

A Sermon

By Đức Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc

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Given in the Tây Ninh Temple on the 14th day of the 2nd Lunar Month - Year of the Dragon (5 March 1928).

Divinely Ordained Dignitaries from the Cửu Trùng Đài¹ and Hiệp Thiên Đài,² ladies and gentlemen,

On the occasion of this convention, I would like to humbly convey to you what I have learned from God for the sake of increasing your knowledge.³ In this case, I think it is quite necessary for me to do this.

There are numerous religious mysteries hidden in God's poems, but their meanings are too esoteric for us to gain immediate insight. I have been taught many things which are relevant to my responsibilities here. This is because God wants me to fulfill a particular mission.

Although it is a little late to declare it, I should have told you earlier that I was instructed (by heaven) to do missionary work in Kiêm Biên (i.e Cambodia) for 7 months. From this point and to start in earnest, I would like to elaborate on the idea of the "Hội Thánh."⁴

The Hội Thánh/Sacerdotal Council

In the phú⁵ given to The Phối Sư [i.e. Archbishop] Hương Thanh's aunt, God said, "*I use good people to save humanity.*" The Hội Thánh is this group of "good" people. It is a group that has been gathered together by God. He has taught them how to have mercy on all living beings and uses this group as a temporal, earthly tool by which to save all humanity.

¹ **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.

² **Hiệp Thiên Đài**, (協天臺 - temple of divine/heavenly alliance): This is the legislative body of the Caodaist religion and includes its College of Mediums. It has the duty of communicating via occult/esoteric power to receive divine messages. It also preserves the religious laws and hears the complaints of the discontented in order to symbolize equality in the religion.

³ Details of the Convention?

⁴ **Hội Thánh**: The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

⁵ **Phú**: A dissertation in rhythmic prose.

These good people have been gathered to form God's earthly body in the present period – that is, the Third Age of Universal Salvation. Their presence means that God will not have to incarnate in the world as He was required to do in the former two salvation periods [during the time of Moses, then that of Jesus – ed]. Through the process of spiritual séance, God has taught each member of the Hội Thánh to believe in the express reality of His existence: He is God, He reigns over the universe in justice, He holds the power to protect His children both when alive on earth and in the realms of the deceased, and He shows the difference between Heaven and Hell in order that they make the right spiritual choices.

God has promised to give these good people a divine rank in the Bạch Ngọc Kinh (The Court of God). He will clear the path to Nirvana and will close Hell in order to save all living beings – this is especially the case for the 9.2 million original souls.⁶ Such bold promises as these can only be kept by God, who is mightier than any Buddha.

Considering God's power and these promises, those who have been selected for membership of the Hội Thánh must trust Him completely.

The beliefs of this special group will spread outwards to others. It is a belief that develops throughout the world in order to improve that world. In order for this to happen, all people must practice the religious way until they achieve enlightenment. This is hard for them because, it seems, there are no proper instructions. Consequently, God has founded the religion of Caodaism to show people exactly the way to practice.

The Đạo

The Đạo⁷ is a sacred force. It forms something that resembles a path that people can take. It allows them to escape the world of suffering and work their way towards heaven.

How to escape the endless cycle of rebirth?

To escape eternal cycles of rebirth you must achieve the secret and sacred magic of becoming a Divine Being. Only by praying to God for the revelation of this secret can such a status be achieved. No other divine being can provide it. Hence, the Đạo is the secret force that helps a temporal human achieve a divine position in the ranks of [from lowest to highest divine rank] Geniis, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas.

God has manifest in Caodaism to unite the old religions and to show people the sacred forces that can be used for their mental cultivation. We might ask, however, why did God not go out and found for Himself an entirely new religion? Why did he simply use the principles of previous religions but bring them together? What if non-Caodaists criticize us and say we just imitate other religions? It is

⁶ **Nguyên Nhân**, original souls: These come directly from the creation process of God whereas **Hoá Nhân** are souls that have spiritually evolved from plant and animal existences. **Quỉ Nhân** is the final category of souls which have committed serious moral errors in previous lives and who have been exiled to Earth.

