

**ĐẠI-ĐẠO TAM-KỲ PHỔ-ĐỘ**  
**CAODAISM**  
**TÒA-THÁNH TÂY-NINH**  
**TÂY NINH HOLY SEE**

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**CON ĐƯỜNG THIÊN-LIÊNG HẰNG SỐNG**  
**The DIVINE PATH To ETERNAL LIFE**

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**HỘ-PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC**

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**TÀI LIỆU SƯU TẦM – 2021**  
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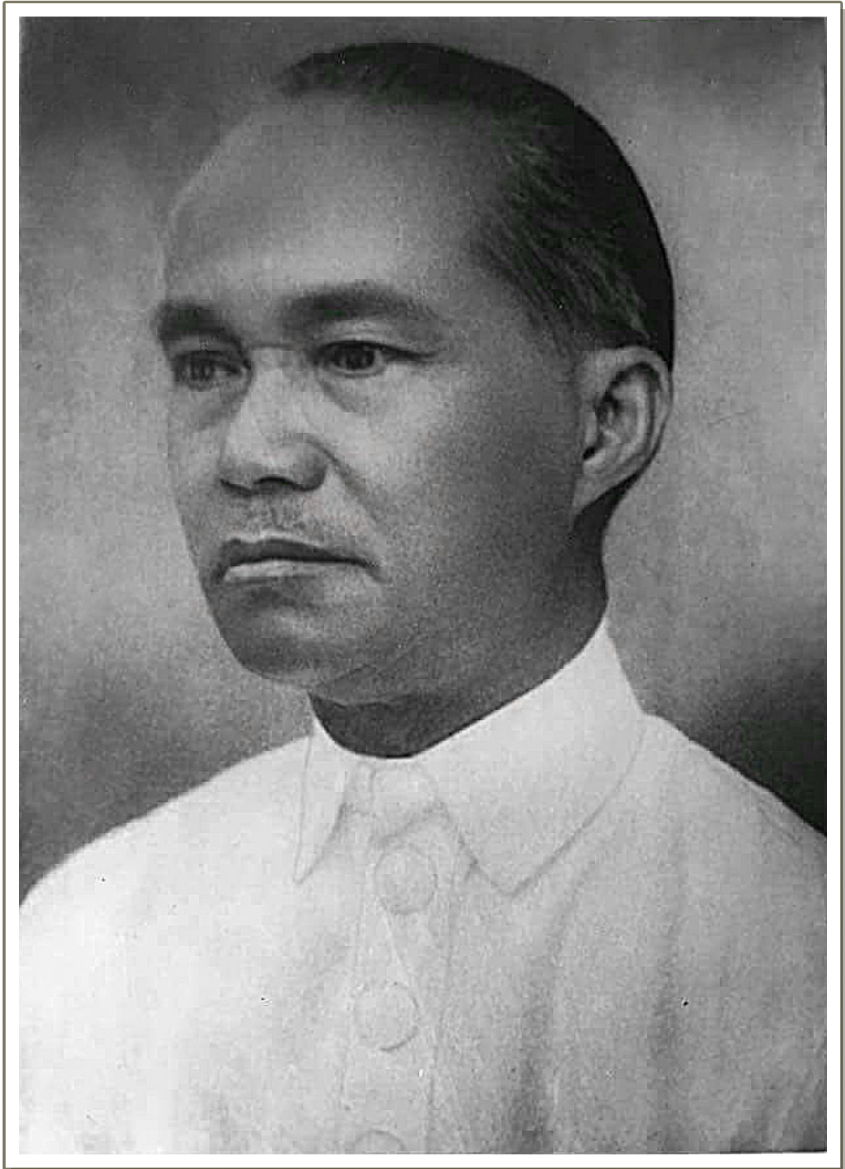
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# **The Divine Path to Eternal Life**

## **HỘ-PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC**

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**ĐỨC HỘ-PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC**  
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**Translators:**

- Christopher Hartney
- Đào Công Tâm
- Từ Chơn

## FOREWORD

**T**HIS SERIES OF THIRTY-FIVE SERMONS, DELIVERED BY HIS HOLINESS HỘ PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC, IS ENTITLED *CON Đường Thiêng Liêng Hằng Sống* (*The Divine Path to Eternal Life*). It is a path of reincarnation which explains the road to evolution for all living beings.

Throughout the thirty-five sermons, His Holiness Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc guides his audience to travel towards the divine realms and begin to understand the mysteries of the subtle soul.

Along the way he explains how the souls of the intellectuals who lack faith in the religions of the world can break free from the constraints of their thinking. It shows them how to seek and understand the profound nature of higher invisible worlds. This enables us all to better understand the divine law.

The sermons comprise an essential guidebook for all souls, especially those who feel it is time to become interested in life on the other side of our perceived reality. It is a vital text for those who want to reach heaven. In the following sermons, His Holiness takes us on a spiritual journey through life and death. This text will inevitably spark the interest of all students of truth and all seekers of the Đạo<sup>1</sup>.

### **Translators' Note:**

The following translation is a work in progress. We have encountered a range of difficulties in placing highly technical Vietnamese religious terms into appropriately descriptive

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<sup>1</sup> Tao (Chinese).

English terms. In certain cases we had to translate for sense rather than literal meaning. Through continued study of the text and readers' feedback we hope to continue improving these translations of one of Caodaism's most important texts.

### **Explanatory Introduction by Trần Văn Rạng**

*Con Đường Thiêng Liêng Hằng Sống* (*The Divine Path to Eternal Life*) is a holy scripture which is equally difficult to read and understand. The sermons in this book discuss stories derived from the realm of heaven. Stenographers and auditors stood by to listen to the sermons, but only a few of them were satori (spiritually awake) to the esoteric depths of the following verbal cultivation. There were other difficulties which can be divided into three categories: the spiritual level of cultivation, time, and terminology.

#### **The spiritual level of cultivation**

In the Cao Đài religion there is a school of five levels: Nhơn Đạo (The Way of Humanity), Thần Đạo (The Way of Geniism), Thánh Đạo (The Way of Saints), Tiên Đạo (The Way of Immortals) and Phật Đạo (The Way of Buddhas). The stenographers and the general audience of believers were only at the level of geniism (that is, on an earthly plane) which made it difficult for them to really hear and understand this higher process of cultivation. The dignitaries of the religion who were present and who already practised the Way of Cửu Phẩm Thần Tiên (those in the executive body of the religion) didn't yet understand the profound nature of the various terminologies of the higher realm.

The stenographers used their own words to record the ideas of our Master.<sup>2</sup> There are occasions when the writer

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<sup>2</sup> **Translators note.** Interviews with stenographers reveal that they were charged with recording the



couldn't see the principles of the speaker clearly because the philosophy being expounded went beyond their level of understanding. *Con Đường Thiên Liêng Hằng Sống* still hasn't been comprehensively checked by His Holiness Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc, therefore there is still some uncertainty about the text as we currently have it.

## Time

Let's consider the period over which the sermons were given. His Holiness Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc began preaching the cycle of sermons on the night of the 16th September, 1948 (13th Day of the 8th month, year of the Mouse) and continued through to the 27th April, 1949 (30th Day of the 3rd month, year of the Buffalo). This is a little more than seven months—less than an academic year—so how can we speak of cultivation?

## Terminology and repetition

All philosophies and theologies have their own terms to enable concepts to be well described. If the terms aren't understood completely, they can easily be misinterpreted or confused one with another.

His Holiness' preaching often discussed the invisible realm. One example is when he spoke about Tạo Hóa Thiên (the Heaven of Creation; the Seventh Heaven) which he linked to Diêu Trì Cung (the Jewel Lake Palace). Diêu Trì Cung is a heaven of Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ (the Buddha Mother); it is the Ninth Heaven.

The terms which are often repeated in this book include Ngọc Hư Cung, which belongs to the Hư Vô Heaven. This is the heavenly council of the eternal law. It controls and keeps the divine Law and the progress and movement of the

universe. Other terms include Bạch Ngọc Kinh (the White Jade Palace: the Court of God; the Council of God), Diêu Trì Cung, Bát Quái Đài (the Bagua Palace; the eight-sided Palace of God's; the Eight Trigram Palace). Nam Tào & Bắc Đẩu are at the head of Ngọc Hư Cung<sup>3</sup>. Ngọc Hư Cung and Linh Tiêu Điện (the Court of God; the Palace where the Đức Chí Tôn holds meetings with the Heavenly Council) are where the Đức Chí Tôn oversees the cosmos. According to earthly writings, Nam Tào & Bắc Đẩu are only caretakers of this palace. Their residence is the Ngọc Hư Cung but they exercise their dharma in the northern and southern hemispheres. Similarly, the Holy Mother's residence is Diêu Trì Cung, yet she exercises her dharma in Tạo Hoá Thiên. If we understand these things clearly, they are deeply fascinating and the book will present no difficulties for us.

In *The Divine Path to Eternal Life*, 30 of the 35 sermons deal specifically with the journey to the otherworld. They are divided into two parts: the earthly world and the realm of heaven.

There are only two sermons about the earthly world. They start from the time that the believers walked in the footsteps of the Hiệp Thiên Đài (the Temple of the Divine Alliance; the Heavenly-Union Palace)<sup>4</sup>, heading towards the Cửu Trùng Đài (the Nine-Sphere Palace).<sup>5</sup> They proceed towards the Cung

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<sup>3</sup> Nam Tào & Bắc Đẩu are the two Immortals who are in charge of registering the births and deaths of humans on Earth; Nam Tào is in charge of registering births and Bắc Đẩu is in charge of registering deaths.

<sup>4</sup> This is the legislative body of the religion which has the duty of communicating with the esoteric power to receive divine messages. It also preserves the religious laws and hears complaints from the discontented to symbolise equality in the religion.

<sup>5</sup> 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 (九重臺), the palace of nine divine planes, or the palace of nine degrees of evolution; the palace of nine degrees of the episcopal hierarchy.

Đạo (the Religious Palace)<sup>6</sup> and on to the Bát Quái Đài. Here, His Holiness describes the invisible world of Bát Quái Đài and the realms of the heavens (see sermon 4).

In the sermons about the realm of the heavens, His Holiness did not explain the heavenly realm according to the nine cycles of prayer of the Caodaist burial rituals. Instead he highlighted the vital points for the path of cultivation.

The starting point for the journey is Cung Thế Thiên Hành Hoá (the palace for those Divine Beings who missionise the Way at the command of Heaven) then over Bích Hải (the sea of suffering; the ocean of human pain) to the bridge between the realm of the earthly world and the realm of the heavens.

The Palace of the Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá is where people worship the three Lords of the earth.<sup>7</sup> (see sermon 8).

The Palace of Tạo Hoá Thiên is where His Holiness relates the invisible realm to that of Diêu Trì Cung and Ngọc Hư Cung.

The Palace of Phục Linh is where you resuscitate the former lives of your soul to examine them. It is only a branch of the Palace of Hồn Ngươn. If we re-read the Maitreya Sutra we will see the Phục Linh Buddha<sup>8</sup> resides in the Heaven of Thương Thiên Hồn Ngươn (the Ninth Heaven). The Buddha at the Seventh Heaven is not named, but takes the name of its position: for example, Thủ Luân Buddha, Chưởng Hậu Buddha and so on.

The Palace of Hồn Ngươn is the Ninth Heaven where

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<sup>6</sup> In the book, this palace is called the Cung Thánh (the holy palace).

<sup>7</sup> These are Ly Thái Bạch; Li Po; Li Tai Pei (Tai Bai Jin Xing; Thái Bạch Kim Tinh), Quan Âm; Kuan Yin (Guan Yin Ru Lai; Quan Âm Như Lai) and Kuan Kung; Guan Gong (Guan Sheng Di Jun; Quan Thánh Đế Quân).

<sup>8</sup> The Buddha who holds the Kim Cầu—the golden and mystical mitre which he uses to show each of our former lives so we see them resurrected in front of us. Every time he waves this staff we see another life; eventually we see every life we have lived.

there are Diêu Trì Cung, Ngọc Hư Cung, Linh Tiêu Điện, and Bạch Ngọc Kinh. Further along on the right side is Nirvana and Lôì Âm Tụ (the Pagoda of Thunder).

To avoid complications, when you want to advance on the divine path to eternal life, familiarise yourself with this divine path which leads to the heavens. Please read the poems which summarise the sermons in a 6-8 syllable verse. After this you can read the sermons, one at a time.

I hope that my co-believers can achieve peace in their hearts so they can enter the path of eternal life.

**Trần Văn Rạng**

(A Disciple of the White Cloud Lodge)

### **Additional introduction**

I was 13 when I first read the *Divine Path to Eternal Life*. I still remember it was a thin book of French typewriter paper which had been made crusty by time. Our family then settled in Pleiku, a nice but rather cold province. The 6-day jungle rains, together with a lack of entertainment, forced myself to become the best friend of my dad's book shelves. He always went to work from early morning to late at night and was often kept in his army camp. His book shelves were full of various kinds of books, such as religious, political, philosophical, military books, except novels because of his dislikes.

Having read all his books though I only partly understood them, I curiously skimmed through the *Divine Path to Eternal Life*. Hardly understanding it, I especially found it interesting. After several times, I jumped to a conclusion that I would studied hard enough so that I could “*revise*”, making it a more attractive book to read in the future. It turns out that is also

my destined responsibility.

I am 65 now and definitely realize how short my life is. I have witnessed my acquaintances and relatives around leave for another life in turn. Therefore, I decided to spend the rest of my life realizing my childhood dream.

At first, I check what I have already had. The original book, some pages of which were even reviewed and signed by His Holiness Hộ Pháp, has lost. Luckily, lots of Caodaist followers, both in Vietnam and overseas, have posted it on the internet. My father and his colleagues' nightmare that the book was seized and destroyed by a cruel dictator is not threatening anymore. Oh, thank the internet! Thank the civilized society! This reminds me a Caodaist conventional prophecy that says, *“One day, China will absolutely respects Caodaism and the US will be responsible for spreading its teachings the world over”*.

However, there are still some problems. I remember my dad's actions<sup>9</sup> while he was alive. He kept correcting a book. If asked, he said this book contained lots of errors because it was downloaded from the internet. Then he returned to Tây Ninh, looking for his old friends. In 1967 he had finished printing this book, offering it to the Sacerdotal Council and his friends. Now he borrowed it, making three copies, giving them to us<sup>10</sup>. Now I know how precious they are. All versions on the internet contain lots of errors compared to those books. For example, originally “*planet 69*” is mistakenly put as “*planet 68*”, “*after*” as “*before*”, “*happiness*” as “*children*”, “*3600*” as “*3000*”, etc. Especially, the second half of sermons 25 were mistakenly replaced by the one of sermon 26 and vice versa. In addition, the original version itself also contains several

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<sup>9</sup> Hiền Tài Nguyễn Văn Mới, cựu Tổng Ký Viên Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh.

<sup>10</sup> Từ Chơn, Từ Tâm, Từ Liêm.

problems. Some Caodaist adherents unanimously told me it is tough for them to comprehend its content. Some possible reasons may be a lot of ancient Chinese Vietnamese terms, classic references, Tây Ninh dialects, old metaphors, etc. The most important thing is bad punctuation and paragraphing. When seeing me help revise the English translation version, my brothers and sisters laughingly said, “*It is easier for the English to understand Caodaism than for the Vietnamese.*” The joke gives me more encouragement to revise the book. My plan is:

The improvement is based of my father’s original book.

The punctuation and paragraphing are corrected according to the English grammar rules.

Footnotes to the Chinese Vietnamese terms are added.

I hope average readers can easily comprehend the ideas in the book with those improvements. Proper comprehension is the base for everyone to examine Caodaism and can possibly get enlightened. Attainment of enlightenment, I think, is the utmost purpose of life on earth.

**Từ Chơn**

Sài gòn Sept/9/2017

## Sermon 1

**What is the Divine Path to Eternal Life? There are three methods of creating a divine position**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 16th September 1948; Lunar Calendar 13th Day of the 8th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT MY SERMON IS GOING TO BE RATHER LONG, SO PLEASE SIT AND TRY TO LISTEN.

Beginning tonight I want to speak to you about a very important topic. I need to address this over several nights to explain it comprehensively. Therefore, every four nights I will come here and talk about this subject. I am doing this to make an essential and precious gift for the children of Đức Chí Tôn (God, the Supreme Being)—a cherished secret for them to keep at hand. With this, one day you may find out how to attain nirvana.

Tonight's topic is Con Đường Thiêng Liêng Hằng Sống (the Divine Path to Eternal Life).

What is this Divine Path? If our understanding is based on the teachings of God, the Divine Path to Eternal Life is that path reserved for souls to travel after they have left their physical bodies. They make their way back towards the Ultimate Source by this path. These souls will return to their spiritual domain, rising higher or falling lower as their previous life's merit dictates. If we want to understand this path according to Buddhism, then the Divine Path to Eternal Life is known as the path of reincarnation.

This is a very difficult topic to discuss. It would need a

massive book for all the children of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) to completely understand the path. Such a tome would comprise several thousand pages!

Therefore, children of God, you must try to listen. You must come to the great divine temple to pray and make offerings and then come and listen to these words. Later on you won't regret that you came or complain that I didn't tell you about the revelations of Đạo Cao Đài (Cao Đài religion) in advance. The most profound and loftiest philosophies can only be revealed in Caodaism.

It is by the special grace of Đức Chí Tôn, that there are a few young men available who have tried to learn shorthand so that they can write down these words as they are being preached.

Remember! These words are not the words of Phạm Công Tắc, they are the words of the Hộ Pháp<sup>11</sup> (Protector of the Dharma). Hộ Pháp is speaking on behalf of God, so the children of Đức Chí Tôn must hear this message. That is why these words are very precious.

I am extremely fortunate to have been selected by Đức Chí Tôn as His Ngự Mã Quân (assistant).<sup>12</sup> On His behalf, I am working to form a religion—this Caodaist religion—the religion that will replace all previous religions. Today's religions are no longer adequate for human thought and

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<sup>11</sup> Hộ Pháp is the one who unveils the mystery of the invisible; the maintainer of the rules and laws of the Cao-Đài Religion (new religion). He pronounces judgments on the dignitaries and disciples, elevates the dignity of the fervent through their merit and brings sanctions against those who have committed faults. He is actively involved in assuring that the religious rules and laws which have become divine laws are carried out in detail, to keep the dignitaries and adepts free of the sufferings inflicted by the lords of karma. In this way, he watches over the positive progress of the disciples in the Way of God, and guides all evolved souls to achieve the divine phase of the great spirits. He holds control over the legislative power both exoterically and esoterically.

<sup>12</sup> Translators note: Ngự Mã Quân was one official who accompanied the Emperor.



consciousness – in other words their paths of progress have been blocked.

I still remember some time ago when Đức Chí Tôn selected me for the position of Hộ Pháp. He taught me how to be a medium and, more importantly, how to practice chấp bút (automatic writing). Đức Chí Tôn taught me to meditate using chấp bút, slowly revealing nhập tịnh (higher meditation; mystic meditation; internal alchemy; nei tan). Mystical meditation is not easy—a simple mistake or omission can ruin your whole life. To under-practise nhập tịnh can leave you nodding with sleep; to over-practise can leave you mentally disturbed. When you practise correctly you need the divine beings on hand to help open your huệ quang khiếu (celestial eye; sky door; crown chakra; pineal eye). When this happens, you can xuất hồn, i.e. your peri-spirit can exit or your spiritual body can leave your physical body. The Divine Path to Eternal Life is the path on which your spirit returns home to Đức Chí Tôn. Đức Chí Tôn Himself has opened my celestial eye, enabling me to meet with Him and learn many secret and essential things from heaven.

Today through this explanation of the divine path to eternal life, I want to guide every soul of the children of Đức Chí Tôn back to Him by the very form of teaching you are now listening to.

The path that takes you back to heaven is not easy to travel, and your return will not be instant. As we want to travel home to God, we must pass through many temples and many palaces. Strange things will confront us in every temple and we will face a different mystery in each palace. Yet we must struggle to understand them and pass beyond them.

There is no happiness equal to this return.

Even after a lifetime of practicing Caodaism, there is no guarantee that a soul will return. A soul can never return if it doesn't practise religion despite how many incarnations it experienced on earth. Brothers and sisters, you must try to remember this. What is cultivation? The Cao Dai religion has already explained cultivation to you. I have already spoken of it at length. You must uphold lập đức (doing charity work), do lập công (doing missionary work), and speak the words of lập ngôn (preaching Caodaism on the media).

Now I return to the topic. A little while ago I mentioned that, by the special grace of God, I was granted the favour of an audience with Him. Before this audience I met other divine beings in the realm of eternal life.

From tonight I am not really teaching you; I am only recounting what I saw, heard and learned when I met the divine beings in the spiritual realm. Telling you about this is also a way of allowing you children of Đức Chí Tôn to visualise the spiritual realm in advance. This will save your soul from confusion in the event of your return.

As I talk, you children of Đức Chí Tôn must listen and imagine we have a guide. Wherever we go, the guide will explain the scene to you, just like when a foreigner comes to Vietnam, they are given a guide to help explain the scenery.

When leaving their physical body, each soul on the planet must gather at this Caodaist Temple and go from here to other realms. Why must we enter this temple and not other temples? This temple is like a large examination centre. Just as the Government holds the baccalaureat every year, the location of our soul's elevation has already been decided. We

must come here if we want to be qualified or valued. Đức Chí Tôn has had this temple built for his children to lập công, lập đức, lập ngôn and prove worthy of their return.

To enter this Temple means entering Hiệp Thiên Đài and moving from there to Cung Đạo. To reach the Cung Đạo, you must make your way along the Cửu Trùng Đài. At each of the nine levels of the Cửu Trùng Đài, the divine beings will confront and test your soul. On each step, one of the Cửu Vị Nữ Phật (nine female Buddhas) will appear to offer mercy and guide the soul who begs for salvation. Children of God, if you are unsure, re-read the prayers from the Đệ Nhứt Cửu Prayer then read all the prayers until the Đệ Cửu Cửu Prayer and the Tiểu Tường Prayer to the Đại Tường Prayers.<sup>13</sup>

There are three methods of returning to Đức Chí Tôn and gaining a position in the spiritual hierarchy in the Cao Đài religion.

**The first method.** The souls inside physical bodies have to follow the ranking of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa (the Divine Beings of the Nine Heavens), that is to join the Cửu Trùng Đài. This method requires us to use our talents and abilities to contribute to the religion, and thus to humanity, as a means to attain enlightenment. This path leads from Đạo Hữu (normal believer) to Lễ Sanh (student priest), Giáo Hữu (priest) Giáo Sư (bishop) and so on. We must serve from tiểu thừa (novitiate) to trung thừa (intermediate) and then to đại thừa (superior) on this path. The categories include practising vegetarianism from six days a month to ten days a month and then full time.

One must cultivate firstly within oneself, then within the

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<sup>13</sup> The Đệ Nhứt Cửu prayer is chanted nine days after death; the Đệ Cửu Cửu prayer is the last prayer in a cycle of nine prayer days which take place once every nine days; the Đệ Cửu Cửu prayer is said 281 days after death and the Đại Tường prayers are said 581 days after death.

family and the country, and finally for all humanity. When we follow the ranking of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa our soul must have confidence in its own spiritual direction so we can lead others towards their salvation. This is what makes the Cao-Đài Religion different from others. We must save ourselves, our family and people outside our family; only then can we save all humanity. We must study to understand the doctrine. When we already understand it we must teach our family, but not just our family, we must teach all humanity. Lập đức is to understand the doctrine; lập công is to teach it to one's family and lập ngôn is to save all humanity. These three duties must be fulfilled to return to Đức Chí Tôn along the path of the Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa.

**The second method.** To gain a rank in the spiritual hierarchy called Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng (twelve Spiritual Levels), we must follow Hội Thánh Phước Thiện (Cao daist Charity Body). We must use virtue to rise to a position, besides practising a vegetarian diet and following the Cao daist laws and the teachings of Đức Chí Tôn the Father.

In order to lập đức one must start and serve from Minh Đức, Tân Dân, Thính Thiện, Hành Thiện, Giáo Thiện, Chí Thiện, Đạo Nhơn, Chơn Nhơn, Hiền Nhơn, Thánh Nhơn, Tiên Tử and Phật Tử<sup>14</sup>.

What is lập đức? It is using love to save humanity; as Đức Chí Tôn said, *'Love is the key that opens the door of Bạch Ngọc Kinh.'*

On this planet, souls incarnate through a life in turbulent waves of suffering, referred to by Buddha in the Four Noble Truths. To escape from suffering we must first endure suffering;

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<sup>14</sup> **Translators' note:** these are the twelve ranks within the charity body.

by enduring suffering we can triumph over suffering. Those who follow Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng show others how to endure suffering and triumph over it. We must endure suffering ourselves to show other people how to endure it. Nothing is better than the virtue of love when we want to endure suffering. The first of the twelve spiritual levels is Minh Đức (bright virtue).

Love enables us to endure suffering. Loving our parents means that we must suffer as we serve and protect them in their old age. Loving our children means that we must work hard to take care of them as they grow. Loving the disabled and the destitute means trying to find a way to help them; finding this way also means suffering.

Enduring suffering allows us to overcome it; but we must do this right to the end, not just for one day. For example, we must look after our parents throughout their old age, and our children until they grow up. These two things are easy compared with the task of helping the whole community. When we look after the whole community, suffering never stops. When you we finish taking care of one person, there are always others that we must deal with; this continues until the end of our life. By doing this, we can overcome suffering, and we will be able to return to Đức Chí Tôn by the way of the Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng.

**The third method** comprises Tu Chơn or Tịnh Luyện, which is the Caodaist style of meditation. After following the path of Cửu Phẩm Thần Tiên or the path of Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng and fulfilling lập đức, lập công and lập ngôn, or enduring and overcoming suffering, those who still feel able to progress in their spiritual quest can enter a meditation centre to practise mystical meditation. At the meditation

centre, adepts will learn the methods of luyện tinh hoá khí (lian jing hua qi; refining the essence and converting it into energy), luyện khí hoá thần (lian qi hua shen; purifying energy and converting it into spirit), luyện thần hườn hư (lian shen huan xu; refining the spirit and returning it to nothingness). This is the unity of tinh khí thần (the three treasures); that is, returning to the void.

Now we resume our discussion of the Divine Path to Eternal Life. When we pass through the Cửu Trùng Đài and enter the Cung Đạo, suddenly we look up. We no longer see Bát Quái Đài, but a vast sea, which is so great it is unimaginable. At this point we begin to walk the Divine Path to Eternal Life.

If we follow the path of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa or Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thiêng Liêng, we will wait until the end of our life before returning to Đức Chí Tôn the Father with both our peri-spirit and our soul. However, today we can travel back to the Đức Chí Tôn by chơn thần (the peri-spirit), as I have been permitted to take this shorter way by a special favour of God.

We look up and see a vast sea, but actually it is the sky of the universe. There in the distance, sometimes visible, sometimes not, we can see a magnificent, beautiful palace. The moment we see it we want to rush towards it. But we realise that we don't know how to move; we just feel that our Pháp Thân (dharmakaya; our astral body) is attracted to this palace by an incredible force. We aren't propelling ourselves, yet we come, moving as fast as an aeroplane.

When we arrive, we see innumerable beings, humans coming and going—too many to count. The crowd is silent, very ordered and secure. This palace is called Cung Thánh, and is the place where souls leave the spiritual realm to journey

back for reincarnation. It is also the place where souls are welcomed back after they have left their physical body.

It looks like an airport or a railway station; people are coming and going at an immeasurable rate. Leaving is sad, coming home is joyful; but the face of each soul, whether they are coming or going, carries the strain of a common worry. Those going down are worried, wondering if they can carry out the duties of the assignment given to them by God. Those coming home are also worried because they do not know if they have lost or kept their position in the hierarchy of the spiritual realm. They worry too much; there is so much worry, everybody is worried.

Next time, I will preach on the Cung Thánh and the Cung Thừa Thiên Hành Hóa.

**Sermon 2**

**The realm of Thế Thiên Hành Hóa**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 21 September 1948; Lunar Calendar 18th Day of the 8th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**HE LAST TIME WE SPOKE I SUGGESTED WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER VIGOROUSLY IN OUR PROGRESS upon this Path to Eternal Life. Previously on our journey we arrived at Cung Thánh (the Palace of Heavenly Arrival and Departure). We have understood what humans on earth are generally like. My friends, today I will take you to enter Cung Thừa Thiên Hành Hóa (the Palace of Divine Beings who missionise at the command of heaven). This is where the divine beings meticulously make plans for the future, from earth to all the other planets. They spend every moment considering the human spirit at every level of the universe, from country to country. They give the highest priority to planning and creating schedules that decide who will go and who will return, in order to offer salvation to the different worlds. This happens particularly in the Cung Thừa Thiên Hành Hóa. We realise that the divine beings never forget to guide our destinies.

Now that we are at the Cung Thừa Thiên Hành Hóa after walking a very quiet long way. Very few souls walk this way because for a very long time, right until now, becoming an Immortal or a Buddha has been extremely difficult. Humans have wondered how much religions can help themselves become Immortals or Buddhas since they were aware of their existence and how long must they practice religion to



become Immortals or Buddhas? We realise that religions have not helped people attain any spiritual positions at all. The Chinese and Japanese deification systems have been unable to help people; these systems leave them dissatisfied, continuing in their cycles of samsara (rebirth). Most people, who have returned to heaven, largely depend on their karmic results. It is no surprise that many people on earth hate religions.

I say that just for you to think about. For ourselves, it is essential that we keep traveling on the endless spiritual path without noticing what people rumor about because, you know, it is easier said than done.

Now we are going to reach a place different from the Cung Thánh. The path we take today will be very mysterious, peaceful and beautiful. As we approach, our body will feel extremely light, elevated and relaxed. While we walk, we see wonderful things on either side of us; they are so extraordinary that our memories of the inadequacies of the earthly world make us sad. But this scenery makes us feel ecstatically calm like nothing else can. When we think about the Immortals, we can see them. Friends, do you know why this is? We think our dreams are just dreams, that they are imaginary, but here they are true; we think and it is real! As we keep walking, we feel extreme joy and complete ecstasy.

We are moving towards the place where we can create a realm. Here our wants are mystically requited in unlimited qualities. We see things we can't achieve yet, and we can see the faces of the divine beings. They care for us and are waiting to welcome us. Their faces are full of wisdom, gentleness and spiritual virtue; they have none of the characteristics of the earthly realms. The beauty of their perfection remains mysterious and unlimited. Whatever you think beauty is, so

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it is. Yet they maintain their external appearance for us to recognize themselves easily; we see that the pictures of Bát Tiên (the eight Chinese Immortals<sup>15</sup>) barely change over time so they can be easily recognised. Showing their conventional appearances, those divine beings, in their heart, really want us to find out the way to attain enlightenment.

Now we see a realm as big as the universe which contains everything from the beginning of time. Not only do the beings from earth befriend us, but also beings from other earths. They have returned from other earthly planets where they obtained sublime positions. As I have said, on this, the 68th planet, there is only chaos, not happiness.

When those divine beings are talking here they can communicate with other realms and while they are talking, nimbuses fly around the sky over their heads. The scene looks so mysterious and limitless we can't describe it. As the divine beings who rule the universe on behalf of God, they can do whatever they want. Their authority is like that of the imperial officers in the past; that is, they can handle an urgent crisis first and report to the Emperor later.

There are numerous good divine beings here. Therefore you can find one if you want to look for the ones, who have good spirit and energy. At Cung Thế Thiên Hành Hóa, where there are all kinds of scenes, we see a world containing everything; no skill is lacking here. If those of us on this planet want their help, they will protect us and provide us with what we need.

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<sup>15</sup> The eight immortals are Lý Thiết Quả (Li Tie Guai), Hồn Chung Li (Han Zhong Li), Lữ Đồng Tân (Lü Dong Bin), Tào Quốc Cựu (Cao Guo Jiu), Hàn Tương Tử (Han Xiang Zi), Hà Tiên Cô (He Xian Gu), Trương Quả Lão (Zhang Guo Lao) and Lâm Thế Hoà (Lan Cai He).

## Sermon 3

**The form of the Bát Quái Đài; the Sea of Suffering**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 10 October 1948;  
Lunar Calendar 8th Day of the 9th Month, year of the  
Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE. WE HAVE ALREADY VISITED THE Cung Thế Thiên Hành Hóa; today we will talk more about it.

We continue to see extraordinary scenery, and tonight's talk will be directed principally at the heavenly appointed hierarchy—those who make up the core of the Cửu Trùng Đài of the Caođaist Sacerdotal Council.

As we walk down the endless path we are unable to tell how long we have been travelling. It seems extraordinary but as we continue, it is like flying in a plane; we don't know how, but we are. The journey is wonderful and mysterious. We are sitting on a mysterious vehicle of dharma, actually the sacred vehicle of Đức Chí Tôn, which is taking us towards a clear, brilliantly illuminated palace. This palace, which has eight sides, is called Bát Quái Đài. It is magnificent, but indescribable, because it is endlessly changing and reshaping itself. Looking out of its eight doors we can see everything—Vạn Linh and Vật Loại (All living beings and materials). All forms of beings are there, with auras dancing around each of them. Eight bridges lead into the eight sides of Bát Quái Đài. Strangely, the bridges aren't made of wood but of eight arched rays of light. Underneath the bridge we see something like a vast blue ocean called the Bích Hải<sup>16</sup>—its waves moving with

<sup>16</sup> Turquoise Sea, also Khổ Hải (Sea of Suffering)

the tides. Suddenly we realise that there are beings coming and going along the eight sides, and when we arrive at one side, we see that most are humans.

The bridges are so mysterious that only those who are able to step on it realise they are indeed entering Bát Quái Đài. When we step upon the bridge, it is moving, and makes us feel weak and unable to walk; our initial urge is to go back. Although we feel weak from our very first step on the bridge, everyone keeps walking.

If we don't have the right spiritual credentials or have generated bad karma during our time on earth, we will fall through the bridge at the halfway point, and descend into Bích Hải. As we fall, we immediately recall how we were imbued with grace as we walked along the bridge. As we fall our bodies become black—strange and ugly like the primordial forms of humanity. It is pitiful! We see many people falling; even those who lived and practised Caodaism with us! We are so lucky to sit in our high position. Therefore, when we see our Caodaist friends falling into Bích Hải, we can't help crying for them no matter how strong we are.

This is a fact which can never be wrong: nothing can escape the boundless law of dharma. Dignitaries! Look at each situation on earth as your lesson. We must follow Caodaist law and cultivate our hearts to become more perfect and a proper part of the holy body of the Đức Chí Tôn (the Supreme Being, God). Don't think that any earthly deed can be hidden from his omniscient power.

We need to be discerning and intelligent to distinguish the good and bad merits that decide our divine destiny. Tell me, what can be hidden from the divine law of Đức Chí Tôn ?

I have the affinity to see this situation, so I realize that, on earth we can't judge one person's deeds as good or another as bad; we can't know if someone will achieve a divine position, or someone else won't. Many of the things we see in this world are totally at odds with the heavenly law; we can't predict what might happen.

Here I see a friend who receives a special blessing from the Đức Chí Tôn. He has a close relative holding an important position as a divine being in the invisible realm—Diêu Trì Cung Thất Nữ Vương (the Seventh Female Buddha). This definitely is Vương Quan Kỳ, uncle of this Buddha, whose name on earth is Vương Thị Lễ. He helped found Caodaism but didn't really know what it was. What he has done does not seem to follow the right path of Đức Chí Tôn. From our observations of Vương Quan Kỳ, we might say he is following a corrupted form of Caodaism.

Strangely enough, while I was seeing many friends crying out and falling into the Bích Hải, Vương Quan Kỳ, who was carrying the ceremonial dress of a Giáo Sư (equivalent to a Bishop) on his shoulder, trailing his bishop's hat in his hand and wearing shorts, was strolling in a carefree way and laughing to himself, yet he was walking with ease over the bridge and into Bát Quái Đài.

Friends, although some people's deeds appear to be contrary to the teachings of Đức Chí Tôn, we know that if they have placed their full belief in Đức Chí Tôn we can't predict what will happen to them. Vương Quan Kỳ had a divine ceremonial dress but he didn't even wear it. He only carried it in his hand, but when he entered the Bát Quái Đài, no power could stop him. We need to keep this lesson in our hearts, and refrain from being judgemental. If you have a duty

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to teach and lead the members of the holy body of God<sup>17</sup>, try to find a polite way to teach them. You have no right to be judgemental while doing this. Remember that you are only members of the holy body of God. Don't be filled with vanity. Here at the door which leads to the divine realm, there are lots of substantial souls who are returning to God. If we Caodaist dignitaries can help more souls return to heaven, we then can be proud of that because that proves we have successfully fulfilled our religious duty.

It is our duty to teach others Caodaism, not our authority. As a result, do not take too much pride in our religious work. There is no reason to be proud of the duty we perform, as we don't do it in our own power. It is truer to say that at most we are a divine machine of Đức Chí Tôn the Father. Whether this machine operates fruitfully or not depends on God's direction, not our talent.

We have the right to be teachers or fathers of the children of God, not the right to assume the role of disciplinarian or to ask the children of Đức Chí Tôn to be our servants. Although we may have made a great contribution and attained lofty positions, we should not look down on the souls who have been reincarnated back down on earth. My friends, if we can't be impartial there is no escape from our sins. This is how we must conquer disorder.

It is distressing that many people know they cannot cross the bridge when arriving at it. They return to earth weeping because they have to reincarnate, that is, they become human again to repay their bad karma.

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<sup>17</sup> The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

## Sermon 4

## The distance between the sea of suffering and the Bát Quái Đài and the Ô Trì pond

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 14th October 1948; Lunar Calendar 12th Day of the 9th Month, Year of the Mouse.*

**I** WILL NOW CONTINUE TO PREACH ABOUT THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE. I THINK YOU ALL STILL REMEMBER THAT last time we spoke about our arrival at Bát Quái Đài. I only preached about how we cross Khổ Hải (the Sea of Suffering) to the Bát Quái Đài.

Today, I will continue to discuss how we can step into Bát Quái Đài by a different way from that which others have used to arrive. Those people are separated from Khổ Hải and Bát Quái Đài by a bridge. The bridge doesn't let them cross, so they must return. Their distress is indescribable. Seeing this happening right in front of us, we can't stop crying, feeling enormously sorry for them.

Now we must search and find out what Bát Quái Đài is.

Is it Toà Tam Giáo (the Tribunal of the Three Religions) of Đức Chí Tôn, as the divine messages have said? Let us watch the situation. If we want to arrive at Bát Quái Đài, we must cross Ao Ô Trì (the Contaminated Pond). Then we can see Bát Quái Đài emerge clearly in front of us, looking like a column with eight doors. This column-palace of eight doors is guarded by a serpent with seven heads; these seven heads stand on duty at seven of the eight doors, preventing any soul from entering Bát Quái Đài. But one door is left unguarded; this is the Buddha door. The other seven doors are kept by

the devil and nothing passes in or out. No power can pass. If you look down, you can see a vast blue ocean. The waters are very choppy; every wave is marked by the term khổ (suffering). As we travel on our cloud, halos appear. These are very tough and are inscribed with the terms sanh (birth), lão (age), bệnh (sickness) and tử (death). Each wave has its own term of khổ. Just as we feel suffering in our life, after seeing these waves we feel a severe bodily pain. There is so much suffering; we see suffering on every wave. The suffering is just as great as the vast oceans.

If Đức Chí Tôn allows us to enter that Palace, we know that this is Toà Tam Giáo Ngọc Hư Cung. With Đức Chí Tôn's permission, we can enter this palace without having to walk over the bridge like the others; we can go by a different path. Just go the way I lead us today. Walking on the eternal path is different from anything else. We automatically hurry along the holy path as we want to arrive.

While we are outside, we remember that we saw a vast area illuminated by the aura of the divine palace with eight doors. But when we enter, the palace disappears and there is only the universe swirling around us. The palace is spinning around and around, but we know this is Toà Tam Giáo. We don't see the contents or the form of the palace inside; when we arrive auras arise like the smoke of an intense flame.

The flame is not real but is the aura of the divine. As we watch, it slowly starts to disappear. Next the scale of justice appears in front of our eyes, then disappears just as slowly. Now we are the audience seeing our previous lives. The whole of our previous lives appears before us; no detail is hidden. Is it not surprising that in the Buddhist sutras this place is called Minh Cảnh Đài (the palace of perfect vision; a mirrored bar



of one's conscience). But the palace is not simply a mirror. In front of us, we can see everything we have done. It is like watching a film.

Whatever we have done in our previous life is displayed in front of us; the scale is adjusted depending on what we have and haven't achieved. Our bad karma and good karma both appear and then a decision is made impartially; a decision that can't be wrong. Can you tell that this is the sacred operation of the divine court? The evidence is there in front of you, the scale of the three religions can never be wrong. The divine law will not omit any detail of what we have done in our lifetime, both physically and spiritually. If you really want to understand how the sacred law works, when you enter the palace you will.

We can't see which way the beings around us go, but inside they have the same form as we have and we can't distinguish them. The sacred power of the palace makes the scene overwhelmingly beautiful with the aura of the divine radiating all about. When we stood on the bridge we saw everyone mixed up together; millions of people passed over. It is wonderful to see male become female, female become male and then all become formless.

And now two shooting flames appear in the palace. Any males who have disobeyed the law of love and not loved themselves or others must become female. The females who fulfilled a lifetime of cultivation and practised the way of love become male. We notice one more thing; we don't know when the other beings leave the palace. When they go out we don't know which door they have left by. We only know the door by which we ourselves leave; we can't know the way of others. Only they know what spiritual rank they attain. Whether

they become an Immortal or a Buddha is decided here. As they leave, if the males have accrued bad karma they become female, and must be reincarnated.

