done anything to benefit Caodaism. How dare they judge the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council although they have too little knowledge of its physical and emotional suffering?

For eight years, I have gone to all the trouble, finding out the way to protect the Caodaist doctrine. Not only have Caodaist dignitaries been against each other internally but also evil power have bullied externally. There have been so many difficulties that some senior dignitaries had to give up their religious responsibilities.

In fact, the troubles in Caodaism were caused by its quick changes, not by those who deliberately eliminated it. The disagreement among the senior dignitaries resulted in non-cooperation. Some wanted to overcome difficulties, but some to spread the doctrine to save people. However, I think they all only helped publicize Caodaism though they made Caodaists divide into several different groups.

It is shameful for me not to bring about a reconciliation among those dignitaries. After all, I cannot do it because “Nothing stings like the truth”. I do not know how to satisfy them all at the same time. No wonder the Buddha said life is like the Seven-Headed Serpent, which represents human seven emotions and you need to control them all.

Had God granted me some way to convince the Caodaist senior leaders to ignore flattery, Caodaism would not have been in such trouble. Few followers really wanted it to improve, but lots of them didn't because of their pride and jealousy.

Brothers and sisters, you should ask yourselves whether you really want to practice Caodaism. Be kind if you really want to. Otherwise, leave it, please!

Having the important responsibility to better life, we cannot convince people to perfect themselves unless we become the role models.

The real purpose of Caodaism is to encourage love because it is the only power to make the world better. Yet some dignitaries only incite anger and hatred. How weird they are!

Brothers and sisters, remember my heartening words:

Having suffered and worked really hard for eight years, we managed to establish this religion. Please, think of the labor even though you hate us! How can we fight against each other for a title while we were just granted a little happiness? Even pagans know how to behave, yet we co-religionists try to mess ourselves about. Others will disdain the Caodaist community because of that competitiveness. Being brothers and sisters, we should not fiercely compete against each other because that will be recorded for later generations to judge. Please, stay away from Satan and follow God. Remember that life is so short. Despite any malevolence, we keep practicing Caodaism. We should ignore both thoughtful and critical comments and refuse any high-ranking posts.

Everyday, we should remind ourselves that God borrows our bodies to represent Himself on earth. As a result, we

should act based on His principles without any changes in order to gather His children.

Hence, I urge both those who have made a mistake and those who have dedicated themselves to Caodaism to unite, follow God and help each other fulfill our responsibility which is to become the role models for mankind. We should collaborate to improve Caodaism, making it a beautiful temple for all living beings. This temple represents God's body on earth.

Senior dignitaries, if these heartening words pass unnoticed, I will wait for your next moves before officially announcing them to everyone.

Translator

Từ Chơn

Saigon, July 17th, 2020

[tuuchoon@gmail.com](mailto:tuuchoon@gmail.com)

<https://sites.google.com/site/caodaismmeditation/Home>