⁷ **Đạo** (道), Dao (pinyin romanization system), Tao (Wade-Giles romanization system): The Way. Also: doctrine, teaching, religion. Relates to a religious tradition in East Asia which can both a philosophical tradition Dao Jia (道家) or a more religious system – Dao Jiao (道教). Both of these are referred to as Daoism or Taoism in English.

generally understood that Nhon Đạo (Confucianism) teaches us how to train our bodies, Tiên Đạo (Daoism) enables us to cultivate our minds, and Phật Đạo (Buddhism) shows us how to achieve sacred nothingness.

Why three religions?

To answer this question, I would first like to explain why we follow the teachings of the three religions both in our earthly life and in the heavenly realms.

In our earthly life

Humans on earth need to follow the guidelines of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in order to fulfill their human responsibilities.

According to Confucianism, a person must act in light of the Three Bonds⁸ and the Five Constant Virtues.⁹ He or she should bear the responsibility for creating a peaceful human society in which harmony reigns. A person should respect this order and not fight against other people. This is against God's will.

For humanity to love and respect one another, Daoism teaches us that we must cultivate our minds to discover the best way to protect each other. [Of the 72 planets that bear life in the cosmos] this 68th planet that we call Earth is a purgatory. Here we are not only tempted by evil but also, we remain vulnerable to natural disasters. We have to face both violence and disease. Alas! This is why so many 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 force from God. Their science has proceeded far beyond average human intelligence, so they deserve to be called "Địa Tiên."¹⁰

Humanity is now intelligent enough to create great machinery. This is why we need the mercy that comes through instruction in Buddhism. If not, we will kill and get killed by our own cleverness. In addition to the law of karma, whose effects we can all see with our own eyes, mercy is the great quality that everyone should have. Think about it. How chaotic will any society become if a dishonest person takes the chance to manipulate all the good people in that society! That is why life on the planet right now resembles a lawless community. The crafty people beat the honest ones so easily! Against this, a religious person remains self-respecting and keeps themselves in high spirits so that he or she can educate others to do the right thing. This is what the three religions have taught us.

A society will thus be in peace if everyone follows the doctrines of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. I wonder when all societies of the world will be able, with good fortune, to live in such

⁸ The **san gang/wu chang** (三纲五常) form the basics of Chinese traditional social relations. The san gang (三纲), or three relationships are ruler to ruled, father to son and husband to wife. Another Confucian tradition summarises five basic relationships adding in elder brother to younger brother and friend to friend.

⁹ The Five Constants or Wuchang/五常 of Confucianism: (humaneness, righteousness, fulfillment of the proper rites, knowledge and integrity).

¹⁰ **Địa Tiên**, Earthly Immortals.

a peace. Given the principles of our religion, you and I can believe that this target will be achieved with certainty in the future.

In Heaven and From the Creation

There had been nothing before The Creation. Then the two masses of air called Hư Vô Chi Khí¹¹ came from nowhere and smashed into each other. God's soul was formed from this, and His Throne called Thái Cực¹² then came to exist. The fiery globe called Thái Cực, which is the mechanism of the material, divided itself under God's orders into the Lưỡng Nghi¹³ and the Tứ Tượng,¹⁴ and then the Bát Quái was created.¹⁵ This is called the mechanism of Nhơn Đạo.¹⁶ Next, millions of earths were produced throughout the universe. Seventy-two of these are presently inhabited by humankind. This is the mysterious force of Tiên Đạo.¹⁷ After this Creation, the fiery Thái Cực returned to nothingness. That is the miraculous force of the Phật Đạo.¹⁸

The Bát Quái endlessly transforms to produce earths and everything that is visible to us in the universe. This is the material process, which follows God's orders. Everything is able to develop without fighting or harming each other. This is clearly the mechanism of Nhơn Đạo [Confucianism]. Living across 72 planets, humanity also perfects this process. The various societies become increasingly civilized over time. This is the mechanism of Tiên Đạo. After all this, everything will be, at some stage, destroyed – no matter how civilized or how long these societies have been in existence. This is the mechanism of Phật Đạo.

A person is nothing before becoming a fetus. Then the combined yin and yang change the fetus into an infant's body. Then the person is born, they grow and mature. This is the mechanism of Nhơn Đạo. After this, the person learns to be more knowledgeable and wiser. This is the mechanism of Tiên Đạo. At last, he or she becomes old and dies. His body is destroyed. This is the mechanism of Phật Đạo.