Although they must reincarnate according to the divine law, they still have the right to remain. No power can force them to reincarnate immediately; they can remain in the palace for 1,200, 2,400 or up to 3,600 years to enjoy the heavenly life at will. We will leave Nirvana and reincarnate when we know we can teach and practise a religion. When we decide to go, it is our decision, not Ngọc Hư Cung's. We have the right to make our own decisions while we are in the spiritual realm, but after we gain a new physical form on earth we no longer have this right. Many spirits descend for their whole life, but they are unable to make any progress towards the Đạo and have to reincarnate again.

According to the history of religions, other faiths have focused on finding theories for humans but these are inconsistent with the divine truth. They make theories that distinguish male and female. For example, there is a Confucian saying, '*We must follow the rule that male and female should not come too close together*'. Religions create unjust laws in which the female must always suffer and have lower status than the male.

We should be absolutely careful not to badly treat our wives or we will be punished when returning to Bát Quái Đài.

If a wife fulfils her duty to her husband, she will be transformed into a man and become his close friend. If we make mistakes with our wives, one day they will complain, '*When I went down to the earth to live with you in the conditions of suffering, you didn't comfort me, you disregarded me.*' You

won't be able to answer and must accept the blame.

That is why Buddhism gives women the same rights as men. I am sure that when we see women on earth who know how to remain fearful and respectful of the law, it is as though they are male. If we mistreated or destroyed each other, or didn't lead our lives together, on arriving at the Bát Quái Đài our partner will become male. Looking at those who are now our best friends, who endured suffering their whole lives; we might think that we will also suffer because, in previous lives, we did not help them or even undervalued them then.

When we arrive at Bát Quái Đài we see there is no male or female. Heaven clearly points out that innumerable beings who were once male reincarnate as female on earth. Many high spirits arrive at Ngươn Tứ Chuyển (the fourth transition). They go down to transform the earthly realm, in other words, they incarnate as female to give birth to new races that will transform the earthly world. In fact, heaven does not distinguish male or female. Đức Chí Tôn says that males shouldn't build their power upon that of the female. Male or female, all are children of Đức Chí Tôn. There is nothing strange about this.

**Sermon 5**

**The Paradise of Extreme Joy and the  
image of the Divine Mother**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 21st October  
1948; Lunar Calendar 19th Day of the 9th month, year of the  
Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT WE WILL TOGETHER MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS ON THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE. MY FRIENDS, previously I accompanied you to Bát Quái Đài along with evil souls (quỷ vị; demons) and original souls. We met many friends who love us and are very dear to us.

Having left Bát Quái Đài, our bodies are no longer dirty. We have discarded the seven elements that form our physical body by going through it. I have explained that on the Sacred Path past Bát Quái Đài, there is no difference between male and female. Our physical forms were destroyed by the mystery there and we will become a divine aura. I assure you that as we look back, we realise that our bodies are like the air. We don't even have remnants of clothing as we pass into the aura of the divine; this covers us.

When we exit Bát Quái Đài we feel indescribable joy. Is this where we achieve our holy body? When we have our holy form we look like an immortal, as the Buddhists say.

Everyone in Bát Quái Đài is our friend and soon these souls will be our relatives. Brothers and sisters, in time we will experience three special joys—a special happiness which we can never experience in the earthly realm. Now there is something that forces us to hurry further on the Holy Path. As we travel, we realise we have not seen anyone wicked in

Bát Quái Đài. Whether we know them or not, everyone does not treat us and our relatives with indifference.

The biggest surprise is, along this path, the beings, who may have been indifferent to each other on earth, now welcome everyone with warmth. The beings, who have already walked through Bát Quái Đài, are even more gregarious. They welcome us with tears in their eyes, as though they were our family. Our reception is so blissful and so gracious that it is beyond anything experienced on earth by even the greatest monarch. Therefore, we understand that the spiritual realm of eternal life is a place to welcome not only the divine beings but also ourselves. If we know how to practise a religion and liberate ourselves from the karmic cycle, we can attain such an equal warm welcome.

Do not think that the divine beings are jealous of us. We will carry the same amount of honour as they do, sharing it with them. When we pass beyond the holy door, there is no jealousy; no-one bears us a grudge. This is the realm where we enjoy our happiness together. We see that even animals have great affection for us. It is impossible to describe this love and high regard; birds, animals and plants all share a special affinity with us. I can surely say that no handsome man or beautiful woman on earth can compare with the spirits in this great, sacred realm where everyone is exactly more beautiful. There is no need for make-up and fine clothing. Whatever you want—anything that comes into your mind—is there. Any beautiful things you want are given to you. Especially you girls—whatever you want is yours. A lifetime in this earthly realm is nothing but illusion. It is wonderful that the poor in this world can attain Buddhahood (immortality) and have unbounded happiness.

As we proceed, we see blue sky opening around us and find ourselves moving towards Vân Động (a cloudy cave); a great tunnel of cloud which rises up and towers over us. It is indescribable, unlimited and wondrous and moves as though it has great affection for us.

In the distance we can see cây phướn (a spiritual banner) flapping in the wind. It radiates with the divine aura so the colour of the banner brightens as it flies. We realise that this banner is very familiar; our affection for it is like seeing an old friend.

I want to make this comparison. Some of you may have lived in Tây Ninh, but left the country for a long time. On the way home as you passed Trảng Bàng<sup>18</sup> you turned to see Núi Bà Đen (Black Lady Mountain). Your heart was flooded with memories as you recognised something very familiar. Similarly, when we see this banner our affection for it overwhelms us and we are filled with love. We want to run faster so we can arrive as quickly as possible (just like in Tây Ninh) to see the magnificent palace that is about to appear.

This palace changes in innumerable ways. If a professional architect were to think about how it might change, they would be extremely joyful and confused; no drawing can capture it. As we move into the palace we see that there is no dirt or sand at our feet, but we are stepping on the divine aura.

Inside we see numerous souls; those whom we have met previously—perhaps lifetimes ago.

Needless to say, the meeting is greatly warm. We will meet our closest friends with no shyness between males and females. We will see that there is no longer any hesitation; our

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<sup>18</sup> A district outside Tây Ninh

deep love will be reborn. Even the love between husbands and wives or brothers and sisters by birth can't compare with such a scene. In fact, that love is different from the one in our material world.

Everyone instantly realises the happiness and joy it contains, which we can never experience on earth.

Interestingly, the situation is like when we are warmly received with deep emotions after living abroad for a long time. Everyone is cheerful and welcoming. In this realm we can immediately have whatever we want. If we imagine seeing an old friend, he/she appear immediately!

Anyway, remember my advice to treat your wife (spouse) kindly or you will have regrets when returning to this realm. The couples, who have a happy marriage on earth and who are able to return to heaven, will love each other more deeply here. They cry for extreme happiness because on earth their marriage may last some 50 years, but here it lasts forever. I can't see any realm that is better than this. It is what the Buddha called Cúc Lạc Thế Giới (the Paradise of Extreme Joy).

As we pass inside we see a throne. Then we approach this honourable seat, look up and see a venerable being, who can transform into someone according to your thought. If we imagine a female immortal, then there is a female immortal before us; if we want to see her as old, she is old, but if we want to see her as young she is young. This is very mysterious. However, I can assure you one thing: you will see your own mother! If a grandfather looks up, he will see his mother; if a grandchild looks up he also will see his mother. On earth, mothers often scold, but when we return to this realm our Heavenly Mother is filled with love. This mother doesn't behave

like mothers on earth. When we see her, all our past love returns. It is indescribable; even those who are hard-hearted will become emotional and burst into tears when they see the noble love embodied in this great mother. She is called Buddha Mother by Caodaist followers.

I am sure many people who believe in Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) and understand the divine doctrine do not realise this. Even Đức Phật Di Lạc (the Maitreya Buddha) who holds a high and honourable position as the head of many heavens is still a child of the Buddha Mother though She only governs Tạo Hóa Heaven (the Heaven of Creation). This is difficult to explain. If you want to know about the love of the mother for her child, look at the statue of the Buddha Mother. Can you see how Maitreya Buddha kneels behind Her in deep respect? I don't need to describe the relationship of the Buddha Mother and Maitreya Buddha; all of you can see how self-evident the power of mother and child can be.

Despite how high your position is, you must still place filial piety first. The excellence of motherhood will always endure.



## Sermon 6

## The power of the Divine Mother who looks to us like our own mother

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 28th October 1948; Lunar Calendar 26th Day of the 9th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Before I continue, I would like to clarify my original purpose when I invite you to accompany me along this path.

Friends, I want to say to you that one thing really worries me. Even before we founded Caodaism (the Cao Đài Religion), the religion was destined to save the souls of the holy body of the Đức Chí Tôn (i.e. Caodaist Sacerdotal Council), especially the elder brothers and sisters. I have many concerns, so I want to explain particularly to the elder brothers and sisters how to progress along the Path to Eternal Life. They should know and understand it clearly. That way, they are prepared enough to take it after their death.

Last time we stopped at Cung Tạo Hoá Thiên (the Palace of Creation Heaven) of Phật Mẫu (the Buddha Mother or Mother Goddess), which is Diêu Trì Cung<sup>19</sup>. I briefly said about the unlimited mystery of Phật Mẫu.

When we enter her palace to have an audience with Her, we look at Her face and see the face of our mother who gave birth to us in our last earthly life. I can see my mother, and I am sure you can all see your mother. As we imagine it, we

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<sup>19</sup> The Gem Pond Palace, where the Buddha Mother resides.

don't know whether the divine eye is reflecting the face of our mother, or if the mysterious power of the Buddha Mother is allowing us to see Her in this way.

Our earthly mother is subordinate to the Buddha Mother. You women must pay attention and listen to this: as the direct personnel of the Buddha Mother, you carried a physical body in your womb before you gave birth. It rested there, waiting for life. The Buddha Mother has placed the gift of creation in your hands.

It is unnecessary to say how honoured a mother is when her child becomes a perfectly moral human and knows how to advance on the Path to Eternal Life. Especially, when her child returns to Cung Diêu Trì and look up to see her, no other honour can compare to this. Therefore, we must maintain filial piety! On the day we look and see the image of Đức Phật Mẫu, the gentle mother of benevolence, we receive a reward of great happiness. On the other hand, if we lack filial piety, the image of Đức Phật Mẫu will have a very serious and indifferent face. Then our suffering will be unbearable.

When we enter this realm, whatever we want is instantly ours. This, of course, does not belong to the material world, but belongs to the spiritual one, which the Buddha called feeling (*vedanā*), volitions (*saṅkhāra*), perceptions (*saṃjñā*), and consciousness (*viññāna*) in the Heart Sutra. Even if we failed to accomplish something in our thousands of previous lives, when we have the correct level of merit to return to Đức Phật Mẫu, whatever we need will appear and satisfy our spirit. Like the happiness of the earthly world, throughout their lifetime, humans search for it in vain. However, if we really want to find that precious thing, we can see it in front of our eyes.

Furthermore, only those who arrive at Diêu Trì Cung can know this. Those of you who are curious may have heard that the Ngạn Uyển garden is in Diêu Trì Cung. What is this? Ancient sutras have said, *‘For each life that begins a flower blossoms in this garden; when the flower fades it marks the end of a life’*. In the earthly realm we call this death, but it isn’t; humans never die. Death is like changing our shirt; we enter the bathroom, and after having a bath we put on another shirt. Death and life are like changing shirts.

In front of Ngạn Uyển garden, we can see a very bright halo, holding the image of a very beautiful garden composed of myriad colours. The garden in this particular spiritual realm isn’t like a garden on earth. It contains numerous heavenly flowers which live a million times through the mysterious power of their transformation; if they were in front of us we could watch them changing colour brightly and continuously. Whenever a human evolves spiritually on earth, advancing on their spiritual path, the Ngạn Uyển garden changes form and increases in beauty. The sutras also say, *‘From this garden, you can go to Ngọc Hư Cung<sup>20</sup> or Cực Lạc Thế Giới<sup>21</sup> by thinking about them and those places will immediately appear in front of us’*. However, I am so curious that I want to go forward to see everything in heaven, so I just go ahead instead.

When we look back at the earthly world it seems like a river or a great ocean. On the far bank of this great river you see a crowd of people. There are millions and millions, so many that we can’t count them. People are crowded along the bank as far as we can see. Far away on the other side

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<sup>20</sup> Where Đức Chí Tôn and other divine beings reside.

<sup>21</sup> Nirvana, Niết Bàn. According to Caoism, it used to be reignied by Đức Phật A Di Đà, but now by Đức Phật Di Lạc.

we can see people crying because of the suffering they have to bear. You may curiously wonder why there are so many people. On both sides of the river there are women and men. They are looking towards the heavenly side. Being sad and worried, they are waiting for the day they will reincarnate because they want to continue living. Those on the heavenly side look across to this side and see that everyone is crying; it is impossible to describe how sad they are. Friends, whether you are male or female you must pay attention to this secret because it is a significant fact throughout your life. On our side of the river (i.e. the heavenly side), people have a special radiance and are remarkably beautiful, but on the other side beings are dried out and full of suffering. They long for the ineffable; their bodies are emaciated and their faces sad.

Let's ask why those on this side of the river are crying as they look across, while those on the other side look over and appear full of suffering. It's because of the natural law of love. They were once in love, but could not marry each other. The disappointment was so big that they committed suicide. Anyone, man or woman, who killed themselves, have to come down to Uổng Tử Thành (the City for Suicides) and then reincarnate. They have to do so because they did not finish their life. It doesn't matter how old they were, they still have to come back to life through reincarnation. They live until the age of courting, then they die without becoming man and wife. After this, those who have the heart of true love will be saved by the Mother Buddha, who will ask Đức Chí Tôn to take them into the divine realm. Those who don't know true love, or live by false love, must reincarnate. Unfortunately, they may cause bad karma while living on earth and that may give them five, ten, or a thousand more times of reincarnation. Only

when they follow the holy path, that is to practice a religion, can they return to the path to eternal life.

Anyway, as we look across to the other side, we recognise their deep suffering. They hope their wishes can be fulfilled, but it is impossible; they must accept this. Night and day they dream, wondering how they can cross that great river. I believe it is the Ngân Hà river (the galaxy of the Milky Way). As we pass, we look down the river, at this side and the middle. Looking back, we can see Bát Quái Đài in the middle of the universe. On the river eight great auras radiate from the eight doors of the Palace. As we continue to look at these eight auras, we see the progression of all beings.

There is a boat on the other side of the river. It is the boat of Quan Âm Bồ Tát (Quan Yin Buddha), who offers salvation following the orders of Maitreya Buddha. Her boat moves constantly back and forwards. That is why one side looks towards the other, dreaming and waiting for the possibility of salvation.

I think this is an extremely valuable lesson. Those who know that unlimited heavenly power will reflect on their life and see not only their whole present situation but also the reason why they had a life full of pain and suffering. Have there been anyone who knows how to search for their true origin?

How sad! Few people realize that their life is only full of suffering!

**Sermon 7**

**The Ngân Hà river and the Bát Nhã  
(Prajna) boat of Guan Yin**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 31st October 1948;  
Lunar Calendar 29th Day of the 9th month, year of the  
Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT WE WILL AGAIN CONTINUE OUR PROGRESSION  
ALONG THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Last time we went to Cung Diêu Trì. We together moved to the front of the Cung Diêu Trì so we could look back and see the earthly world from which we had come. Here are what we passed: we looked closely at Bát Quái Đài with the Thất Đầu Xà (the Snake of seven heads) under the foundations. The great ocean of suffering, our earthly realm, lies below the body of Thất Đầu Xà. On the other side of this ocean is the river of the Milky Way. I told you, from the great ocean of suffering to the realm of eternal life, we must cross the river of the Milky Way. On the river there is the Thuyền Bát Nhã (the Prajna Boat toward Nirvana) sailed by the Bodhisattva Quán Âm following the command of Maitreya Buddha. This boat paddles up and down the Milky Way and across the Great Ocean of Suffering to save human souls.

One thing grabs our attention. We look back and see the eight doors of the Bát Quái Đài radiant with the eight auras from the Palace, turning as they emanate eight kinds of souls. These are the souls of vegetables, animals, humans, geniis, saints, immortals and Buddhas. We see these souls spreading throughout the universe. Do they have anything special? The beings, especially those which are immobile, are quite calm

as they move in their aura; they appear to be floating and are at ease. For a third of the way out the souls still seem to be in order, but further they are out of order. Isn't it what the Taoism calls Kim Bàn (the Golden Basin of the Buddha Mother), where peri-spirits first appear?

After that, we notice an aura radiating on top of the souls, in which there is a spark representing the true nature of each soul's life—the eventual possibility in all of us to be a Buddha. Further examining, we know there are three treasures put inside us by Đức Chí Tôn: Tinh (matter), Khí (essence) and Thần (spirit). Actually, they can be understood as animal, human and Buddha. When we have the opportunity, I will explain this in more detail so you can understand the foundation of human beings—where they are from, why they have come here and where they go after they die.

Isn't this the realm where we can see and understand what the Buddha explained in the Heart Sutra: form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), volitions (saṅkhāra), perceptions (saṃjñā), and consciousness (vijñāna)? I am convinced that whoever wants to practise a religion with all their heart will definitely comprehend this. If you join and practise Caodaism halfheartedly or without any belief at all, you cannot see the invisible path, which is designed to save all living beings in the universe.

Now we understand that Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) founded Caodaism for us to discern the Bí Pháp Chơn Truyền (the True Esoteric Practice) so that we can decide whether we follow Him or our animal nature. Remember that our physical body is undeniably an animal. Observing the sacred and mysterious parts of divine creation, we can't

say how long it takes a soul to evolve from the Tiểu Hồn<sup>22</sup> through to the Đại Hồn<sup>23</sup> and on to the level of geniis, saints, immortals and Buddhas. We just can calculate that when earth was created (at least seven hundred million years ago), the Tiểu Hồn came to form inanimate materials, birds and animals. Then they evolved into humans, in other words, their souls developed from giác hồn (the nascent state of the soul) to linh hồn (a complete state of the soul). Consequently, the development of the soul takes at least a hundred million years. Our physical body, which is only an animal for our soul to ride, lives and dies on this planet. When it acquires the nhứt điểm linh tâm<sup>24</sup>, the Đại Hồn enters our astral body. Because of its animal nature, our physical body has to protect its own life, constantly fighting with others for food and clothes and facing other pressures of creation like fire, water, wind, rain, heat and wild animals.

Like wild animals, humankind has to fight countless battles to preserve their own lives. Despite innumerable fights, to keep their dignity, they have to prevent their animal nature from exercising its cruelty. Think of our nature as being in the middle—above us is Đức Chí Tôn, and below us is the animal. Ask yourself whether you follow Đức Chí Tôn, or the animal within you? There is no reason to follow the animal, giving up the wisdom of our soul.

Nowadays, thanks to our present brains, we can partly comprehend the Creator's mysteries. As we advance, one day we will all receive great intelligence and attain these mysteries. Unfortunately, some people's minds are so materialistic that

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<sup>22</sup> Low-level souls of materials, plants and animals.

<sup>23</sup> High-level souls of humans and above.

<sup>24</sup> The intelligence granted by God.



they become vô đạo (non-believers). They betray their souls and oppose their Creator or Đức Chí Tôn. Although Đức Chí Tôn has given humans intelligence, they often use it against their Creator, basking in their own pride. Many previous scriptures have said, *'the intelligence of humanity is a devil'*. This is why our ancestors, particularly the Vietnamese, would have said *'he is a devil'* when they see someone who is a cheat or is cunning. Our intelligence is a devil, so if we follow it, we throw away our hopes of attaining the lofty positions of geniism, sainthood, immortality and Buddahood promised by Đức Chí Tôn as He said, *'If you, child, can be better than myself, I will step down so that you can reach your position.'* Unluckily, it is disappointing that so many people do not want to listen or know because the devil has tempted them to follow their animal nature. As a result, the strange comedy of fighting and killing continues to play itself out in the earthly realm. We watch suffering unfold in front of us, because humans are willing to sacrifice their dignity to obey the animal within. They become a slave to the beast, fighting and killing each other just to keep alive. That is the valuable lesson for us to learn.

I will explain it further in the next few days. Today we have only talked generally to open your mind; soon we will have more time to advance on our journey to eternal life.

**Sermon 8**

**The secrets and mysteries of the Bát Quái Đài  
and the motion of the eight-levels of souls**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 5th November  
1948; Lunar Calendar 5th Day of the 10th month, year of the  
Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO DISCUSS OUR PROGRESS  
ON THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Last time I asked you to remain at Bát Quái Đài to observe some of the secrets and mysteries of creation. This is where all the souls transform and continually restore the universe.

I did not describe it in detail, but just sketched it out for you to take as a lesson. Today I will give more details to see if it is Kim-Bàn (the Golden Vessel), as the Buddhists would say. Let us look back to see the sea of suffering or our world behind us. It links to the River Ngân or the Ngân River, which a Prajna Boat is crossing. The figure sitting in this boat is Đức Phật Quan Âm (Guan Yin Buddha) who follows the orders of Đức Phật Di Lặc, taking the souls who have attained enlightenment from shore to shore.

Let me explain how mysterious and secret Bát Quái Đài is. Eight levels of souls appear in the eight doors, spinning like a wheel or a lighthouse on the coast. When it turns we see eight beams of light illuminating the whole universe. The scene is very solemn and difficult to describe. The great mystery of it all makes us afraid. The radiant light entwines with sanh quang (the living light). All souls can take the form of a plant, an animal or a human on earth. These souls look beautiful—nothing like our physical bodies. Whenever

we see these eight lights, eight classes of souls appear. Some are leaving, some returning; some enter, some are released, thousands at a time. It is hard to visualise so many souls.

In addition, the universe comprises Tam Thiên Thế Giới (3,000 worlds), Tứ Đại Bộ Châu (4 great regions) and Thất Thập Nhị Địa (72 planet earths). There are many worlds that have not been fully developed, so there are no beings in those parts of the universe. Consider this very subjective comparison which I based on the 72 planet earths that have humans. Imagine the diameter of our planet earth is a little over 10,000 kilometres; when we plot the universe on a large-scale plan, we see that our planet occupies only 10 centimetres, while the distance from our world to another world is 280 kilometres! Brothers and sisters, knowing that the universe is so great, you may feel afraid of the spiritual power and realize that you never comprehend how souls transform into beings.

Now, let us look back. You can see a beautiful, magnificent sight in front of Diêu Trì Cung. There is a world on the right, another similar world on the left and the last one in the middle with rays of light shining blindingly in front of Diêu Trì Cung.

I think you would like to know what those three worlds are. I can tell you right away clearly. The palace in front of Diêu Trì Cung is Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa, on the right side is Cực Lạc Thế Giới (the Paradise of Extreme Happiness) and on the left is Ngọc Hử Cung. We can see them because we use the divine eye. In fact, I affirm that it is far, far away. However, we can see it now because we are standing at Diêu Trì Cung, where we can get anything we want. As we saw before, it is not easy to reach Bát Quái Đài. And the way from there to Kim Bàn is far, far off beyond our imagination.

Next, we enter Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá and later we will explore the other two. To explain the term Hiệp Thiên, Đức Chí Tôn has established Hiệp Thiên Đài in Caodaism on earth. This is where Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm (the Three Heavenly Governors) reign and Đấng Trọn Lành (Perfectly Moral Divine Beings) reside. Not only on our planet, but also in Tam Thiên Thế Giới and Thất Thập Nhị Địa there are the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings, who act as an advocate for all guilty souls.

This palace has the same function as a court on earth. Only the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings are entitled to work here as advocates of all living beings.

Whether they are genii, saints, immortals or Buddhas, they must be qualified as Perfectly Moral Divine Beings to enter Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa. The palace has a special duty to act as an advocate for all souls. That is why I always say Hiệp Thiên Đài of Caodaism, which has been established by Đức Chí Tôn on earth is a metaphor for the Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá in heaven.

Interestingly, when I entered the palace, the divine beings welcomed me with great hospitality. They would like you to understand how our lives are judged at the Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa and that they have had lots of difficulties protecting sinners there. Also they hope all living beings would know the law of cause and effect as well as the divine right of punishment and reward. They would like us, when returning, to preach to everyone, telling them that close relatives in the invisible realm pray daily for their salvation. At Ngọc Hư Cung the appeals are dealt with very strictly, and at Cực Lạc Thế Giới things can become very difficult. Friends, remember you are protected and will be guided, so

just calmly practise Caodaism, be faithful to his holy body or the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council and follow the Đức Chí Tôn completely. All the brothers at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa have the means and the right to protect the children of Đức Chí Tôn. They are made complete by their sense of self-respect; no power can suppress their action.

I have always thought, and still do, that no other religion has this sort of justice and kindness. The justice is an eternal right granted by the divine. Therefore, Đức Chí Tôn's promise of complete salvation is surely possible. The solution to the difficulty of protecting all living beings has been decided for both earthly and heavenly realms.

Friends, you only need good cultivation to attain nirvana. While you are practicing a religion, no one can criticize or abandon you. Every day of your life, think about this: keep your heart eager to make these treasures, your secret gift, to follow the Đức Chí Tôn and fulfill your religious responsibilities.

Sermon 9

**The Dragon Flower Assembly where divine positions will be decided for the souls**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 8th November 1948; Lunar Calendar 8th Day of the 10th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WISH TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATING TO CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA.

Last time we stopped there and had conversations with the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings —those who are the saviours of everyone in the universe.

It is crucial to examine why our time is so chaotic. It is because we are living through Hạ Ngươn Tam Chuyển (the third period of the third transition). The divine plan has already made preparations for Đại Hội Long Hoa (the Dragon Flower Assembly). According to our divine teaching, Đức Chí Tôn said, '*Children, you must come together to establish the Dragon Flower Assembly to create heavenly positions for the elevated souls of Hạ Ngươn Tam Chuyển. Then you can open Thượng Ngươn Tứ Chuyển (the fourth universal transmission) for all souls yet to come.*' The Dragon Flower Assembly will be where the Divine Beings pass or fail souls. That is why we have seen the mysterious and the sacred thing on this planet: Đức Chí Tôn founded the new religion, that is Caodaism. That also means it is the time you must completely pay off your karmic debts without any reluctance.

I have already explained that individuals, nations and the entire human race all have to pay off their own karmic debts. This is why the drama of murder is so familiar to us,

like the tragedy of Tây Sơn<sup>25</sup>, which is the karmic debt of the Vietnamese. As a result, we Vietnamese have to pay it off. Of the 72 planets in this universe, the divine beings at the Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa are constantly worried by the 68th planet that we call earth, because it has to bear the karmic enemies of the third universal transmission. I already told you that at the very beginning of our discussion about the Divine Path to Eternal Life.

We must address the question of why humans are living disordered, chaotic lives and murdering each other, so the national political systems are collapsing. Why is this happening? First, we have to get fully informed before we can trace the karmic account of our planet. In doing this we can understand how souls develop in the divine realm.

Though some insects, fish, birds and animals can live independently, most of them keep together for safety; ordering their own groups. Similarly, it is impossible for humans to live individually because their lives are bound by love. Humans only have their intelligence to protect themselves, but according to the basic law of living it seems that isn't enough. We are not strong enough compared to other animals. As a result, we have been both respectful and afraid of larger animals, calling them Mr Tiger, Mr Elephant, Mr Lion and so on.

Humans have been so afraid of many animals that they formed society to protect each other. They needed to make laws to live together in harmony. However, they have never accepted that in doing this, they must make a return contribution to society. On the contrary, their intelligence is used to cheat and struggle against the very society that protects them.

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<sup>25</sup> The event in which all officials and generals and their relatives related to the regime of King Quang Trung were massacred by King Gia Long, who had won a Vietnamese civil war.

Humans can defraud the common good by cheating and cunning, but they can never escape divine justice and karmic law. Since we want to survive, our struggle creates karmic account. Every human takes on a life as a means of living. We need to eat and clothe ourselves to survive. If we are naked as the animals we would be worse than they are. Animals have no clothes, but they hide themselves to stay alive. They have to kill each other to survive. People fighting for survival must kill each other like animals to protect themselves. This is the drama we see clearly today.

As you know, my spiritual position is Hộ Pháp (Guardian of the Law), so in the beginning of Caodaism, I put a hard question to the divine beings, *'Is it possible for humans beings to reincarnate as animals?'* The divine beings prudently answered, *'I think there are many souls who are not worthy of their status as humans even though Đức Chí Tôn continues to bless them. However, as a human, you have only two possibilities: to continue as a human or to progress. If you can't retain your status as a human, you have to go backward, that is to return to the status of an animal.'*

Perhaps many people will not accept the fact that Đức Chí Tôn blesses the souls unworthy of their status as humans. However, in the Third Universal Transition, Đức Chí Tôn has granted them an amnesty in the Dragon Flower Assembly owing to His culmination of very much suffering for His children. We do not know how much the Divine Father has suffered for these children. Think about it! Since the Creation, no other beings on the other 71 planets have been as blessed as humans on this planet.

Because humans live together, they need to have a birthright to their land. Since the time of primitive life on



this planet, humans have wanted to protect themselves, firstly by building huts in trees or making little houses in caves, then by building proper houses. At that time, they were only scared of wild animals. They had to stay in their caves watching until there were no wild animals before going into their paddy fields for fishing.

When they saw that there were no wild beasts, they went out, hoeing the earth to grow crops. Sometimes their fear of wild animals prevented them from leaving their caves, so cunning people could steal their crops outside. Being weaker, they had to surrender to others' demands. Consequently, they had to gather, forming a group and trying to take back whatever food was taken.

Groups developed—one or two people in one group, four or five in another. Gradually, groups became tribes. The tribes were still uncertain whether they could protect their members. Sometimes, they were defeated by other tribes so badly that they had to surrender and became slaves. This is how one tribe gains control over others, as more tribes together to form societies and nations.

From ancient times until now, maintaining order and justice and protecting life achieves sovereignty over the land. Previously, each region had its own leader, who had the knowledge, talents, and power to be head of the tribe. The people must respect and admire a king to establish a nation. We have seen this throughout history. We can rely on knowledge to build a country with laws; for example, a country such as Japan had laws from the very beginning to protect the lives of its people with justice. Men acting as kings of tribes or countries govern everyone's lives and create the nation's destiny. We have clearly seen the drama involved in

making the destiny for a nation or tribe: the pattern is clear. It was easier to establish a tribe or a nation in the past than it is now. Human knowledge was modest, virtue was not infected by cunning; people were not cruel like in the 20th Century. Today people are influenced by civilisation and science. Our minds and our knowledge of humanity have already exceeded the old ways of maintaining order. This is why authorities have often collapsed. The majority rises up to lead coups and form new political systems.

Everyone on the planet is moving towards democracy, but what is democracy? It is the majority of the people combining to hold power. Their influence determines the destiny of our planet. Sadly, very many people lack the knowledge or virtue to hold that destiny competently. As a result, nowadays those who are stronger are naturally better.

They become rulers by cunning and don't rule by ancient methods of virtue. Humans have sown the seeds of rebellion, so the spirits of humanity on earth are now revolting because many of us have no rights in the system of control.

There is no special birthright to the land or right of control for the destiny of the country; therefore revolution occurs. After much agitation they understand it at last; there is a right which enables them to govern the country with stability, but they have already destroyed it. Now they search for ways of creating that right; this is the modern drama. We see people hoping to take command of that right to protect their own destiny and that of their country.

Humans continue to search for the keys to correct sovereignty, but whatever happens this sovereignty can't last. This is why Đức Chí Tôn has come and said, "*The way you*

*humans used to make your sovereignty was wrong. You have destroyed it instead. Now I come to give it to you by showing how to get it.*” The path of Đúc Chí Tôn is based on a proper judicial system. Whenever nations and societies on earth follow Caodaist Law in establishing their sovereignty, they will see that Caodaist Law can make long lasting absolute rights for them. I affirm that a good judicial system can give power to humans. Therefore, the current one should be corrected and improved. To attain that valuable goal, humans, at least, should know that it is their virtue that generates their power.

Therefore, whenever people return to the way of virtue, untying themselves from desire and establishing a way of life, they can live gloriously, flexibly and happily. When we can destroy past bad karma and return to the path of virtue, the country will be peaceful, and we will enjoy special blessings from Đúc Chí Tôn .

Sermon 10

**The essential, secret philosophy of the religion; what is the peri-spirit?**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 12th November 1948; Lunar Calendar 12th Day of the 10th month, year of the Mouse.*

**I** WILL CONTINUE TO PREACH ABOUT THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE BECAUSE IT CONTAINS THE MOST sacred and truest philosophy for our souls.

Last time we met with the geniis, saints, immortals and Buddhas who have achieved the ranks of the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings. They are our representatives and advocate on our behalf at Ngọc Hư Cung and Cực Lạc Thế Giới.

Today I am speaking about the Caodaist philosophy related to what we have seen on the Divine Path to Eternal Life. This gives an intellectual method that everyone can follow to understand the Caodaist Teachings. As I have said, it is a philosophy we have been searching for since we were born. We have been looking for this noble path even though it has been right in front of our eyes, but we can't teach ourselves to understand it. As a result, I have been trying to lead you, God's children, on the true path for a long time. If you listen and search with all your hearts, I will reveal the most crucial points of the true, faultless philosophy so you may discover them yourself, for example when you enter Cung Diêu Trì (the Gem Pond Palace) you should find its true meaning in Caodaism. Furthermore, when you see the eight sorts of souls emerging in Kim Bàn Bát Quái Đài (the Golden Vessel in the Bagua Palace), you should find out what their forms and their

astral bodies are.

Last time, I already explained this: our peri-spirit (astral body) looks exactly like our physical body.

What is the peri-spirit? I will only discuss this briefly. It is the Khỗi Linh Quang (great source of divine light)<sup>26</sup> whose form is like our physical body. Our body is a physical-animal body. I have already described the activities of the composition of the body and how a new-born human takes the shape of a visible animal, formed by the divine consciousness which the Buddha Mother created. Our soul controls two animals (the physical body and the peri-body) and that helps humans continue to survive—not because we are strong and overcome all beings on earth.

If you examine the history of this planet, you will see that the earth has passed through so many centuries. How has it survived without many powers which keenly protected life? If we imagine a life we can see how the law of creation works. Life is very cruel. The animals and birds are strong; they can protect themselves, but humans are weaker. How can we protect ourselves and survive? We have to depend on Khỗi Sanh Quang (the great source of vital fluid) to create our peri-spirit. It is the spark of Đức Chí Tôn. Thanks to it, we can survive.

We have already known that all souls of the universe must enter Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa to see how our divine advocates can defend us. You older brothers and sisters and you younger sisters and brothers, you have seen innumerable number of humans in the universe, not a fixed number. Compared to the universe, our earth is only considered a

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<sup>26</sup> Khỗi Linh Quang creates the peri-spirit

small neighborhood, not a city or a society. The Perfectly Moral Divine Beings, who are our divine advocates, attained their status when the earth was still in the early stage of transformation, that is, when it was like the current moon with very few living beings. Even during that early stage, lots of geniis, saints, immortals and buddhas from our earth were qualified as The Perfectly Moral Divine Beings.

I assure you that the name of this 68th planet earth is so glorious, even though it is the lowest planet of the 72! Despite its low rank, lots of Perfectly Moral Divine Beings have come from it. Whether we will attain our spiritual positions or not depends on Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá. Again, I affirm that our Divine Advocates there are highly respected in heaven.

When we enter this realm and see so many spiritual beings with their extremely high and glorious ranks, you must be greatly surprised. You may be curious to find out how the earth in the past could create these Perfectly Moral Beings with their glorious and exalted titles. I am sure that you are all as curious as I am.

As for the origin of humans, the Buddha already preached the doctrine of the root of human sufferings: birth, which causes the other three: old age, sickness and death. Thinking about it, we know we really fear those sufferings. The Perfectly Moral Beings, who are our advocates in Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa, also fear them. Though it is unreasonable, we all still fear what we cannot avoid. We all even cowardly force ourselves to adapt to them. Why? Shouldn't we find out why we have to do so right here, on this very earth?

Like I said, individuals, villages, societies and humanity have their own karmic account generated by our evolution on

the Divine Path to Eternal Life. That is why I try to lead you, my friends, on it for further comprehension. We are born on this planet; even when we are just out of the womb, we have already undertaken a journey of a thousand lives. The doctrine of Christianity called this '*original sin*'. When we just come out of our mother's womb, crying, we already have all kinds of karmic debts from previous lives; we don't know how many. In Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá, the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings, who are our advocates, hate those karmic accounts a lot; they are afraid that if they can't succeed with their task on our planet they will have to spend millions of years in the circles of rebirth. Therefore, they remain constantly at their positions by avoiding more reincarnations, so they are unable to go to higher divine levels.

Surely, if we know what kinds of debts they are and how to pay them, we can pay them off. It is more surprising that we even become richer after we pay off our mortgage. This debt is crucially important and very expensive. When we can pay off the mortgage it will be very admirable. If we are afraid of paying off our debt from this life, we are like a soldier on the battlefield who is afraid of death; he is worthless. If we want to be a general or a hero, we must be victorious on the field. The soldier who is afraid of dying or goes absent without leave has no honour.

This 68th planet has a special name among those in the spiritual realm. Therefore, though they fear suffering, lots of Perfectly Moral Divine Beings still come to stay. Right on this 68th earth they have their own victory. They create their position with difficulty, but they become greatly honoured. Therefore, what you should keep in mind is you must somehow pay off your heavy debts from innumerable previous earthly

lives immediately. Do not let them obstruct your sacred conscience like a rotten corpse frequently accompanying yourselves. You will be free and pleasant after leaving that corpse. Unfortunately, it is absolutely hard to do so.

Being humans, you certainly know that dilemma. Everyone, needless to say, knows our physical bodies live like animals. According to Buddhism, our physical bodies are called Kỵ Vật (the animals we ride). That is why Buddhism always describes Buddhas on animals, for example, Từ Hàng Bodhisattva rides Kim Mao Hẩu<sup>27</sup> or Địa Tạng Buddha rides Đê Thính<sup>28</sup> to admirably free themselves from the cycles of reincarnation.

We owe these animals their lives, but we can control and order them to pay our debts. How? We make them completely adapt to human societies on earth both to survive and to pay off our debts. With that in mind, we not only adapt to human society but also work as servants for humanity to pay our debts. Our debts cannot be paid off until we become servants for humankind.

The highest philosophy is the life in which we don't live for ourselves but for society. When this happens, I am sure everyone will be able to save themselves.

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<sup>27</sup> A divine animal in Chinese mythology, which looks like a lion.

<sup>28</sup> An animal in Chinese mythology, which looks like a dog.



## Sermon 11

## The true happiness of human beings; how to conquer suffering

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 4th December 1948; Lunar Calendar 4th Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**B**EFORE I EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA, THERE IS STILL ONE COMPLICATED MATTER to address—the fight of those souls who have founded religions on earth. That is the problem of humans and the four sufferings.

Heavenly souls come down to earth in physical bodies or animal bodies, depending on the law of progression of souls to attain particular spiritual positions. But there is a strong contradiction: if we want to attain an honorary spiritual position, our soul must solve the problem of the four sufferings. Since our souls reincarnate in the circle of the four sufferings, we have no way to eliminate suffering. If we bear this physical body, we must endure the sufferings of the earthly world. Everyone must suffer except those who have enough courage and power to face the four sufferings, beat them and attain immortality or Buddhahood.

Sadly, some souls do not have enough ability and determination to attain the status of Perfectly Moral Divine Beings because that means they must search for happiness in the world of suffering. Let's look at these beings: the fish is kept in a tank, the bird in the cage, and humans are constrained by the four sufferings. They are always looking for a way to escape. The four sufferings are the cage and our soul is like

the animal struggling to escape. Even though it can't escape, it still tries to find a way out.

The souls who reincarnate and bear their physical bodies in this universe understood the four noble truths. They know they have to find a way to escape suffering, but the divine law is already established in its own way. I myself have already understood that drama.

Humans who are reincarnated in the scene of suffering, or in the gaol, are always trying to discover what action will lead to liberation from suffering. When they can't discover a way to escape suffering, they find a way to comfort themselves, to find a little happiness and release the suffering within them. Usually, they have not found any, but caused more bad karmas. Consequently, some lofty souls do not dare to face the Fourth Noble Truths because they know they lack courage or determination.

Now I suggest stopping for a moment to find out what the true happiness of humans is and if there is a way to triumph over this scene of suffering? What is happiness in this earthly realm? We should seek this and understand it because when we do, we will be able to solve the problem and triumph over suffering. We see that people have only been dreaming. I recall a very interesting religious story:

Once there was a soul who went to hell. When he paid off his bad karma the King of Hell allowed him to ascend for reincarnation. But then he argued with the King, demanding that his requests be satisfied before he accepted reincarnation. The King of Hell asked the soul what he wanted. The soul replied, *'I would like to plead for four things.'* He then read out a four-sentence poem: *'Make my father Thượng Thơ (high*

government official).

*Make me Trạng Nguyên (first rank doctorate of the national examinations).*

*Grant me a thousand sections of fertile land around my house, worked by young men and comely girls.*

*Give me a beautiful wife and pretty servants, each as lovely as the others.'*

The King of Hell replied, 'Don't be so sure. Even if I granted all these things, it would not be enough happiness or honour for you. You want to become a Trạng Nguyên and also the son of a Thượng Thơ. I am not sure that Trạng Nguyên will become the son of a high government officer who is uncorrupted and virtuous, with great abilities and happiness, showing benevolence to the people. On the other hand, if that Thượng Thơ is greedy and dishonest, should you then reincarnate into that house and become his son?'

The soul still tried to plead for his requests to be granted; he stressed he could only be a Trạng Nguyên.

Just think about it! Passing the Trạng Nguyên exam isn't a sign of happiness. Look! Mr Nguyễn Hiền passed the Trạng Nguyên exam at the age of 13. He was not allowed to be a mandarin due to young age. He had to wait until he was 16 before he was allowed to serve the Emperor. It is unfortunate that he passed away at the age of 21. Can we say that Mr Nguyễn Hiền achieved happiness? He certainly didn't.

The third sentence of the poem reads, "Around the house a thousand sections of fertile land". The soul is asking for the most fertile land so he can become rich. But is wealth happiness? At most it is greed, not happiness.

The fourth sentence says, “*Young men and comely girls, a beautiful wife and pretty servants*”. Are these the best things in the world? Is this happiness? It is not sure.

And look at these last words, “*a beautiful wife and pretty servants, each as lovely as the others*”. A beautiful wife is always a challenge; she relies on her charms, knowing she is more alluring than you. Because you love her so much she complicates your life and makes you crazy. Only the final words “*each as lovely as the others*” are something interesting, but happiness, I’m not sure. Therefore, from the beginning of the world until now, everyone has understood that not even the king can be sure if he has attained happiness in his lifetime.

Furthermore, the Confucian sages of Vietnam have passed down some essential advice. To establish a nation and create happiness for everyone, you must have three conditions: Thiên thời, địa lợi, nhơn hòa. (good weather, favourable terrain and harmony among the people). Therefore, let us examine that to discover a way to free souls from suffering for ourselves and for others.

What is Thiên Thời? It is to follow the divine plan. Heaven has established a plan for us which we must obey. Thiên thời is to obey the Đạo; this is irrefutable.

What is Địa Lợi? It is all the geographical advantages of the country which everyone can see. Can the land support life? The elite members of our society must consider this. The king can’t create the geographical advantages. Only virtuous talented people can do it.

What is Nhơn Hòa for? If everyone isn’t in harmony we move towards discord. If discord prevails, war soon follows.

Hence, three things can make people happy. Do we have

the means to make happiness? We have, but let's think of how people are threatened by the third world war right now. World war has happened twice; these two wars have caused the deaths of countless people.

Humans are about to be threatened by a third war. What are we living for if we have to face this possible disaster? Are people really seeking and following their own happiness?

This is an obvious answer. All Vietnamese people are seeking happiness, but only in their dreams. Similarly, the Hồ Chí Minh's government is also seeking happiness in theory, but has produced nothing. Actually, the whole world is starting war again, so I am sure no politicians honestly want to seek happiness for humanity. There are only those who show off with colorful theories to tempt people to kill each other. They have cunningly boasted that they could create peace and happiness for humanity, but failed twice.

It is very disappointing that the spirit of humanity must endure so much suffering. Even if they don't experience suffering, humans don't know how to listen to the voice of spiritual beings. If they did, they could enlighten and correct themselves as they search for true happiness.

People only pursue false happiness. It is no wonder that the great sage Gandhi was assassinated. The sage Dalagadot<sup>29</sup> (?) was also killed by an ill-wisher. Now we are enduring so much suffering we must try to find a way to solve the problem of governments for the spirit and happiness of all. The United Nations was formed but has this organisation made peace yet? Again, regrettably, nothing. There are many reasons for this and Garry Davis<sup>30</sup> has symbolised the spirit of humanity by

<sup>29</sup> Dalagadot ?

<sup>30</sup> On 25 May, 1948, in Paris, France, Garry Davis, a former Broadway actor and US. bomber pilot during World

coming to the United Nations to ask it to protect peace and save humanity. He is fighting for this and asking people to follow him, but do they listen? I, myself listen.

The biased theory of communism, and others, are trying to find happiness for humanity. But the more you fight, the deeper you enter a vicious circle of violence resulting in more suffering. Just let people think about it—how can we find true happiness? Next time I will explain this further.

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War II, renounced his citizenship of, and allegiance to, the United States of America, at the age of 26. At the same time, he publicly declared himself a 'citizen of the world.' From that moment on, Davis, was legally outside the nation-state system and represented instead the sovereignty of all humans by becoming an operative for the world-government-in-microcosm. See (<http://www.worldgovernment.org/gov.html>) access date

## Sermon 12

## The power of protecting the souls of human beings in the religion

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 5th December, 1948; Lunar Calendar 5th Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I CONTINUE TO SPEAK OF OUR PROGRESS UPON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

For the last few days we have stopped at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa to look at its activities. This palace is directly related to human souls; its operations concern the spirit of religions. We met the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings, those who undertake the crucial responsibility for representing the souls who are being judged there.

If we ask whether the world's religions people are practising can save human souls, the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings laugh and say, *'Friends, you may find it surprising to know the founders of the world's religions are usually invited to come to Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa and see judgements passed on the heads of their disciples. They see what their disciples have done on earth and how they did it'*. Moreover, the founders of various religions—those who established religions based on their teachings and attitudes—have a spirit which is grounded in the root nature of humanity. They take the most elemental theories to construct a philosophy for their belief systems. For example, Christianity takes love as its fundamental doctrine, Taoism focuses on the body and Islam takes belief as its fundamental. Every doctrine has a central point around which it can govern the spirit of humanity.

As you have seen, some people who are practising Buddhism, but not following the virtue of the Buddha, that is compassion and philanthropy. Buddhists know only one thing—a life-time dedicated to serving humans and other beings. They would consider wealth, elegance, honour and fame as fleeting as the morning dew. The Buddha was born into the family of King of the Shakya nation with wealth and elegance, but he gave up everything. Why did he carry a begging bowl? He begged to feed the poor and the hungry. He refused to wear clothes that were better than those of the dispossessed. The virtue of the Buddha is begging; begging which embodies a spirit that takes it far beyond normal practice.

If a follower of Buddhism also begs, but sits in his temple waiting for others to bring offerings so he may eat and live, he is deceiving the psychologies of Buddhist believers. He takes all the mysterious and divine teachings of the Buddha and turns them into an instrument to threaten the faithful. These sorts of people only affect believers one way, by threats. They establish a hell of very cruel punishments to entice people towards Nirvana. The truth is they never serve beings like the Buddha. When returning to the divine realm, people like this declare, *'I have been following the objectives of Buddhism; the Buddha attained Buddhahood therefore I must also attain Buddhahood'*. By what theory and proof can Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa protect that person when he longs to enter the Paradise of Extreme Joy and the Divine Jade Palace?

Let's talk about the heart: when Jesus Christ spread Christianity on earth, he took love as the basis of his faith. His love for humans was endless; with truth in his heart he said that he was like an animal who sacrificed himself for Đức Chí Tôn. He asked to bear all the sins of humanity in



the same way the scapegoat (le bouc emissaire) was sacrificed after being loaded with all the sins of the race. Jesus carried all those sins and undertook to end his life on the cross, using his heart of unending love to save humanity. As a result, what he only does is to live with that endless love; what he only does is to leave his life in the hands of humanity and become a sacrificial animal for Đức Chí Tôn. That is his truth and we say his divine heart is endlessly holy.

When his disciples travel back to Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa, saying, *'I loved all beings as my master loved them; I have followed the true teaching of my master Jesus Christ; I also offered my whole heart to Đức Chí Tôn'*. In fact, they hold the power to forgive humanity on behalf of Đức Chí Tôn, but they twist that power to govern the spirit of humanity. In Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa they claim to be following the footsteps of Jesus Christ, serving the Lord and preserving his teachings. They offer their heart to liberate humanity from suffering; but we can see their actions are worthless in contrast with the sublime truth of Jesus Christ. If Ngọc Hư Cung and Cực Lạc Thế Giới ask the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa about the actions of these disciples, which are contrary to their master's teachings, what can they answer to these two powers Trị Thế<sup>31</sup> (governing the earthly world) and Giác Thế<sup>32</sup> (awakening the earthly world)?

Let us talk about the mind and intellectual pursuits. Ru Jia (Confucianism) takes the mind as the basis of its doctrine. The intellectual may appear in many guises, using sublime philosophy to create a society; this isn't easy. Confucius had to use intelligence to cultivate the self. Our own self-cultivation

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<sup>31</sup> Ngọc Hư Cung (the Divine Jade Palace)

<sup>32</sup> Cực Lạc Thế Giới (Nirvana or the Paradise of Extreme Joy)

enables us to possess enough power to teach other souls. We can teach people how to achieve complete goodness, continuing to perfection, the highest level. On the opposite side, Confucius' disciples, armed with their intellectuality, studied much and understood a great deal. They spoke clearly and skillfully, using all their noble spirits to talk at length, but, in fact, doing nothing. When they return to Ngọc Hũ Cung they entreat the divine beings there, *'I have followed the teaching of Confucius to cultivate the intellect. I respected moral behaviour and followed and preserved the rules. Therefore, I have the right to stand among the ranks of the sages and should be treated exactly the same as the 36 sages who followed the master. Why have I returned here to be criticised and refused entry through the door of Confucianism?'* Now, what can Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa say?

This disciple said he followed Confucianism, cultivated his intelligence and tried to respect and obey the Master's teachings. Yet he did not really practise Confucianism at all, but used his intelligence to stir up trouble and make society suspicious of itself. He used his intelligence, sitting licking a pen made of cat hairs, to incite people to sue each other. He dared to sell people's lives with the stroke of a borrowed pen, using literature to make wives and husbands divorce, and deceiving the uneducated with his words. Would people like this be recognised by Confucius as his disciples? He definitely won't recognise them when coming to the Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá to witness the judgement.

Through the three examples just mentioned, I assert that the founders of these religions are truly dedicated to serving humanity. However, sadly, though they tried to create a real spirit for humanity by spending their lives teaching them,

they had to suffer a lot.

Consequently, instead of making people happy, their doctrines became the tools for heartless villains to deceive humanity. Instead of creating good karma, they made bad karma.

How disappointing! If Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa applied the law Tội Vi Trưởng<sup>33</sup>, then the founders couldn't sit peacefully on their lotus thrones. And if the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings in Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá were as small-minded as earthly men, how could the founders of the world's religions sit peacefully? They have to appear before the court on a constant basis. Instead of giving honour to their founders, the followers of these religions create more sins.

That is why there is a proverb saying, *'It is true that no harm done to you can be as bad as the harm caused by your relatives'*.

What scares me most now is the religion of the Đức Chí Tôn or Caodaism is based on human spirit. Unfortunately, the spirit of humanity is presently oppressed by a sophisticated and material life. Does it have enough strength to protect itself? Can it win? If the spirit of humanity doesn't stand up and decide to be independent of a predestined role as slave to materialism, what future will the Cao Đài Religion have? Not only must we protect ourselves for victory but we must also make the truly moral spirit of humanity as strong as that of Đức Chí Tôn. What if we fail? We should leave this question hanging.

We have to keep our eyes on one thing; we must see what form Đức Chí Tôn will create and preserve our moral spirit.

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<sup>33</sup> A convention where the head of the family took responsibility for the actions of those in the family

That is the method we should follow to build stable and long-lasting beliefs.

## Sermon 13

**The governing power of the Ngọc Hư Cung; the teaching dimensions of the Paradise of Extreme Joy**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See at the Mouse Hour (between 11pm and 1am) on the 13th December 1948; Lunar Calendar 13th Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLAIN THE DISPUTE OVER FAITH AT CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA.

There are many complicated problems between the authority of defending souls and Ngọc Hư Cung's rights to rule the universe, and Cục Lạc Thế Giới's rights to teach souls. Many philosophies cause heated debate amongst the believers and their religions.

As for belief, most of the higher classes and intellectuals today are atheists, especially our Eastern writers or Confucians and European thinkers who exercise freedom of speech and thought. Those who go beyond this point are anarchists—people who lack goals and don't worship are much worse than those who simply have no faith. When these people return to the spiritual realm, they will have to kneel in front of the divine law for moral examination. They would like to avoid this, but they can't escape the infinite power of the universe.

These people are very argumentative. They are strongly opposed to the divine law and hold many really eccentric theories. We can't possibly imagine their answers. For example, at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa they argue, *'It is true that the lofty, enlightened divine being descend to earth and create religions for teaching humans morality. They have formed their religious philosophies, but those are not useful for our way of*

life at all. Conversely, those philosophies cause problems for the struggle of progress.

*If the divine power, which is said to be infinite and to be the power of the creation of the universe, had given us faith by doing something obvious or really protected us, we would have practised a religion. But those philosophies are still very illusory, so what can we borrow from to create faith and follow religion? Religious founders teach us to do good and avoid bad deeds. Seeing suffering around us, we want to do good, but others don't want good things; they pressure and cajole us to become cruel. If we surrender, the cruelty damages us. We want to sacrifice our life to create better life for others; but humanity doesn't respect or accept it. Your excellencies, you can see that there are many virtuous people on earth who humble themselves under the power of violence and agree to suffer loss, beg for food and become nomadic. You ask us to depend on them to build up our faith. We have never clearly seen the faith of those who live virtuously; please describe them so we can see them.'*

Now, what theories do the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings in the spiritual realm use to respond to these sorts of arguments? Here is what they say,

*'You are too academic, trying to find a way to protect yourself. Truth isn't like you described it. The truth is that you don't know how to believe in yourself, and if you don't believe in yourself, who can you believe? If you don't believe in yourself, how can you believe in the philosophy of religion?'*

*Đức Chí Tôn sent founders to establish earthly religions, not to ask humans to worship Him. He came and sent others to build the lofty church for worshipping the faith of humans. He built this lofty church so people could worship humanity,*

not Himself’.

*‘You object to this and say you need to see how following virtuous religion can be a way of protecting your life, making it solid and durable. No! This can’t be! You yourselves still depend on the philosophy of religion to create your life. If there is no religion, humans belong to the level of animals—like elephants, panthers, tigers and monkeys in the dark forest. That means you have depended on religion to protect yourself.*

*What theory have you used to understand that you are noble, better than other beings? You know you are the most spiritual and sacred of this planet’s beings, the divine spark of Đức Chí Tôn. How can you know with self-respect that you are the noblest on the planet, more spiritual than other beings? You would like to give up your noble positions and spend your life and spirit on unworthy pursuits. What should your spirit depend on? If you don’t believe in yourself, who can you believe in?’*

*‘The religious founders didn’t deceive anyone! You said the philosophy of religions deceives the human mind, but that philosophy is a mirror for people to see what they really are. If you don’t follow it, and avoid it because you are afraid, where can you strengthen your faith? Life is difficult, but not so much that it drive humans to destroy each other! Being intellectuals, have you found out happiness in the material world? Have humans succeeded in having happiness with their devise schemes? Are they still seeking and struggling? If they are still struggling, that is they have use wrong methods, which create suffering for human lives without any benefit’.*

*‘You complain that the divine power doesn’t show miracles for you to see with your naked eyes, so you are unable to build up faith. I am sure you still pursue earthly happiness even though*

*Đức Chí Tôn really appears on earth. Humans just don't want to believe God, not because of not witnessing any miracles. That's what they always do'. Our faith must be directed to ourselves first; knowing ourselves allows us to know the rest of humanity. When we know others, we can know Đức Chí Tôn, the Master Creator of the Universe. To know this Being is to know yourself clearly. If you don't know this Being you can't expect to know yourself. If you don't know yourself, no one else can know you. Living without faith is the act of not knowing yourself; it is the same as being flora or fauna—living a life with no meaning or value.*

Let's think about this. When we enter an examination, the examiner asks us about the Four Books, the Five Classics and other canonical works that constitute the doctrine of Confucianism. If we have studied, we can answer correctly and pass, even though we don't bring any books with us. It's the same for religions. They are revealed on earth for us to practise, but some people don't practise because they don't believe. How can they ask the divine beings in the spiritual realm respect them? Besides, religions can also be compared to gambling. Play so you can hopefully be among a few winners. The results are never disclosed in advance so that everyone can win.

Faith comes from those who are self-respecting. If we believe and worship ourselves, others can also worship us too. Faith is believing in oneself. If we can't believe in ourselves, how can we ask others to believe in us? If we can't believe in ourselves, how can we ask people to believe in Đức Chí Tôn, the Creator of the universe and our souls? If we don't have enough faith with convincing evidence, we aren't worthy of being a member of Hội Thánh (the Caodaist Sacerdotal



Council).

Sermon 14

**The method of cultivation; although each of the five branches of religions is different, they all have the same aim: to free humanity from suffering**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 15th December 1948; Lunar Calendar 15th Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLAIN THE DEBATE AT CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA BETWEEN THE PERFECTLY Moral Divine Beings and the irreligious intellectuals who don't accept any true belief.

These intellectuals continue to question the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings about religions. They say, *'If you force us to hold a certain belief, to practise a religion and to cultivate ourselves in order to progress along the endless Divine Path to Eternal Life, climbing the heavenly hierarchy of the souls of the Universe—then please allow us to ask questions'*.

*'Many different religions have been established to teach people on this planet. We aren't saying we attack these religions, but all they do is confusing humans. This is why people are relinquishing their belief in religion. We are neither attacking the founders nor saying that their various philosophies are no longer useful to humanity. However, we are convinced that the different religions contradict each other. Since their philosophies are contradictory, people become confused and don't know what to believe'*.

*'Take Nhơn Đạo (the Doctrine of Humanity), it reveals that when we have the misfortune of being born as a human on this planet, we realise that we are in a realm of suffering,*

*living lives of suffering. Everyone knows the four sufferings as highlighted by Sakyamuni Buddha, which are neither unreasonable nor avoidable. However, each religion has its own method of practising to make spiritual progress on the Divine Path to Eternal Life. Nhơn Đạo guides humanity to live with suffering, Thần Đạo guides humanity to overcome suffering, Thánh Đạo guides humanity to endure suffering, Tiên Đạo guides humanity to escape from suffering, and Phật Đạo guides humanity to find the path to destroy suffering. As a result, to deal with human sufferings, each religion describes various ways and philosophies to achieve this end. We recognise that these philosophies are true and useful. We don't oppose them, but too many distinct philosophies confuse humans, so they don't know which spiritual gate to enter. Many people with a wide knowledge and intelligence can detect the perplexity I have just told about while studying those philosophies. They can discover that the illusory nature of faith is real for many reasons. If they can't completely understand a philosophy, or believe in one that seems too easy, they worry that people will laugh at or criticise them, and they lose faith. As a result, they pretend they don't believe. They know it is right to believe, but they are afraid and can't overcome their behaviour and that of others. Most educated people behave like this'.*

What do the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings reply? They say, *'You are knowledgeable and educated enough to set your own behaviour, but you aren't courageous enough to decide to do the right thing. You've already seen lots of people with a noble spirit who will sacrifice their life to do the right thing; many wise people have done this throughout time. We ask you, "Does any religion on earth teach people to do the wrong thing?" No religion does this. Even false doctrines wouldn't dare to*

*teach the wrong thing; they only teach people to do right. No religion dares to tell people to do the wrong thing. Intellectuals like you see the right thing to do, but don't dare to do it. This shows your spirit is very weak'.*

*'What's more, you have seen belief is the foundation, the intermediary and the direction for humanity's survival. How can you refute this? If you say the world's religions cause people to be uncertain what to believe, let me tell you this: religions are like many dishes in a meal prepared for you. There is so much choice: meat, salt, bean sauce, vegetable, preserved bean curd. You say there are too many dishes but you hold up your chopsticks and play with the food without eating. If you don't eat you will become hungry. So eat!*

*The religions that remain on earth are fashioned to human behaviour. They guide the spirit of humanity. If we see a house with many rooms for people to live in, are we going to say there is no space for anyone else? People are offering many dishes but you don't know what to choose. Does this mean that none of the dishes is any good to eat, that they won't help us survive? If you can't choose a meal, that is because you're not good at choosing or because you just turn them down with haughty disdain. Don't you remember the saying "Don't be too pretentious or you'll be starving?" 'Religions on earth are just like young members in a family. It is common that they compete and criticise each other. A family has grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts, children, nephews and nieces. You should teach the young that brothers have to obey their mother, their mother must obey their father, their father must obey their grandfather, their grandfather must obey their great-grandfather and so on. The distribution of power in the family is never impossible. When the child becomes an adult it will behave appropriately as a*

family member’.

*World’s religions were established depending on the level of intelligence and virtue of humans in many regions, so there certainly are differences. In spite of that, every religion teaches us to respect moral principles. The combination of their teachings teaches people true morality. It’s untrue that so many religions have been created to criticise and destroy each other. There’s no way that one religion could destroy the others, even if they hated and competed with each other. That is because they lack the forces to do this. There is only one truth: they only encourage human races to live religiously so that all souls can continue to progress on the Eternal Path. Even if there are hundreds of paths, you only need to know one way, that is enough. Whatever way you take, you will arrive at the same point at the end—the realm of the divine eternal life, the truest realm, the one we need to find’.*

In this earthly realm we have a physical body and undertake all the suffering that comes with it. We are seeking the truth of religions, therefore every religion shows us the way. The more they teach you, the surer you are to arrive. If a religion can’t show you the Path to Eternal Life, it is no longer a religion, so we don’t need to listen to or follow it. Everyone will leave it if they realize that is only a superstition, not the true path to eternal life. False religions can never deceive humankind to the end or destroy all their wishes to find the way back to the spiritual realm.

**Sermon 15**

**The secret dharma that develops an altruistic life where selfishness is destroyed for a public life against individual desires**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 19th December 1948; Lunar Calendar 19th Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLAIN THE ESSENTIAL PHILOSOPHY. THIS SERMON MIGHT BE A LITTLE BIT longer, so please sit if you are tired, and try not to be restless.

Each time we attend a midnight ceremony, I want to explain a philosophy which is complex enough to cover a thick book. Therefore, it is very difficult to summarize it into a short essay. Tonight I will continue to explain the debate at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa over the mysterious secrets of the heavenly organisations. It concerns the philosophy of leading an altruistic, selfishness-destroying life or a public life opposed to personal desires. This is also called Bí Pháp (Secret Dharma, Esoteric Doctrine). If we can practise this doctrine on earth, aiming to save various incompatible human systems, humanity can break out of the cycle of fighting and killing.

Moreover, in Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa, the divine beings use the theory of constant evolution as a foundation. Although they approve religious freedom (that is, everyone has the right to be both religious and irreligious), they are more influenced by Confucianism, which says the public is more important than the private. Also, they believe only religious belief can show you the value of God's mysterious system of rewards and punishments, including the visible and invisible

power of Đức Chí Tôn, the Lord of all beings. Unfortunately, if they attach too much importance to Confucianism, human rights of religious freedom will be limited. There are some people who think they don't have the right of religious freedom because of that, so they stand in front of the Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá, objecting, *'We see that all beings on this planet are using many unjust methods to protect themselves. Society is in chaos, the strong are winning, the weak are losing, the stupid are being destroyed, and the intelligent are more powerful and stronger. It is the same with humanity. We can clearly see this drama will continue to play itself out on earth; it will never end. If the greatly enlightened beings on earth cannot discover how to rectify the situation and create harmony, humankind will be destroyed all. If there is an invisible power, which can decide the destiny and fundamentals of humanity in the future, will it be able to protect them and prevent injustice?'*

If the problem is presented to us like this, it seems very difficult to resolve. Fortunately, the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings in Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa don't give up on it. They reply, *'That is because people, in their heart, still believe the personal is more important than the public. That elevates selfishness and destroys the altruistic. Whenever this drama still takes place, the relative law that decides the destiny of human activities still operates. When everyone understands that they must maintain the public and destroy the private, and elevate the altruistic and destroy selfishness, humanity will be liberated.'*

We see that the earthly realm is different from the divine realm in one thing. Unlike that of the divine realm, every human system is created from one premise—selfishly keeping the personal domain. Whenever you keep the personal and remain selfish, there will be competition and comparison;

when there is competition and fighting, there is killing and destruction. This is commonplace, isn't it ?

All beings must follow the law of nature. It already establishes the right of dĩ công, diệt tư (diminishing the personal and elevating the public) whether you live in a society or in your family. In a family, if the children put their own aims first, chaos and poverty will reign. In a country, people must support their country so the nation will be strong. Conversely, if people act egotistically and work for their own happiness without making sacrifices for the community, the country will slide towards chaos. Now, look at the world, it is egotistic for the world's nations to only know how to take care of themselves and struggle to make their country the best. When one country wants to be better than the others, there is protest and struggle. When countries struggle, people kill each other. This has been commonplace so far. Actually, the natural law of progress forces humans to continuously evolve. Why? To move them towards the path of union, the path of altruistic behaviour that will lead to the destruction of the ego. It's a great shame that humans don't have this sort of spirit yet. They shouldn't describe the egotistic path as just or true. However, they still don't consider these egotists as abject, rustic, backward and unjust. No wonder the world is upside down and in chaos. My friends, you cannot hide this fact forever!

Now, my friends, I invite you to leave Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa and look down to earth. We will look at its evolution to see what power has caused all the changes. Under the banner to invoke the spirits of Đức Diêu Trì (the Universal Mother Goddess) in front of Diêu Trì Cung, there is map displayed for us to examine. We see an area of land close to the sea,



with some small muddy areas and some hills. The land is undulating, and has a sign, ‘For sale: 300 francs’<sup>34</sup>. This piece of land is the town of New York. It is very sparsely populated and the land is cheap. Then, its form changes. It becomes a small harbour town, and merchants come to trade. Then we see it change, becoming bigger. People are moving about, many of them trading in gold. The scene develops, things improve, and change follows change. Now the town has become big, with many people bustling about; it is the time of La Fayette. The people of New York are trying to find a way to liberate themselves from the yoke of the English.

We see more changes as the buildings increase; the harbour is full of ships. The people are even busier and the buildings rise to a hundred stories. They are magnificent. The scene is very different from what it was. The muddy areas have become part of a vast harbour teeming with incomparable wealth. We visualise this—the city of New York as we see it now developed because of the rise of the individual. We ask which scene humanity would prefer to keep—the muddy piece of land or the noble metropolis?

Next, the divine beings said, ‘*It isn’t finished yet, it is still changing. Not only New York City but the whole world will change and change again up to its limit. Vietnamese friends, let’s look at the map of Sài Gòn City.*

First, we can see sedge growing wild along both banks of the big river. Next to that, a few fishing boats are on the little river. This is Bến Nghé. We see that it is muddy and dirty on both banks and overrun with sedge right up to the paddy fields. Then, we see the form of the landscape changing; the two banks now have less sedge and people are hurrying to build

<sup>34</sup> 60 Guilders # 524 (Wikipedia)

stilt houses. The river becomes full of trading boats. Now we see even more change; people are gathering near the banks to build houses and make a bigger village. The scene is full of houses and boats. In the next scene we see dry paddy fields and houses with dirt floors everywhere. Then there are houses with tiles and more thatched cottages. After more changes, we see that each bank of the little river is Nguyễn Huệ Street (Charner Avenue) in Sài Gòn. The people are very busy; the city is bustling. After more change, the small river disappears. There are no longer any stilt houses on the sides of the big river. Many ships full of merchants are coming and going busily. With more change, we see the town trading prosperously with churches rising and government offices being built. After still more change, we see the town as it is today.

The divine beings asked, *'Do you want to keep Sài Gòn city as it was previously, with muddy paddy fields, or keep it as you see it today?'* Then they added *'Of course, it isn't finished yet; there is still more change to come'*.

If you want to see how the Caodaist religion develops, here it is. First we see our Holy See on the map with jungles, trees, tigers, panthers, monkeys and many other wild animals. Then we see it change with a few thatched cottages in the forest. After some time, people cut the grass with their scythes and open up the land. They build a temple with a few thatched cottages for accommodation. After more change, we see thatched huts wherever there is cleared land; they are close together in the forest. We see people entering the temple, looking clean and honourable. Then a few members of the hierarchy enter the temple while people outside are scolding and abusing them. After yet more change, we see crowds of poor people coming to fell the trees and level the land. We see stone towers and a

temple with a tiled roof being built. After still more change, the old temple disappears and the current temple and other buildings rise up everywhere.

As the Caodaist believers, would we like to keep the desolate forest, or keep the current temple? The divine beings said all this change occurs because of the need to elevate the public. Whether it is New York or Sài Gòn, cities change their form depending on public need, not individual whim. The houses we build are only the achievement of public union, not the individual or ego.

Hence, after coming here from Bát Quái Đài, we probably understand the spiritual secret. Walking past the Caodaist Temple, you should know that lots of people have cooperated to build it. Everything we see on our way was made by our own hands; they are public, not personal. This is even true of Phật Mẫu. We recognise that she is also our mother on earth; she gives birth to our physical being. Phật Mẫu is a public being; she cannot be personal. And Đức Chí Tôn, whom we will see next, is a father to each of us. He is also a public being, and can no longer act as an individual agent. Even the divine power to operate the universe is based on the principles of unselfishness. Whenever humans dedicate their life to the public purpose, refusing to take a piece of land for individual use, they can enjoy happiness.

**Sermon 16**

**The law of love and the right of justice; how to lead humanity to union through belief**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 22nd December 1948; Lunar Calendar 22nd Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**S**O FAR, WE HAVE COME TO CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA WHERE WE SAW A DEBATE AND DISCOVERED what, if anything, is set against us.

In my last talks, I told you about the irreligious souls who put questions to the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings. Those souls generally lack virtue and search for philosophies that will let them deny their guilt. We saw that the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa did not allow them to get away with it.

Tonight we will climb up to the top of Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa. This is the most critical time because those souls will put very tough questions about the power of faith and the law of love and justice from all the earth's religious founders. Therefore, you should pay close attention to what I am going to say—especially male and female dignitaries who have been appointed by divine decree.

Last time, the irreligious souls criticized the differences between religions, saying that because there are too many religions, the human heart has become inconsistent. This time they attack the religious law, asking *'If a religion is established, its law must be made pursuant to the Divine Law. Why have the founders established religions that differ from each other? Some founders explain it one way, others another. It is obvious*

religions contradict each other, so how can humanity not be divided? How can it be united?’

‘The religious founders should review their religious laws and methods, which often contradict each other. They don’t agree, especially when it comes to ideals and the spirit of virtue; how can humanity avoid disunity? If humanity isn’t united, it is in trouble. Obviously, life on earth is always contradictory and difficult, lacking unity’. The Perfectly Moral Divine Beings at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa laughingly answer, ‘The earthly laws are unjust because there are many different psychologies, deeply held virtues and spirits among various races on earth. You cannot ask the Buddha (Siddhartha) to form a religion in India (now Buddhism) with the laws and methods which are identical to those in other nations. You cannot ask him to have the same heart and nature as people who have a very different nationality. However, he still can control the human psychology because his teachings are based on the law of love and justice. Using different methods, religious founders have established various earthly religions with distinct law systems, which even contradict each other. Nevertheless, they can show humanity the way to religious belief, that is to worship Đức Chí Tôn and man. The Buddha said if he was not both love and justice, my religion could not be about love and justice’.

‘From the first day of Creation until this very moment, what have the religious founders used to establish a religion? Is it love and justice? If not, they had never found the sublime philosophy for the emotional needs of humanity. They just practiced religion to attain higher heavenly positions for themselves. Had it not been for love and justice, the religious founders would neither have worked so hard to find a profound philosophy for humanity to learn nor to humble themselves to descend among us. They

won't suffer to raise the spirit of humanity by acting like that'.

*'Lao Zi<sup>35</sup> saw that people didn't understand their true identity, so they didn't know their rank. Lao Zi was born in China when people's state of mind had been devastated. The Chinese didn't know the dignity of humanity. At that time the human mindset was confused; there was no true human conduct and people lacked self-respect. They didn't believe in humanity because they didn't know that they were noble. As a result, they only lived with their animal nature. Without generosity and kindness of Lao Zi to awaken people at this time, they would have been no knowledge of their highest and noblest ranks and they would have continued to live like animals. Had it not been for love and justice, Lao Zi would never have established Taoism. From China, he preached not only to East Asia but also to Europe and countless people follow his way'.*

*'In fact, all religions aim at protecting human spirit. Religious founders have thoroughly considered it, so they have made religious laws based on love and justice. Religious leaders have introduced methods of religious practice in order to lead the human spirit towards the noblest levels of love and justice'.*

*'Also, religious founders established religions to protect human morals. For example, Confucius formed Confucianism in China because he saw that human morals had been turned upside down and ruined. He formed Confucianism to protect*

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<sup>35</sup> Lao Zi, (Lão Tử) wrote his only book, the **Tao Te Ching** (Đạo Đức Kinh) just before he walked away from the Chou empire that he had served. One day, Lao Zi decided to take his leave of the city and simply started walking towards the distant mountain pass to the West. Arriving at the gate leading out of the Empire, he was halted by the gate keeper at the border. This was a man named Yin Hsi, who asked him, 'Before you retire entirely from the earthly world, will you please write some words for our enlightenment?' Lao Zi agreed and before he walked out through the gates and disappeared into another realm, he left with Yin His, a slender collection of eighty-one short chapters verse consisting in total of only around five thousand words, which is now called **Tao Te Ching**.

human morality'.

*'Similarly, Lao Zi also saw that human dignity had degenerated. It no longer had any psychological worth; humans had completely lost their values. Consequently, he humbled himself to come down to earth and establish a law, which took human morals as its basis. If humans have self-respect and know their position, they know Đạo. Knowing Đạo is knowing the divine law; knowing the divine law is knowing Đức Chí Tôn has created Caodaism. Therefore, we must keep practicing and protecting Caodaism. Lao Zi never keeps Đức Chí Tôn as his personal treasure. Lao Zi stated the highest and most respected Đạo, which is the law of love and justice, determines life in the universe, so it has to determine the life of all human races in the earthly world. His law highlights the public rather than the private, so it is the opposite of earthly traditions. As for morality, Confucianism is an excellent model, which, for the time being, all nations are seeking. That is why Đức Chí Tôn has predicted that Caodaism is a banner signalling to all nations that they must realise in advance the period of world-improving Confucianism has arrived. Furthermore, Jesus Christ established Christianity. If he hadn't been selfless he wouldn't have offered his body in sacrifice to Đức Chí Tôn. He begged for forgiveness for the sins of humanity so he deserves to be loved. If humankind considered him a role model, there would be more love among us in the world.'*

*'If you intellectuals still deny, saying that owing to the distinct teachings introduced by religious founders, it is impossible for you to choose one to follow, so you decide to become atheists, let me tell you this. There are a thousand ways, but you must select one! If you refuse to lead people's emotional needs on the way of belief or guide the spirit of humanity towards the law of*



*love and justice, you are not allowed to achieve your heavenly status when you show your own records to the Three-Religion-Tribunal. You will have to beseech the court for mercy. I'm certain there will be no way you can deny your guilt, no matter how much you argue'.*

*'If you atheistic intellectuals still keep your original viewpoint, I will show you this evidence. The Caodaist religion has been revealed. Đức Chí Tôn established it twenty-four years ago. He has come to sign the Third Covenant with humanity because people betrayed the Second Covenant. They didn't keep their faith, and were opposed to God. Humanity is heading for ruin. We compete and try to destroy each other, but because of His love and kindness, Đức Chí Tôn has come and signed the Third Covenant, leaving it as a law to guide us'.*

In summary, other divine beings urge humankind to examine Caodaism for the proper way of belief that suits what was listed in the Third Covenant between Đức Chí Tôn and man. That is the law of love and justice. Although religious laws have countless forms, they remain within the law of love and justice.

The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council depends upon the highest form of this invisible law—the laws of love and justice to lead humanity to the invisible realm, Heaven. Only the law of love and justice counts, others are simply methods.

In the next sermon, I will preach about the power of the law of love and justice.



## Sermon 17

## The power of the law of love and justice and the agreement between the Đức Chí Tôn and humanity

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 26th December 1948; Lunar Calendar 26th Day of the 11th month, year of the Mouse.*

**L**AST TIME I PREACHED ABOUT THE LIVELY DEBATE AT CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA OVER THE LAW WHICH religions have left on earth. I also briefly explained the law Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being or God) assigned to His holy body (the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council) to implement the Third Covenant. Besides, I promised to preach about the power of the law of love and justice.

My friends, at the beginning of Caodaism, I sketched out the power of Đức Chí Tôn. At that time, Đức Chí Tôn didn't announce the Third Covenant, but His Grace Chuồng Đạo<sup>36</sup> briefly explained this so we can understand that Đức Chí Tôn makes His holy body and all people to follow the law of love and justice. I then asked him about this, 'A master is different from a father, so why is Đức Chí Tôn himself called both "master" and "father"?' His Grace Chuồng Đạo replied, 'A father is worthy of being called "father" and a master is worthy of being called "master."' Now, I want to remind you of this poem:

*His law is love, his power is justice,  
Live honestly and avoid earthly conspiracies.  
As Father, He silently looks after His children.*

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<sup>36</sup> Chuồng Đạo is the head of the Society of Foreign Missions. This is his holiness Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn (Victor Hugo). He was appointed to this position by Đức Chí Tôn .

*As Master, He gives up divine status to His children.*

Through this poem, His Grace Chửởng Đạo told us in advance that in the coming Third Covenant, Đức Chí Tôn would demand that all humans, especially His holy body (the Caodai Sacerdotal Council), implement the law of love and justice.

Next, I want to say about the power of the law of love and justice. Actually, we can see all living beings around ourselves are created by the law of love. Animals love and humans love. If they don't have this, they can't continue to multiply. If humans don't love each other, they can't become husband and wife. If they lack this ability, they can't have children and continue their family, leaving children and grandchildren for posterity.

Since the Creation, both animals and humans have had to follow the law of love imposed by Ngọc Hư Cung and Tây Phương Cực Lạc (Sukhàvati; Western Pure-Land; the Paradise of Extreme Joy) in order to attain heavenly statuses. And Cung Diêu Trì of the Buddha Mother is where the law of love is fully enforced through the reproduction of all living beings in the universe. Truthfully, if Đức Chí Tôn lacked love, He wouldn't separate Himself into a second body to create the universe as we see it now. Similarly, if we were afraid of love, we would be afraid of our own creation. If the male side and the female side are afraid of their wife and husband respectively, life can't be created. They must have a deep love to become wife and husband. Additionally, love is not only for marriage but also for larger subjects, like love for race, nation and humankind.

Therefore, when Confucius established Confucianism, he focused attention on human morals. His doctrine has such a very resilient and stable foundation that it has lasted over 2,000

years and still has its original strength. It is strong enough to change the world. The fundamental source of human morals is love, which Đức Chí Tôn demanded that we follow. If we sign the Third Covenant with Him, we must follow it.

This time the Covenant which we signed with Him must be effective. He makes us sign and implement it so that we won't break our promise with Him because we have signed similar Covenants twice before and have failed twice. On the previous two occasions, did He command us? Well, He did, but He didn't speak to humanity. Therefore, we thought it was not an obligation, so we didn't implement it. If we aren't obliged to follow a law, it is ineffective. This time Đức Chí Tôn not only said but also commanded us.

Addition to the law of love, this time we must implement the rights of justice. Just look at the very organizations on this earth. If there is no sense of justice, I am certain that the entire current organisations can't survive. However, there is still an imperfection, which is people fight and kill each other when they implement the rights of justice. It is obviously undeniable that humans are living in chaos because justice is only a matter of talk. The justice presently mentioned by all nations now is only a method of deception.

Commonly, people use a weighing scale to represent justice, but there is no justice in the world yet. The strong, the rich, the noble and the honourable all have a different idea of justice. The poor also have a different sense of justice.

Human justice as we see it now is false, so it only creates chaos and brutal killing. If humans are determined enough to have good collaboration to bring the genuine justice to all human races, there will be no more killing. Unfortunately, they

are using words and money to implement a mere display which is the meaning of their justice. Humans haven't achieved real justice yet, so they haven't seen true justice and love on earth. Đức Chí Tôn urges all his children, especially the Sacerdotal Council, his holy body, to implement a sense of justice that reveals its true essence.

This is why one sentence of Đức Chí Tôn's divine messages says, *'Whenever you see an act of injustice on this planet, it is a sign that Caodaism hasn't been achieved its target.'*

## Sermon 18

**The true happiness of humanity**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 6th January 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 8th Day of the 12th month, Year of the  
Mouse.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLAIN WHERE THE TRUE HAPPINESS OF HUMANITY COMES FROM.

I have mentioned that, in the lively debate in Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa, the well educated, but irreligious souls tried to get away with their guilt. They weirdly argued, *“Only noble and respectable souls have the spirit, the power and the means to face serious challenges of the Four Noble Truths (birth, aging, illness, dying) to claim their heavenly ranks. Most other souls can’t undertake, let alone resolve or conquer it to search for a way to free themselves from suffering. They want to escape from suffering, but know that there is no way out. Due to much suffering, they look for any kind of happiness that may help reduce their suffering. Unfortunately, while doing so, they may generate sin from wrong deeds, which only adds to their karmic account. Why are they convicted while they just really want to have a little happiness?”*

By the way, God’s children and His holy body, please ponder on this issue to find out how the Perfectly Moral Beings at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa answer them.

Meanwhile, let’s find out where the true happiness of humankind is from.

Tonight I will preach for a bit longer. Please try to sit patiently, and listen as attentively as you can.

It is always really tough to preach the truth using common words, especially in a very short talk. Additionally, I have to make my talk as short as possible by concisely summarising it because I do not want to make you tired after each ceremony. Friends, brothers and sisters, preaching isn't easy. It is extremely arduous.

It isn't like when some of our sisters go up on stage and say a few things—just two or three sentences—and then finish. I remember this Giáo Sư<sup>37</sup> went up to the pulpit but stood there with stage-fright for a while because he hadn't had enough time to research his topic. Each time I preach, I keep a separate space for all of you to ponder on and then add more in order to get the deepest meaning. I am trying to give you a key, one you can hold, that will open the gate and guide you through the path of Đức Chí Tôn .