Discussing the Ngũ Chi

The Ngũ Chi¹⁹ are: Humanism, Shintoism (animism or local genism), Christianity (The Way of the Saints), Daoism (The Way of the Immortals) and Buddhism (The Way of the Buddhas). On this earth, a human should fulfill his or her personal responsibilities and practice Humanism. If he or she tries harder to help others, they practice Shintoism/animism. If he or she achieves things that

¹¹ **Hư Vô Chi Khí** – relates to the Chinese concept of Wu wei (無為) which can mean in action, effortless action and peraps in this instance air or the void.

¹² **Thái Cực**, Taiji, (太極): The “Supreme Ultimate” in East Asian cosmology.

¹³ **Lưỡng Nghi**: The two forms, i.e. - Yin and Yang.

¹⁴ **Tứ Tượng**: The four phenomena.

¹⁵ **Bát Quái**, The Bagua (八卦): The eight trigrams.

¹⁶ **Nhơn Đạo**: The way of humanity; Confucianism; humanism.

¹⁷ **Tiên Đạo**: The Way of the Immortals – cf fn 7.

¹⁸ **Phật Đạo**: Buddhism.

¹⁹ **Ngũ chi Đại Đạo**: The five religious branches.

are much more beneficial to humanity, we say that he or she practices Christianity. Daoism is manifest if the believer can perfect what they have learnt and are then able to teach these lessons widely. Being knowledgeable about all things, he or she knows that their mind has conquered life and needs quietness and rest before they pass away, then he or she practices Buddhism.

For the *Nguyên Nhân* [or original souls],²⁰ these five systems are considered to be a five-rung ladder that enables the self to climb to a divine position equal to that of God (i.e. become a Buddha). It is impossible to reach the top rung in just one attempt. But with determination and care you can gradually climb that ladder to the peak. Therefore, God uses those five religions as a school of five classes. This school allows us to practice religion so that we can one day achieve a divine status. The divine positions you achieve will then be surely yours without anyone else's rejection or approval. Those who copy the exemplary behaviors of the *Genii* will become *Geni*. Next, we hope that the *Genii* will imitate the qualities of the *Saints* so that they can become *Saints*. Similarly, those *Saints* then become *Immortals* and finally the *immortals* become *Buddhas*.

Someone may ask "how can immoral humans become perfectly moral divine beings?" You can answer this by explaining that even the *Hoá Nhân*²¹ have souls that have been granted by God. For example, coral (material), mimosa (plants), parrots, dogs, horses, 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 a divine position one day. This is why God has established religions for you to practice. Someone may wonder how a human can achieve divine status even though a religion is only a secular community. The answer is that without secular life there can be no divine status, and without divine status the secular world cannot last. A similar thing exists with our body and soul. Without a soul our body is not alive and without a body there cannot be a human being. Hence, there surely must be a material world if there is also to be a spiritual one. This doctrine and the *Sacerdotal Council* are worldly bodies but they are in accordance with the *Divine Law*. This is an equivalent to the *Cử Thiên Khai Hóa* [The Teachings of the Nine Heavens]. The *Caodaist Law* is also the *Divine Law* and the *Sacerdotal Council* is able to contain all the *Geniis*, *Saints*, *Immortals*, and *Buddhas* of Earth.²²

Aren't Caodaists being too confident when we consider that the law we have established is the Divine Law?

It has been explained by God that because of His compassion, from the time of Creation, He never punished humanity. It is also said that the *Law in Heaven* was made by the *Heavenly Assembly* so that, by agreeing to it, all the signatories would keep to its clauses (i.e. *Geniis*, *Saints*, *Immortals*, and *Buddhas*) and that they would work to keep themselves from violating it. They wrote this law to govern their own capacities rather than to satisfy God. Also, it is said that God cannot now amend the *Heavenly Law* for it has been presented to Him for ratification and is now unchangeable.

²⁰ **Nguyên Nhân**: original souls – cf fn 6.

²¹ **Hoá Nhân**: souls that have spiritually evolved from plant and animal existence – cf. fn 6.

²² **Cử Thiên Khai Hóa**: The masters or divine beings of the nine heavens; a reference to the divine beings of the nine heavens who are responsible for opening the nine heavens and for teaching and elevating humanity.