Anyway, let me now tell you about where the true happiness of humankind is from.

I always tell you it is a really difficult task to discover the truth or an imperceptible philosophy. We have to thoroughly investigate the topic to find the answer in our conscience. To make it easier, let's examine the small things and then make deductions about the larger truths.

All humans want to find a way to ease the suffering of life, but they are just groping around for the answer. Alas! People have made numerous schemes to seek happiness because they are extremely thirsty for it. Poor them! Consequently, they will follow whoever starts to create happiness for them. The Germans followed Hitler because they thought he could create happiness; the Italians followed Mussolini because they

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<sup>37</sup> A Caoadaist dignitary of The Caoadaist Executive Body. Between Giáo Hữu and Phối Sư.

thought he could bring them happiness. Right now, all human races are fooled into believing a sort of colorful happiness. Because of that everyone becomes confused. This misplaced longing for happiness deceives the human spirit. Think about it. Where is human happiness? All right, let me rephrase it. Let's examine ourselves to see where our happiness is. Try it! Have we been happy since our birthday? We see nothing but suffering, don't we? Therefore, I advise that you admit the truth of the Four Noble Truths suggested by the Buddha. However, that doesn't mean we accept the arguments of the irreligious souls in *Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá*.

Now, I will recollect my life to see how much suffering I have had to endure and how much happiness I have been allowed. Where should I start? I was born into a family of compassion and virtue. My father was an official in the French Colonial Administration. When I was four, my father attained a good position and the family lived well. We had fine clothes and plenty of food on the table. If my father had been corrupt and taken bribes, he would have been very rich. However, he was extremely virtuous, and considered virtue to be the highest goal.

He often objected to injustice, especially the oppression of the poor. Because he committed himself to helping people, he had difficulty keeping his position. He always defended the weak and the lonely and objected strongly when the authorities were unfair. They hated objectors like my father, and eventually he was fired. After losing his job he returned to the family house and worked as a trader with my mother to make ends meet.

I was the eighth child and I had a younger sister. We lived as a brood of children in a very ragged nest. My other

brothers and sisters made their way in the world with their own families, but I remained with my parents; the second-last must stay with the family. At the time I thought I was unlucky. Looking back, I didn't know anything except that we all loved each other a lot. I loved my father who created me and raised me—a genuine man. I loved my mother who nourished me and cared for and nurtured our family; and I loved my brothers and sisters. It was because of this love that I studied hard, worrying that if I didn't work hard enough, my father and mother would be sad and worried. My parents would say, *'If you don't study, we will be very distressed.'*

Because of love I was so resolved to study hard that I became extremely studious. What only I did then was to love my family. As a result, when there was dissent among my brothers and sisters, I really suffered for it. If my brothers and sisters were fighting, even though I was in tears, I was often the one who tried to make peace. When I reflect on that time and all that has happened since, it was the happiest time of my life—the time when all I knew was love.

My father passed away when I was twelve. By the time I had completed my studies and started working, I was living with my mother. I loved her dearly and was worried that she would pass away. I didn't know who I would live with after her death. I even worried when I was asleep.

In Tây Ninh people often held funerals at night, so you would hear people chanting while you were asleep. When I heard the chants I would wake up and stumble towards my mother, who would ask what I was doing. I would reply that I had heard people going to a funeral and that I was scared that she had died. I loved her so much. Consequently, when I was seventeen, I decided to go to work to support and return



thanks to my surviving parent. I didn't know anything then, only my mother's love.

After that, my younger sister got married and moved out of the family home. I had passed my examinations. If I had taken a job with a large company, I could have had a good salary, but I was still worried whether I could look after my mother. Furthermore, my brother-in-law told me that working for a commercial company provided no honour. Thus, I took his advice and decided to work for the government.

My salary at the time was 70-80 piastres; it seemed so much! I spent more than others but still had enough left to look after my mother. When my salary was only 20 piastres a month, I began to get into debt, but by then I also had a wife to support. I became confused because it was hard to look after my mother too. How could I take care of all this? I suffered physically and spiritually worrying how to bring happiness to my family.

It was a time I can't forget. I only knew one thing; I needed to work to look after my mother, my brothers and my sisters, but I couldn't. Then my mother passed away. I was 22. I was extremely sad because I could then make a living, but my parents had passed away already. My feelings were intensified because I had my own children, so I could not worry about external matters then. Next, without my parents, I had no choice but to bond with my brothers and sisters, but in turn all the loving members of my family passed away later. As a result, all my familial love was directed to my elder brother-in-law. I loved him more than my blood brother.

Then my youngest sister, my dearest friend, passed away. It was enough to make my soul a wanderer and my body

became indifferent to life. I would look at the grass and see the birds outside and I would remember. I listened to the songs of the girls as they sowed the rice and the calls of the boatmen; everything reminded me of my sorrow. There were no longer any joyful days; all I wanted to do was find a good location and practise a religion. At that time, my soul was in a terrible state.

Luckily, Đức Chí Tôn (the Supreme Being, God) came and gave me a touch of enlightenment, one that illuminated my small soul and liberated me from suffering. Therefore, I followed Him, and the more I followed His ideal, the more I offered my soul to Him. Then He delivered a profound love to me—a love a million times more rewarding than the love of a family.

If one knows how to practise a religion, one knows the Đạo. If one knows the Đạo, one knows how to guide one's brothers and sisters with this profound love. It means facing the thousand sufferings of humanity with love.

So far, I have lived through many years of suffering and undertaken suffering together with my Caodaist brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, they have died one by one and returned to union with the heavenly Father. Only I am left to bear the burdens of suffering. However much suffering I have, you friends remain unconcerned, as if you were not Caodaists at all. I have to take care of the religious work of teaching and guiding our Caodaist younger brothers and sisters, and taking care of the young children. Nobody helps or protects our Caodaist community. I thought I have offered my life for this religion, so I can liberate my soul from suffering, but all I see is increased suffering. What is the source of this agony? Fortunately, at last I can find the happiness needed to live in

such suffering. If there weren't happiness, I would already be dead. I would have died when I was forced into exile<sup>38</sup>, or when the Caodaist community was in a state of emergency, and about to fall. If I hadn't had happiness to comfort my spirit, I wouldn't be alive now.

Presently, happiness exists. The happiness which comforts my spirit is the love I have for the children of Đức Chí Tôn . The love of these million souls is my true happiness. It makes my physical body strong and healthy. This strength keeps me alive to conquer all kinds of suffering. I truly love the children of Đức Chí Tôn , and I know that they all return their true love to me. In the past, Caodaist adherents didn't love each other and some even were jealous and made their spirits envious, but gradually the true love of the children of Đức Chí Tôn helps me prove that spiritual love and justice are definitely true. We have created happiness because of love. Now my true happiness is the endless love for God's children in Caodaism. This happiness enables me to live with more strength and power.

Let's ponder on this: whenever we achieve something big, and can enjoy that accomplishment, that work is really valuable. This work (Caodaist community), which we have just carried out for a short time, hasn't had any achievement yet. However, if millions of people trust us, we must try even though we can lose our lives. That's worth the ultimate sacrifice, isn't it?

I tell you, if the Caodaist Religion can enjoy the infinite happiness Đức Chí Tôn gives one day, it is my great honour to have created a great work and presented it to the children of Đức Chí Tôn. I could achieve this because of the incomparable power of love.

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<sup>38</sup> By the French to Madagascar

Next time I will tell you more about the power of love and human happiness.

## Sermon 19

**Đức Chí Tôn devised the Cao Đài religion  
to create happiness for all humans  
and peace for this 68th planet**

*Delivered in the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 13th January 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 15th Day of the 12th month, year of the  
Mouse.*

**I**N THE LAST SERMON, I LEFT A QUESTION HANGING: CAN THE CAO ĐÀI RELIGION PRODUCE HAPPINESS FOR ALL humanity and create peace for universal harmony?

Since the question has been asked, we must answer it. We should not only believe in Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) but also know he comes to create this religion to chiefly sign the Third Covenant with humanity to create happiness and allow people to enjoy a lasting peace on this 68th planet. We firmly believe this will be achieved, especially because of the affirmation of our spiritual eldest brother, the Spiritual Pope, Lý Bạch (Li Po; 李白) who said,

*A great religion (Caodaism) has been established. It has united all living beings with Đức Chí Tôn .*

That means he affirms that the Cao Đài religion has been created and step by step will develop to achieve its final goal. We have also seen how human agreements work, especially those between great powers. They sign agreements which contain innumerable articles. Conversely, there are only two articles in the agreement with Đức Chí Tôn: Firstly, the law of love. He determines that love is the law for us—not simply loving humanity, but a love for all beings. The second is the rights of justice, which he designates.

We haven't seen any agreement as simple as this. Yet it is so powerful and hard to be carried out. It seems that humans probably won't be able to carry it out by themselves by doomsday. We have understood and believe that it will be achieved, but we can't tell when. We only know the true purpose of the Caodaist religion by instinct, and ascertain it through our wisdom and intelligence. That purpose is we have to create and make a lasting peace for a universally harmonious world.

Thanks to wisdom and understanding by seeking, we can see the law of love has been the most powerful since humankind existed. Without the boundless strength of the law of love, Sakyamuni Buddha would never have established His religion.

When the Buddha subjected Himself to ascetic disciplines on Nairanjana River, Kiều Trần Như and his four friends followed the Buddha. They didn't go with him as followers but went to observe, to see if he would reach enlightenment. When they saw Prince Gautama, the Buddha-to-be, come down from the mountain and start eating and drinking normally, they remarked that he had returned to an earthly life and hadn't attained enlightenment. They walked off and left him. When he went out to preach he searched for these people; they realised his authentic nature and rejoined him. Only two of them were essential to the cause, but finally only one remained and attained enlightenment.

Lao Zi, who founded Taoism, had one disciple, Doãn Hỷ (Yin Hsi)<sup>39</sup>, and one servant, Tù Giáp. They both understood

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<sup>39</sup> Lão Tử (Lao Tzu; Lao Zi) wrote his only book Đạo Đức Kinh (the *Tao Te Ching*) just before he walked away from the Chou empire that he had served. One day Lão Tử decided to take his leave of the city and started walking towards the distant mountain pass in the West. When he arrived at the gate leading out of the Empire,

His teachings, but only Yin Hsi followed Lao Zi and attained immortality. Taoism developed through him up to our own time.

Although Khổng Tử (Kong Zi; Confucius) had 36 saints, 72 sages and 3000 disciples, it is true that He wasn't sure if any of them would understand His teachings completely. Only one did—Master Tăng Sâm<sup>40</sup>. We know this because in the moment before Khổng Tử passed away, He called Sâm to Him and said '*Only you master my teachings.*'

Jesus Christ had only half a disciple because Saint Peter denied him three times before he repented and confessed to Mary in tears.

At the beginning, Muhammad only had one female disciple (Khadisha). Islam was founded then.

We deduce that only with love offered by one person or even half a person could the founders establish their religions on this earth.

Hence, Caodaism is more fortunate than the previous traditions, as it had three people<sup>41</sup>. The true appearance of the religion of Đức Chí Tôn (Caodaism) is created from His incomparable powers. The disciples draw and mould its form from this truth, following Đức Cao Đài's orders.

May I offer my excuses to His children, I am not telling you this out of pride, but I have made a considerable contribution to Caodaist priesthood. That's why I ask everyone to reflect

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the gate keeper halted him. This man, named Yin Hsi, asked him, 'Before you retire entirely from the earthly world, will you please write some words for our enlightenment?' Lão Tử agreed and before he walked through the gates and disappeared into another realm, he gave Yin Hsi a slender collection of 81 short chapters in verse consisting in total of only about 5,000 words. This is now called Đạo Đức Kinh.

<sup>40</sup> Zengzi, born Zeng Shen or Zeng Can, courtesy name Ziyu. The favorite disciple of Confucius.

<sup>41</sup> Đức Quyền Giáo Tông Thượng Trung Nhật, Đức Thượng Phẩm Cao Quỳnh Cư, Đức Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc.

on their past religious activities to see that we all have united collectively in the Caodaist community because of immense and boundless love. Therefore, we can deduce that other Caodaist friends also join because of love. Formed by love, Caodaism is the community of love, whose Sacerdotal Council will lead humankind back to God.

We don't only dream or deceive human psychologies. Obviously, everyone can see in front of them what power has formed the current religious authority. It is the law of love that formed the current power of Caodaism and no power can destroy it. It might be concerned about the law of hate, but fortunately the force of hatred can't cause trouble because the divine hand has already turned all hatred aside. It is formed from love and it grows by love. From the constitution of love, the more it grows the stronger it becomes; it will dominate hatred, and hatred will never be able to conquer it.

I once defeated hatred when other Caodaist sects used the power of hate to occupy the throne of Đức Chí Tôn on earth! I was brave and used my rights to destroy them all, so I could preserve the Caodaist community. I have lost a great deal and have had to shoulder all this hatred, but I successfully maintained the image of Đức Chí Tôn for complete love. I stopped Caodaism from being blemished and becoming defiled.

Why did I dare make such sacrifice and bear this hatred to protect the Caodaist organization? Because I knew that it would become the image of the authority that governed the world in the future. If it were not complete it would leave behind a blemished and rustic model unable to become the Lord of the world.



At that time, other Caodaist sects used hatred to forcefully take their positions. Being Hộ Pháp of Caodaism, I hold the orthodox power of Đức Chí Tôn in my hand. How could I let them usurp the throne and take their positions by force, like a king or a lord in the past?

It's lucky that those evil powers couldn't beat the holy body (The Supreme Being, God) of Đức Chí Tôn. They were defeated because there is an imposing person in His holy body who holds the law—the sword of wisdom and enlightenment—in his hand to protect the true religion, allowing it to reach its true form. This can form power for people now, and create power for humanity on planet earth in the future.

Sermon 20

**The image of the Divine Mother on the earth is the image of Shiva; the divine extended family of each individual will meet at Cung Diêu Trì**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 16th January 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 18th Day of the 12th month, year of the  
Mouse.*

**W**E HAVE REMAINED AT CUNG HIỆP THIÊN HÀNH HÓA FOR A WHILE. WE HAVE LEARNT MANY INTERESTING things about our spirit's nature. We probably want to stay there forever, but, regretfully, we must continue along the path to eternal life.

We really want to dawdle here because Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa is close to Diêu Trì Cung, which is our original womb; no wonder it is hard to leave. Friends, you must remember that we are only passengers on the endless Path to Eternal Life, but in Diêu Trì Cung when you meet the beloved Mother, you just want to stay with her. Imagine if you could see how she expresses her profound love for us. Last time I already told you about my happiness when my birth mother, who had passed away years before, entered the spiritual form of the Great Divine Mother. That is when I felt happiest. In Cung Diêu Trì, we see our process of transformation from those very primitive times when we were simply matter to the times when we became humans, even angels. We achieved happiness and reached the position we long to attain as well as bore the sufferings when our second bodies reincarnated repeatedly in humans.

I want to explain the most essential point which is linked

to our religious practices in past incarnations. We have already seen our great Divine Mother keep our memories in her palace. She has preserved and cared for our divine achievements in the spiritual realm.

This is not very different from the way our mother behaves on earth. Do you remember our holidays, like Christmas, when a mother buys toys for her children? She is expressing her love for them. After her child finishes playing with the toys, she takes them into the house. She lovingly keeps them in pristine condition and when the child grows to adulthood, she looks upon the toys as a memento of their early years. Just as our earthly mother does this, our great Divine Mother, who has lived through millions of lives, does much more. What can we gain from this? How can we fail to be amazed? Every action at her palace reminds us of her endless affection for us.

There is another essential point. We meet our extended spiritual family at this palace. Then we certainly understand this special kind of happiness. When we arrive at the palace, we have the chance to rest and ponder over ourselves for some time. On earth, even if we create a great family, the most we can only hope to live for about 100 years. Then, you must die one day and leave your earthly family. In contrast, our extended spiritual family is waiting for us right now—waiting here, anticipating and longing for our return. They don't want us to waste our lives. They are waiting for us with the love we have experienced since our last departure.

Although our conscience and our spirit suffer greatly as we reincarnate, the most important thing for us to remember is that we are merely passengers. We might live over here or over there, for, as you know, there are many planets in the universe. Now living on this 68th planet, we all consider it

the most loving home we have. We see that everyone around us is afraid of death because they are worried that they will leave it. Everyone worries about the death so much that they sometimes become morally depraved for survival. However, if we understand the death, we wouldn't need to undertake this kind of suffering. I'm certain that our 68th planet is in the lowest class in the universe, where humans suffer most. Our life here isn't so worthwhile that we should grow overly fond of it. Our planet is full of suffering; it is the planet itself that suffers most.

On this planet, we see travelers going far from home and their relatives going out to the port to say goodbye. The ones who are leaving cry; the ones who are staying cry. They are crying, but they leave. If you are going to cry so much, why go in the first place? The people who are staying cry even more; if you are going to cry so much why let them go? Why all the tears? Why leave?

It's the same for travelers in eternal life. All of us have to continue our progress ever further along the Divine Path to Eternal Life. We make constant progress without limits. We have to take the path through this vast universe until we reach the great work of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God). No individual soul knows this limitless work or can thoroughly understand it.

Friends, just follow me to enter the divine door. There are two of the most essential things in Ngọc Hử Cung and Cốc Lạc Thế Giới. When the time comes I will guide you to those two places.

Additionally, I must also clearly point out to you that the great Mother Buddha descended to this earth and is called the

Shiva Buddha in India. You can see Her statue on Bát Quái Đài on the roof of our Caodaist Temple. We know that is Her statue because of the breasts on her chest.

In the beginning when Đức Chí Tôn decided to divide His tánh (nature). He used the khí (qi; energy) or His mystical dharma to create and develop the Buddha Mother. The Buddha Mother belongs to the Yin, Đức Chí Tôn belongs to the Yang. When the Yin and the Yang are united together, they beget lives and the universe.

In India the statue of Shiva Buddha is made half female with her face resembling a male. This is because at that time humans couldn't distinguish the yin/yang composition of heaven.

According to Taoism, Đức Chí Tôn is Thần. Thần created Khí (The Shiva Buddha) and Khí created Tinh (living beings). According to Buddhism, Đức Chí Tôn is the Buddha; the Buddha Mother is the dharma. The dharma then creates living beings and things of the universe. These living beings and things are called the sangha (living beings and materials).

Therefore Buddhists actually worship the Buddha Mother though people thought they did not. Anyway, She has been there since heaven and earth began, creating all the beings in the universe though few people know who She is.

Next time I will guide you to enter Ngọc Hư Cung and we will examine that palace's mystery.

**Sermon 21**

**The secrets inherent in what we have done; what we are doing, what we must do; the relation between angel and animal in each of us**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 9th February 1949; Lunar Calendar 12th Day of the 1st month, year of the Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT WE WILL TOGETHER MOVE ALONG THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Being Caodaist adherents, we together hurry along the path shown by the Supreme Being, who has come to preach on this planet earth. It is we who prove His sacredness in the religions he has established. Before coming to observe the governing organisation of the universe in Ngọc Hư Cung, we should understand who we are and what we are doing now so that we will not be surprised by the unexpected thing like the debate we have witnessed at Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa.

I explained humans philosophically comprise two special parts: the soul, which is our most mysterious part, created by Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God), and the body, which is created by the Buddha Mother. The former is invisible while the latter is visible. The invisible one is morally perfect as well as sacred. The visible one operates separately according to its own physical law whereas the invisible one still continues to progress through the ranks of geniis, saints, immortals and Buddhas.

From before history, religions have described a human soul and his body as an angel riding upon an animal. From antiquity, philosophers the world over have described many

examples of religions, sacred and mysterious traditions. Like in France, we have *la belle et la bête* (the beauty and the beast).

In this way, all religions are essentially the same in distinguishing the two separate parts of humans. For example, in East Asia and in Buddhism we have seen Đức Văn Thù Bồ Tát (Manjucři Bodhisattva) riding his white elephant, Đức Từ Hàng Bồ Tát (Từ Hàng Bodhisattva) riding the Kim Mao Hẩu<sup>42</sup>, Đức Địa Tạng Vương Bồ Tát (Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva) riding the Đê Thính<sup>43</sup> or the Eight Chinese Immortals riding their animals. They all are the examples of the two parts (physical and spiritual) of a human.

Similarly, examining the system of creation on this planet, for example the human marriage here, we can see that one person alone can't make a happy family. The husband and wife must be in agreement or, more exactly, deeply love each other to be successful. They must be closely concerned with each other though they are completely different in mental and physical aspects. This mysterious law of creation compels us to search continually for our spouses. Consequently, when people reach the age of marriage, then they feel something is lacking in life and have to look for a spouse. The law of creation also requires us to solve our own problems so that we can live harmoniously. Similarly, the husband and wife have to solve their problems to create harmony between themselves. Why?

To teach us that we need to create harmony between our physical body, the animal, and our soul, the angel.

How can angels and animals co-exist? There is certain methods so that they can live together in order to progress to their original spiritual rank in heaven. That law raises a

<sup>42</sup> A heavenly animal like a lion, described by Chinese mythology.

<sup>43</sup> A heavenly animal like a dog, described by Chinese mythology.

question in our mind: can an animal and a human have the same law? No. Animals have their law and humans have theirs. Our physical body has its own law and our soul has a spiritual law. The two laws cannot be combined. We can see clearly that we humans and animals don't have the same dignity, nature or essence.

Our way of life is different from that of animals. We can't give rice to a horse and expect it to eat it. Conversely, we can't eat grass, walk on all four legs or run a thousand miles. A horse can't sit at our table. All philosophies show that animals and humans can't have the same dignity. Our physical body, which is animal, and our original soul—*nguồn linh* (the spirit)—can't be equal and unite with each other. These two laws are important to each other, but can't be united.

It is commonly said that we humans can publicly exercise supernatural powers after attaining enlightenment. No way! There is no magic on earth. They are only black magic, if any. If an enlightened person were able to do that, Xuan Zang<sup>44</sup> would not have let his corpse flow in the river. Remember that only our second body or spiritual body<sup>45</sup> can achieve buddhahood or nirvana and then move to the divine eternal life. On the other hand, our physical bodies are actually animals which must obey the laws of birth and death on earth.

Hence, the political power of the universe is wielded in Ngọc Hữ Cung. Here the universe is governed based on spiritual laws, which are completely different from the laws applied on earth. The two laws are made by two different systems. All governing organisations in Ngọc Hữ Cung are

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<sup>44</sup> The hero in *Journey to the West*, an ancient Chinese novel. In this novel Xuan Zang saw his corpse flow in the river after getting the Buddhist scriptures, that is achieving nirvana.

<sup>45</sup> which is traditionally called *Via* in Vietnamese (ethereal body in English)



different from those which govern the earth. The two systems are closely related with each other but not interchangeable. You can't apply the laws needed to govern this planet to the spiritual realm. It won't work.

We have to know which part we are looking for. We are seeking the organisation which enables us to reach a heavenly position. We must explore how to attain the most noble and highest position—the position of a Buddha. We must attain the holy virtue of Đức Chí Tôn who is Lord, by whatever means. He Himself is the Buddha who created the universe and begets all other Buddhas. Whatever we do, we must eventually reach the position he did.

This is similar to what we can see around us on earth. Children always want to embody their father's nature; they imitate whatever he does. This is entirely natural. It's part of our virtuous nature and isn't at all strange. As I've explained, every individual, however worldly they are, wants to be God. They always admire the position of God, hoping to attain this supreme universal position. In the universe there is always a force that pushes people strive to get to heaven; this is the desire to leave our animal self and transform into a Buddha.

We can't deny this philosophy—it stares us in the face. We never want to lead a lowly, animal way of life like that of our physical body. The body may be good and strong for a while, but then it becomes weak and dies at last.

We are riding a healthy, strong horse, which can run a thousand miles. But when it becomes weak and old it must be abandoned. There's no reason to consider that an animal is better than we are, so we can't consider our physical body—the animal—is better than our soul.

From long ago, intellectuals have worked very hard, lost in thought, to seek out the meaning of our life in relation to the universe. They want to know why we have to live and what is important in the universe. They need to search for the answer to the questions: *'Why must our souls, which are so sacred and special, trapped in such weak animals?'* Thanks to their souls, which are closely related to the Đạo or morality, they can live as humans. If not, they are only a weak animal unable to beat others. Therefore, humankind don't dare to abandon morality. Without morality, they are only animals. They always want to depend on morality to establish the value of their life.

Tonight I have disclosed a secret, so now you know what to search for. Next time we meet, I will guide us to Ngọc Hư Cung to thoroughly observe the politics of the universe.

## Sermon 22

**The philosophy of civilization**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 15th February 1949; Lunar Calendar 18th Day of the 1st month, year of the Buffalo*

**C**HILDREN OF ĐỨC CHÍ TÔN (THE SUPREME BEING, GOD), BEFORE I LEAD YOU ALONG THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE, especially into Cung Ngọc Hư<sup>46</sup>, you must know one essential thing. If I don't explain it before we enter the next palace, you will have a severe disadvantage. That is you won't understand the essence of the sublime philosophy of the progression of souls, especially of how we attain our heavenly positions.

Now, I will begin. There is one thing from planet earth, which creates incredible suffering in human souls because it have made humans fight for progress from time immemorial, leading to very many sins.

That is Văn Minh (civilization)! Today I will preach about these two terms: văn and minh. What is văn minh of our time? The root of this Vietnamese term is found in the Chinese language. Văn (wen) means words, culture or literature; words which we get from others or invent ourselves. Minh (ming) means apparent, clear, conscious, bright. As a result, văn minh is the clear wise words that help us discover ways to plan the future or to make progress in our life. After that, we use words to pass on our experience to the next generations so that they will know how well our society has progressed.

In French văn minh is “*la civilisation*” (civilization-English), which has three additional meanings:

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<sup>46</sup> The same as Ngọc Hư Cung.

Firstly, it is the total progress in psychology, that is the advanced level of reasoning or the highly developed lifestyle humans have had so far and are trying to improve until they are completely satisfied.

Secondly, it is the total social or national progress in wealth. Since people always want to preserve their society, they develop new ideas and instruments to improve it. A progressive society will bring them happiness.

Thirdly, the methods our spirit uses to overcome material. To put it another way, the methods we invent to suppress our animal spirit. Our minds can recognise the spiritual from the divine nature; we do this to be worthy humans, not lowering ourselves to be like animals.

Which of these three meanings should we choose? You may say all three, but I think the last meaning is definitely the most authoritative. But why? Because it is the one that can create true human happiness. We humans now can fly across the skies in an aeroplane, like a bird or dive into the oceans using apparatus. Perhaps we won't even need to stay on earth, but will be able to hang about in the clouds. Now we can travel faster on earth than in the past or stay in the air. However, this isn't happiness. It is just technological advances, which people thought could create human happiness. No, they are wrong.

In fact, being embraced, comforted or flattered doesn't make complete happiness. Besides, some people thought they would be happy if they could oppress all rivals. No, they're wrong either. True happiness is spiritual, not material.

Since ancient times, hundreds of kings have created nations and completed other great works. They all dreamed

of being the Lord of as many nations as possible because they thought that would bring them happiness. History proves them wrong as you may see!

We have seen the drama behind the quote, ‘...*the greater our name and fame the more difficulty we must face.*’ If a king’s spirit isn’t satisfied, he can’t be truly happy. It doesn’t matter how rich or how noble he is; it isn’t happiness. If the spirit isn’t satisfied, there can’t be happiness. Humans always search for this sort of happiness; it is more important than their search for food or shelter. Life has given them an honourable, luxurious and satisfying existence, but only on the physical plane. They constantly seek pleasure for their physical body; indulging themselves for two or three days if they can. After several days they become numb. If their physical body attains happiness at any level, they won’t be satisfied, because true happiness doesn’t depend on the physical body. Happiness and glory don’t depend on the physical body at all. Thus, the civilization that only makes a kind of human happiness only relevant to the physical, is earthly. This sort of happiness is the same as the dew that forms on the grass in the morning. It is transitory—a flash in the eyes of people who remain unsatisfied. What we create will only satisfy our physical body, not our soul, so it won’t last and can’t be completely honourable.

The civilization that helps people control their animal desires and moderate their survival on earth will create true happiness. We need to moderate our physical desires for a limited satisfaction in the brief temporary life on this planet. Only the spirit of virtue and morality can create true happiness.

Once again, I explain the true meaning of the term *văn minh*. *Văn* means wise words, and *minh* means the bright virtue. If civilisation can be truly achieved, that is humans

can create the sublime faith of this planet, there will be true happiness. The method that is based on virtue will lead to perpetual happiness.

## Sermon 23

## The progress on the Path to the Eternal Life is limitless

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 23rd February 1949; Lunar Calendar 26th Day of the 1st month, year of the Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT, I WILL CONTINUE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ALONG THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE. WE HAVE postponed our talks for a while and now there is one thing that pushes me to cover many things quickly. That is because I have already seen some of you packing your bags to go home<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, male and female Caodaists, you must learn to understand and become familiar with your way of going home.

We have progressed from Diêu Trì Cung to Ngọc Hư Cung, the palace which governs the universe. I don't need to mention this, for we have already learnt that we are coming to a very important place that holds power over and directs the workings of the cosmos.

Perhaps we all imagine what it is like to have the power to govern the universe. This power must depend upon the ceaseless work of a group of highly skilled officers. We can imagine that this group of busy officials is like those who govern nations of earth. For example, wherever a capital is located, it will resound with the congestion of government business. Conversely, this palace doesn't have the sort of hectic chaos we might imagine.

I would like to explain this palace step-by-step, so that

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<sup>47</sup> Home = Heaven. Go home = die. He implies that some senior Caodai dignitaries are going to die.

you, children of Đức Chí Tôn can understand as easily as possible. I have seen it and I am here to tell the story for all male and female believers—particularly the elders and the heavenly appointed dignitaries amongst you. You must pay attention and remember this.

Anyway, one thing remains intriguing—it is very hard to convince souls to leave Cung Diêu Trì to continue their spiritual progress. When most souls arrive at this motherly realm, they enjoy incomparable happiness—particularly those whose lives were hard during their previous reincarnations. They feel at home in this realm with its unbounded joy. They share the company of the Mother of immeasurable and boundless love. It is hard to ask souls to leave such a place, but one thing is essential. As the saying goes: *‘Đi cho biết đó biết đây, ở nhà với mẹ biết ngày nào khôn’* (it is better to experience the world and increase your learning than to stay at your mother’s hem). We must progress to learn more. The Divine Path to Eternal Life is a way we can go on forever without needing to stop. This is the key: we should continue to travel and learn as much as we can.

If we ever hold the infinite power of Đức Chí Tôn in our hands, we have the chance to create another universe by ourselves. We can create our own great work, for the path of progress has no end. It is limitless, truly immeasurable, as boundless and endless as the universe we see in front of us.

If we see the banner of Diêu Trì Cung unfurled in front of us and would like to find out where Ngọc Hư Cung is, we simply turn to our right and it will be directly in front of us. Now, Diêu Trì Cung appears on our left.

We continue, but our progress is different from before,



because the scenes we see here are extraordinary and very mysterious. We see countless things in front of us, but they all appear in the form of their peri-spirit. What we imagine immediately appears in front of us provided they have already been created. These scenes are formed mysteriously, endlessly and unimaginably.

For example, if we want to travel with incredible speed, just by imagining it, we can. We can have whatever we desire. We only have to think about something or someone and they will instantly appear before us. Our human intelligence is useless trying to explore this boundless world.

It is impossible to describe the happiness you enjoy in this realm in writing.

We have enjoyed the delightful happiness of Cung Diêu Trì. We thought this happiness couldn't be surpassed, but the further we progress the more our delight increases. Keep going! Keep going forever; on and up towards the boundless level of spiritual contentment. However much we enjoy it, it is never depleted.

As we pass this way, we don't feel lonely; we meet many, many close friends who warmly welcome us.

If we see someone who left their homeland to live far away, but has returned to meet their family again, we will understand this situation. Needless to say, we can all understand how cheerful and happy they would be. Let's imagine that we have seen our close friends on this path of progress; our love would overflow from our hearts when we caught sight of them! It would take thousands of lives on earth to create such love. Imagine our extended family, not just from this life, but from many thousands of lives. When we are together on the path to

eternal life, we experience an endless happiness which cannot be described. I dare to guarantee that '*in this realm there is no discord, no hint of sadness*'. There is no sorrow or suffering; with joy in our hearts we remain eager to keep moving.

Suddenly we see in front of us an infinite realm replete with beautiful mysterious palaces. They are made entirely of something like crystals; their colours are clear like crystals. There are halos flying in all directions; the features of the realm create these forms.

In the past enlightened people became speechlessly surprised when they returned to the realm of Ngọc Hư Cung due to its extreme mystery ! Its mystery is indescribable, continually changing under our spirit's influence. Some of us may describe its form as a perfect square because we have imagined that way. However we imagine it, it is made like that. It appears in whatever form we imagine! Any architect or engineer who sees it would immediately give up their career because it's impossible to create something like this. Not only would they give up their career but also they'd go mad if they tried in vain to understand or duplicate it.

When we reach Ngọc Hư Cung, we see ourselves change to resemble the forms and colours there. We can only enter if we can adopt the nature and colours of this realm. If we can't change, we must leave. It is our Pháp Thân<sup>48</sup> that can enter this realm. It is described by a sentence of prayer—Rắp Nhập Cảnh Thiêng Liêng Hằng Sống (prepare to enter the Path to Eternal Life). We thought we would see innumerable noisy people after entering. No, we only see our extended spiritual family offering their greetings. This is their meeting place,

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<sup>48</sup> Also Chơn Thân, đệ nhị xác thân = perispirit, astral body, subtle body.

from the time we attained the spiritual position of Tiểu Hôi<sup>49</sup> (ego) right through to the position of Đại Hôi<sup>50</sup> (monad). We can reincarnate from here to attain the positions of geniis, saints, immortals and Buddhas. It may take millions of lives, but it can be done.

We see innumerable friends, our extended family and Tông Đường<sup>51</sup>. When we arrive they welcome us, and take us to a palace. They tell us, *‘Over here you aren’t allowed to speak, only to think; thinking is the same as talking’*. For example, if I think I would like to see my brother, then next my brother is standing in front of me. At this palace words aren’t used to communicate; there is only thought, which replaces language. They tell us not to think of geniis, saints, immortals and Buddhas because there are no such divine beings in this realm. Words are only used on earth, the 68th planet; at Ngọc Hử Cung there is no need for terms. Concepts such as geniis, saints immortals and Buddhas are only used on earth.

We know there are no ranks in the spiritual realm. There are ranks on earth because we humans determine them, so they only exist on the 68th planet. We have seen the people on earth; each individual has a different spirit. There are 2.7 billion<sup>52</sup> people on the planet, each with different behaviours and peri-spirits. None of them has the same peri-spirit, so we can say no two people are the same. Since each peri-spirit is absolutely unique, the heavenly position attained is also unique. We cannot rank the spiritual positions. Everyone

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<sup>49</sup> the souls of plants or animals, i.e. lower than those of humans.

<sup>50</sup> the souls of humans and above.

<sup>51</sup> Tông Đường is literally one’s ancestral temple. The Hộ Pháp also uses this term to refer to our wider spiritual family whom we meet on returning to heaven. It is our spiritual clan or spiritual extended family—our spiritual lineage.

<sup>52</sup> the world’s population in 1920s.

has their special spiritual position because each life has its own progression. Our past progresses determine our spiritual positions. Class in Ngọc Hư Cung isn't the same as on the earthly world, because the spiritual positions are different.

Therefore, in the spiritual realm you have your own status. No one can drive you away or argue over where you stand. It is impossible to give up your spiritual position either; the only position for you is the one you have. It seems these positions are already set up and available because you occupy one. Đức Chí Tôn says, *'My children, I have already reserved some heavenly wealth for each of you.'*

As for our heavenly status. If we don't have a rank, what can we use to determine where we are? We use our spiritual extended family. I have seen the extended family of the divine beings from this disturbed world, the earthly realm. Humans inhabit five planets (Kim, Mộc, Thủy, Hoả, Thổ)<sup>53</sup> from where they can attain nirvana. I have seen the extended families of Sakymuni Buddha, Lao Zi, Confucius, Mohammed and Jesus Christ, but the most honourable and numerous extended family is that of Từ Hàng Bồ Tát (Quan Yin Bodhisattva).

Therefore, you will attain the heavenly "position" of your extended family in heaven. However, an individual can incarnate many times in many different earthly families. For example, the soul Kim Thanh Quan may descend to this world and be born in the family of Từ Hàng Bodhisattva, Confucius, Muhammad or Sakyamuni Buddha; each time in a different family. As a result, those spiritual extended families are closely related.

This is why our name exists everywhere in the universe

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<sup>53</sup> Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Saturn are listed here according to the Five Elements (Ancient Chinese Philosophy)

though we are unable to know the whole universe. Even if we want to know how many planets there are, we can't. All we know is humans only live on five planets. We can't guess or understand the other three thousand worlds.

Consequently, some divine beings who descend into the world seem to know everything about us, just like many people in France know things about Vietnam. What they are talking about seems so confusing, but they clearly understand this planet, knowing the holiness and their powerful magic.

Talking about our life on earth, I don't mean we should treat ourselves badly, but we should be so strict with ourselves. This is because, in Ngọc Hư Cung, our divine relatives will lead us to a palace where there is a book called Thiên Thơ (the gods' records of the divine rules). When we open it, we see our name and what we have done in our previous lives. Our past lives all appears before us in this divine book. From this material, we will be the judge of our own deeds. We will decide whether we need to reincarnate or can attain a heavenly position of a particular rank. It is we that give the verdict on our deeds, not any other jury or judge.

The management of this palace is called Nam Tào<sup>54</sup> and Bắc Đẩu<sup>55</sup> in earthly terms. No one rules over us here; we rule ourselves. We decide our life; we decide the value of our sins or merits on our own. No law can compel us; we have the prerogative and freedom to decide the origin of our fate.

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<sup>54</sup> Nam Đẩu, Nam Đẩu lục tinh, is a group of six stars seen in the South. Ancient Chinese believed those stars were controlled by six deities named Nam Đẩu Tinh Quân or Nam Tào. According to Caodaism, Nam Tào is another name for Nam Cực Tiên Ông, an immortal, who keeps the Human Birth Records. *Encyclopedia of Caodaism*

<sup>55</sup> Bắc Đẩu, Bắc Đẩu thất tinh, is a group of seven stars seen in the North. According to Chinese mythology, they are manipulated by seven deities, one of whom is called Bắc Đẩu Tiên Ông keeping the Human Death Records. *Encyclopedia of Caodaism*

**Sermon 24**

**Our sins are recorded by the hands of our own perispirit; therefore there is no way we can deny them**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 27th February 1949; Lunar Calendar 30th Day of the 1st month, year of the Buffalo.*

**T**ODAY I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Children of Đức Chí Tôn , in the last sermon I took you to Ngọc Hư Cung, which is used to record all karmic accounts and the lives of humanity. I will explain it more today so we can clearly understand because the political organisation of the universe is so vast.

Let's imagine the 3,000 worlds, the four great heavenly regions and the 72 planets. First, the 72 planets contain the 12 worlds, which are the purgatories of our soul. Among those, the last and smallest planet with the smallest world is our earth, where we descend to repay the wrongdoings and debts from our previous lives.

Humans live on five planets but we belong to planet number 68.

Let's consider humanity on this planet. There are more than 2,700,000,000 people<sup>56</sup> on planet 68. Think about it! There are lots of planets 100 times as big as ours. Therefore, image how many humans are there in this vast universe!

Hence, it is hard to imagine the political system of the universe, which governs the life of each individual without

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<sup>56</sup> The world's population in the 1920s.

missing anyone. Let's try to imagine what power is needed to govern this great political system. Where is that subtle and sacred power? Where can we find it?

We should find out what that secret is so that we can imitate it to have a similar governing organisation on earth. If we can do so, humans will have a lasting peace then. Sadly, no one has found out what that secret power is so far, so humanity is still in chaos.

Like I said in the last sermon, we can neither deny our wrongdoings nor avoid the punishment reserved for us. That is because of that secret power. When we find out where that power comes from, it all becomes understandable. Actually, it is we humanity who hold that eternal, boundless and mighty power. How? All our wrongdoings are recorded by our peri-spirits.

How can we deny this guilt, even if we want to? Our peri-spirit itself records it and decides for us. All our guilt from Tiểu Hôi:<sup>57</sup> to Đại Hôi:<sup>58</sup> is displayed in front of us. All our activities, all our relationships, all our basics and all our karmic accounts from all our lives are recorded in the Vô Tự Kinh (The Divine Wordless Book). We made the decisions to carry out these actions; how can we deny that we did them? Even if we want to, we can't. Our peri-spirit has decided our condemnation. No one else is involved; this is what we are afraid of.

On earth, when a judge has to pronounce sentence, a lawyer is often present to plead on our behalf. But there are no lawyers in this palace; we must decide our own sentence. Therefore, we can now see the incomparable secret power of

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<sup>57</sup> the souls of plants and animals.

<sup>58</sup> the souls of humans and above.

governing the universe: that which allows us to be our own judge. Who else can defend us? We can't argue or deny the guilt from our condemnation. Since we decide it ourselves, we cannot reject our guilt. We cannot argue to override our peri-spirit. There is no way to argue or deny our sentence.

Consequently, there are two classes of souls. The first come to earth to resolve the bad karma generated from their previous lives. We call these souls sinners coming to correct their actions.

The second class of souls are those who have come from afar to enrich their knowledge of life. They descend to our planet to gain a higher heavenly position.

First, let me tell you about the sinners. Here is what sinners will face when they return to Ngọc Hử Cung after death.

We have already seen the dramas of the officials who betrayed the King in the past. The betrayers, together with his relatives, were all put to death at the same time. That is surprisingly like the situations in Ngọc Hử Cung. If we endure our own condemnation, there isn't very much suffering. The incompatible and mysterious law of the universe obliges our Tông Đường and our ancestors to endure with us. The real suffering for us is that they witness our punishment.

When a soul returns to Ngọc Hử Cung and assumes the results of his previous lives, he is welcomed by his entire Tông Đường. They observe the path along which his soul has passed to see if the results of that life have overcome his bad karma. They want to discover if there has been any change to his karmic account from his previous life and to find out if the life just lived has created more sin. If the soul goes towards his perfect way, achieving enlightenment, the whole



Tông Đường is extremely happy. Conversely, if he returns to the animal level, generating more and more sin. We see the whole Tông Đường must share his guilt; this is why there is so much suffering.

We know that the beings who are allowed to enter Ngọc Hư Cung are the souls who have attained enlightenment. As a result, if some peri-spirit descends to earth and causes bad karma, his/her whole Tông Đường will suffer greatly.

Let me tell you again that among Tông Đường at Ngọc Hư Cung, the most respectful and honourable is the Tông Đường of Từ Hàng Bồ Tát. The second most respectful is the Tông Đường of Địa Tạng Vương Bồ Tát and the third most respectful is that of Maitreya Buddha. These are the three most respectful and honourable Tông Đường. There are, of course, other Tông Đường. Every one of us is assigned to a particular Tông Đường, who remain at the palace waiting for us to return.

Because of Quả Kiếp (our predetermined karmic life) most of us are sent to earth to pay back Quả Kiếp—the punishments set for us. Instead of following on the perfect path towards creating a heavenly position for ourselves, we might be creating sins. This is a serious mistake.

Second, I will tell you about the souls of Du Học (those who study abroad). There is another class of souls, who come to the world to investigate a dimension of life. They will use this knowledge to establish a heavenly position for themselves. Nothing on earth affects this class because their Tông Đường decides to send them to the earth to carry out a lifetime of research.

They are like the children of the upper classes who are

allowed to study abroad to increase their knowledge and learn correct behaviour. If they pass their exams well, everyone is happy. If their results are mediocre, there is nothing serious. For example, you send your child to study in France, but he doesn't work hard.

At the end of the month his results are sent home and it is clear that he isn't good at such subjects as morals, geography, and technical lessons as well as etc. You might laugh and say he is lazy, so you write to him and ask him to concentrate harder on the subjects which he isn't really good at yet. That's all you need to do. There's nothing to worry about him. Like him, the souls coming to earth for further studies keep their faith carefully, closely and with nobility. They do not want to come down to the world, but if they do then they act nobly. They never lower themselves to undertake immoral actions.

So far we have seen how the universe wields power to make our Tông Đường bear its suffering. This should make us very fearful. When confronted with the love of our Tông Đường, we face a great punishment from the spiritual realm. When a life ends and we return, our Tông Đường's happiness is the reward, but its suffering is the punishment. This kind of punishment is so great that it frightens every soul.

Why did Đức Chí Tôn come and gather all his children to establish this visible Holy Body (the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council)? Because if he can establish this religious community, all his children will be able to attain nirvana. One day they will attain their position in the realm of eternal life. No happiness on earth realm can ever be compared with that in the realm of eternal life. Only in the eternal life can you have true happiness. What is the Holy Body of Đức Chí Tôn ? It is the organization that manages all children of Đức Chí Tôn

according to the law of love. Each member of this organization carries love from Đức Chí Tôn in his/her heart. Đức Chí Tôn used love to establish his Holy Body. He said, *'You have been enjoying the right of endless love so you should spread it to your younger brothers and sisters, from this century and on to other centuries'*.

The punishment we Caodaists are most afraid of on earth is that of banishment. What is banishment? It is to be expelled from our great family or Caodaism, which Đức Chí Tôn established for us. This earthly law is made to prevent us from dropping out of Caodaism. This is the real reason behind the sentence of banishment.

Whoever is expelled and abandoned by their great family is cast into an animal state and will be unable to find happiness by themselves. They are then only animals who grow old and die alone according to natural law. Being banished by the Caodaist Sacerdotal Councils on earth isn't very different from being expelled from the Tông Đường of Đức Chí Tôn. If you are expelled from the earthly world, your soul is also expelled in heaven. The day we no longer belong to the Tông Đường of Đức Chí Tôn is the day we are dishonoured. When we are alive, we wonder fearfully whether we will be able to return and pay our debt. Actually, the scariest thing is the dishonour we suffer in the face of our Tông Đường.

**Sermon 25**

**The Phục Linh realm where we find  
our divine extended family**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 3rd March 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 4th Day of the 2nd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**B**EFORE CONTINUING TO TALK ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ON THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE, I WANT TO GIVE YOU SOME advice on how to preach, that is, how to deliver a religious talk.

For nearly two years I've been looking for a way for everyone in the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council to spread our teachings. We all know that preaching is essential for human salvation because it explains the essential teachings of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God).

First, we need an objective so listeners pay attention to us during our talk. We have to hold the spirit banner to lead listeners to our philosophical discourse.

I have seen one thing that should be rectified. Some speakers goes up to the stage to speak about the South, but when they preach they start talking about the North, which isn't part of their topic. This is the same as if I say I'm determined to go to Saigon and everyone looks in that direction, but I start to walk towards Phnom Penh. People wouldn't understand it at all when the discourse was finished, even though they had listened.

You need a specific rule when you preach. Your words have to be melodious and profound; you can't just say what you

want to say. A discourse is like a poem—it must have a subject, prosody, stress and metre. There must be an introduction, a middle and an end; we have to observe its rule.

Đức Chí Tôn has taught us a lot about the rule of preaching. Cao Thượng Phẩm and I practised for two to three months. Then he went onto the stage to preach and I remained in the audience to listen.

You have to practise a lot. Without practising you cannot do it. It is like you have to follow the prosody of the Tang Dynasty poetic conventions when you want to write a Tang poem. We can't simply speak without rules. As well as the rule, we must learn *Phù*, *Tỷ* and *Hứng Thú* by heart<sup>59</sup>. A good speech is preached according to the rules, with melody, literary style and eloquence. Every address must contain these.

If we want to preach correctly and have an appropriate topic, the sermons must include *Kinh* (sacred books), *Điển* (ancient books) and *Luật* (law). *Kinh* are the four books of Confucianism, *Điển* are the five classics and *Luật* is the law governing the world from ancient to modern times. We can use these for prosody to plan our sermon. We have to study hard as we need our own prosody. It's not easy, but we have to change the language of Đức Chí Tôn to put his truth into the spirit of humanity. If we can't do this, we are silencing Đức Chí Tôn !!! We have to replace his language; we can't speak for him if we don't.

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<sup>59</sup> *Tỷ* is a method of talking where, when we go up on stage, we *Quang Tiến Dụ Hậu* (use stories from the past and the present to explain and highlight noble and lofty arguments).

*Hứng* is a method of talking where, when we go on stage, we step into the situation and, recognise the phenomenon of the earthly world. Our words must match the dimensions of the situation so we can highlight the whole form of the *Đạo* in time, relating them closely. Our discourse will be appropriate because the natural atmosphere inspires us, influencing how we preach. We must explain clearly so our audience understands completely.

From now on I will be stricter and more rigorous. You must sit quietly and listen; if you talk nonsense, you will suffer the consequences. We have been talking for nearly two years, so you won't be forgiven if you talk nonsense. If you are punished, don't say that you weren't warned that this would be difficult and the punishment would be carried out.

Today I will continue to explain the politics of the universe. I have already told you where the power of those who govern the universe comes from. The universe is governed by the power of self-control. We control ourselves; humanity governs itself. The universe is like a vast boundless sea; if we make laws and determine our own power, what sort of power could we hold? The most important secret of the entire motion of the universe is the mystery of each individual who can control themselves. This is how we attain boundless secrets and the judgement of Đức Chí Tôn. This is the case for the soul that can govern itself.

I have told you the sentence can't be rejected; guilt can't be argued, because we govern ourself. In the end, we make our own judgement and determine our own punishment. Who can refuse this or make their words reject their faults? This is the most abiding power of the universe.

The politics of the universe is different from that of the earthly world in only one point: Individuals controls themselves. Đức Chí Tôn's heavenly council only determines the movements and events of the universe. No Divine Beings directly judge any souls. The political system has become stable and strong because each soul has the right to govern themselves.

I have explained that our greatest worry is seeing our

spiritual family punished in the realm of eternal life because of the wrong we have done. Our spiritual relatives bear our shame on the divine path to eternal life. They are mocked and criticised because of us; they are threatened and abandoned in the realm of eternal life and lose their status. This worries us most. Therefore I have pointed out the real truth of the universe. Can we attain that truth? Sure, we can.

Now I will show you our Vietnamese race, influenced by the civilisation of China, has attained that.

I've explained that planet earth has reincarnated three times. In its latest life, its physical forms were destroyed when it reached its seventh transition. Then it was transformed and has now arrived at its third transition again. When it arrives at the seventh transition, it will be destroyed again.

During the first transition, human beings only acted to protect themselves or gathered in small groups for mutual protection. At this time, animals were more powerful than humans; the only human concern was mutual protection.

The second transition led to the period of craft. Tribes would gather together to make weapons in their struggle against wild animals. At that time, the weather was not good, so there were many kinds of pest and plague and other things that could destroyed humanity. Humans had to defend themselves, so they developed armies, weapons and other means of self-defence. In the third transition, societies were formed and different races began to develop. What is a society? Think about it and you can see that it is a reflection of the heavenly politics. Now the third transition is over, the first part of the fourth transition (which has three parts) begins. This is the period where humanity unites—everyone on planet earth is

developing the doctrine of great harmony. Humanity has to establish a stable political system so there can be unity on the planet. This beginning creates a state of unified harmony for humanity.

Actually, China has gained this Bí Pháp (secret law). Each of the great families in China—the Lưu, the Trần, the Lý—has their own authority to govern themselves. The Emperor rarely faced trouble when governing the people, because a member of any group who was found guilty discovered that the whole group had to be accountable to the Emperor for their actions. Therefore, the political system of ancient China was stable, strong and extraordinary. If it has failed, it is because the Chinese have disregarded the ancient and turned to the modern, destroying the precious and durable traditional political system. Governing the universe is the same. Vietnam is like China, so we already had the same political system.

If we want the people to unite with suitable harmony, our great families must be united first, starting from the small details and leading to the big picture.

Therefore, I recommend that the Charity Body re-establish Tông Đường as it was in ancient times. This is the secret law leading to the desire for great harmony, the political organisation of Vietnam and the precious fundamental point needed more than ever.



## Sermon 26

## The method of governing the universe lies in how we govern ourselves

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 7th of March 1949; Lunar Calendar 8th Day of the 2nd month, year of the Buffalo.*

**T**ODAY LET'S PROGRESS ALONG THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Dear celestial hierarchies of Hiệp Thiên Đài (legislative body), Cửu Trùng Đài (executive body), male and female believers and senior dignitaries. Since I began explaining to you about your progress on the Path to Eternal Life, I have encouraged you to consolidate these ideas in your mind and through your nerves. From the beginning, I have tried to quickly speak of many things so that you can be well-informed. Now I don't think I need to urgently do so because you still have time to listen to me.<sup>60</sup> I am only holding your hands and leading you to the eternal life, so you can observe it for yourself and discover everything more easily. I am afraid that sermons on philosophy won't work. Watching it, you can remember it. And later when you enter the realm, you will see the truth. Đức Chí Tôn only wants all His children to see the truth, not merely an illusion of it. His teachings never tolerate illusions.

It isn't my fault that the Meditation Halls haven't been open yet. For the exoteric only, it takes me twenty-four years of hard life with broken hearts and minds from youth until old age, and I still haven't finished six or seven of the ten

<sup>60</sup> In previous sermons, he said he needed to tell everyone about everything because he was afraid that many of them would "return home", i.e. die without knowing what the path to eternal life was.

stages. It is not my responsibility to struggle like this, but it is what I have done.

It wasn't my duty to perfect the Caodaist governing system, but I had to<sup>61</sup>. At times I became very sad and I would have liked to give up. But looking back, when I saw the children of Đức Chí Tôn were lost with no-one to guide them, I didn't give up, even though I wanted to. How could I abandon my spiritual nature in a life that can undertake difficulties?

Anyway, I want to continue to explain our progress and guide us from Nam Tào and Bắc Đẩu. Last time, you saw Vô Tự Kinh (the divine book without words) and you understood your karmic lives. Now, let's return to the Path to Eternal Life. According to my last sermon, we entered Ngọc Hư Cung, where our brothers and sisters from our Tông Đường guided us to the realm known as Cung Phục Linh.

Friends, you should know innumerable spirits are there. If it were like this earthly world, where we communicate by talking, it would be terribly noisy. But we don't need to talk; it is an extraordinary political system. As I continue to explain it, we will see this extraordinary, unimaginable political system. The only language in that realm is thought; communication is spiritual. Whatever you think about, you have it immediately. For example, if I want to go somewhere, people would instantly understand that I would like to be there. Other souls also think instead of talking; thinking replaces language. We have seen countless familiar souls who are loving and close to us. We never see anyone at the door who hates us or who is unfriendly.

Brothers and sisters, you must remember this one very

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<sup>61</sup> His actual responsibility is to direct the Caodaist Meditation Halls.

important thing because it greatly influences our lives. When we are about to enter the door to the Cung Phục Linh, our spiritual brothers and sisters remind us that we shouldn't be afraid. We must remain calm and cool. If something changes within us, we shouldn't be fearful, flinch or be deterred. Despite their reminder, when we enter we are still struck dumb and become insane. As we enter, ignorance overcomes us; we don't know what it is or where we are, we don't know anything. Then we awake and see a Buddha standing in front of the souls that enter, holding the Kim Câu<sup>62</sup>. We also see Hộ Pháp, who safeguards our soul with Bắt Ấn (a mystical gesture of the hands, called mudra). This Buddha is familiar to us; he is no other than Phục Linh Tánh Phật. He holds Kim Câu, which he uses to show us each of our former lives; we see them resurrected in front of us. Every time he waves the staff we see another life; eventually we see every life we have lived.

We return from the level of đại hõ (monad) to the level of tiểu hõ (ego) and from there to the material world. We are all hoá nhân (impure souls, evolving souls); no-one on this planet is nguyên nhân (pure soul, original souls). All pure souls have already attained enlightenment in the third transition. The rest of humanity is impure souls, who have evolved from materials.

By the way, I want to tell you something about the Maitreya Buddha who now holds the power of the universe in the seventh transition. When our planet didn't shed its skin, Maitreya Buddha was just a monkey. This monkey was a servant of Sakyamuni Buddha who was then a black rural

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<sup>62</sup> Kim Câu (金鉤) is a special, mystical staff belonging to Thái Thượng Lão Quân, the head of Taoism. It is a golden mitre used to direct and control the immortals. He who holds this golden mitre is the representative of this Master and all who follow him must obey its instructions.

dweller. By the middle of the third transition, Sakyamuni Buddha achieved the level of Bodhisattva; after that he could become a Buddha.

Maitreya is preparing to enter Buddhahood this time. He presides the Hội Long Hoa to attain the level of Buddha. Sakyamuni Buddha's life on this planet spanned about 1,500,000,000 years.

In Cung Phục Linh, we must go backwards, down until we get to the material level. When we enter our original soul, it seems as though it is still living in the material domain.

In a moment I will lead you into Cung Ngọc Hử to see the Divine Being, who is communicate with us Caodaists. He reigns at Huỳnh Kim Khuyết (the gate of pure gold to where Đức Chí Tôn holds meetings with the Heavenly Council) and holds two positions: Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế (Jade Emperor, Supreme Being) and Đại Thiên Tôn (most respectful and greatest Being in Heaven).

To summarise, when we accomplished phục linh (returning to our original soul), we see everyone in the whole universe as our best friends. Those souls stand noisily in front of us, but they don't seem strange, because all souls have the same foundation. This is the secret of the universe.

Like I said, in Cung Phục Linh, we lose our consciousness because we return to when we were newly born. We know nothing when we are new-born. That is the first time we don't have any consciousness and when we die we become unconscious again. This is the mystery and the secret. It is usually known as ăn cháo lú (drinking the soup of forgetfulness). Now we realize that if we didn't lose our consciousness, we would remember our previous lives. That would be terribly

frightening because if we had done something extremely horrible before, we wouldn't want to continue our present life.

When we return to our original souls, we see the Creator of the universe or Đức Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế<sup>63</sup> or Đại Thiên Tôn<sup>64</sup>, reigning from Ngọc Hư Cung. There is something that push us to go there to see Him. Although our Tông Đường and our friends ask us not to go, our soul will struggle to reach Ngọc Hư Cung, and we go.

So now we arrive at Cung Ngọc Hư<sup>65</sup>, the place which holds the political power of the Universe. Ngọc Hư Cung controls every star and sun in this universe.

It is usually said that Cửu Trùng Đài is the reflection of the power that governs the earthly world of Ngọc Hư Cung. In fact, there are no governors. I have explained that souls governs themselves and Ngọc Hư Cung only helps and blesses them, not rule them. This place only wants all souls to be sanctified. Often they aren't blessed because of their previous bad karma. Ngọc Hư Cung doesn't “rule”, but just reveals a little about their karma.

The Buddhas who hold the karmic lives of each being aren't very severe. Many souls who know that their karmic accounts are very heavy no longer want to live. The karmic results of life are so essential that the divine beings only want to reduce the consequences of our karmic accounts; they seek ways to mitigate any penalties.

The main aim in Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa is to let the offenders be their own judge. They know how serious the karmic account of their lives is to decide their own punishment.

<sup>63</sup> The Jade Emperor

<sup>64</sup> Đức Chí Tôn

<sup>65</sup> This is where Đức Chí Tôn and His court govern the universe.

Unlike in the earthly world, in the spiritual realm an offender judges and determines their own punishment and the being who represents the governing power is only there to protect the soul's happiness and decrease their sentence.

This is what governing the political power of the universe means: holding power to give merit and decrease the sentences that we would give ourselves. They don't accuse us and aren't there to pronounce sentence on us. It is up to us to confirm the sentence, for we are our own judge. Even if we had a lawyer here, we still couldn't pass. Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa is where we accuse ourselves; we can't avoid it. This is the political system of the universe.

When we arrive and enter Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa, the divine beings who reign there seem worried in case we had caused a great deal of sin in our life. They worry, but we don't; they worry that we will pronounce too harsh a sentence on ourselves.

Accordingly, the souls of the universe are comforted in Ngọc Hư Cung. The divine beings there hold power to guide and protect, but not to govern. Friends, you must remember that souls govern themselves. Brothers and sisters, you must especially understand this secret to renew yourself. While we are still on this earth, we have to judge, control and punish ourselves in advance. We should rule ourselves now, so that later, when our soul ascends, we are less upset, and judge ourselves less harshly. Although we might pretend, we should learn to rule ourselves on earth. There's no need to be afraid; Đức Chí Tôn uses the beautiful term '*repent*'. If you repent in the earthly world, you won't have to judge yourselves in Ngọc Hư Cung when returning.

## Sermon 27

**The secret dharma that liberates the self**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 11th of March 1949; Lunar Calendar 12th Day of the 2nd month, year of the Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO DISCUSS OUR ADVANCE ALONG THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

I've noticed that we are all tired after worship and find it difficult to maintain concentration on a long sermon. Additionally, when I am preaching and repeat the same point to emphasise it, it's hard for you to listen properly because listening for long periods can be equally exhausting. So I only preach for a reasonable amount of time. If I went on too long, the sermons would descend into nonsense. On the other hand, if was too brief, I wouldn't address the topic adequately. I must make these talks the right length, so the children of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) won't become tired and will remain content to listen. Tonight, however, I hope to be excused for taking some extra time and preaching for a little longer because of the nature of our topic. Forgive me, but if you become tired, I will excuse you.

Last time I explained how we enter Cung Phục Linh. Tonight I will explain this process in a little more depth. Today's sermon contains a secret key to the dharma of our liberation. I want you to understand in advance how the mysteries of Đức Chí Tôn's secret dharma guide the process of liberation. I hope that you will remain attentive.

I have explained previously that when we enter Cung Phục Linh, we relive our former lives in reverse. The Phục

Linh Buddha maintains and preserves our original soul by crossing back through our previous lives. While this is being done, Hộ Pháp protects and stabilises our Thượng Nê Hườn (pineal eye; crown chakra; fontanelle). Our souls are stabilised and guarded when he does **Bắt Ấn**<sup>66</sup>, or stands guard over the forces above us. In **Cung Phục Linh**, we are made to forget the memory of our previous lives.

Our souls have travelled to enter our selves and experience this rush backwards through the account of our previous lives. We might have lived through ten thousand million lives from the rank of inanimate to that of a human. When we move backwards to many lives, this mysterious mechanism of the universe drives us to enter our original soul. That original soul judges all of our karma account. That's why I said each soul assesses itself as one might judge a sinner. I tell you: individuals are their own judge; we judge ourselves with the utmost seriousness. When we judge ourselves no one can make excuses for us. I have explained that the sentence we pass can't be reduced: our sins can't be cancelled and the law can't be avoided. How can we avoid the law if we are our own judge? This is how our soul judges itself. Our original soul has the results of all our previous lives. I ask again, who will make excuses for us in this self-judgment process?

Do not despair. Although you don't know, there is a way to make appeals on our behalf. We can be our own lawyer appealing for ourselves by recognizing the mistakes we have made while we are living through our innumerable lives on earth. When we do this, our soul can appeal on our behalf. Then when we return to heaven after death, we don't need to charge ourselves anymore. The sublime souls who

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<sup>66</sup> Performing a special gesture of the hands (mudras)



have attained enlightenment have passed on the method of absolving our punishment, but people don't appreciate it. This method is called Ngô Nhựt Tam Tỉnh Ngô Thân.<sup>67</sup>

As for the sins you have committed in your life, Đức Chí Tôn has provided a means of liberation. He has said, *'Your sins on earth are plentiful, but if you call out My name at the end of your life, I will come to save you.'* Đức Chí Tôn has placed this secret dharma of liberation in your hands, so your soul can be truly liberated. To call His name is to pray *'Nam Mô Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát'*.

I have explained that when our original soul manifests itself, it has the same nature as the universe—the same nature as Đức Chí Tôn. That is how you attain nirvana.

The universe produces souls, so souls have the same nature with the universe or with Đức Chí Tôn. Đức Chí Tôn owns everything. If we leave the karmic result of our lives in His hands, who will judge us? This is how we achieve liberation and attain enlightenment.

I surely know that there are up to 3,000,000,000 planets. This figure is so huge, can we really know how many humans there are? I am calculating for this planet 68; it is the smallest, but there are more than 2,700,000,000 humans on it!

In the universe there are up to 3,000,000,000 planets, so how many humans does that make?

Just imagine Đức Chí Tôn holding the complete power, the power of judgment, over all this. When He blesses us or increases our merits, He is called Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế (the Jade Emperor). Whenever He reduces our sins, He is called

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<sup>67</sup> The Confucian idea that just as you must make at least one visit to your parents each day, you must examine your conscience three times a day.

Đại Thiên Tôn (the most respectful and highest position in heaven). Đức Chí Tôn is supreme; this is self-evident. Our planet is filled with souls from the material level up to the level of humanity; everything in the cosmos has this Being at the centre of their lives. The soul survives just as our physical body strives to live. If our eyelash is irritating us, we feel it? Do we feel pain if our finger is grazed? Whatever we do or don't do in the Universe, Đức Chí Tôn knows where we are. He knows our position instantly and completely, because his physical body is the means of liberation. This is the great secret.

Now, I want to explain the site of Ngọc Hư Cung. When we are fortunate enough to enter this place with the Divine Beings there, we will realise our predestined role.

Now we arrive and stand outside this palace—especially when we arrive at Cung Phục Linh (the palace of returning souls)—we see many magnificent buildings illuminated like gems in the centre of the sky. When we go inside we see nothing but halos. Lifting up our heads we see the universe; as it stretches in front of us it is incredibly blue like when we stand at Bát Quái Đài. We also see the spiritual beings in their ranks. Đức Chí Tôn reigns at Huỳnh Kim Khuyết. When we look down we see the court that governs the universe; we see it is limitless, most powerful and supreme.

Though there are so many beings, no one can stay out of that power.

Thus, how can the political system of the universe hold its power with such stability? It is the same as our visible political system. They govern those who are evil. Nonetheless, this power is definitely simple; this court doesn't need a judge to control evildoers. There is no prison to keep the offenders

or lock up the criminals, nor any need for a king to reward good people; there is no need for rewards.

There is no need for power, or for higher or lower ranks. They have no power at all because our souls decide our own sentences and punishments. Nothing is simpler! The most difficult law is that of punishments and rewards, but these two things are unnecessary here. What use is the universe's political system? It is to protect and preserve the universe. Its duty is to serve all beings.

It is quite strange that the purpose of the strongest power in the universe is only to serve all beings. From the beginning of time until now, no power is as strange or compatible with this. That is why people use animals to represent human physical bodies. An animal on earth has an important, and ultimately spiritual, aim: coming to serve humanity and all other beings in the visible realms. That is why there is a doctrine that says your heavenly position depends on your service on earth. If we are capable of serving, we will also attain a position in the heavenly hierarchy; if we are unable to serve we will fall to the level of a criminal.

Again, I stress that the organisation of liberation of ĐứC Chí Tôn depends on the work which we dedicate to all beings.

**Sermon 28**

**Linh Tiêu Điện (Ngọc Hư Cung) and the  
Governing Body of Đức Chí Tôn**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 21st of March  
1949; Lunar Calendar 22nd Day of the 2nd month, year of  
the Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO DISCUSS OUR ADVANCE  
ALONG THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Last time, good friends, I guided you into Linh Tiêu Điện (Ngọc Hư Cung). I will continue tonight, but I need to outline a few essential matters first. Since I've been preaching about this esoteric doctrine, I have always prayed to Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God), because there are many difficulties. I have seen these with my spiritual eye, but can only explain them with words, so I can't be sure I am describing them accurately.

I confess that for every ten things I need to explain to you, I can only really explain seven, five, or maybe fewer. This is why I pray to Đức Chí Tôn, just as Xuan Zang did on his journeys to India looking for Buddhist scriptures. He was Chinese, but they were written in Sanskrit and it was very hard to translate all the sutras into Chinese.

He made a great vow and translated them as well as he was able. He suspected his translation wasn't perfect, so he promised that when he died, if he hadn't explained the sutras clearly, his tongue would be black. Conversely, if he had, it would be red.

Northern Buddhism<sup>68</sup> was greatly blessed by the work of Xuan Zang. When he died, people opened his mouth and saw it was red. Xuan Zang had clearly and perfectly explained the true teaching of Northern Buddhism.

I always pray to Đức Chí Tôn for insight before I ascend to the pulpit to preach the esoteric doctrine. I do this because I know I lack complete clarity of mind and can't explain the visions of my spiritual eye in a perfect sermon.

It would be much better if Đức Chí Tôn had specially blessed Caodaism, especially His spiritual body, the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council, and allowed some dignitaries to achieve enlightenment in order to correct, support and help me.

Today I will continue my story. When we arrive at the threshold of Linh Tiêu Điện, we are stunned by its magnificence. I have explained that any architect who sees these buildings will continue to dream about their beauty and magnificence, and the skill behind their form. He will fear, going mad and dying with nothing but these images on his mind. He won't be able to stop thinking about their beauty; their impact on his mind will be so strong that he will go mad knowing he can never hope to recreate such designs.

The palaces are constructed from gems of various forms and sizes; whatever we imagine appears.

The endless power of Đức Chí Tôn has formed it. This is the mysterious, endless and incomparable power. The palaces are indescribable. When we enter, we see the Universe, as vast as a great sea. Then a court appears.

The nature of the court is mysterious and solemn; it is beyond words.

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<sup>68</sup> Mahayana Buddhism in China.

At the highest point we see Đức Chí Tôn raised on His great throne and surrounded by courtly attendants. I will describe His image to you later.

Above His head far in the distance, you see the three Buddhas—Brahma Buddha, Krishna Buddha and Shiva Buddha— whose statues are put on the top of Bát Quái Đài, Toà Thánh Tây Ninh<sup>69</sup>. Even further into the distance, so far we can't imagine, it is as though we see a nimbus flashing; we can't see an image, but it illuminates his whole court. This is Huỳnh Kim Khuyết; Cửu Phẩm Thần Tiên (the nine levels of geniis and &immortals who attend the court) is underneath. The scene is so solemn and mysterious that we can't imagine it. It is indescribable.

If we luckily attain nirvana and achieve a position in the heavenly hierarchy, we might be put at a very low rank. Since the requirements for a low rank here is not very challenging, Our dharmakaya<sup>70</sup> can reach that level in this realm. However, If looking up and comparing ourselves with others, we will understand that our position is not great at all.

If we look further and higher still, our position seems really insignificant.

On the other hand, it is heart breaking if we are demoted. His court is so far in the distance that it disappears. Then we feel indifferent and unconcerned, unable to tell where we are or what realm we belong to. We stay there and experience great suffering; nothing compares to it. It is very sad that we may be demoted. All our sins appear in front of us; we can't deny them. We stand there and suffer; we have to judge ourselves. After judging ourselves, slowly, step-by-step, we descend to

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<sup>69</sup> the Cao daist central Temple in Tây Ninh, Việt Nam.

<sup>70</sup> Peri-spirit, astral body

the door of the earthly world—the door of hell. This is how we judge ourselves.

Talking about the court of Cửu Phẩm Thần Tiên, we can join it if we fortunately achieve a good heavenly position. There we see the divine beings who are so noble and honourable that some of them come near Đức Chí Tôn, nearly equalling Him. These are the beings who have attained enlightenment. Their achievements all come from one word: ‘*suffering*’. They have achieved the highest and most respectable positions because they undertook a great amount of suffering throughout their innumerable lives and overcame it.

This is how they created their honourable positions. Đức Chí Tôn Himself also undertook suffering to attain His present utmost power. Just imagine how suffering can overcome us. Why can’t we defeat it? It is obvious that we lack the courage and spirit to undertake suffering. We are too afraid of suffering to master it.

That reminds me. Previously, I didn’t believe in the mysteries of the religion of Đức Chí Tôn . I studied, like everyone else, using my mind and understanding to resolve my thoughts and determine my actions. I had doubts about even the spiritual position of Sakyamuni Buddha or Jesus Christ.

It was not until Đức Chí Tôn allowed me to meet him that I realised I had a heavy responsibility and felt greatly comforted. We have undertaken a great deal of physical and spiritual suffering to achieve our present position—birth upon birth, death upon death, step by step. If we obtain a nobler position, we feel extremely happy.

However, if compared, you will realise other people seem like birds while we are like fish. I means some people are noble

like birds while we remain ignoble, like fish. Then looking back to the Supreme Being, we realise that our spirit and his spirit seem related. Though he doesn't speak out anything, we realise that He has endured a lot more suffering, of which we only undertake a portion. How can we be sad; how can we be discouraged when our Divine Master has undertaken this suffering a million times. That is why when we see his face, we receive some consolation for our physical and spiritual sadness and suffering.

Why is this? Because it is His great power that is the immense mountain of suffering. His image is the endless suffering. It is because He accepts much suffering that He achieves such a mysterious power. This is how we are offered consolations after we have conquered our own suffering. I am absolutely sure and affirm this: those whose bodies are physically disgraced are blessed, for their souls will gain incomparable happiness. The people who have undertaken much suffering in their life will be consoled by Đức Chí Tôn Himself.

Those whose are oppressed, despised and disapproved of by others in their life will be brought into a position of extraordinary honour happiness by the Supreme Being. He Himself will help them and offer them support.

Therefore, if we have enough courage to undertake the suffering of Đức Chí Tôn, we will receive an unending supply of glory.



## Sermon 29

**The difference between the process of rising through Heaven and the process of falling into dark realms**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 5th April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 8th Day of the 3rd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT, I WANT TO CONTINUE TO PREACH ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE. I will preach a little more quickly so that we can finish this subject and have time left to talk about the secret dharma (esoteric practice).

Children of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) last time, I guided your spirits towards Linh Tiêu Điện (Ngọc Hư Cung). We saw that Đức Chí Tôn appears spiritually embodied as the dharmakaya of the Ngọc Đế, that is the Emperor of the Universe. We still didn't see the image of Đại Thiên Tôn because Đức Chí Tôn doesn't want us to see that. His dharmakaya doesn't appear to us with the status of Đại Thiên Tôn; we can't see it at Linh Tiêu Điện.

I have already explained the authority and the honourable nature of various Tông Đường of the enlightened beings.

It is discouraging that there is a sharp difference between the realm of ascent and the path of descent. Even those with strong hearts and great courage will still be nervous and afraid when I talk about the path of descent. All of our spiritual Tông Đường, who are gathering, waiting for us, will be extremely happy if we obtain a position in heaven's hierarchy. Then we will progress towards great happiness and virtue with their great support.

Conversely, if we are guilty and demoted, this honourable realm will gradually fade away from us even though we remain in the same spot. How sad! The amazingly happy scene will recede and move far away from us until it becomes invisible. It flees from us; we don't run from it. Our happiness is wary of us; it deserts us and gets away. Then we immediately suffer. That is exactly what people generally say: heaven and hell aren't far away from each other. For example, if we make a serious mistake—if we kill a person in hatred—they will immediately stand in front of us and look at us mournfully. People think they might hate us and want to kill us, but it is never like this. They will be sorrowful and sad for us. When we only see this person, our soul—our peri-spirit—will regress step by step towards hell, depending on our crimes. At the very moment of our fall, we summon the scenes of our guilt, in which the offender stands at the door of hell. Then we determine what judgment that we must pass upon ourselves.

What sadness! Those who don't have love and don't love each other won't receive words of comfort from other souls. They will only hear the sound of lamentations and accusations around them. Like I said we have to pass judgment on ourselves. What frightens us most is we don't know how severe our punishment should be to fit our sin. This is why we suffer.

I will explain these things to you one day because I haven't been allowed to go down to hell yet. Đức Chí Tôn has promised that whenever I disincarnate, before I return to the realm of eternal life, I will be allowed to go past hell to liberate the souls who have been unjustly punished and help them ascend to the heaven. Đức Chí Tôn and other divine beings have described the realm to me, so that when I eventually walk on that path, nothing will look strange and I will have nothing to fear.

Let me tell you again that whenever we obtain liberation, our Tông Đường will be extremely happy and joyful on our behalf. All of geniis, immortals and Buddhas from the lowest to the highest rank will be happy and joyful. It is impossible to describe this joy and honour.

The positions we obtain in the heavenly hierarchy, whether high or low, are completely different from each other. As I have explained, the high-ranking divine beings are like a bird, but we seem to be fish. Our position seems insignificant compared with theirs. One lives in the heavens, the other in the sea.

When we reach a higher position, we can't describe the great honour with which we are welcomed and received. This is related to our spiritual family, who bestow incomparable happiness upon us because our whole spiritual family is upgraded and are more honoured.

Đức Chí Tôn has said that Ngọc Hử is the realm where He has preserved heavenly wealth for us. When Cực Lạc Thế Giới (Nirvana) approves our position, our whole spiritual family will welcome us back to the great property which Đức Chí Tôn has created for us at Ngọc Hử Cung. I can't possibly describe this. Imagine how honorable the ceremony that welcomes us back to the eternal life of our spiritual family is! Cực Lạc Thế Giới (Nirvana or the Paradise of Extreme Joy) will decide what heavenly position we can take according to how much progress we have made in our morality. There are innumerable higher positions and must continue and work our way through, however high, until we sit on Huỳnh Kim Khuyết of Đức Chí Tôn. That will be the day we achieve our goals! But that is still a long way to go, so now let's return to the great property granted by Đức Chí Tôn to enjoy happiness based on the good deeds we have done from our last life on

earth.

We may attain a higher or lower rank, but it is how long we can enjoy ourselves in heaven that counts. We have joy in what people usually call the Paradise of Extreme Happiness (Nirvana) for 1,200, 2,400, 3,600 or even 36,000 years, but then we must reincarnate to continue our progress on the Path to Eternal Life.

In the next sermon, I will continue to describe Cực Lạc Thế Giới (the Paradise of Extreme Happiness)

## Sermon 30

**The Paradise of Extreme Joy: where  
we are temporarily liberated; this is  
not the ultimate realm for souls**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 10th April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 13th Day of the 3rd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**L**AST TIME I PROMISED TO GUIDE YOU CHILDREN OF ĐỨC CHÍ TÔN (THE SUPREME BEING, GOD) TO THE PARADISE of Extreme Happiness. I will keep this promise tonight. We are traveling on the path of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa<sup>71</sup>. If we attain a heavenly position after only one reincarnation, the honour that we have created on our journey along the Path to Eternal Life is so profound. We return to Tiểu Thiên Cung (the Little Heavenly Palace), that is the extended family we have established throughout our numerous lives. After that we pass from Tiểu Thiên Cung to our great extended family.

The honour associated with our return to the Paradise of Extreme Joy is indescribable.

From the distant past until today, Buddhism has described and spread the idea of the Paradise of Extreme Joy, so we generally think we can return to this place if we practice Buddhism, attaining enlightenment. Let me affirm this, this is a realm where we are temporarily liberated. It is only where we determine our earthly merits, not the highest realm for souls.

Later, I will outline and guide you to that place. Then, you will have a better understanding of the Paradise of Extreme

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<sup>71</sup> A reference to the divine beings of the nine heavens who are responsible for opening those nine heavens and for teaching and elevating humanity.

Joy as revealed by various religions. It is just commonplace, not very important. There are other realms which are loftier and more precious. This is where we determine our merits and our established position, just as we determine our works in the earthly world. We determine our merits compared to those other people create in their lives.

The Paradise of Extreme Happiness, or Nirvana, isn't special at all. It is only where enlightened souls arrive to get their heavenly wealth (if any). Buddhists consider it an important place because we won't achieve anything on heaven if we cannot enter this.

Before we reach there, we should have some understanding of Paradise of Extreme Happiness. At the door, we will see Buddhist monks sitting outside and chanting. When they see us, some will show us that they are trapped in a kind of pitiful pain and anguish. Later, I will explain more clearly who they are. In this area we see a crowd with many different sorts of monks walking up and down. Some have shaved heads, others have long beards, and still others have very strange forms. When we arrive outside the Paradise of Extreme Joy we see this; it is like the outskirts of the Holy See. I will tell you more about these people later on.

But what is this Paradise of Extreme Joy? Souls progress on the Divine Path to Eternal Life in order to independently establish their heavenly status. They can establish their own world in the divine realm. No other authority does this for them. They are allowed to develop their own will. All souls can choose one from two ways to advance:

First, souls progress along the path of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa to Ngọc Hử Cung and Linh Tiêu Điện.

Second, following the method of Hư Vô Tịch Diệt, souls attain their heavenly positions in Nirvana, the Paradise of Extreme Joy.

Right at this time, you can see these two opposite sites, which influence every individual. They are waking versus sleeping, life versus death and suffering versus satisfied contentment. Waking belongs to the powers of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa and sleeping comes under Cực Lạc Thế Giới's power. Living belongs to the powers of Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa and dying comes under Cực Lạc Thế Giới's power.

Cửu Thiên Khai Hoá entirely holds the power of Vạn Pháp Chuyển Luân (Pháp Luân Thường Chuyển)<sup>72</sup>—the mystical dharma of the progress of souls in the Universe. Cực Lạc Thế Giới holds the method of Hư Vô Tịch Diệt (the absolute peace of soul) for souls to attain heavenly positions. The former governs the universe while the latter determines positions in the heavenly hierarchy. This is how the two powers are related.

After we enter the Paradise of Extreme Happiness, the happiness which we observe is several times greater than the happiness we saw at Diêu Trì Cung (the Heaven of the Creation under the Mother Goddess)—the happiness we experienced by being near our Holy Mother. When we enjoyed the happiness of our Mother the contentment wasn't our own; it came from the common store of good works gathered by our Holy Mother—the great common enterprise.

Let's consider an example. Returning to our parents' home—even though it is noble, luxurious and infused with our parents' grace, and no matter how much we enjoy being with them—is nothing compared with the feelings that arise

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<sup>72</sup> The wheel of dhamma-cakka (the holy doctrine) set in motion by the Buddha.

from our own home. Our work in the Paradise of Extreme Happiness is what we have created on our own. It is more enjoyable than the contentment our parents create.

In the Paradise of Extreme Happiness, we have created a microcosm the same way as Đức Chí Tôn has created His macrocosm. There are both demons and Buddhas within it because of our cunning in previous incarnations. We sometimes practised hatred rather than love, and were hostile rather than philanthropic. Our animosity creates evil work and our love and philanthropy create holy one. Similarly, Đức Chí Tôn's animosity creates Satan and His philanthropy creates God.

In our lives we have the power to create our own microcosm. We should correct bad habits that evoke animosity and hatred within us, gradually giving them up. Every life we lead should be full of love so we can enjoy our pleasures at Cực Lạc Thế Giới (the Paradise of Extreme Joy) for at least 1,200, or 2,400, 3,600, 12,000, 24,000 or 36,000 years—according to the merits we have earned. In each life, we should have a way to remove our animosity and hatred and obtain the power of love, like that we find in the image of the three Saints who signed the Third Covenant with God. We see this in the mural displayed at the front of the Caodaist Temple.

I remember at the beginning, when the Caodaist Religion just opened, the Eighth Female Buddha gave a divine message on love in a very intimate manner. We should all try to understand this secret doctrine as completely as we can. It is very important and very significant, especially for the mystical dharma. Đức Chí Tôn has come to sign the Covenant and bind us all to one law, the law of love. Because of this law, Đức Chí Tôn can hold the powers of the universe in his hand.