Our own religious code, the Caodaist Canonical Code²³ was made by our Giáo Tông [Spiritual Pope] Li Bai²⁴ and other Caodaist dignitaries without God's interference. Only after it was presented to God and received His consent did it become an earthly law equal to the heavenly law. And just like The Heavenly Law Code, which cannot be influenced or overridden by any being or force - even God - the Caodaist Canonical Code remains unbiased and untouchable. Let us examine the process by which it was made.

The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council is composed of two hierarchies: the Cửu Trùng Đài (Executive Body) and the Hiệp Thiên Đài (Judicial Body). The Code for the Cửu Trùng Đài was granted by God first. However, the dignitaries under the Hiệp Thiên Đài were not excluded from the process. They, together with the dignitaries of the Cửu Trùng Đài, had to construct the Code for themselves. Therefore, they also have to observe the Caodaist Canonical Code in the same way that everyone else must. The Thập Nhị Khai Thiên [The Twelve Heavens of Paradise] made the heavenly law and presented it to God. Following this method precisely, The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council made the Canonical Code and presented it to God. As a result, the two laws have a profound equivalence.

If he should seem to break the law, even the Hộ Pháp [Guardian of the Dharma/head of the Hiệp Thiên Đài] must be summoned to appear in the Toà Tam Giáo²⁵ under the direction of the Cửu Trùng Đài, be judged, and submit to its jurisdiction like any ordinary believer. Similarly, if a Giáo Tông [pope] was accused of breaking this law, he would also be summoned to appear in the religious court under the auspices of the Hiệp Thiên Đài as though he were just an ordinary believer. The divine beings (Genii, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas) make the law in heaven while the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council has made the Canonical Code for earth. Consequently, these law codes are considered equal.

As an aside, I would like to elaborate on how the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council is organized and why it is considered as having an equivalence to the divine beings.

The Sacerdotal Council is divided into three parts.

1- *The Bát Quái Đài*²⁶ is the dwelling place for all Geniis, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas. It is directed by God.

²³ The **Tân Luật** or Canonical Code.

²⁴ **Lý Bạch**, 李白 Li Po/Li Bai (701-762): The famous T'ang Dynasty Poet and the Spiritual Pope of the Cao-Đài religion.

²⁵ **Toà Tam Giáo**: The Three-Religion Tribunal – see also Bát Quái Đài.

²⁶ **Bát Quái Đài**, (八卦臺 The Eight-sided Palace): The council of the great spirits which govern the eight states of the soul; it is also the eight-sided palace of God's presence, or the eight trigrams palace, that is, the spiritual hierarchy of Caodaism.

2- *Cửu Trùng Đài*²⁷ is where Caodaists who have been divinely ordained work as dignitaries in the religion. They are considered equivalent to the Geniis, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas on earth. They are led by the Giáo Tông [pope].

3- *Hiệp Thiên Đài*²⁸ is the organization that protects the secular and religious law – as does the Ngọc Hư Cung²⁹ in heaven. It is led by the Hộ Pháp [Guardian of the Dharma]. The Hiệp Thiên Đài (Tower of Heavenly Alliance) acts as the door to heaven. Hiệp means “communion” or “alliance” Thiên is “heaven.” In other words, it is the ladder that enables humankind to access heaven. The organization includes the offices of the Hộ Pháp [Guardian of the Dharma], Thượng Phẩm [Guider of Souls on the Spiritual Plane], Thượng Sanh [Guider of Souls on the Earthly Plane] and Thập Nhị Thời Quân [The Twelve Zodiacal Superiors].

Who are the Thập Nhị Thời Quân?

The Caodaist Thập nhị Thời Quân³⁰ are considered to be the earthly equivalent to the Thập nhị Thời Thần [Twelve Zodiacal Deities, at the rank of Geniis in Heaven].³¹ They are the source for 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 the zodiacal point of the Rat,³² whereas Earth will end at the Ox.³³ And Humans are born in the period of the Tiger.³⁴*”

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

The Thập nhị Thời Quân are assigned to three branches: Pháp, Đạo and Thế (Dharma, The Way, Secularity)³⁵ - each of which has four dignitaries per branch.

Who is the Thượng Sanh?

²⁷ **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.