We have the opportunity to create a noble work: it depends on the power of this law. For example, if we are unluckily hated by some relative, this is our demon karma. We shouldn't be afraid of it. If we're smart, we will use love and behave well towards them so they can destroy their hatred. This is the mystical dharma which I have just revealed. I do this so you, children of Đức Chí Tôn, can search for the method of self-liberation.

Cực Lạc Thế Giới is where we return to our own heavenly microcosm, particularly the Buddha part and the evil part will be controlled. We also determine the dharma here. According to religions, if we sit without moving, concentrating quietly, the divine light will illuminate us. Then we will completely understand every realm in the universe. We only need to sit in one spot, and we can move mountains and fill in the seas.

All spiritual powers are established in Cực Lạc Thế Giới. Our religious achievements in each life will create our eternal spiritual power. Perhaps Đức Chí Tôn will graciously appoint us as an authority to control a world, which has dozens of planets. We can govern the world from the Paradise of Extreme Happiness without traveling anywhere. This eternal power, which we can't understand, continues to operate all the way to the point where it has enough power to create its own special universe, just as Đức Chí Tôn has His own universe. That is when we can reach the highest level.

Sermon 31

**Đức Chí Tôn preserves our divine  
extended family for us**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 11th April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 14th Day of the 3rd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL PREACH IN MORE DETAIL, AND FOR A LITTLE LONGER. IF YOU ARE TIRED, PLEASE EXCUSE ME and try not to be irritated or sleepy.

Before I lead you into the Paradise of Extreme Joy, I will teach you about a philosophy that you children of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) must pay close attention to. Especially, I will take you to a very beautiful location, which in Buddhism is known as the realm of Nirvana or the Paradise of Extreme Joy. Before I explain this, I have to stress something else.

It's time to discuss a very important matter—the final decision to set the future of Vietnam. I've already talked about the situation between the Vietnamese people and the French and have found someone who will reclaim Vietnam's independence. We must do everything we can to claim back our freedom, even though we haven't been able to do so yet. I think all our people will decide to ensure the person doesn't fail. The person is Bảo Đại, our Emperor. Our nation's independence must be sought and won.

I am sure Emperor Bảo Đại will ask for this and will succeed. He knows how to safeguard our nation's future. We will be able to protect it; this is essential. Of course the quest doesn't depend solely on Emperor Bảo Đại, but on the whole

nation. To win independence and fulfil his duty, he must make demands of the French and succeed. Every Vietnamese, not just the Emperor, must work towards this goal, whether we achieve it or not.

I want to stress one more essential point. At this time, no one should stand up as a representative of the nation, or claim authority over the people; there is no authority that can decide the country's future. No thief, from all our people, male and female, dares to say they represent the nation, for we've already been robbed badly.

Right now, I think every Vietnamese person is alert and ready to prevent anyone from abusing them. I'm certain Vietnam's future is in the balance. It depends on how the Vietnamese exercise their intelligence, their virtue, their capacities, their initiative, and their ability to be discerning and prudent. This will decide the future and the destiny of the Vietnamese race.

We when look back at our country's situation, our religious organisations are essential. They have been established by Đức Chí Tôn Himself, formed and maintained until now, when we need to use them. The Caodaist religion is ready. All you men and women who are children of Đức Chí Tôn should be more discerning and more conscious so you can lead the movement with virtue and preserve our nation's future. Our race's survival will lead to a new purpose and a new happiness for the Vietnamese people—Lạc-Hồng, the race of a 4000 year-old tradition.

I want you to be aware of another issue. You must keep your eyes open and remain careful, using your intelligence. Don't let ghosts or demons guide you; they will use tricks to

destroy our work in gaining independence. We have been slaves for over eighty years. The French have demonstrated right in front of us a hundred ways in which they have guided our people wrongly. If we get this wrong, we may be enslaved again.

I'm trying to illuminate the path on which all our people can decide our future direction. This path was left to us by our ancestors and is 4,000 years long—4,000 years of settlement. We were enslaved and oppressed many times by China's regime, influenced by that huge country. We were often oppressed because we followed that path. We must travel on the path of our ancestors now; it is all we have to guide us in building our country.

I've explained this essential issue; we must understand that the King is only the head of Tông Đường. This family is the lord of all—lord of the hundred families. The King has the right to be the lord of the whole nation. An emperor or king decides the country's destiny, but he isn't alone. He doesn't hold the monopoly, for there are authorities—those who are the heads of other Tông Đường. I will establish a congress of eminent citizens, men and women, from the whole nation to be responsible for advising the king and deciding the country's destiny. I have formed the Ban Kỳ Lão (a committee of eminent elder citizens), a senior section of all national groups so men as well as women can hold power to help the Emperor decide our country's destiny. The whole body of believers, men and women aged fifty and older need to register so I can be informed. I will invite people outside our religion so we can call all experienced senior citizens together to achieve a national congress—a congress that will be ready to receive Emperor Bảo Đại when he returns to decide the

country's destiny. This settles the issue.

Now I will continue to talk about Cực Lạc Thế Giới (the Paradise of Extreme Happiness). I've explained that each of your spiritual extended families has already been revealed. Đức Chí Tôn spoke metaphorically He has maintained and preserved your heritage in heaven so it is ready for you. This is Tông Đường Thiêng Liêng (our spiritual extended family).

Our Tông Đường is divided into three classes.

The first is the intellectual souls who are derived from our original souls.

The second is the class of our external relatives, the souls who associate with us when we reincarnate. When we return to each human life, we move into a web of parents, siblings, friends and relatives; these are our external relatives.

Thirdly, there is the class of our internal relatives. These are our souls that descend for reincarnation. Each time we go down, we can let a separate part of our soul reincarnate as a particular person. That is why sublime beings don't need to reincarnate, but have the right to let a part of their soul descend to do so. We find this in the prayer '*Nhứt thân ức vạn diệu huyền thân biến*' (one body, but can mysteriously transform innumerable times). A sublime soul only has one body, but they can transform it into millions of bodies. We can't understand that process with our common knowledge. We need many lives and many attempts at reincarnation before we can reach such mysteries, which are granted by Đức Chí Tôn .

Anyway, when I lead you into the Niết Bàn Cảnh, you will understand one thing. Although you can transform into lots of reincarnations, only your peri-spirit returns to heaven

after your death. However, it's detrimental that our peri-spirit will force ourselves to reincarnate again if it's not content with the heavenly position just attained. Every death has tử khí (an energy of death) about it; this energy is a block which we can use to build a lotus throne. All this determines our position.

Nguyên linh (our original soul) decides our intellectual soul. This is the most important thing; we should be very afraid of losing it. As for the second and third classes, whether they are external or internal relatives—they may betray us at last. In the same way, Lucifer is within the original personality of Đức Chí Tôn Himself. Who is Lucifer? He is Đức Chí Tôn's very close friend as well as the most powerful opponent. The Đức Chí Tôn has to use that close relationship to limit Lucifer's evil behaviors. Those who oppose Đức Chí Tôn create a demonic position for themselves. Our external relatives, even blood relatives, normally rebel with us; this is the drama we usually see. Most of our friends often turn from us easily, especially the best friends. Generally, in our Tông Đường, we should be afraid of our best friends the most.

Đức Chí Tôn has said the external relatives can be made perfect. He is so anxious about this that He recommends you establish these things now, while you are still on this earthly world, so you can gradually develop them. That is why when he established Caodaism, he called Tương, Trang, and Kỳ, the great divine appointees, and asked each of them to establish their own extended family, which really is their spiritual external relations. Why does Đức Chí Tôn ask us to establish such families? If we don't have external relatives, we can't develop our spiritual microcosm. Noble souls have established their imposing heavenly palaces. Especially if some of their members are religious founders, who told them

to establish the microcosm and then help them do it, the microcosm will be more impressive. I won't hide it, I, myself, have a quite large Tông Đường although it is smaller than those of Maitreya Buddha, Quan Yin Buddha, and Amitabha Buddha. Hộ Pháp's Tông Đường is also very good. The acting Pope often pretended to say Hộ Pháp's family court is stronger than his own (the Lê family). But when he says this, he is only being figurative.

Anyway, we now arrive in Nirvana, which is like the capital of Cự Lạc Thế Giới. This is where we will see Maitreya Buddha at Kim Sa Đại Điện (the Great Palace of the Golden Sand). This palace is similar to an Egyptian pyramid, but not exactly the same. Its body is round and it has an oblique surface. It is different from Peruvian pyramids because from the top to the base it looks more like a bánh ếch<sup>73</sup>. Like an Egyptian pyramid, a Peruvian one's base is larger than its top, but it is flat on the top level.

In Peru, people came to this flat top to worship and make their offerings to Đức Chí Tôn.

The pyramid I am speaking about looks more like those in Egypt. When we arrive, we know that this pyramid is Kim Sa (golden sand).

We must pay close attention to one great thing—an extremely large willow tree at the door. I can't describe it; its leaves are like a small thread and it covers the pyramid. It appears to be a few hundred kilometres and it is endless—it seems to go on forever. It covers the pyramid completely like a parasol. This willow tree is the secret dharma (esoteric doctrine) of Nirvana. Each leaf has a drop of holy water on it;

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<sup>73</sup> A kind of Vietnamese cake, a pyramid-shaped sticky rice treat wrapped in banana leaves.

each drop of water is the foundation of a life in the universe.

The pyramid has innumerable levels or steps and numerous Buddhas—so many we can't count them—are sitting on their lotus thrones at every levels; there are Buddhas everywhere we look.

I have explained that those Buddhas, who have attained enlightenment on earth, are from the original soul of Đức Chí Tôn. If we use our spiritual eye and look up at the lotus thrones, we see their positions are created by lots of lives on earth. If a Buddha wants a promotion to a higher lotus flower, he must reincarnate in an animal and go from this level up to the Buddha position. Once this is achieved, another level of lotus flower is reached.

Looking at these lotus flowers on the pyramid, we see them transforming back to their Pháp Thân (peri-spirit, astral body), which look like the ones coming from Kim Bàn. In the Buddha Mother's golden basin, their Pháp Thân look misty, like in a dream. But here reigning over the lotus thrones, their Pháp Thân look complete, perfect and clear. They appear absolutely mysterious and eternal. Each lotus flower is luminous and related to the universe and all other worlds because of their luminosity. It's like a radio broadcast—you can tune in everywhere. The whole universe is under their direction because they have special rights. This isn't a political direction, but an educational one.

The political system of the universe has two parts. The first is the organisation that governs the worlds under Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa. The second is the organisation that educate humanity under Nirvana or the Paradise of Extreme Joy. What's more, I've explained that once we have achieved a lotus



flower throne, we may still be dreaming of achieving the Five-Level Position or the Ten-Level Position. If we don't want to lag behind the others, we must remain there for 1,200 years sitting, meditating and settling our spirit. We have to do this to create a higher and more honourable lotus flower throne. This is all the souls, who travel on the path of progress to the Paradise of Extreme Happiness, dream about.

Buddhas are merely one part against ten thousand compared to Đức Chí Tôn, but they still want to achieve the same position as His. Hence, they must go on forever.

**Sermon 32**

**What is a drop of holy water? What is the true appearance of Nirvana? What is the true appearance of the Paradise of Extreme Happiness?**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 15th April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 18th Day of the 3rd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE. Previously, I led all the children of Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) into the realm of Nirvana.

I have described the countless Buddhas and explained that there is a giant willow tree at the door of the great pyramid. It covers the pyramid completely like a heavenly net. Each leaf looks the same as it would on this planet. It is a little bigger than a human hair and there is a drop of holy water at its end. What is this drop of water? It will become the life of souls throughout the universe.

All these Buddhas have the same form as we see in the Buddha Mother's golden basin. At that time their Pháp Thân (peri-spirit, astral body) are only faint images, but when they return and are raised on the pyramid's throne, they become bright and clear. On the pyramid, their Pháp Thân becomes mysterious, limitless and endless. Let's discover why. When our Pháp Thân appeared at the Buddha Mother's golden basin, they were only some shadow. After countless times of life and death, we can attain the essential elements of a living being to improve our Pháp Thân. We do this to obtain all the secret mysteries and the power of creation itself. When we obtain this

Pháp Thân, we attain Buddhahood. Then we will completely understand every divine secret of all creation.

I have also explained that when our physical body dies, it returns to the sum of Tử Khí<sup>74</sup>. People think our bodies rot and cease to exist, but the energy of death allows us to create a lotus-flower throne for ourselves. I want to explain more clearly that the Buddhas' dharmakaya on the lotus flower thrones of the pyramid is a collection of thousands of lives. Having been uninformed, we might have feared the death-energy, but now we actually long for it. We seek it dearly because we see it become a lotus flower throne under the willow tree. It is precious and multi-faceted; it glows with millions of divine sparks throughout the universe.

Presently, Maitreya Buddha is the leader of Nirvana, who was previously Amitabha Buddha's. He succeeded Amitabha Buddha when Đức Chí Tôn opened the Caodaist Religion for the Third Salvation. At this spiritual moment Đức Chí Tôn also granted powers of atomic dimensions to humans. This power also comes from the throne of the lotus flower.

Now in Nirvana we know the secret of the khí, whose character Đức Chí Tôn has placed at the rear of the Hộ Pháp's statue. We call it Khí Sanh Quang, which is the vital energy for life while people call it atomic power. Maitreya Buddha is seated upon his lotus flower throne, which is the atomic energy everyone wants and is searching for.

Đức Chí Tôn created this position and every soul longs for it no matter how noble they are. Whether they are a king on earth or a divine being in heaven, they long for and search for the experience of being seated on the pyramid on a luminous

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<sup>74</sup> Death energy (literally translated).

lotus flower throne. Though it's extremely hard, it's up to you whether you can achieve this. Sakyamuni Buddha has told us there are countless Buddhas. He didn't lie to us; the number of Buddhas is indeed countless.

Again, I affirm that Đức Chí Tôn has created and reserved this dimension for his children. If someone sat here previously, we can too. If someone could obtain this position previously, then, clearly, we can too. Though it is extremely precious, we can also sit on it. But whether we can sit on it depends upon our virtuous foundation. These precious properties are eternal. The position is not just for one person; everyone can attain it. A soul decides its right to establish its own position just as we decide our rights in the earthly world. It's true. It is up to us to want to develop a lotus throne at the pyramid and whether the position lasts long. This is the truth and it never changes.

I've told you before we will meet a crowd of people at the outskirts of the Paradise of Extreme Happiness. We will see all sorts of people from different races, not just from this 68th planet—the shaven-headed, the bearded; all types. When they arrive at the Paradise of Extreme Happiness they will face a very high wall which prevents them from moving further, just like the Great Wall of China. We ourselves feel excited for them. Entering from the air, we look down and see the crowds jostling forward. They gather into small groups and chant together according to their prayer times. I'm not saying this because we can laugh at them or criticise, but when we see them, we feel pity.

Who are these souls? If we understand the philosophy of Đức Chí Tôn we shouldn't worry about them. They are monks and priests of various religions. Although their path isn't straight—it is even heretical—their heart is always directed

towards religious teaching. Many intellectuals and elevated souls follow these heretical ways. Even though we know they're heretical, it isn't strange that this happens, because people guide them, making these ways easy to follow.

It is sad, for the people aren't intentionally wrong. They're wrong because they follow religion wherever they find it without knowing what the true doctrine is. For example, it is traditionally said that you should shave your head and enter Buddhist monasteries to become a Buddha. That is only a myth! They aren't aware of the origins of their religion or that it's wrong. It's not their fault though. This harmful, surprising thing happens because they don't completely understand the true teaching. They don't know the realm of Nirvana, nor its true appearance. How can they enter this paradise if they don't know what it really is?

Though they practise a religion with a genuine heart, they still can't enter because the religions on planet earth have deviated from the true course. They follow them because they listen and believe. Those who follow these religions can come to the Paradise of Extreme Happiness, but one thing separates them; they can't enjoy it's full extent. They enjoy the simulated experience, for they must stay at the outskirts for a certain time so they can know their spirit fully and cultivate it. These people have no sin whatsoever; they are merely lost or on the wrong path. They enjoy the unreal dimension of this paradise while they remain on the outskirts for a period of several hundred years. Then they have to reincarnate and practice a religion again. This enables them to fully understand the true teaching and they can enter the real paradise.

Now, let's leave the Paradise of Extreme Joy and meet our friends in the outskirts. When we meet them and talk,

they ask us questions. It is like when the French see people returning from their colony they say, *'How's your business? And how are the others?'* The divine beings ask similar questions. They ask about the conditions of the souls—their sins and their merits. They ask whether earthly people have achieved anything. *'Have they helped elevate the Đạo? Do the souls know themselves or not?'* We will have an amicable conversation with a fortuitous rapport.

When those friends ask, *'How can it be so difficult for humans to make their positions?'*

We tell them it is because humans are suspicious and thought it's enough to rise to this level. They don't know where the true teaching is because they have lied too much. They suspect there's no extreme joy in Nirvana; they say the realm of the heavenly palace doesn't exist. They think these ideas are fantastic or shadowy. They don't believe there are Buddhas, immortals, saints and geniis. When hearing this, the friends at the outskirts of Nirvana become really disappointed.

On the earthly world there are all sorts of people. From stupid people, who know very little, to intelligent people, who understand the natural laws of creation and know how to take advantage of it. Similarly, there are also different levels in the Paradise. The noble people on earth such as Sakyamuni Buddha, Jesus Christ or other religious founders said there are people more sublime than themselves. If we haven't seen the Eternal Life, we might not believe that.

Hence, humankind's doubt is generated by their own karmic account. They have undertaken suffering through lots of reincarnations so that they can gradually evolve according to their karmic law. However, Đức Chí Tôn has said, *'Children,*

*you can attain enlightenment right in only one incarnation if you know the Đạo and practise religion properly*. Đức Chí Tôn's words aren't wrong. It is up to your belief in Đức Chí Tôn whether you attain enlightenment.

**Sermon 33**

**Many people practise religion, but few  
achieve a position because Lucifer blocks  
the way to the Paradise of Extreme Joy**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 19th April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 22nd Day of the 3rd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR  
PROGRESS ON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

Children of Đức Chí Tôn, in the last sermon I told you about the Paradise of Extreme Joy and took you to see the realm of Nirvana. I also showed you the outer districts of this paradise. I think that's enough for you. On the Path to Eternal Life, to go beyond Cửu Thiên Khai Hóa, you must achieve enlightenment at least. At first, I think I should tell you Caodaists one thing so that you won't be too frightened or hesitant to advance on your path of evolution when you die one day. I must remind you about something which is an essential part of my special responsibility. This has influenced various religions—especially Buddhism. From the beginning of time until now, many people have practised a religion, but too few have attained enlightenment, because the spiritual way had been blocked. I haven't had such a good chance to talk with the Divine Beings; I still need to question them thoroughly about these details.

I remember while I was at Ngọc Hử Cung, Linh Tiêu Điện, Đức Chí Tôn gave me the holy order to go and open the Paradise of Extreme Happiness. Initially I was confused. I didn't know why I was given the duty of opening it. I had to



ask myself what the Paradise of Extreme Happiness actually is and why I was being sent to open it. Arriving there, I discovered what had happened to the souls who had obtained high positions in the universe. I learnt how they undertook their examination from Kim Quang Sú (Lucifer; Satan). By His grace Đức Chí Tôn allows this figure to be the examiner of Hạ Ngươn Tam Chuyền<sup>75</sup>. After this circle is complete, the first circle of the fourth manvantara will begin.

Who is Kim Quang Sú? In Christianity he is referred to as Lucifer. He is a Great Immortal who has the power to bring Đức Chí Tôn's spiritual light to illuminate the universe. This Great Immortal has aimed towards the position of a Buddha; his power is only slightly less than that of Đức Chí Tôn. Lucifer could attain Buddhahood, the position is only a few steps away from him, but because of his pride and arrogance, he always falls short of his goal. Additionally, because of his pride and greed for advancement, he doesn't acknowledge Đức Chí Tôn's power. He wants to take great powers for himself to control the Universe. He hasn't gained these powers completely, but Ngọc Hữ Cung already knows about Lucifer's dishonesty. Nevertheless, Ngọc Hữ Cung still let him gain the position of Governor of a world. I think he deserves the position of President of a universe if he isn't too proud or arrogant. Regrettably, this didn't satisfy Lucifer. His betrayal caused him to be sent down to the position of first amongst the devils. If we want to understand Kim Quang Sú's situation and how he took over the power of the heavens, we should read the Bible.

At the present time, Kim Quang Sú, the Great Immortal, together with other devil souls, has been granted an amnesty.

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<sup>75</sup> the last circle of the third manvantara.

In this general amnesty, Đức Chí Tôn blessed evil spirits as well as all the other souls in the universe. The first leader of the demons and devils has also undertaken highly significant duties to examine those immortals who seek Buddhahood.

It isn't surprising that Lucifer came to us through a séance when the Caodaist community was becalmed and the whole sacred body (Caodaist Sacerdotal Council) of Đức Chí Tôn was acting harmoniously. At that time, we had no bad intentions against each other; there wasn't even a whisper of rebellion. Everyone followed the rules of Đức Chí Tôn's true teachings.

Suddenly Kim Quang Sứ came in through a séance and provided us with a poem which is more like an ultimatum,

*All nine immortal ranks fear my face*

*I may bow to Sakyamuni, but chaos thunders in my wake.*

*You see how I'm received at that Palace of Jade*

*But will truth or heresy usher you to the Pure Land?*

Look at that! What a power! Lucifer blocked the way from Ngọc Hũ Cung to the Paradise of Extreme Joy, so souls couldn't pass and had to return. Honestly, all religions on earth should have explained this fact, but they didn't.

Đức Chí Tôn knows this. He dares to let Lucifer, His most powerful enemy, challenge Himself as well as His children! Nevertheless, he doesn't flinch; he isn't afraid. This shows us the power of Đức Chí Tôn is higher than that of Lucifer; it is really much higher.

We might expect that Đức Chí Tôn has to maintain the spirit of humanity with care because of Lucifer's challenges. In fact, He doesn't need to pay as much attention as we think.

That is why on the Caodaist inaugural day at the Tù Lâm

temple, Đức Chí Tôn came, wrote his name with the psychic pen and then ascended. After that Lucifer, with His permission, came to cause disturbance in the ceremony.

Allowed by Đức Chí Tôn, Lucifer is always ready to destroy the Cao Đài Religion. Lucifer has carried out trick after scheming trick over twenty years. The children of Đức Chí Tôn, both men and women, are being destroyed; he has consistently tried to make them relinquish the Cao Đài Religion. He will use any trick to destroy the holy body of Đức Chí Tôn, but it isn't easy. Despite his great power, Lucifer can't overtake the level which Đức Chí Tôn wants for his children. We have seen enough proof to understand this.

Amazingly, we never know whether Lucifer knows it or not. Actually, Đức Chí Tôn allows Lucifer to examine his children to relinquish the earthly in exchange for the holy.

I have read up on history and I remember when Hàn Tín went to Quang Trung. Trương Tử Phòng had presented a precious sword and a letter of recommendation. Those things were used to convince Hồn Bái Công to recognise Hàn Tín as a general. For some reason, Hàn Tín hid the letter of recommendation. He tried to display his own talent and skill to make Hồn Bái Công recognise him and employ him for an important task. He didn't want to use this letter of recommendation.

Another pity! It's very difficult to make others realise who we are, especially when fortune doesn't smile on you. This is how Hàn Tín was examined. In a case like this, it doesn't matter how much talent you have, you can't break away from the force of destiny. Hàn Tín couldn't meet his fate by talent alone, instead he met an examiner called Phàn Khoái who

prevented him from demonstrating his intellectual power. At last, at midnight Hàn Tín leapt onto his horse and returned to Quang Trung. Becoming aware of what had happened, Tiêu Hà followed and caught up with Hàn Tín. This is when he agreed to present the letter of recommendation. Hàn Tín's pride and self-respect caused this. It might seem noble, but eventually you have to stand and be judged so your talent can be valuable.

Phụng Sở<sup>76</sup> is another person who was in a similar situation. Trương Phi examined him, so he couldn't make his name by his virtue alone.

Therefore, Đức Chí Tôn can grant us a divine position for us, but we have to use our own talent to create our power; we have to use our virtues to make our own way to that position. If we want to reach our sublime heavenly position, we have to undertake and pass an examination. If we fail, we have to accept that we will go backwards; we can't refuse! Remember that examiner Kim Quang Sú is very harsh.

These stories illustrate how the true nature of humanity means we are judged harshly; Kim Quang Sú judges even more harshly. His pride and self-conceit are all-consuming; no being or soul can corrupt or bribe him. No-one can ask him to elevate someone whom he examines and doesn't pass his scrutiny convincingly.

By the way, I will tell you this story. The other day, I was given a holy order to go and clear the way to the Paradise of Extreme Happiness. I travelled on a Vân Xa<sup>77</sup> from Ngọc Hử Cung to Cực Lạc Thế Giới. When the mysterious vehicle passed this location I saw that Kim Quang Sú was barring the

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<sup>76</sup> From the Chinese Classic, *The Three Kingdoms*.

<sup>77</sup> a vehicle made of cloud in heaven

way. I was disconcerted and I didn't know whether to stay or return. Then suddenly I saw His Eminence Lý Minh Vương (the Chinese Immortal, Li Tai Guai) in the dharmakaya body of His Holiness Thượng Trung Nhựt (the Caodaist Acting Pope). He was holding his stick, limping forwards and fighting with Kim Quang Sứ. The Acting Pope was limping and leaping forward, but fighting, even though he was exhausted and one leg was shorter than the other!

I was sitting on a mysterious cloud vehicle wondering how Lý Minh Vương could fight like that. At first, all I could see was the Acting Pope who, as you know, was Lý Minh Vương. Kim Quang Sứ was facing him; they were both fighting. It seemed that neither of them could gain the upper hand. Even though many precious dharma objects were used in the battle, the fight was inconclusive.

For a while I saw Lý Minh Vương hit Kim Quang Sứ with his stick; sparks and soot were splattered all over Lucifer as if a bottle of ink had been smashed over him. When he was hit, he was divided in two, creating a second person. Then, on the other side, I saw a heavenly-appointed member of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council, whose name I do not want to reveal, hopped out and fought that second person. No matter how many people Lucifer created, the same number were created on the other side to fight him and his army. At this point a great war began. And I was there, observing the fight, sitting on the cloud vehicle, like being in an aeroplane.

I watched this great battle for so long I actually started getting weary and fell asleep! When I woke up, the forces were still fighting. I fell asleep three times; each time they were still fighting when I woke up. After I awoke the third time, I saw the war extend to the depth of the whole universe. I didn't know

how our side can win the battle. Then I thought I couldn't sit on the cloud vehicle for ever. I had to find a way to help instead. When I began thinking like this, my dharmakaya appeared as another person.

Sitting on the cloud vehicle I wore a white robe and the hat like my minor ceremonial dress. I didn't know what this dress was made of, but after I put it on I felt very light and happy! When I left my dharmakaya, I saw that I was wearing my major ceremonial dress. This costume was like the one I wear on earth, but my earthly one is only a rough copy.

After I changed into my major ceremonial dress, I held my *Giáng Ma Xử* (staff for ruling over evil) and *Kim Tiên* (the golden rod). I flew up and hovered over the person sitting in the mysterious cloud vehicle. (There is one thing to be aware of: the person above can understand and know what the person sitting in the vehicle is doing as if they are the same person!)

I saw the battlefield was vast. I held the golden rod, and *Giáng Ma Xử*, which had no visible form. This precious dharma object is invisible. The golden rod belongs to *Cửu Thiên Cảm Ứng Lô Âm Phổ Hoá Thiên Tôn*, that is, it belongs to His Holiness *Thái Sư Văn Trọng*. He had given me *Kim Tiên*, which you can see when you enter the meditation hall. The *Kim Tiên* is used to destroy evil and prevent evil forces from blowing wildly into the great divine temple of *Đức Chí Tôn* and disturbing His children.

When I flew into the middle of the sky, I saw the vast battlefield but I couldn't comprehend it. If the battlefield remained so vast, it would be very hard to fight. But when I held the golden rod and tried to draw a circle to contain the battle, it was almost the same as casting a net. I held the

golden rod and concentrated on drawing the forces into a smaller area. When I did this, the battlefield became much more concentrated. As it became smaller and smaller, I could see that our side was defeating Kim Quang Sú.

Our religious side (with His Eminence, Lý Minh Vương in the lead) had destroyed Kim Quang Sú's side. Finally only His Eminence was left fighting with Kim Quang Sú. They fought each other for some time longer. Then Lý Minh Vương hit Kim Quang Sú with his stick, just once, transforming him into a mere aura. He got into a nimbus and fled.

This is the way to the Paradise of Extreme Joy. Is that why religions have said that the Đạo is blocked? After that, as we approach the external door of the Paradise of Extreme Happiness, we see two giant pinwheels are spinning continuously. If we use our imagination we can see that from the top to bottom these pinwheels are about five or ten thousand metres across; when they are spinning they prevent the door from opening—like the great wall, they don't let anyone pass.

One of the doors creates a white nimbus; the other creates a red and pink nimbus. When I arrived, I pointed the Giáng Ma Xử directly at one of the two doors, asking it to stop spinning. It stopped immediately. If we look carefully we can see that the pinwheel is a swastika that had been spinning. When I asked it to stop the people who were at the external door of the Paradise of Extreme Happiness ran inside. After some of them had crowded inside, I directed the other pinwheel to stop and another group of people rushed in.

After these people entered, a Buddha was standing above;

with his two hands he practised a mudra<sup>78</sup> and threw down the swastikas. These pinwheels started spinning again. When I stopped the swastikas spinning, does that mean I opened the door of the Paradise of the Extreme Joy for the souls who had attained enlightenment while Đạo was blocked to enter? When the Buddha appeared and made them turn again, the way was blocked again, but I am sure that all the souls in the outskirts could already enter the paradise. That surely was the Supreme Being's holy opinion, not just a coincidence.

Hence, Đức Chí Tôn has ordered that I open the door of the Paradise of Extreme Joy for two reasons: First, the way from the Linh Tiêu Điện, Ngọc Hư Cung to the Paradise of Extreme Happiness is barred by Kim Quang Sứ. Second, the monks who practised religion but haven't achieved nirvana because the true dharma was perverted, causing them to be exiled from this paradise.

Đức Chí Tôn told me to go there and guide the souls, preserving a position for them at the Paradise of Extreme Happiness.

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<sup>78</sup> A ritual hand gesture in religions.



## Sermon 34

**Hỗ Nguơn Thượng Thiên, where the great and merciful Father appears**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 23rd April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 26th Day of the 3rd month, year of the Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

I'm allowed only to tell you about Tạo Hoá Huyền Thiên<sup>79</sup>, not from Hư Vô Cao Thiên<sup>80</sup> to higher heavens. Luckily, those heavens are already described in Caodaist Scriptures, so you may be familiar with them all. It's not necessary to further describe them here.

I just want to say something more about the Hỗ Nguơn Thượng Thiên<sup>81</sup>. As we know, it is now the first cycle of the Fourth Transition, so Maitreya Buddha has been given the power to govern and control every soul and body in the universe. This palace is where we can encounter the presence of Đức Chí Tôn and are closest to Him.

When I explained about Ngọc Hử Cung and Linh Tiêu Điện, I told you that Đức Chí Tôn is our great and merciful Father. However, at Ngọc Hử Cung, he was only a superior King, not a great and merciful Father. At the Hỗ Nguơn Heaven He appears as the great and merciful Father.

So the Jews, who attained enlightenment, see Đức Chí Tôn appear as Jehovah when they return to Hỗ Nguơn

<sup>79</sup> the tạo hóa Heaven; the Heaven of Creation under the Mother Goddess; the Celestial Sphere of Creation

<sup>80</sup> The Heaven of the Highest Void.

<sup>81</sup> Hỗ Nguơn Heaven under the guidance of Maitreya Buddha.

Heaven after death. I'm sure that every soul dreams about such happiness in this place.

If we are Chinese, attain nirvana and return to this heaven, we will see our great and merciful Father in the image of Hồng Quân Lão Tổ<sup>82</sup>.

The Indians, depending upon their situation and the result of their actions, will see their great and merciful Father in the image of Brahma, Shiva or Krishna.

Thus, this is the realm where all souls are united with Đức Chí Tôn. It is the realm of the true dharma of the Caodaist religion, put on this earth for humans to access. We have seen that Đức Chí Tôn has allowed souls who have obtained enlightenment to pass, as well as those who haven't. Everyone is able to return and unite with Đức Chí Tôn. He Himself comes there to teach and live with His children during each teaching session. He gives His children everything, without a second thought. His Holiness Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn<sup>83</sup>, (Đức Chứng Đạo, the head of the Society of Foreign Missions) has said,

*'The Father gives his children vitality  
The Master bestows his own divinity'*

If we want to see this phenomenon, when we arrive at Hồn Ngươn Thượng Thiên, we will. This is the realm where we can see this happiness.

In addition, Hồn Ngươn Thượng Thiên is where the sublime beings and intellectual souls from the level of Thiên Tiên (Heavenly Immortal) through to Buddhas come together. They gather here and stay to cultivate their great work—their

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<sup>82</sup> the primordial ancestor—a metamorphosis of the Jade Emperor; Đức Chí Tôn

<sup>83</sup> The religious name of Victor Hugo when dwelling in the white cloud lodge.

accomplishments. This is where all the transformation and the destruction of the universe are decided according to the true dharma. Importantly, it is where those sublime beings decide the agenda of the Dragon Flower Assembly for every being in the universe. That is why we see the souls in continuous silent contemplation when we return to this realm. They can't be distracted, for they consciously invoke the name of Đức Chí Tôn. From Đức Chí Tôn, we go to start our life and whenever we are able to return to Him, we attain Nirvana or enlightenment.

Therefore, the Hồn Ngươn Thượng Thiên is called the Cung Định, Cung Pháp (Palace of Destiny, Palace of the Dharma). Why is it called this? Because in this realm every soul has to become united with Đức Chí Tôn. There, we've seen the images of Đức Chí Tôn and other Great Immortals dwelling on their thrones.

Children of Đức Chí Tôn, in the next sermon I will guide you to Bạch Ngọc Kinh (the White Jade Palace), which is the image of the Bát Quái Đài (the Eight Trigrams Palace) that we can see on planet earth.

**Sermon 35**

**Lôi Âm temple, here Amitabha Buddha reigns**

*Delivered at the Tây Ninh Holy See on the 27th April 1949;  
Lunar Calendar 30th Day of the 3rd month, year of the  
Buffalo.*

**T**ONIGHT I WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK ABOUT OUR PROGRESS ON THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE.

I ask you all to pay special attention to today's sermon because it contains the Bí Pháp for obtaining enlightenment. You should pay special attention as well as concentrate all your beliefs on Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) to understand how to become liberated. This is all we really want when we practice religion. Last time I guided the spirits of the children of Đức Chí Tôn to the Paradise of Extreme Happiness. We specially observed the great pyramid thoroughly.

Tonight I invite you all to enter Lôi Âm Tự, just as I did when I reported to Amitabha Buddha. Amitabha Buddha gave Maitreya Buddha the power to rule the Universe, so Maitreya Buddha now dwells at Kim Tự Tháp (the pyramid) and Amitabha Buddha has returned to Lôi Âm Tự.

Entering the Lôi Âm Tự, I saw and heard Amitabha Buddha preaching. There I can learn the Buddhist philosophies from the beginning of the universe up to now.

Buddhism has taught how to liberate oneself from the cycle of reincarnation on this planet. This isn't a secret. However, humans don't practise it. This is why they don't attain enlightenment. Buddhism is the most ancient tradition; it is the mother of all other religions.

After that, I heard bells ringing. At the same time somebody told me to get into my dharma vehicle, the mysterious cloud transport used to go to the White Jade Palace. Two celestial handmaidens and a servant directed the vehicle, speeding it along. I saw them hurrying me into the vehicle so we could leave quickly. One day, when you are in the Meditation Hall and have the time, I will explain the appearance of this vehicle when it is travelling along the Divine Path to Eternal Life.

While I was passing Cung Hồn Ngươn Thượng Thiên, where Maitreya Buddha obtains dharma and decides divine positions for all souls, I suddenly found it confusing. Why is the Holy Mother under the power of her child, Maitreya Buddha? Immediately after this I saw the image of Holy Mother standing with Maitreya Buddha kneeling behind her, with his hands on his forehead. This image indicates that although he is powerful and has his rights and prerogatives, his mother still has her own rights; she can't be surpassed. So, Maitreya Buddha only obeys the Holy Mother's orders to govern the universe.

Through all these scenes, I was on the dharma vehicle travelling perpetually on the Path to Eternal Life. I can barely describe the experience.

Then, I saw bright lights in the distance, like the morning sun. On the far horizon I saw a light that illuminated the view; it's like a brilliant halo of vital energy.

When my dharma vehicle arrived here, a nimbus came, illuminating the vehicle, like a lighthouse on our planet. The nimbus illuminated my whole body and a very strange mist appeared within. The more the dharma vehicle moved, the more my happiness increased. I fell like I was in a coma without

knowing where I was; my happiness remained indescribable.

When we come closer, we see a very strange object — a magnificent palace. Its colour is brilliant and keeps changing. Vital fluid covers it completely, swirling around it.

Although the palace is transparent, it is living. It isn't made of stone and brick like earthly palaces, but evolves as a living being, changing colour constantly and endlessly. This mysterious dharma can't be described, but when we look at it, it is magnificent!

On earth, houses are inanimate, but they are alive in the White Jade Palace. They transform and change as though they're revolving. Vital fluid surges around them from south to north and east to west. The block of fire and light makes them look like the sun. The sun's light is hot and uncomfortable, but the light of the White Jade Palace is very gentle and mysterious. It is blissful and delightful.

Palaces are inanimate, so how can they be alive here? It isn't strange if we understand.

At Bạch Ngọc Kinh, palaces are made of Hồn Ngươn Khí (the cosmic fluid, the supreme ether), which transforms into the air we are breathing. This khí is the energy that feeds and nourishes all beings. That is why palaces here are alive. I arrived on my dharma vehicle and saw countless souls in front of the door, circling everywhere. When the dharma vehicle stopped, I got off and saw the three doors of the White Jade Palace. The twelve Lords of Zodiac were there, wearing marshals' uniforms and holding the divine staff in their hands. They barred the door against the souls who were outside. I was very upset.

These three doors were set apart with four Lords guarding each.

When I wanted to talk, the three doors changed into one and the twelve Lords of Zodiac came together and stood in front of me. I asked why they refused to let the waiting souls enter. When I asked this they felt strange. They replied that someone had told them not to let souls enter the White Jade Palace. Hearing this, I immediately knew who “*someone*” was: Kim Quang Sú. I was so upset I turned to the souls and told them to enter. The souls moved towards the gate; they flowed into the White Jade Palace like a river breaking its banks. When all the souls had entered, I ordered the twelve Lords of Zodiac to enter and checked to see if anyone was left outside. Lastly, I shouldered Giáng Ma Xủ and entered.

The White Jade Palace is divided into three parts; the middle section contains the sublime Buddhas. Facing inwards, I saw the female college on my left side, and the male on my right. I was listening and watching people walk about [talking] loudly. On the other side, we only saw the shadow reflected through the wall. This wall is very strange; it is clear like jelly.

I didn't pay attention at first; but when I went further I saw everyone had already taken their throne. I was allowed to enter and see them all settled in their place. I put the Giáng Ma Xủ on my shoulder again to move on, but I didn't know where to go. I asked myself, ‘*Why does everyone except me have their seat?*’ Suddenly a being near me, whom I hadn't noticed before, said, ‘*Your throne is over there, sir*’. I looked up and saw my throne was quite magnificent, but inside I was struck with doubt. I was afraid the being was deceiving me. When I showed my fear the being stressed ‘*That is your throne, sir*’.

Since I have undertaken countless lives of suffering on earth to create a divine position, from the beginning of time until now, it is extremely happy to be able to sit on this throne

now. This realm is extremely blissful; if you reach it you overflow with bliss. I wondered how I could possibly go and sit on such a throne. But while I was thinking about it, it seemed as though steps appeared for me to go up and sit there. After I sat down, I saw that everyone had food and wine. I asked myself, *'Why do they have things to eat, but I don't?'* As soon as I said this, I saw a peach of immortality and a glass of immortal wine in front of me. In this realm, whatever we think of—whatever we want—is given to us. Anything we think about suddenly appears. Even after a million lives on earth you couldn't have a life which was as luxurious, noble and blissful as this.

This is the Dragon Flower Assembly which we are attending at the White Jade Palace. Đức Chí Tôn let me see this in advance because He wants me to tell His children that one day they will be there too. I think if we attain enlightenment and unite with Đức Chí Tôn, we will be allowed to live there. We have reincarnated and undertaken the suffering of life to create our position. Our suffering will return to us in an overwhelming reward. If we see this we can easily understand Đức Chí Tôn can never bear to be in debt to anyone.

It is wonderful for those who dare to make offerings to Him and those who love humanity and know how to be His servant. He will respond in our favour when He becomes our servant and returns to us. No happiness on this earth can equal this.

As for the female beings on the other side. On my side, I could only see their shadows; I didn't know why a wall was set up to prevent anyone from seeing them. I was very upset by the idea of a wall. Then when coming near, I saw it looked like jelly. I put my hand in, it moved through it, and when I



withdraw my hand it closed up again.

Upset and curious; I wanted to do something so I could see the other side. When I thought about this, suddenly the wall drew aside and left a wide space. I saw all the female beings on the other side. It looked very blissful; you women will be very happy. The female side is as happy as the male side.

In the realm of the White Jade Palace, the female beings are extremely elegant because their dharmakaya is constantly changing and transforming; I don't know how they can be this elegant. Therefore, ladies, if you want to be elegant and beautiful, you must practice religion hard so you can return to this realm and be like this. There is no elegance like this on our planet.

Since I attended the Dragon Flower Assembly in heaven, I have no longer wanted to live. I wanted to die so I could return to this realm. Dying is desirable because the more I live the more I suffer. I want to die and return to this realm, but of course I can't.

Đức Chí Tôn doesn't dare to let those who aren't sublime see these realms. If someone saw this suddenly, I think they might go mad or try to kill themselves to get back to the realm and enjoy this happiness. But if they killed themselves, they couldn't return, they would have to descend to Uổng Tử Thành<sup>84</sup>. They would stay there until they could overcome their karmic sins, then they had to start reincarnating again. You friends should always practice Caodaism and avoid impatience, especially the Caodaists on Bà Đen (Linh Sơn Thánh Mẫu Mountain) who shave their heads. You can't attain enlightenment that way. Don't rush!

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<sup>84</sup> the Suicide Town, which is traditionally where people committing suicide are punished.

When I continued inside I wanted to find out who our great and merciful Father is. Is this being also the Jade Emperor. How can I know Him? When I thought about it I saw something in the distance, as though covered by a curtain. When I moved closer, I knew He was there. I wanted it opened so I could see Him. When I thought this, suddenly the curtain opened. There seemed to be steps, levels which receded so far that I can't explain it. Then I saw Him step out dressed in a white robe with a distinctive white turban, like the minor ceremonial dress of Giáo Hữu<sup>85</sup>. He also wore two sashes around His waist. His beard was white and stunningly beautiful; it looked magnificent.

I thought I saw Him dressed differently when He sat at Linh Tiêu Điện; perhaps there were two different people; perhaps it wasn't Him. When I thought about this, I saw Him step out; standing in the centre. He looked directly at me, seeming to be asking me to just look. When I looked up to Him, I saw the nimbus illuminate His head and He held a stick that was incredibly beautiful. A gourd was attached to the end of the stick and He carried a bag at the side of His body. He was wearing the Jade Emperor's robe. He held his stick, which became the balance beam. He pulled the gourd and it became the tray of a set of scales. Then He pulled at his bag and it became the weights of the scale. These three precious objects united and became the spiritual scale which we saw at Linh Tiêu Điện. It no longer seems strange; the being before us is also our great and merciful Father who is constantly transforming as He creates the Universe.

That's why we shouldn't consider a flower an object and pick it without a reason. We might mistakenly pick the life

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<sup>85</sup> a low-ranking Cao daist dignitary.

of a Buddha. Then it will be very hard for us to cultivate our morality.

We say an animal is just an animal, but it might be a bodhisattva who is reincarnating. If we mistakenly eat it, one day it will return to the higher realms where it will be equal with us and remind us that in a previous life, *'You, Buddha, ate me'*. This memory will be enough for us to pack to reincarnate on earth again. We see innumerable animals on earth, but we don't know if any is a bodhisattva reincarnating to create their lotus throne. If we mistakenly eat them, it is very hard for us to attain nirvana. Therefore, Đức Chí Tôn has told us to be full vegetarians.

After seeing him, I was still curious and wanted to know all about the White Jade Palace. It's so vast I don't know when I can go around it and actually see it all. I entered and reported to the Supreme Being, asking His permission to see the whole palace. As soon as I thought about it, he seemed to know what I was asking. He came close to a stool which was near me on my left though I wasn't aware of it. When Đức Chí Tôn knocked his stick on the stool, it was transformed into an old man. As I didn't know his name, I only called him Mr Stool.

I didn't know him at all, but he guided me everywhere around the different parts of the palace. In each realm, the souls are narrowed down, like in a rockery. I went everywhere in Bạch Ngọc Kinh, but I was still worried that I might have missed something. I went around so far I became very tired, but I continued to explore. The Universe is so vast there are no borders. Therefore, when we return to the realm of the White Jade Palace, neither men nor women will need to worry that there aren't enough seats. If it's not adequate, please call me and I will make up for any lack.

Children of Đức Chí Tôn, I assure you all there will be enough seats! You will never be dismissed because there are many spare seats.

Friends, you should try to practice religion while you are on planet earth, so you can return to that realm. Let me take care of finding somewhere to live, renting houses and anything like that.

Anyway, I have explained it and you have understood that you must practice religion. If you don't, it is your decision. You can't say I didn't warn you, or that you didn't know. Don't cheat and don't contradict me. I have spoken in front of you all; you are witnesses.

Now the Divine Path to Eternal Life is finished. Next time we meet I will start to preach about the secret dharma.

## GLOSSARY

- **Ao Ô Trì** – Ô Trì Pond. Traditionally, this pond is in Hell, containing blood and dirty things. Sinners will be drowned here as punishment.
- **Amitabha(s)** – the name of the Buddha of the Western Pure Land. Its primary meaning is infinite life and light; amitufo in Chinese
- **Bắc Đẩu** – Nam Tào and Bắc Đẩu are the two Immortals who are in charge of the registration of the birth and death of human beings on the earth. Nam Tào is in charge of the registration of birth and Bắc Đẩu is in charge of the registration of death
- **Bạch Ngọc Kinh** – the divine White Jade Palace; court of God; council of God
- **Bạch Nhựt Chi Thăng** – flying up during the day, i.e. doing something magical in public.
- **Ban Kỳ Lão** – a committee of eminent elder citizens, over 60 years old
- **Bánh ếch** – a pyramid-shaped sticky rice flour treat wrapped in banana leaves
- **Bát Quái Đài** – the council of the great spirits which head the eight states of the soul; it is also the eight-sided palace of God's presence, or the eight trigrams palace
- **Bát Tiên** – the eight immortals. They are: Li Tie Guai (Lý Thiết Quả), Han Zhong Li (Hồn Chung Li), Lü Dong Bin (Lữ Đồng Tân), Cao Guo Jiu (Tào Quốc Cựu), Han Xiang Zi (Hàn Tương Tử), He Xian Gu (Hà Tiên Cô), Zhang Guo Lao (Trương Quả Lão), and Lan Cai He (Lâm Thể Hoà)

- **Bắt Ấn** – a mystical gesture of the hands (mudra)
- **Bần Đạo** – His holiness Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc refers to himself throughout as '*Bần Đạo*' or '*poor monk*'
- **Bí Pháp** – secret dharma, the esoteric (or occult) teaching/ the esoteric doctrine
- **Bích Hải** – the sea of suffering; the ocean of human pain
- **Bệnh** – sickness
- **Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát** – the term that Đức Chí Tôn uses to identify himself in séances and the name that Caodaists use at the end of their prayers. It literally means: high palace, immortal, His Honor the eldest Boddhisattva, the venerable saint. Caodaists believe that Đức Chí Tôn the Father has no name; for this reason they prefer such terms as '*the most high*', '*the ultimate being*', '*the absolute*'
- **Cao Thượng Phẩm** – His Holiness Cao Quỳnh Cư. Thượng Phẩm is the leader of the spiritual realm helping Cửu Trùng Đài to abide in an atmosphere of contentment; he reveals the heavenly voice to virtuous souls, and guides them towards their divine place among the great spirits. at the same time while he closes behind them the door of spiritual regression. The leader of the spiritual realm symbolises the holy doctrine (the Đạo). Wherever the heart of the eternal exists, Thượng Phẩm can be found. He is concerned with the religion's meditation cells and the temples and churches of the faith. He supervises all disciples and defends them against abuse by the authorities
- **Cây phướn** – the spiritual banner
- **Cháo lú** – the soup of forgetfulness
- **Chấp bút** – automatic writing. Automatic writing is a way

of channeling that allows the medium to get in touch with the upper world

- **Chơn thần** – the peri-spirit
- **Chưởng Đạo** – the head of the Society of Foreign Missions' His Holiness Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn (Victor Hugo). He was appointed to this position by Đức Chí Tôn
- **Con Đường Thiên Liêng Hằng Sống** – the Divine Path to Eternal Life.
- **Cung Diêu Trì** – the Heaven of the Creation under the Mother Goddess; a palace located beside the precious jewel lake
- **Cung Định, Cung Pháp** – palace of destiny, palace of the dharma
- **Cung Đạo** – the religious palace (lit), the seance spot in Tây Ninh Temple (where important seances are held)
- **Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa** – the palace of divine beings who wield the power to control all humans in this universe of many planets; the palace (or department) of the divine alliance for preaching the doctrine.
- **Cung Ngọc Hư** – belongs to the Hư Vô heaven; the heavenly council of the eternal law which controls and keeps the divine law. It also controls the progress and movement of the universe. It is the court of God, the council of Đức Chí Tôn or divine White Jade Palace.
- **Cung Phục Linh** – in the Phục Linh realm; the palace of returning souls
- **Cung Tạo Hoá Thiên** – the heavenly Palace of the Buddha Mother; the celestial sphere of the creation
- **Cung Thánh** – the holy realm; the palace of heavenly arrival and departure

- **Cung Thế Thiên Hành Hóa** – the palace for those divine beings who missionise the doctrine at the command of heaven
- **Cực Lạc Thế -Giới** – Paradise of Extreme Joy; the Kingdom of Happiness
- **Cửu Phẩm Thần Tiên** – the nine levels of geniis & immortals, which are: guardian angel, archangel, principality, power, virtue, domination, throne, cherub, and seraph
- **Cửu Thiên Cảm Ứng Lôi Âm Phổ Hoá Thiên Tôn** – 九天感應雷聲普化天尊. the position of the principal genii, head of the Lôi Bộ. He oversees the lightning, thunder and maker of rain. According to *Fen Shen Yen I* (a famous Chinese novel), His Holiness Nguơn Thử Thiên Tôn appointed the spirit of Thái Sư Văn Trọng, an officer to King Trụ, to the Cửu Thiên Cảm Ứng Lôi Âm Phổ Hoá Thiên Tôn in order to be head of the Lôi Bộ (geniis of thunder) which includes control of the 24 celestial generals
- **Cửu Thiên Huyền Nữ** – the Buddha Mother
- **Cửu 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 these nine heavens and for teaching and elevating humanity
- **Cửu Trùng Đài** – literally the nine-sphere 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. -九重臺. The palace of nine divine planes, or the palace of nine degrees of evolution; the palace of nine degrees of the episcopal hierachy
- **Cửu Vị Nữ Phật** – nine female Buddhas



- **Dalagadot** – (no information)
- **Đạo** – 道- Đạo, Tao (Chinese), the Way, doctrine, teachings, religion.
- **Doãn Hỉ** – Yin his, a disciple of Lao Tzu,.
- **Đạo Hữu** – normal believer
- **Đạo Minh Châu** – (sermon 6) Precious Religion
- **Đại Hối** – the universal monad, the souls of humans and above.
- **Đại hội Long Hoa** – the Dragon Flower Assembly
- **Đại Thiên Tôn** – the most respectful and highest position in heaven
- **Dại thừa** – superior
- **Đạo Cao Đài** – the Cao Đài religion
- **Đề Thính** – (sermon 21) a mythical animal like a dog.
- **Dharmakaya** – astral body, peri-spirit.
- **Đi cho biết đó biết đây ở nhà với mẹ biết ngày nào khôn** – it is better to experience the world and increase your learning than to stay at your mother's hem.
- **Dĩ công, diệt tư** – diminishing the personal and elevating the public
- **Địa Lợi** – favourable terrain, or all the geographical advantages of the country
- **Địa Tạng Vương Bồ Tát** – Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva
- **Điển** – 典, the ancient classics
- **Điều Trì Cung** – the Heaven of Creation under the Mother Goddess; a palace at precious jewel lake
- **Điều Trì Cung Thất Nữ** – the Seventh Female Buddha
- **Du Học** – those who study abroad
- **Đức Cao Đài** – God, Đức Chí Tôn, the Supreme Being.

**Đức Chí Tôn** – The Supreme Being, God.

- **Đức Diêu Trì, Đức Phật Mẫu** – Universal Mother Goddess; Buddha Mother
- **Đức Phật Di Lạc** – Maitreya Buddha, the future Buddha
- **Đức Phật Quan Âm** – the Buddhist Bodhisattva Quan Yin, Goddess of Mercy
- **Đức Từ Hàng Bồ Tát** – Từ Hàng Bodhisattva
- **Giác Thế** – awakening the earthly world
- **Giác hồn** – the nascent state of the soul
- **Giáng Ma Xử** – the staff for ruling over evil, the Evil Destroying Pestle.
- **Giáo Hữu** – priest
- **Giáo Sư** – bishop
- **Hùng Kiếm** – the Sword of Elevation, the Male Sword.
- **Hạ Ngươn Tam Chuyển** – the last circle of the third manvantara; third period of the third transition; third universal transmission
- **Hiệp** – alliance
- **Hiệp Thiên Đài** – literally the temple of the divine alliance, the heavenly-union palace. It is the legislative body of the Caodaist religion which has the duty of communicating with the 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
- **Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá** – Communion with Đức Chí Tôn for Education
- **Hoá nhân** – an impure soul; the person of impure soul; a being slowly evolving

- **Hội Thánh** – the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council
- **Hội Thánh Phước Thiện** – the Caodaist Charity Body
- **Hồng Quân Lão Tổ** – the Primordial Ancestor; a metamorphosis of the Jade Emperor; Đức Chí Tôn
- **Hỗn Nguyên Khí** – the cosmic fluid, the supreme ether
- **Hỗn Nguyên Thượng Thiên** – the Hỗn Nguyên Heaven under the guidance of Maitreya Buddha
- **Hư Vô Cao Thiên** – the Heaven of the Highest Void, under the bodhisattva Từ Hàng
- **Hư Vô Tịch Diệt** – the absolute peace of soul, 虛無寂滅
- **Huyệt quang khiếu** – the celestial eye, sky door, crown chakra, pineal eye
- **Huỳnh Kim Khuyết** – 黃金闕, the Gate of Pure Gold to enter the palace where the Đức Chí Tôn holds meetings with the heavenly council
- **Karma(s)** – literally action. The Buddhist teaching that all our actions have consequences that carry on into our futures; the law of cause and effect; the results of our thoughts, speech and behaviour
- **Khí** – qi (c), 氣energy
- **Khổ** – suffering
- **Khổ Hải** – the sea of suffering
- **Khối linh quang** – great source of divine light; creates the peri-spirit
- **Khối Sanh Quang** – great source of a vital fluid
- **Khổng Tử**- Kong Zi, Confucius
- **Kim Bàn** – The Golden Basin of the Buddha Mother
- **Kim Cang Buddha** – Vajra Buddha
- **Kim Câu** – 金鉤 Kim Câu is a special and mystical staff of

Thái Thượng Lão Quân, the head of Daoism

- **Kim Cương Phật** – Vajra-Buddha
- **Kim Mao-Hầu** – a mythical beast in heaven that looks like a lion.
- **Kim Quang Sứ** – Satan, Lucifer
- **Kim Sa** – golden sand
- **Kim Sa Đại Điện** – the Great Palace of Golden Sand
- **Kim Tiên** – golden whip, 金鞭 , a precious instrument of His Holiness Hộ Pháp. This dharma staff is used to destroy evil and to prevent evil forces from blowing tempestuously into the great divine temple of Đức Chí Tôn
- **Kim, Mộc, Thủy, Hoả, Thổ** – the five planets: Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Saturn according to the Ancient Chinese Philosophy.
- **Kim Tự Tháp** – the pyramid
- **Kinh** – sacred books, scriptures.
- **Kỵ Vật** – an animal which we ride
- **Lão** – age
- **Lập Công** – doing good works, practicing Caodaism.
- **Lập Đức** – upholding virtue, doing charity work.
- **Lập Ngôn** – speaking the words of the great way, preaching Caodaism
- **Le Bouc Emissaire** – a scapegoat
- **Lễ Sanh** – Student Priest
- **Linh Tiêu Điện** – the Court of God; the palace where Đức Chí Tôn holds meetings with the heavenly council
- **Lôi Âm Tự** – Temple of Thunder in the Paradise of Extreme Joy
- **Luật** – law

- **Lý Bạch** – Li Po/Li Bo 李白; the Spiritual Pope of Cao- Đài religion
- **Lý Minh Vương** – the Chinese Immortal, Li Tai Guai
- **Maitreya Buddha** – the future Buddha
- **Minh Cảnh Đài** – the palace of perfect vision, a mirror of one's conscience
- **Minh Đức** – bright virtue
- **Nam Tào and Bắc Đẩu** -Nam Tào and Bắc Đẩu are the two Immortals who are in charge of the registration of the birth and death of human beings on the earth. Nam Tào is in charge of the registration of birth and Bắc Đẩu is in charge of the registration of death
- **Ngân Hà river** – the Milky Way
- **Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế** – the Jade Emperor, the Supreme Being
- **Ngọc Hư Cung** – belongs to the Hư Vô Heaven; the heavenly council of the eternal law which controls and keeps the divine law and controls the progress and movement of the universe. Divine White Jade Palace; the Court of God; the Council of God
- **Ngũ tầng quan**- the Five-Level Throne **Ngũ thiên and ngũ chuyển** – **Ngũ thiên Ngũ giải** – having a reclining surface.
- **Nguyên linh** – an original soul
- **Nguyên nhân** – pure souls; the person of pure soul, humans with original souls.
- **Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn** – the religious name of Victor Hugo when dwelling in the White Cloud Lodge
- **Ngự Mã Quân** – an official who accompanied the Emperor; this has relevance to Confucian philosophy—in this case God's ambassador

- **Ngươn Tứ Chuyển** – the fourth transition
- **Nhập tịnh** – mystic meditation, internal alchemy; Chinese: nei tan
- **Nhơn Đạo** – the way of humanity; Confucianism; humanism
- **Nhơn Hòa** – concord among the people, people's unity; when everyone is in harmony
- **Ngô Nhựt Tam Tỉnh ngô Thân** – the Confucian idea that each day you must make at least one visit to your parents, or, more generally, you must examine your conscience three times every day
- **Nhứt thân ức vạn diệu huyền thần biến** – one body, one million mysterious transformations
- **Nirvana(s)** – literally extinction-quietude. A state of ultimate liberation in which one is liberated from vexation, suffering, and the cycle of birth and death
- **Pháp Thân** – Dharmakaya; cosmic body of the Buddha, ethereal, etheric, astral body; body of the law/dharma
- **Phật Đạo** – Buddhism
- **Phi Tướng Diệu Thiên** – the Phi Tướng Heaven which is also the 8th of the 9 heavens.**Phục Linh** – to resuscitate your former lives for your soul to examine them
- **Phục Linh Tánh Phật** – The Buddha who holds the Kim Câu (golden and mystical hook) which he uses to manifest each of our former lives so we see them resurrected in front of us. Every time he waves this staff we see another life, eventually we see every life we have been
- **Quả Kiếp** – our predetermined karmic life
- **Quan Âm** – Bodhisattva Quan Yin
- **Quan Yin Buddha** – Quan Âm

- **Quarternaire** (French) – quaternary; that which can be divided into four, for example the arms of the cross or the Cabbalistic quartering of the body
- **Quỷ vị** – perverse souls or demons
- **Rắp Nhập Cảnh Thiên Liêng Hằng Sống** – to prepare to enter the Path to Eternal Life
- **Ru Jia** – the founder of Confucianism
- **Sanh** – birth
- **Sanh quang** – the living light
- **Satori** – spiritually awake
- **Tam Thiên Thế Giới** – the 3000 worlds
- **Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm** – the three Lords of the earth, the three Caodaist Governors.
- **Tánh** – nature, pakati (p)
- **Tạo Hóa Thiên, Tạo Hoá Huyền Thiên** – the Heaven of Creation under the Mother Goddess; seventh heaven
- **Tăng** – the sangha; religious community
- **Tây Phương Cực Lạc** – Western Paradise of Extreme Joy; Western pure-land; sukhàvati (s)
- **Thần Đạo** – the doctrine of geniism
- **Thánh Đạo** – the doctrine of the saints
- **Thập Nhị Đẳng Cấp Thêng Liêng** – the twelve spiritual levels
- **Thập Nhị Sứ Quân** – the twelve feudal principalities of rebellion
- **Thập tầng quan** – (*sermon 31*)the Ten-Level Throne
- **Thất Đầu Xà** – the snake of seven heads, the Seven-Headed Serpent.
- **Thất Thập Nhị Địa** – the seventy-two earths

- **Thiên** – heaven
- **Thiên Thư** – the gods' records of the divine rules
- **Thiên thời** – clear weather
- **Thọ, tưởng, hành, thức** -.feeling (vedanā), volitions (saṅkhāra), perceptions (saṃjñā), and consciousness (vijñāna) in the Heart Sutra
- **Tinh khí thần hiệp nhất** – combination of body, mind and soul.**Thượng Nê Hườn** – bai hui point (the top of your head), the crown point, pineal eye , crown chakra
- **Thượng Thiên Hồn Ngươn** – the Ninth Heaven
- **Thượng Thư** – a High Government Official in ancient Vietnam
- **Thượng Trung Nhựt** – religious name of the Caodaist acting Pope
- **Thượng Ngươn Tứ Chuyển** – the fourth universal transmission
- **Thuyền Bát Nhã** – panna (prajna) boat toward nirvana
- **Tiên Đạo** – the way of the immortals
- **Tiểu Hối** – the ego, souls of animals and below
- **Tiểu Thiên Cung** – the lesser heavenly palace,
- **Tiểu thừa** – novitiate
- **Tinh** – jing (Chinese); material, essence, human body
- **Toà Tam Giáo** – the Three -Religion Tribunal
- **Tội vi Trưởng** – a convention (under Ming law codes introduced into Vietnam in 1801) where the head of the family takes responsibility for the actions of those in the family
- **Tông Đường** – literally one's ancestral temple. The Hộ Pháp also uses this term to refer to our wider spiritual family



whom we meet on returning to heaven. It is our spiritual clan, spiritual extended family or spiritual lineage

- **Trạng Nguyên** – first rank of the doctorate of the national examinations in ancient Vietnam
- **Trị Thế** – governing the earthly world
- **Trung thừa** – intermediate
- **Tử** – death
- **Tử khí** – the energy of death
- **Tứ Đại Bộ Châu** – the four great regions
- **Tứ Hải vi Thiên Hạ Chi Giáo** – by crossing the seas all humanity can share in the same experience,(this phrase refers to a King's ambition)
- **Từ Hàng** – the boat of mercy; to cross the sea of sorrows
- **Uống Tử Thành** – the dark realm, the realm of the iniquitous dead, the Suicide Town.
- It is where the souls of unjust dead are kept.
- **Vạn Linh and Vạn Loại** – beings and things
- **Vạn Pháp Chuyển Luân/Pháp Luân Thường Chuyển** – the wheel of the holy doctrine (dhamma-cakka) set in motion by the Buddha
- **Văn minh** – civilization
- **Vân Động** – the Cloudy Cave
- **Vô đạo** – non-believers, atheist.
- **Vô thọ thường thức Diêu-Trì** – Buddhahood
- **Vô Tự Kinh** – the divine book without words
- **Xuất hồn** – a state when the astral body leaves the physical body.



## APPENDIX

THE MYSTERIES  
 IN  
 THE DIVINE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE  
 SERMONS  
 BY  
 HỘ PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC

From  
*Thế Pháp và Bí Pháp*  
 Từ Chơn

**Introduction**

All Cao Đài devotees know the terms The Divine Path to Eternal Life. This is one of the most life-and-death issues for Caodaists to be interested in. Terminologically, this phrase is meant to adjust the earlier assumption about where a person goes after death. Previously, it used to be named paradise and hell. The phrase emerges in the prayer “*Cầu hồn khi đã chết rồi*”<sup>86</sup> and the ritual to pray for the elevation of the dead. The ritual comprises funeral prayers, which consecutively describe the path a soul has to take to return to Đức Chí Tôn<sup>87</sup> after death. Nevertheless, the most original and interesting are the series of sermons preached by Đức Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc from September 9th 1948 to April 4th 1949.

The series is original owing to one reason. While, in the

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<sup>86</sup> Praying for a newly dead person.

<sup>87</sup> The Supreme Being, God.

funeral prayers, the information about the Path to Eternal Life is chiefly told by poems obtained from seances that contain unintelligible ancient Chinese-Vietnamese, Đức Hộ Pháp's sermons are in the form of a Vietnamese narrative telling audience his experience of the journey, so it is completely understandable to everyone. His journey was possible because Đức Chí Tôn activated his Huệ Quang Khiếu<sup>88</sup> so that his astral body could walk the Path to Eternal Life. As a result, his story is better elaborated with the emotions of Phạm Công Tắc as an ordinary man.

\*\* Unlike the state after death, astral travel allows one's astral body to leave their physical body for other places right when one is still alive. This can be achieved by tịnh luyện<sup>89</sup>, which is also called the third way of Caodaism. The other two are doing missionary work and doing charity work. Tịnh Luyện is extremely difficult to be executed and Đức Chí Tôn has said those who can do it deserve an audience with Himself while they are alive. Despite difficulty, Đức Chí Tôn has privileged Đức Hộ Pháp to perform astral travel to return to the spiritual realm, then to reveal something to Caodaist devotees. Having done so, Đức Chí Tôn kept His words, *'To save all, precious religious method should be disclosed, not the other way round'*. In his sermons, Đức Hộ Pháp repeated several times, *'I try to preach as quickly as possible so that children of Đức Chí Tôn can have a valuable way to follow to be able to achieve enlightenment one day'*.

\*\*\*Hence, the Path to Eternal Life is not simply a narrative of a traveller, but rather the way to get enlightened. In fact, the hidden meaning of that interesting narrative plays a really

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<sup>88</sup> The divine eye, the third eye, which is possessed by an enlightened person.

<sup>89</sup> The Caodaist method of meditation.

serious role in Caodaist teachings like Genesis of Christianity or the stories told by the Buddha. A complete comprehension of this narrative equals to the achievement of enlightenment right on earth. That raises the question of how you should understand it. As mentioned above, you should set the target for religious enlightenment before reading it, not for your own curiosity or comparisons to scientific theories. Comparison and satisfaction are absent from enlightenment. Without proper practicing, the Path to Eternal Life is only for entertainment.

\*\*\*\* Nonetheless, it is never plain to read and understand the Path to Eternal Life. That is not an act of an onlooker because you all are walking the path, which is the cycle of reincarnation mankind has taken innumerable times. Yet, you still feel embarrassed and indifferent to Đức Hộ Pháp's description. Though listening to your own story, you still find it quite strange. Each familiarity is another surprising discovery. It is that contradiction that confuses you. Listening, reading and understanding it should be considered a self-exploration. That is, you examine yourself, not anyone else. In short, reading and understanding the Path to Eternal Life is walking it, being ready to deal with any sudden contradictions.

\*\*\*\*\* The Path to Eternal Life told by Đức Hộ Pháp starts from the Đền Thánh (Caodaist Temple) to lots of spiritual palaces and ends in Bạch Ngọc Kinh, the White Gem City, where the capital of the universe is located.

## **THE STOPOVERS**

### **\*Depature**

Having left their physical body, souls have to assemble in this Caodaist Temple before moving to other realms. They should move from Hiệp Thiên Đài, through Cửu Trùng Đài

and to Cung Đạo. At Cung Đạo, they look up and see. There is not Bát Quái Đài any more but a vast cosmic space. There they have been on the Path to Eternal Life.

What is the Caodaist Temple? Is it the concrete structure in Tây Ninh province, Việt Nam? Such a one-sided thought only causes completely incorrigible misunderstandings, conflicts and falsehood. The Caodaist Temple should be considered the symbol, the language or the exoteric doctrine containing hidden words, i.e the esoteric doctrine. Entering the Temple or investigating the exoteric doctrine, you can puzzle out the esoteric doctrine. Mastering the material world, you can catch on to the supernatural world. Thoroughly examining the self, you can wise up to Đức Chí Tôn's teachings hidden in the structure of the Temple.

First, you have got to step up Hiệp Thiên Đài. Remember that before a ceremony, the dignitaries under Hiệp Thiên Đài, representing human consciousness, precede the ones under Cửu Trùng Đài, representing human physical body. Thus, you should join Caodaism with meticulous thought, not the desire for mundane satisfaction.

Outside the Temple or in a worldly society, you see the statues of Ông Thiện and Ông Ác (Good and Evil). This is the metaphor for the fact that humankind is trapped by dualist thinking. They constantly have to choose between right and wrong, good and bad or love and hatred. Indeed, our life is completely dependent on this truth. For survival it is compulsory for us to follow the right and safe instructions as well as to avoid the wrong and unsafe things. No one of us, for instance, intentionally jump in a fire!

Nevertheless, it is a curious paradox that for millions

of years we mankind have tried to do the right thing and eradicated the wrong thing, but evils still exist among us. They even become more fraudulent and serpentine. Only when you “die” or step in the Caodaist Temple does that dualist battle stop its annoying influence. Therefore, stepping on the threshold of the Temple, you see the symbol of a scale, which implies the good equals the evil inside the Temple or the Caodaist priesthood. Be careful! The term “equal” does not indicate any number or amount but implies the philosophical relationships between the good and the evil.

Outside the Temple or in your temporal life, your desire to eliminate the evil or to have justice is only an illusion. There are no true justice or love while you are “alive”. Those two concepts become true only when you enter the Temple, forsaking dualist thinking at the door.

Hence, the door of the Temple symbolizes the boundary between religious and mundane life. Outside good and evil should be differentiated for the purpose of survival, but inside they should be “eradicated”. That is the condition to fulfill the two articles, which are love and justice, in the Third Covenant with Đức Chí Tôn. Please, be cautious! The term “eradicate” is only temporarily used because it still belongs to dualism. In other words, true love and justice come when there is no more thinking or reasoning. For example, when rushing to rescue your beloved in a dangerous place, you completely forget what is right and what is wrong. There is no more thinking!

When there are true love and justice, joy, affection and satisfaction emerge as the three serpent heads rise above the Nê Hườn Cung<sup>90</sup> of Đức Hộ Pháp’s statue in Hiệp Thiên Đài. Let’s think about it. Thoroughly investigated, anger, desire, hatred

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<sup>90</sup> The invisible spot inside a human head.

and sorrow do not vanish if you try to restrain yourselves. Such attempts only leave them intact because they still come from dualist thinking. Only when you truly love someone will you have genuine joy, affection and satisfaction. At the same time such emotions as sorrow, hatred, anger and desire will completely disappear. With such a state, a believer can effortlessly go through Cửu Trùng Đài, reaching Cung Đạo.

The distance from Cửu Trùng Đài to Cung Đạo is extremely challenging. This is when your brain and body strictly collaborate to achieve an indispensable breakthrough to get to Cung Đạo. Each level in Cửu Trùng Đài is both a highly competitive examination in morality and a time of redemption with the Cửu Vị Nữ Phật (Eight Female Buddhas) waiting at each step to help. Why it is imperative for souls to be saved by the Cửu Vị Nữ Phật? Because Cửu Trùng Đài represents the physical part of a human, which follows the orders of Tạo Hoá Thiên led by Đức Phật Mẫu (Heaven of Creation under Buddha Mother). Practically, though the brain and body can mutually influence each other, the latter is usually predominant. In addition, the body also follows its own rules, imposed by Tạo Hóa Thiên, such as the rules of nutrition, shelter, entertainment, etc. The brain needs to figure out the ways of protection. It even becomes a slave of the physical body and cunning plots leading to sins committed are often inescapable.

The passage through Cửu Trùng Đài insinuates that the body is directed by consciousness to return to Cung Đạo. For that purpose one should train their brain like a warrior ready for a battle. That is why we see Đức Hộ Pháp must dress a suit of armor, representing human consciousness. Getting to Cung Đạo, the brain finishes the worldly reincarnation; that



is, the argumentative awareness now becomes trí huệ (prajna) after a process of strict filtration.

Now, with trí huệ what you can see when looking up is not Bát Quái Đài, but the vast universe. In other words, you are walking the Divine Path to Eternal Life. Hence, to move from the earthly world to the spiritual realm you only need a glimpse with your divine eye, which is illustrated by the Caodaist symbol on the Bát Quái Đài.

What is a glimpse with divine eye? That is not the one we have every day. The view goes through the eyes and follows the neural transmission to the brain. It is then compared with the images stored in your memory for the final decision of what view it is and whether it is familiar or not. At the end of the process, you now realize that you have seen. For example, I see a piece of wire and remember someone's touching a similar thing that causes electrocution. Finally, I conclude that this is a dangerous electrical wire. We human always see that way, but the process is so quick that it is hardly recognized. That is a worldly process i.e. a process with a beginning (watch) and an end (see).

A glimpse with divine eye is completely nonidentical. You suddenly see the whole fact. You are inside the view without comparison. There are neither people who see nor things that are seen. Like Đức Hộ Pháp's description, "*Looking up, you see the cosmos and you are already on the Path to Eternal Life*". An abrupt glimpse! After a blink of an eye you and the Path of Eternal Life are one. To have such a glimpse, you have to move from Hiệp Thiên Đài, through Cửu Trùng Đài to Cung Đạo, that is you must practice Caodaist exoteric doctrine. With that glimpse you can see the Path to Eternal Life not only in Cung Đạo but also wherever you are.

You may ask how. Caodaist exoteric practice is presented in various ways, for Đức Chí Tôn wants to save all races of all levels. Coming to Đền Thánh (Caodaist Temple), everyone can look at and see innumerable different ways of exoteric practice. There are no better ways, but the ways that count are the more suitable ones. Additionally, you should ask yourselves whether you can practice it for your own life. However, for the confused ones, Đức Hộ Pháp recommends three methods for consideration:

- Doing missionary work in Hội Thánh Cửu Trùng Đài.
- Doing charity work in Hội Thánh Phước Thiện.
- Performing esoteric practice in Meditation Halls.

Anyway, let us have a look at the first way. Cửu Trùng Đài (Caodaist Executive Body) stands for the human body or the secular society. Joining this organization, you have the responsibility to help and educate people so that they know how to return to Cung Đạo. According to Tân Luật Pháp Chánh Truyền (Caodaist Canonical Codes) the hierarchy of Cửu Trùng Đài comprises:

1. Bàn trị sự (Chánh trị sự, Phó trị sự, Thông sự) (Village Admin)
2. Lễ Sanh (Student Priest)
3. Giáo Hữu (Religious Mate)
4. Giáo Sư (Religious Teacher)
5. Phối Sư (Religious Master)
6. Chánh Phối Sư (Senior Religious Master)
7. Đầu Sư (Master Head)
8. Chương Pháp (Dharma Master)
9. Giáo Tông (Supreme Leader)

According to what the ranks are named, the Caodaist priests must obviously follow some specific way in order to live up to those names. First, you have to put both you life and your relatives' in order to be called an admin (Trị Sự). Then, you begin to learn how to behave (Lễ Sanh). After that, you can make friends with other Caodaists (Giáo Hữu). Next, having succeeded in the role of a friend, you can become a teacher (Giáo Sư). From a good friend to a teacher, you need significant progress because a teacher must be much more talented and virtuous than a good friend. Otherwise, how can you teach others if you have nothing better? Additionally, teachers are divided into three levels: Giáo Sư (Teacher), Phối Sư (Master) and Đầu Sư (Master Head). A successful teacher will gain the next rank of master and the best master is called master head. The master head, who is most knowledgeable in religious philosophy, can become the Dharma Master. And the top rank named Giáo Tông (Supreme Leader) belongs to the best Dharma Master, who will be the eldest brother of all Caodaist adherents and who will educate others to walk the Path to Eternal Life on behalf of Đức Chí Tôn (the Supreme Being, God).

Joining Cửu Trùng Đài is an approach requiring a very close relationship with people around. That gives you an opportunity to self-improve. Thereupon you do not need to retreat to somewhere really quiet. Still living among others, you consider them a mirror that provides good examples for you to learn. At the same time you can better your community with your influence. Remember that it is really tough to do so because life always changes and ruins you mentally without a hitch.

What's more, Cửu Trùng Đài is not where you can take

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great pride in yourself. You'd better morally improve yourself for the purpose of serving others, not for higher ranks or colorful titles or a spiritual destination. Only when you completely forget your self for pure altruism can you get close to the target.

In sum, Cửu Trùng Đài is where you well train your mind and the target is the glimpse of the divine eye. That is your departure for the Divine Path to Eternal Life.

### **\*Stopover 1**

With the glimpse of Huệ Nhãn (Prajna Eye, Divine Eye), let us begin the divine journey. The first stopover is the heavenly Bát Quái Đài (Bagua Palace, Trigrams Palace). As depicted by Đức Hộ Pháp, the palace looks like an eight-sided construction with eight doors. The doors on the upper floor radiate eight beams of light, in which eight sorts of souls (materials, vegetation, animals, humans, genies, saints, immortals, Buddhas) fly into the vast space. Another eight light beams, which look like eight bridges spanning a huge sea, come into the doors on the ground floor from the universe. The above beams are like the exits, and the ones below the entrances. So the souls after death take the lower doors to enter this construction and see two mysteries.

The souls who had lots of good karmas in life are mixed with the beams to enter Bát Quái Đài. Conversely, the ones with bad karmas fall into a sea known as Bích Hải (Turquoise Sea) and are transformed into really ugly forms.

Some souls who had very eccentric behaviors in life and who were thought not to exactly follow Đức Chí Tôn's teachings can easily cross Bích Hải. Đức Hộ Pháp gives an example of Mr Vương Quang Kỳ (Giáo Sư Thượng Kỳ Thanh).

Although Mr Vương left the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council to found another cult, the Cầu Kho, which is considered an act against what Đức Chí Tôn taught, he still can safely walk across the bridge. There is only one exception: he can only carry the robe for a Caodaist dignitary, not to wear it. This is a lesson for us all: do not judge anyone while you live on earth.

The first mystery reminds us of the bridge of Nại Hà. It used to be depicted as a heavenly bridge, under which are hungry beasts ready to eat any falling souls. However, Đức Hộ Pháp says the falling souls are now only twisted into weird forms. Commonly, it is easy for people to think that is not fearful, so they will keep committing sins. In fact, in the spiritual realm there are no physical pains. Đức Hộ Pháp uses the distorted figures under the bridge to symbolize what souls fear most. The most frightening thing here is you are not allowed to enter the heavenly Bát Quái Đài, that is you cannot advance on the Divine Path to Eternal Life. For an enlightened person this is the most severe mental punishment.

The second mystery means the bridge is where the crisis of dualism of your consciousness is resolved. What cannot be decided whether it is right or wrong in the earthly world is concluded here by the symbol of Mr Vương's laughingly walking across the bridge. The robe, which is just the colorful attire, is casually put on his shoulders. The half naked but honest man can achieve what the liars have to pull back from. That is to enter the spiritual Bát Quái Đài.

As a result, the eight beams that span Bích Hải are the bridges of faith. If you are certain that you have fulfilled your human responsibilities in your last reincarnation, you are completely self-assured to cross them. These responsibilities are called Nhơn Đạo (Doctrine of Human) by Caodaism. To

have such faith, you must be completely honest to fulfill your responsibilities until your death. The souls with such faith fearlessly step on the bridges, move straight into the running spiritual machine of Đức Chí Tôn.

Inside Bát Quái Đài, souls can eye another enigma. They reach a place called Minh Cảnh Đài (the Mirror Palace) and view their last reincarnation. This is also Toà Tam Giáo (Three Religion Tribunal) where they will judge themselves.

This is a really unique point of Caodaism. Conventionally, it was thought that guilty souls were sent to Hell and punished by Diêm Vương (the King of Hell). They were also decided where and how long to reincarnate. Contrariwise, innocent souls would be elevated to Paradise by Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế (the Jade Emperor), but it was unknown for how long they could stay there. Now according to Đức Hộ Pháp each individual will determine their future based on their good or bad karmas created in their reincarnations. This kind of judgement is nonexistent in the realm of consciousness. Since human consciousness instinctively works in compliance with dualism, any law violations are defended by means of argument. The reason I committed crime is this or that, so inflict less severe punishment on myself, please! That is what sinners in the world always say and usually those who are more powerful or wealthier will win the lawsuit.

In the Toà Tam Giáo in the spiritual realm, souls judge themselves by means of trí huệ (prajna), so there are no justifications. I judge myself. That's all. There are no emotions, melancholy or self pity. Souls also weigh up how much punishment for themselves i.e. when and how long is their next reincarnation. On the contrary, innocent souls will decide how long they will stay in the spiritual realm. After that, they

leave Bát Quái Đài for other heavens.

Anyway, philosophically, based on this divine message, *'Children, I am you and you are myself'*, it can be deduced that Bát Quái Đài is the symbol of the self. Entering Bát Quái Đài is your introspection with complete self confidence and perfect integrity. It is definitely tough to do so because with only a tiny misstep, you will fall into Bích Hải and be twisted into an ugly form or consciously making a mistake. Inside Bát Quái Đài, you are self confident and honest enough to have a right judgment.

Lastly, the mechanism of the whole universe of Đức Chí Tôn (God) depends on each self. The tiny are able to run the giant. Therefore, all activities of every individual on earth can sway the universe. With that in mind, the tiny self will not endure its destiny any more, but rise until it equals the universe. Đức Chí Tôn and I are one.

### **Stopover 2**

Apart from Bát Quái Đài, souls get to Ngân Hà (River Ngân, Milky Way), where people committed suicide due to love. On the river is the boat of Prajna by Quán Thế Âm Bồ Tát (Guan Yin Bodhisattva) to take souls to the other side.