²⁸ **Hiệp Thiên Đài**, (協天臺 - temple of divine/heavenly alliance): This is the legislative body of the Caodaist religion and includes its College of Mediums. It has the duty of communicating via occult/esoteric power to receive divine messages. It also preserves the religious laws and hears the complaints of the discontented in order to symbolize equality in the religion.

²⁹ **Ngọc Hư Cung**, White Jade Palace: This can be found in the Hư Vô Heaven; This is the heavenly council of the eternal law which controls and keeps the divine law and controls the progress and movement of the universe.

³⁰ **Thập Nhị Thời Quân**: The Twelve Zodiacal Superiors – 12 dignitaries under the Hiệp Thiên Đài who assist in the direction of souls.

³¹ **Thập nhị Thời Thần**: The Twelve Zodiacal Deities - 12 Genii in heaven who direct souls.

³² The time around midnight: 23:00 - 00:59.

³³ Very early morning: 01:00 - 02:59.

³⁴ Early morning: 03:00 - 04:59.

³⁵ **Pháp, Đạo and Thế**: The Dharma, The Way, Secularity.

Souls come into existence from two sources: those made before and those made after the Creation event. The former are called original souls and the other evolutionary souls. All materials, plants, animals, birds and humans have evolutionary souls. Of these, humans are at the highest level. In the Third Salvation, God saves all souls. He especially helps evolutionary souls climb to the level of humanity. The Thượng Sanh is the being who is directly responsible for these promotions. Mastering secular laws, he leads all living beings along 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 the following four Zodiac Superiors: the Bảo Thế, the Hiến Thế, the Khai Thế and the Tiếp Thế.

Who is the Thượng Phẩm?

Joining Caodaism, you can earn a divine status. God will be able to help you reach the highest level. The Thượng Phẩm is the one who is directly responsible for this process. He protects the spiritual status of believers and assists them to avoid breaking the law in their quest to get a divine promotion. He prevents Caodaists from fighting each other for higher positions. He keeps the Cửu Trùng Đài in order and prevents them from retreating in their need to missionize. Mastering religious laws, he defends Caodaist dignitaries and believers by preventing them from violating those laws. He is the Caodaist defense lawyer. His team in achieving these tasks includes four Zodiacal Superiors: the Bảo Đạo, the Hiến Đạo, the Khai Đạo and the Tiếp Đạo.

Who is the Hộ Pháp?

Like the law in a secular society, the Bí Pháp³⁶ is the secret or esoteric power in Caodaism. The 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 hold audience with the Genii, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas. Mastering secular and Caodaist laws, Hộ Pháp is the leading Judge of the Caodaist court.³⁷ His staff members include the following four Zodiac Superiors: the Bảo Pháp, the Hiến Pháp, the Khai Pháp and the Tiếp Pháp.

The Hiệp Thiên Đài, a replica of the Ngọc Hư Cung³⁸ on earth, is the door by which souls can travel to the Thirty-six Heavens, Nirvana, and the Bạch Ngọc Kinh to meet God.³⁹ It is also the checkpoint to prevent immoral souls from penetrating into heaven. Due to His great compassion and expectation, God assigns the Thượng Sanh, the Thượng Phẩm and the Hộ Pháp to save, gather, and take all of His children back to heaven. Physically, the Hiệp Thiên Đài is an institution, where good people are selected and assigned to work with the Cửu Trùng Đài to help Caodaist believers

³⁶ **Bí Pháp:** The Secret Dharma, an esoteric (or occult) teaching/the esoteric doctrine.

³⁷ After being judged by the Court of the Cửu Trùng Đài, the accused can appeal to the Court of the Hiệp Thiên Đài if he/she can claim unfairness.

³⁸ **Ngọc Hư Cung:** White Jade Palace. This can be found in the Hư Vô Heaven; This is the heavenly council of the eternal law which controls and keeps the divine law and controls the progress and movement of the universe.

³⁹ **Bạch Ngọc Kinh:** The White Jade Palace: the court of God. It can also refer to the Council of God.

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.

Cử Trùng Đài

The *Cử Trùng Đài*⁴⁰ is a copy of the *Cử Thiên Khai Hóa*.⁴¹ It serves for the *Cử Phẩm Thần Tiên*.⁴² Joining Caodaism, you become a member of one of these levels.

The Divine Beings in the Nine Heavens govern the earthly worlds and the *Cử Trùng Đài* administers the Caodaist community, saves people and leads them back to God. The *Toà Tam Giáo*⁴³ established by God in the *Cử Trùng Đài* represents the authority that God gives to the Divine Beings to manage the universe. The Canonical Code has already explained the reasons behind the authority of the Caodaist dignitaries.

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

Level 1- Genii:

- Those who are non-Caodaists, but moral enough, can attain a level equal that of *Địa Thần* or Earthly Genii.
- The Caodaist believers, who practice Caodaism, are recognised as *Nhơn Thần* or Geniis of Humanism.
- The *Lễ Sanh* (student priests), are at the level of *Thiên Thần* or Heavenly Genii.

2- Saints:

- *Giáo Hữu* (priests) are at the level of *Địa Thánh* – that is: Earthly Saints.
- *Giáo Sư* (bishops) are at the level of *Nhơn Thánh* - or Saints of Humanism.
- *Phối Sư* (archbishops) are at the level of *Thiên Thánh* - or Heavenly Saints.

3- Immortals:

- *Đầu Sư* (cardinals) are *Địa Tiên* or Earthly Immortals.
- *Chương Pháp* (censor cardinals) are *Nhơn Tiên* or Immortals of humanism.
- *Giáo Tông* (or pope), is a *Thiên Tiên* – or Heavenly Immortal.

What I have just said is a brief mention of the equivalences between Caodaist dignitaries and the divine statuses that are equal to these positions in heaven.

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 explains that the Caodaist dignitaries serving under the *Cử Trùng Đài* and the divine beings He has assigned to incarnate on earth did so in order to establish Caodaism.

⁴⁰ **Cử 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.

⁴¹ **Cử Thiên Khai Hóa**: The Nine Heavens.

⁴² **Cử Phẩm Thần Tiên**: The Nine-Level Hierarchy for Divine Beings.

⁴³ **Toà Tam Giáo**: The Three-Religion Tribunal.

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 who, having been incarnated on earth, are still serving among Caodaist believers. God is letting them gain experience for their future spiritual assignments. As for the Tam Trấn Oai Nghiê, ⁴⁴ - they represent God in their administration of the Cửu Trùng Đài. They are Buddhas. All souls will have to join the Cửu Trùng Đài and attain earthly positions if they wish to achieve the co-relative divine positions after death. Without the Cửu Trùng Đài you cannot enter the Cửu Trùng Thiên.

Bát Quái Đài

The Bát Quái Đài ⁴⁵ is where Genii, Saints, Immortals, Buddhas, disincarnated Caodaist dignitaries and believers are worshipped. This is in accordance with the principle “God and humanity unite.”

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

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

In conclusion, I would like to say: Firstly, The Hiệp Thiên Đài is the opening door to heaven. Here there are devoted helpers available for original souls to return to their previous divine positions. Here evolutionary souls can compete for higher divine positions - even a position so advanced that it is equal to the one that God Himself holds. Secondly, your position in The Cửu Trùng Đài is the divine position God grants you on earth. It is like a barometer - it shows you what your divine position will be after death – but in advance. Thirdly, 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 the secrets of heaven to you, so be aware if you want to escape the cycle of rebirth. Caodaism is a religion. Thanks to it we can persuade and save people. To do so, we have to be perfectly moral. We have to correctly administer the Caodaist community. Frankly, we are still not moral enough! His Holiness the Giáo Tông always criticizes us. He complains 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 completing my responsibilities – due, sadly, to my evident inabilities. Having tried hard, I am still like a firefly at night - not yet luminous enough to show the way for believers. Brothers and sisters! I think you and I have to try to be better if we want to keep ourselves worthy of God’s love. The higher the rank, the more moral we should be. That is something we should do to repay God for His love. We should not do it simply to achieve something like a divine status. We should try to happily accept what God grants us. We have to trust and worship God at all times.

⁴⁴ **Tam Trấn Oai Nghiê:** Three Heavenly Governors.

⁴⁵ **Bát Quái Đài,** (八卦臺 The Eight-sided Palace): The council of the great spirits which govern the eight states of the soul; it is also the eight-sided palace of God’s presence, or the eight trigrams palace, that is, the spiritual hierarchy of Caodaism.

I can foresee the punishment that is awaiting us. Therefore, why don't we wholeheartedly repent together and see whether we will be forgiven?