Worldly people are always subject to impulses from their own desires. I wish to have a stable job, a luxurious house and children with highly academic talent, etc. These wishes result from only one thing: a desire to live. This desire itself is not immoral at all and it is shared by all living beings. An animal instinctively try to flee a dangerous situation. A tree branch tilts to catch the sunlight for good photosynthesis. It is the desire to live that distinguish between this person and that person, individuals and society and this community and

that community. It also drives people to attain what is called the current civilization.

Nonetheless, various desires perpetually make life miserable because you have to struggle for satisfaction. The more civilized the society is, the more complicated human relationships are. Thus, how to satisfy the desires becomes more and more sophisticated. It is important that satisfactions are increasingly becoming more sporadic. You are very well-to-do, but, because of overindulging, cannot educate your naughty boy who lives a lavish lifestyle. You win a lawsuit, but lose your properties because of much court fees. As a result, you are really disappointed, but later you have something new to pursue, trying to hide sadness.

Sometimes, the desire becomes irrational, for example the wish to end all wishes. Consequently, you try to eradicate all ambitions by leaving your family, joining a priesthood and abandoning your love. Whatever it is, you still wish! In some case, you may be so frustrated that you want to commit suicide. That way, you think all wishes, along with your unhappiness, will disappear. Đức Hộ Pháp illustrates this with the images of the people along the banks of Ngân Hà. They have killed themselves because of love and now their souls have to wait for the Prajna Boat.

Indeed, in the earthly world people's wishes stop when their life ends. This seem to be the only way to eliminate wishes. Yet, in the spiritual realm these miserable people cannot cross Ngân Hà. Only those with true love will be taken to the other side by Quan Âm Bồ Tát.

Ngân River is the encumbrance that prevents you from realizing your dream, the extreme suffering from despair and



the bar to the spiritual realm of extreme joy. Therefore, you can only cross Ngân River thanks to true love, not wishes.

This situation is used as a metaphor for a religious method, in which Trí Huệ (Prajna Boat) is the means and listening (Guan Yin Bodhisattva) is the navigator. Listening will enlightens you and then the enlightenment in turn takes you to other bank, i.e. frees yourselves from worldly suffering.

In sum, those broken-hearted people have used their argumentative awareness to deal with their unhappiness. That is why there is forestallment between suffering and happiness. It is impossible to lift this blockage with suicide, which results from dualism. As a result, they have to wait on the banks of Ngân River. Remember that the Caodaist adherents who commit suicide are not licensed to be taken to graveyard by Prajna Boat (Caodai Hearse). The Prajna Boat representing the state of no dualist thinking cannot carry a suicide representing the result of a dualist thought to escape unhappiness.

Now the question is how to get enlightened by listening. Listening is a meaningful action, which is a key to unlock your dumbness. But what should you listen to? The term Guan Yin Bodhisattva or Avalokitesvara means perceiving the sounds of the world, which can be a word, a lyric, a sound from a bird's flapping wings, etc. And how? This question undeniably shows the process of dualist thinking in your mind. You may want a technique to follow, tiring yourself out because of waiting. The crucial point is you are still waiting for an outcome, so you are only another suicide!

Acquiring some know-how now becomes a very weighty matter. Trí huệ (prajna) is so glorious that it can blind the ability of listening. Prajna is only the pointer finger, but the

real target or what you should listen to is the moon. The pointer finger is not the moon, yet you just stick to your guns “moon” or the Prajna Boat, ignoring the destination. In other words, you only want to attain enlightenment, neglecting what you should listen to. That is because it is said you will be a Buddha if you get enlightened while what you listen to may be too broken-hearted.

So far, you have walked a short distance on the path of listening. You have known if you listen to something with the desire to get a result or to get enlightened, that will lead you nowhere! It is the same thing as you count for how many days you have done your missionary work or how many times you have helped the poor.

Therefore, forget prajna and look at listening more closely. Generally, I prefer talking to listening. I always have innumerable issues to talk about. Now I decide to stop talking, focusing on listening. It is hellacious to do so at first, but you will get used to it if being resolved enough to reveal the truth.

When somebody begins to talk, of course I can hear except he speak an unknown language. At the same time my mind becomes active to respond. I am annoyed with the wrong or unintelligible terms spoken or gratified at the advanced level of the story. What benefits me will be remembered for good. Conversely, what insults me will be rejected, but still recorded in my memory. Suppose that the speaker outraged me, I would find it dissatisfied and the next time I meet him I immediately recall the insults though he does not say anything. That's what I usually do while listening! Hence, I only listen to myself. Wave after wave of emotions rock my mind, but I never have a deep empathy with the speaker.

Now if I wholeheartedly ask myself, *‘Can I listen to a speaker differently? Can I listen and emphatically comprehend what he is saying including what he has said as well as what he has not said?’* Such a serious question without the need for an answer is the first step out of the confinement of dualist thinking to an unknown realm or a world without beginning or ending. It is listening without hearing. Only by that way can you cross Ngán River in the spiritual realm or finish the second stage of the Path to Eternal Life.

**\* Stopover 3**

Having left Bát Quái Đài and crossed Ngán Hà, you reach Cung Diêu Trì – Tọa Hóa Thiên (the Gem Pond Palace – Heaven of Creation).

In Diêu Trì Cung, souls will have an audience with Đức Phật Mẫu (the Buddha Mother). It is miraculous that each soul will see the image of their own mother, who gave birth to themselves on earth. This is a fabulous symbol of love. There have been numerous art work to glorify mothers, who suffer from her love for her children. Additionally, she is ready to sacrifice everything for her children without waiting for any reciprocation. That love surpasses any mundane or fake worldly things. It is never a mistaken idea to say that is the only altruistic love on earth.

Now you stand in front of your own mother. Needless to say, you cannot imagine how happy you are. Conversely, your suffering will be unbearable if you have done something offending her in life.

An earthly mother sacrifices everything for her babies. She gives them what she owns. If being poor, she can do everything for them. The source of that love is the Buddha

Mother, the spiritual mother of the universe. Buddha Mother also sacrifices everything for her babies, so when souls come back to Diêu Trì Cung, which was their beloved cradle, she gives you what you want. Đức Hộ Pháp simply says, *'In Diêu Trì Cung you can have what you want'*.

Subsequently, souls visit Ngạn Uyển (Heavenly Garden). Here there are spiritual flowers, each of which represents a soul in the earthly world. It blossoms when a soul reincarnates and withers when that soul leaves its body for the Eternal Life. This is an intriguing symbol. In the daily rituals of offerings to Đức Chí Tôn (Supreme Being, God), flower represents our physical body. As a plant, it flowers when it is fully grown-up and ready for reproduction. The flower withers, but starts another life. Thus, life has neither commencement nor termination. That is the endless power of the Buddha Mother. A physical body stops living, but its living germ has been spread out and will multiply forever. All in all, the power to sustain life in this universe comes from Buddha Mother and is indescribable.

At last, before leaving Diêu Trì Cung, souls are given a peach party called nhập tịch (naturalization). That means souls are officially approved to be part of the spiritual realm with the equal rights and obligations to other spiritual beings. After that party, they are officially the spiritual beings. This Thể Pháp (Exoteric Dharma) has been displayed on earth through the Hội Yến Diêu Trì (the Banquet of Gem Pond) known to every Cao daist devotees.

According to mythology, souls have heavenly wine and peach in that banquet. That's just a metaphor. Heavenly peach is for the body and heavenly wine for the astral body. To be part of the spiritual realm a soul needs the combination of the body and the astral body. Similarly, you need the same

combination of your earthly body and consciousness to go beyond time and space, entering the spiritual realm. In other words, that is the esoteric practice of Luyện Tinh Hoá Khí (lian jing hua qi; refining the essence and converting it into energy).

There is an interesting at the beginning of Caodaism. Once Mr A Ǻ Ǻ told Messrs. Cự, Tắc and Sang to throw a party for Đức Phật Mẫu (Buddha Mother) and Cửu Vị Tiên Nương (Nine Female Buddhas). Then, Đức Phật Mẫu directed them to pray Đức Chí Tôn (God) for religious instructions. Messrs. Cự, Tắc and Sang represented Hiệp Thiên Đài or KHÍ (qi, brain, consciousness) the half material and half spirit of a human. Phật Mẫu và Cửu Vị Tiên Nương are the power of life. Vegetarian party or purified food will change the Tinh (essence) into Khí (qi, energy, consciousness). Next, praying Đức Chí Tôn (God) for religious instructions implies Khí changes into Thần (peri-spirit). Another thing worth noticing is: when Mr Phạm Công Tắc asked Mr AǺǺ whether he saw Đức Phật Mẫu and Cửu Vị Tiên Nương, the answer was yes. However, Mr AǺǺ said he used a miracle to hide himself, so Đức Phật Mẫu and Cửu Vị Tiên Nương did not see him. Obviously, the human physical body has to follow a special rule different from that of the human soul. Natural life is a nonstop process: birth, growth, age and death. It is Hiệp Thiên Đài (Peri-spirit, mind, consciousness) that connects the physical body and the soul. It is the same as Messrs. Cự, Tắc and Sang acted as a go-between in the story.

After the vegetarian party, Tinh has changed into Khí. Being fully developed, Khí prays God for religious instructions or unites with Thần or Đức Chí Tôn. The result is not an end of the process, but another beginning. You get out of the cycle

of birth and death to start another cycle, that is you keep going on the Path to Eternal Life.

Now, from Diêu Trì Cung, the cradle of life, souls are ready to enter the world of boundlessness.

#### **Stopover 4**

Following Đức Hộ Pháp's narration, let us stop at Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá (Divine Alliance Palace for Execution and Education), where Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm (Three Heavenly Governors) and Các Đấng Trọn Lành (Perfectly Moral Beings) dwell.

First, let's discuss the terms Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa. Long before, it used to be said humankind executed the law on behalf of God. In other words, people, the most sacred beings or the microcosm) can replace God as the ruler of the world. That viewpoint has been popular for a long time, especially in Chinese society. However, granted that authority, people only wanted to benefit themselves only. Other living beings around have been ruthlessly exploited. Consequently, lots of animals became extinct, lots of trees were chopped down and the natural resources were carelessly exploited. Those irresponsible actions severely damaged the ecosystem and the pattern of weather. It is not exaggerating at all for scientists to say humans are seriously penalizing themselves.

In the third time, establishing Caodaism, Đức Chí Tôn announced, "*Nobody has the right to rule human souls on behalf of myself anymore*". Because of that, he founded Hiệp Thiên Đài (Divine Alliance) on earth to symbolize the union between God and Man. Humans cannot replace God, but have to unite with God. That is, humans will face disastrous consequences if doing something against nature. Also, they

should not wrongly believe that God will give what they need.

Next, as for the icon of Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm (Three Heavenly Governors), who are Đức Lý Giáo Tông (Li Po, the Caodai Supreme Leader), Đức Quán Thế Âm Bồ Tát (Guan Yin Bodhisattva) and Đức Quan Thánh Đế Quân (Guan Yu). In this Third Salvation, Đức Chí Tôn shows them as the role models for humankind. It is the time human relations are badly affected by lots of negatives. Therefore, it is extremely difficult for people to remain virtuous. They should imitate the characters of Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm in order both to survive and to return to Đức Chí Tôn at last. There are no differences between a priest and a lay person. Those who stay righteous for life as Tam Trấn can unite with Đức Chí Tôn.

Besides, another thing worth mentioning is the controversy between the Perfectly Moral Divine Beings and the irreligious souls. Why in Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa? Because it is the place for reasoning or fighting. Đức Hộ Pháp told us about the Divine Beings' explanations and the atheists' eccentric reasons. There are also some believers who failed despite meticulous religious practice also attack religions.

The lengthy endless arguments in Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa remind us of the resemblant dramatic quarrel in our world. Being religious or nonreligious and belief or disbelief are only the two sides of the same coin. Whether you believe in God or not is only the matter of faith. It does not matter in whom you believe, but whether you are qualified for the position of Perfectly Moral Being counts. Which religions are less important than personal morality.

Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa is indispensable because it is impossible to have an alliance between God and Man

without disputes. Similarly, dualist thinking is very pivotal because it is where God and Man unite. Without it one cannot communicate with God. Without *Lưỡng Nghi* (Yin and Yang) you cannot trace back to *Thái Cực* (the Absolute). However, it is extremely argumentative and hard to master. Especially, in *Hạ Ngươn* (the last cycle of a transition) it is impossible to discriminate between right and wrong. They are perfectly mixed. Lots of lofty divine beings have descended into the world to show people how to trace back to the Absolute, but the *nguyên nhân* (original souls) still get completely lost. Unfortunately, all techniques come from dualist thinking.

Everyone may put a question here, ‘*So what should we do?*’. To wholeheartedly raise that question is the beginning of *prajna* or the primary spark of *Thái Cực* (the Absolute). Be careful! An answer means the process of *Lưỡng Nghi* (Yin Yang) has already happened. As a result, don’t try to answer. Just do more research, meticulously listening to the question. Only by that way can you evade the lengthy dispute in *Hiệp Thiên Hành Hóa* and keep up your advancement on the Path to Eternal Life.

For example, I believe in *Đức Chí Tôn*, so I think I am different from someone who doesn’t. According to various levels of the difference, I treat him. I may be gently cautious or even hate him. If I am a little religiously informed, I will remind myself, ‘*It’s not good to cause a discordance, which results from dualism*’. Then I try to treat that person as usual. However, deep in my heart, the difference still exists and emerges again whenever I see that person. Shall we ever put this question, ‘*Why am I different from that person?*’ and think about it over and over again? Some day, we will realize and comprehend that there are no differences at all between



us and that person. That will be when heaven unites earth or God unites Man for an explosion of the Prajna power, which unlocks the mysterious door to the Thirty Six Heavens.

### \* Stopover 5

Returning to Ngọc Hư Cung (The Gem Palace of God) is what both Caodaist adherents and all human races only dream about. Going there to have an audience with Đứ́c Chí Tôn and to come face to face with the absolute truth has motivated all thinking living beings for millions of years. It has been called Heaven, Paradise, the Realm of Extreme Joy, afterlife or whatever. Despite different names, a return journey is what everyone is thirsty for. Consequently, due to different terms used, each soul sees different forms, that is they see what they want to see. It is not strange at all! If the baby Jesus in Africa is featured as a black child with curly hair, some God of a race threatened with extinction in the jungle can be a certain weird icon.

Anyway, inside Ngọc Hư Cung, everything is surprisingly strange. First, there are no languages. The souls here communicate through thinking. In crowded earthly communities, language becomes too essential and sophisticated. Words are only the contrivance, not the awareness itself, so it can convey part of thought. It can be considered the twisted form of thought. Furthermore, words transferred to a listener are translated based on his level of education, traditions and interests. While watching an extremely gorgeous dusk together, you can never have the same feeling as your friends'. Though both praise it, my sunset never equals yours, is it? People are still leading such a hypocritical life as long as they use words for communication. The lack of language in Ngọc Hư Cung is not a situation of self-isolation, but the one of

real communication. It is the free communication between thoughts without any barriers. There are neither speaker nor listener, neither I nor you, neither rights nor wrongs. There are neither questions nor answers because they are the same. That sort of communication is exactly the structure of Ngọc Hư Cung.

Another strange thing is there are no divine ranks such as Genii, Saints, Immortals or Buddhas, except heavenly extended families. No hierarchy means absolute equality. In earthly world there is no absolute equality. Ranks not only motivate people to move forward but also make them suffer. Human progress is a must because it is the rule of the material world. Ngọc Hư Cung is the top world, so progress is completely gratuitous. That is why there is no divine hierarchy there.

Nonetheless, absolute equality is not enough. There should be another factor, which is heavenly extended families. It is heavenly extended families that connect all souls. What are heavenly extended families. Souls who reincarnate throughout the universe have lots of relatives. The heavenly extended families comprise all of those relatives. The more reincarnations you have, the bigger your heavenly extended family is.

Hence, all souls in the universe are relatives. There are no concepts like rival or enemy in the spiritual realm. The more opponents you deceitfully defeated in the earthly world, the more ashamed of yourselves you are in Ngọc Hư Cung because they are now your loving relatives. The regret is so great that you beg to reincarnate immediately for atonement. Therefore, you cannot continue to walk the Divine Path to Eternal Life, which is the most downheartedness for souls.

Ngọc Hử Cung has the organization based on absolute equality and the relationships based on family love. Consequently, at the door of Đền Thánh (Caodaist Temple in Tây Ninh), which stands for Ngọc Hử Cung on earth, displayed the statues of The Three Saints. The statues symbolize heavenly extended families drafting the Third Covenant with Đức Chí Tôn (Supreme Being, God). This expresses the nature of Ngọc Hử Cung in the spiritual realm.

In Ngọc Hử Cung, souls have an audience with Đức Chí Tôn. According to Đức Hộ Pháp, they will see the three symbols: Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế (Jade Emperor), who is the King of the universe, Đại Từ Phụ (God the Father), who is the father of all souls and Thầy (Master), who educate all souls. This is the philosophical system of Quân-Sư-Phụ (King-Master-Father) of Confucianism. Đức Chí Tôn wants His children to follow in the last cycle of the third transition.

Đức Chí Tôn has no forms. It is humanity that gives Him forms because formlessness is incomprehensible to their awareness. Therefore, He emerges in three forms (King, Master, Father) so that you (especially Asians) can get it. That is also the ideal society humankind should follow to survive in the Third Salvation.

The symbol of King-Master-Father of Eastern philosophy features special emotions and willingness. Father is the cornerstone of a society. Fathering means not only giving your children enough food and education but also being an upright role model for them to copy. A father should be both a strict disciplinarian and an empathetic listener to help his children. A master should not only give his disciples knowledge and experience but also show them good examples, sincerely helping them fly higher. A king should be the symbol of the

highest authority, which depends on true affection for his subjects.

Those are the ideal criteria nations on earth want to pursue for a stable society. Historical facts have proved that if those criteria are failed to meet, there will be really disastrous consequences. A devil-may-care father can never build a happy family and, needless to say, a society with lots of such fathers will morally deteriorate. It is unnecessary for any advanced system of philosophy or noble thinkers to prove that. The point is it is very hard to meet those criteria.

Everyone, in any society, has tried to copy those models. This is a fight in which they try to balance love and reason. With less reason, the society becomes depraved and it becomes too grievous otherwise. As a result you should balance religious and secular viewpoints to attain a society both moral and advanced. Ngọc Hư Cung, where Đức Chí Tôn reigns the universe, is located right in such a society, not in any multicolored paradise.

### **Stopover 6**

After Ngọc Hư Cung, souls depart for Cực Lạc Thế Giới (The Realm of Extreme Joy), but first let us watch the battle between Hộ Pháp (Dharma Guardian) and Kim Quang Sứ or Quỷ Vương (Satan, Lucifer, the Devil). So who is Kim Quang Sứ and how mighty is he? Through Caodaist divine messages, he is a Đại Tiên (Great Immortal) who proudly gave this poem in a seance:

*“Cửu phẩm Thân Tiên nể mặt ta,  
Thích Ca dầu trọng khó giao hòa.  
Cửa Kinh Bạch Ngọc nâng lui tới,  
Đường Đạo Tây Phương thử chánh tà.*

Chỉ đá hóa vàng đon miệng thế,  
 Treo gương trí huệ giục phồn hoa.  
 Lấy chơn thay giả tô thiên vị,  
 Thắng bại phàm tâm liệu thế à !”

“All Divine Beings highly respect me,  
 Despite his grandness, I barely get along with the  
 Buddha.

*I usually come to Bạch Ngọc Kinh,  
 To test the enlightened souls.  
 My strategy is to tempt people into  
 Pursuing fame and money instead of enlightenment  
 And to grant fake divine status,  
 So watch out for your worldly greed”.*

Life comprises lots of trends and viewpoints, which have their root in dualist thinking. The trigrams of the *I Ching* are from Yin and Yang. The modern PC also begins with turning on and off the circuit. If Đức Chí Tôn (The Supreme Being, God) clears the Path to Eternal Life for all souls, He also authorizes Kim Quang Sú (Satan, Lucifer, the Devil) to block it. It is the sparking confrontation between the two opposite forces that operates the divine mechanism of the universe.

Kim Quang Sú is a terribly powerful divine being. However, his power is never horizonless. Đức Chí Tôn said, ‘*the Devil dares impersonate Myself, but not dares sit on My throne*’. You can easily impersonate someone because any names are possible in the realm of consciousness. Nonetheless, the throne of Đức Chí Tôn is the Absolute, that is it only exists in the spiritual realm. Kim Quang Sú is allowed to pretend to be God, so he can bamboozle all divine beings who are reincarnating in the earthly world. Only when all souls unite with Đức Chí

Tôn, eradicating dualist thinking (i.e. Đức Chí Tôn is on His throne) does Kim Quang Sứ stop tricking people.

To put it another way, Kim Quang Sứ (deception) only emerges and equals to Đức Chí Tôn in the realm of dualist thinking. In the absolute realm or human conscientiousness (the throne of Đức Chí Tôn) there is no Kim Quang Sứ.

Now let's return to the battle mentioned in the sixth stopover. Taking orders from Đức Chí Tôn, Đức Hộ Pháp goes to unlock the door to Cực Lạc Thế Giới (Nirvana, the World of Extreme Joy). On the way, he is halted by Kim Quang Sứ. Right then, Đức Quyền Giáo Tông Lê Văn Trung (the Acting Supreme Leader of Caodaism) shows up and begins to fight Kim Quang Sứ. Kim Quang Sứ transforms into lots of similar beings, so more Caodaist disciples also join in. The battle between good and evil expands endlessly.

Being tired of watching it, Đức Hộ Pháp falls asleep on his heavenly vehicle. When he wakes up the third time, the battle has not been over yet. After that, he decides to intervene and transform into two Hộ Pháp's, one of whom stays watching and the other flies into the sky. It is worth mentioning that those two beings have the same thought. The flying figure draws a circle in the air with Kim Tiên (Golden Rod) and the battle becomes minimized until there are only two fighters: Đức Quyền Giáo Tông and Kim Quang Sứ. The battle stops when Kim Quang Sứ is hit and flies away.

At first sight, the story seems like thousands of Asian fairytales, in which genii fight and at last win evils. However, the implication in the story is never that plain. Hộ Pháp stands for human consciousness. That he takes orders from Đức Chí Tôn to unlock the door to Cực Lạc Thế Giới (the World of

Extreme Joy) means humankind is forced to seek happiness by the law of nature. Needless to say, no living beings seek ways to destroy themselves. For us humanity, we still look for something preferred to our present situation though we decide to kill ourselves.

If you try to look for happiness, you naturally encounter hindrance or Kim Quang Sứ. However, the one who fight Kim Quang Sứ is Đức Quyền Giáo Tông, not Đức Hộ Pháp. Đức Quyền Giáo Tông leads Cửu Trùng Đài, which represents the human physical body. Consequently, fighting only happens in the earthly world. Consciousness witnesses its own battle as a bystander. That consciousness wakes up three times implies the Caodaist style of meditation called Luyện Tam Bửu (training the three treasures: body, mind and peri-spirit) to catch the nature of facts. When your consciousness or mind wants to fight, body and mind have united. They then are neither two parts nor one; neither dualism nor oneness. Kim Tiên now emerges or light from the prajna penetrates things so that you can see them as they really are. As a result, joy and hindrance are one, happiness and suffering are one and good and evil are one. The body now gets out of darkened suffering. The path to Cự Lạc Thế Giới is finally clear.

There is something thought-provoking in front of the entrance to Cự Lạc Thế Giới. There are lots of people, some of whom are standing and some sitting, waiting here. Đức Hộ Pháp says they are both clergymen and lay persons. Thus, by various ways, lots of people, who can be both religious and irreligious, have overcome the challenges of Kim Quang Sứ to reach this place. However, they have to stay outside owing to an obstruction, which are two fast spinning pinwheels at the main doors. Next, Đức Hộ Pháp points his Giáng Ma Xứ

(Evil-Destroying Pestle) at the pinwheels to stop them. Actually they are two swastikas. At that moment lots of waiting persons rush through the entrance before the pinwheels spin again.

Why do the people who have beaten Kim Quang Sú have to stay outside Cự Lạc Thế Giới? Because they realize they have won. They know the path to happiness, so they still stay outside it. If there is the path, there is the obstacle. The harder they try to unlock the door, the farther happiness goes away.

The two spinning pinwheels at the entrance of Cự Lạc Thế Giới are the tracks left by the operation of Tứ Tượng (Four Phenomena). They are four human emotions “*joy, sorrow, neither joy nor sorrow and half joy half sorrow*”. They are the four principle elements of your consciousness, self or whatever. Tứ Tượng stop spinning and show their actual forms when Hộ Pháp uses Giáng Ma Xử. Giáng Ma Xử is the invisible power inside consciousness. It is the execution of that power that stop the spinning Tứ Tượng. In other words, when you spend lots of time trying to solve a problem and all your efforts are in vain, that is when an inside power starts and pushes consciousness into the problem. There is neither hindrance nor suffering. Happiness is right in front of you as it has been.

Anyway, going through the entrance, you now can go around Cự Lạc Thế Giới, which humans have admired for millions of years. Due to such admiration, humankind have called it several charming names and provided various definitions. So what does that realm look like? It consists of only two concepts: Lô Âm Cổ Tự (Ancient Thunder Pagoda) led by Phật A Di Đà (Amitabha Buddha) and the lotus thrones managed by Phật Di Lạc (Maitreya Buddha).

Before sitting on their own lotus thrones, souls come to



listen to sermons by Phật A Di Đà in Lôi Âm Cổ Tự. Lôi Âm Cổ Tự is the concept for a site. In my Vietnamese opinion, it can be a moss-covered pagoda with wavy roofs on an unheard-of mount. In your opinion, it can be an abbey or a temple in accordance with your culture. Whatever it is, it is where Phật A Di Đà delivers sermons on Buddhism.

Who is Phật A Di Đà? First, that name literally means “*The Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life*”. That is the source of space and time. You can have a mental image of somebody in old brown robe with a ragged scarf. He has a lenient smiling face, sitting on a prayer mat or a lotus and having a magical aura. He will teach you how to attain the Buddhahood like himself. Generally, my mind can only create something like that!

Is it possible that you see such a divine being in the spiritual realm? No, actually that is only an earthly notion to denote something outside the earthly realm. Listening to the sermons by Phật A Di Đà is to listen to space and time, which is an action beyond reason. That sort of listening is indescribable because you can only hear a roll of thunder if it happens in your earthly world. Being used to dualist thinking, you cannot stand that roll of thunder. Only those who are about to get enlightened and who are about to sit on lotus thrones can comprehend those sermons.

After the sermons, souls now understand what space and time are and are ready to sit on their lotus thrones. What do the lotus thrones look like? According to Đức Hộ Pháp, they are on some construction like an Egyptian Pyramid with innumerable steps, on which Buddhas sitting. In front of it is a huge cây dương (poplar tree or willow tree) with vast covering foliage.

Compared with Tạo Hóa Thiên and Ngọc Hử Cung, this is a monotonous or serene realm. At least it is with human dualist thinking! And you may think sitting on those lotus thrones is like having pity on a lost civilization in an excursion to Egyptian Pyramids. In fact, that does not mean you sit on a golden chair, for instance. That does mean an action of complete self-liberation. Sitting or reigning means controlling. The height of the pyramid is endless time because you have to reincarnate innumerable times in order to step up the next level. The four-sided shape of the pyramid symbolizes the universe with the top of infinity.

At first, it is really extremely courageous to sit on those lotus thrones. It is admitted that very few souls volunteer to reincarnate, especially to start again from scratch because everyone knows how much suffering of life on earth is. However, you may be courageous to achieve a target because there is no courage for nothing. You may be courageous enough to reincarnate many times to attain a lotus throne and then proud of your higher divine rank. You are not against space and time and become a loyal slave to them. Since space and time are limitless, you keep reincarnating forever without escaping the low-and-high trap. Obviously, courage cannot bring liberation.

According to Codaist divine messages and sermons of Đức Hộ Pháp, Phật Di Lặc, who embodies loving kindness, manages those lotus thrones in the Third Salvation. Therefore, your reincarnation should be for humaneness, not your own courage. You should reincarnate because of your desire to save others. That is an action beyond space and time. Your complete altruistic behavior will free yourselves from the cycle of birth and death. It is the top of the heavenly pyramid

where space meets time, isn't it?

According to the narrative of Đức Hộ Pháp, we have just finished our journey on the Path to Eternal Life. Now we may sit on our lotus thrones at will, for 1,200, 2,400, 3,600 years or whatever. After that, we will descend to the earth and start again from scratch. Just like what Laozi wrote in chapter V, Tao Te Ching, '*Great is departure, departure is moving farther, moving father is returning*'. But that is another issue which will be discussed one day.

Now let's have a look at some possible conclusions.

The truth : Some people may ask if the Path to Eternal Life true?

Such a question is reasonable because people are used to live with reason and proofs. However, let's examine this. Đức Hộ Pháp takes orders from Đức Chí Tôn to walk the Path to Eternal Life and then disclose it to everyone. Đức Hộ Pháp symbolizes human awareness while the Path to Eternal Life is the cycle of rebirth. Human awareness and the cycle of rebirth have existed for millions of year without any necessary verification. Facts remain unaffected by space and time. People have made wars, restored peace, tested nuclear weapons, launched missiles to Mars, earned more interest, chanted Buddhist scriptures, etc. They have done everything because they long for happiness, haven't they? The Path to Eternal Life is also the route consciousness takes to seek happiness, which is a reality.

Philosophically: The Path to Eternal Life has its root in the profound philosophy of the East. Eastern philosophy is characterized not only by the uncompromising confrontation between Sắc (Form) and Không (Emptiness) but also by their

extremely complicated relationship. They even are oneness in the deep essence of Eastern philosophy. As a result, Eastern philosophy does not label someone as angel or villain. Everyone is considered human instead. Supernatural notions in Eastern philosophy becomes the figures in mythologies, in which the divine beings have the same emotions as those of humankind. Deities and human are interchangeable in semi-fictional narratives. The Path to Eternal Life contains diversely colorful icons, which have various hidden denotations for people of all levels to explore. The diversity can partly shows the oneness, which is the spirit of Caodaism.

Liberation: the Path to Eternal Life is the great cycle of reincarnation, which is also the utmost principle of the universe. Souls evolve from materials to Buddhas again and again. Being able to fully comprehend this, you will not need to get out of suffering. That is true self-liberation. With that in mind, you will have innovative methods to any problems in life. All ambitions will not make you suffer any more. People will be nicer to each other. Life will not be a horrible battle, but the place where people learn and help each other fulfill their responsibilities.

**Từ Chơn**

Sài Gòn, 2010

Revised 3 Feb 2021

Translated 28 Oct 2021

A HIDDEN DENOTATION  
 OF  
 “THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE”  
 BY  
 HỘ PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC

## Introduction

### Origin

The series of sermons on “*The Path to Eternal Life*” by Hộ Pháp Phạm Công Tắc<sup>91</sup> from 16 Sep 1948 to 27 Apr 1949 is a key scripture of Caodaism. Thanks to Ban Túc Ký Toà Thánh Tây Ninh (Team of Stenographers) a book with the same name was published. Right at the beginning, Đức Hộ Pháp announced, ‘*However, God has blessed Caodaism, so some youngsters have tried to learn shorthand to record what I preach...*’. Since a tape recorder was still too expensive then, stenography was the only useful means. Hence, a Team of Stenographers, who used an innovative method for Vietnamese by Mr Nguyễn Văn Mới, was established. Every night, the stenographers took part in the sermons and tried to record them.

Owing to social and political changes, not until 16 years later could stenographer Nguyễn Văn Mới have an opportunity to collect enough materials and motivate friends and philanthropists to print it. The book was then given to the Cao Đài enthusiasts and the copyright was transferred to Hội Thánh (The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council) led by Đức Thượng Sanh<sup>92</sup>. To date (2021), after lots of social changes, the book has been published several times and at last posted on the internet. Being typed again and again, the original

<sup>91</sup> The leader of Hiệp Thiên Đài (the Executive Body of Caodaism)

<sup>92</sup> Mr Cao Hoài Sang, one of the two assistants to Đức Hộ Pháp.

content was corrupted and there are lots of typos and errors. Especially, sermon 25 and 26 was mistakenly mixed leading to confusion. Thus, I recommend this link for a completely improved version with footnotes based on the original book.

<https://www.daotam.info/booksv/TuChon/cdtlhs-bientap.pdf>

### **Significance**

To begin with, this book is crucially significant because right in the first sermon, Đức Hộ Pháp affirmed, *'These sermons are not delivered by Mr Phạm Công Tắc, but Hộ Pháp. Hộ Pháp preaches to all Caodaist devotees on behalf of Đức Chí Tôn (the Supreme Being, God).'*

As you know, Caodaists can receive divine messages through séances, but only divinely assigned mediums can do so. Ordinary believers cannot practice ouija board or automatic writing except with divine privilege. Đức Hộ Pháp is Ngự Mã Quân (Trusted Courtier), who is one of the reliable Caodaist mediums, so the divine messages he received from the divine beings are completely plausible. For example, he and Đức Thượng Phẩm performed Đại Ngọc Cơ (Great Gem Divine Pen) to write the Tân Luật Pháp Chánh Truyền (Caodaist Canonical Codes). Furthermore, according to Caodaist Law, Giáo Tông (Supreme Leader, Pope) can be elected by all adherents, but Hộ Pháp cannot. Hence, in 700,000 years to come, there will probably be several Giáo Tông, but only one Hộ Pháp. Consequently, Hộ Pháp's sermons are unique.

Secondly, Hộ Pháp said, *'Only Caodaism has such profound philosophies'*. Indeed, all Caodaist theological terminology can be found in this book. These theological terms differentiate Caodaism from other old-established religions. His sermons

also challenges the assumption that Caodaist philosophy is only a patchwork of different religious teachings because apart from some established religious terms there is a new Caodaist terminology. This terminology affirms the viewpoints of life and universe which are completely new. Moreover, there are new methods of self-cultivation different from those of other religions. Since Caodaist divine messages asserts that other religious methods are corrupted by intentional human embellishments, Caodaism introduces new methods, which will be developed and practiced in the next 700,000 years.

Thirdly, Đức Hộ Pháp announced, *‘The path peri-spirits follow to return to Đức Chí Tôn is the Divine Path to Eternal Life. Đức Chí Tôn Himself activated my Huệ Quang Khiếu (allowed me to achieve enlightenment) and let me have an audience with Himself to learn lots of vital things’*. This is the first time in Caodaist history a leader officially has recognized a controversial method, which is called Tịnh Luyện (Caodaist Meditation). Some believers said it was prohibited while others disagreed with that. With that announcement Đức Hộ Pháp affirmed Tịnh Luyện is one of the three authorized methods for Caodaist followers. Furthermore, he publicly said he himself had practiced it successfully. Such announcement had never been made by any other Caodaist leaders before.

Finally, the most important thing needed by any Caodaist adherents is the promise Đức Hộ Pháp made, *‘I tried to preach as concisely as possible so that all Caodaist disciples can master it for a future achievement of enlightenment’*.

With those points in mind, it is completely possible to believe that the Divine Path to Eternal Life is not only an entertaining narrative but also the true instructions for the achievement of religious enlightenment. Therefore, Caodaist

followers should read it for a proper practice to attain enlightenment right in this reincarnation because you may forget everything in the next reincarnation!

### **Some essential definitions**

First, it is mandatory to learn the definitions of some Eastern theological terminology used in the story because most of them are in Chinese Vietnamese. They are rarely used in Vietnam nowadays, so even the Vietnamese need to know them.

#### **Niết Bàn**

Niết Bàn is Nirvana (Sanskrit) and Nibbana (Pali). It literally means to extinguish. According to ancient India religious doctrine, Nirvana results from a process of thinking when people can “*extinguish*” or eradicate their greed, hatred, stupidity, suffering, and especially the endless cycle of rebirth. Now Nirvana is considered the ultimate target of Buddhists. In other words, the Buddhists who ponder over things in their life in some ways until they can stop those things will attain Nirvana.

#### **Cực Lạc Thế Giới**

Cực Lạc Thế Giới is Sukhavati (Sanskrit), which literally means “*a purified world*”. The Vietnamese usually call Tây Phương Tịnh Độ (the purified place in the West) or Cực Lạc Thế Giới, Cực Lạc Quốc, An Lạc Quốc (the World of Extreme Joy). After the Buddha passed away, his disciples wrote down what he had preached. Those books become the Buddhist scriptures. However, after hundreds of years or so the disciples divided into several cults due to disagreements. One of them is Mahayana, which also divided into many branches. One branch called Tịnh Độ Tông affirmed that, according to the



scripture Sukhavatvyuha, if you pray to Amitabha Buddha for salvation, he will allow you to reincarnate in the world called Sukhavati (Purified World). That world is thousands times as good as this world. That is why it is called The World of Extreme Joy.

Hence, based on their own belief, Buddhists try to either achieve Nirvana or reincarnate in the World of Extreme Joy. Đức Hộ Pháp combines these two purposes by calling them “*The World of Extreme Joy or Nirvana*”.

### **Hộ Pháp**

Research revealed that Hộ Pháp or Dharmapala (Sanskrit) was first worshiped in Tibet in the 8th century. Ancient myths say that Padmasambhava, the first Buddhist preacher in Tibet, successfully conquered the local evil spirits. Those spirits then vowed to protect Buddhism and became Hộ Pháp (Protector of Dharma).

Hộ Pháp is also worshiped in Hindu, Bon and other Asian religions. There are hundreds of Asian myths that describe Hộ Pháp as various figures. Usually his statue looks like a warlord in a suit of armor carrying some kind of weapon. Since the term Hộ means protect or guard, his statue is often put at the entrance of a pagoda or temple.

In Caodaism, Hộ Pháp is the top dignitary in Hiệp Thiên Đài, which is one of the three major bodies. The others are Bát Quái Đài led by Đức Chí Tôn, and Cửu Trùng Đài by Giáo Tông. Hiệp Thiên Đài plays an intermediary role by taking orders from Bát Quái Đài and transferring them to Cửu Trùng Đài. As for legal matter, Hộ Pháp deals with all problems relevant to Caodaist law in the community. Additionally, he manages all Meditation Halls specializing in

Tịnh Luyện. Among the Caodaist icons, he represents human consciousness (thinking) while Giáo Tông human body and Đức Chí Tôn human soul.

Also, in heaven he is in charge of three of the four heavenly regions: Nam Thiệm Bộ Châu, Đông Thắng Thần Châu and Tây Ngưu Hoá Châu. The four one, Bắc Cù Lư Châu, is for devil spirits. According to the divine messages on 12-8 Year of the Tiger (17 Sep 1926), these regions are called Tứ Đại Bộ Châu (Three Great Heavenly Regions) and described as *'they are not planets, but float in the air'*.

And finally, Hộ Pháp directs eight sorts of souls, which are materials, plants, animals, humans, genii, saints, immortals and Buddhas. In other words, he has authority on all souls in the universe. Thus, he has extremely enormous power over all souls.

### Chữ vạn

The Chinese call 卐 萬字 (wànzi), meaning *"the symbol of everything"*. In Vietnamese it is *"vạn tự"* or *"chữ Vạn"*. In fact, this symbol comes from Eurasian swastika meaning *"prosperity"*. It has been used since 500 BC in lots of religions, such as Hindu, Buddhism, and Jainism in India. In the West, it appears in many cultures and religions, meaning good luck. Even Hitler used it for his political party, but put it like this 卐 in a rather sloping position. Hence, depending on the religion, culture or purpose, it is designed as turning clockwise or counterclockwise and described in various ways.

In Caodaist constructions, it is carved on the front of Lầu Chuông (Bell Tower), Lầu Trống (Drum Tower) of Đền Thánh and Lầu Chuông của Báo Ân Từ (The Temple of Buddha Mother). There is no official explanation for that from The

Caodaist Sacerdotal Council, but it has been rumored that for those swastikas, the French exiled Hộ Pháp and some dignitaries to Madagascar, accusing them of close relations with Nazi Germany. Whether it is true or not will need more evidence from the future historians.

In short, chũ Vạn is an ancient sacred symbol of many religions in the world and explained in many different ways.

### **Giáng Ma Xử**

Giáng = to conquer, to oppress; Ma = ghosts; Xử = a kind of ancient Chinese weapon like a pestle. According to Chinese mythology each deity has an animal to ride and a magical weapon to oppress evil spirits. Caodaism says Hộ Pháp has two magical weapons, which are Giáng Ma Xử and Kim Tiên (Golden Rod).

### **Esoteric Significance**

#### **Why metaphor**

Đức Hộ Pháp described six stopovers on the Path to Eternal Life. Each stopover is used as a different metaphor. Like what Caodaist followers usually believe, each exoteric message conceals an esoteric one and both Caodaist believers and nonbelievers can explore it to design their own methods for enlightenment.

Some may ask why Đức Hộ Pháp does not give direct explanation, but only uses metaphors. Actually, there are some reasons. First, under French colonial rule, the Vietnamese had to learn Chinese writing because they did not have their own writing. Hence, they were greatly influenced by Chinese literature and education. The Chinese enjoy the fairytales in which humans live, work and fight together with deities and ghosts. For example, in Fengshen Yanyi (Investiture of the

Gods) there are real people like Trữ Vương, Đát (Đắc) Kỳ, Khương Tử Nha, etc. fictional figures like Lôi Chấn Tử, Thân Công Báo, Vân Trung Tử, etc. and mythological deities like Na Tra, Vi Hộ, Từ Hàng Đạo Nhân, etc. Another example is Tây Du Ký (Journey to the West). Buddhist monk Xuanzang actually went to India, learned the language, then translated Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, but Tôn Ngộ Không, Trư Bát Giới, Sa Tăng and other evil spirits are imaginative characters. Therefore, in a society where most educated people only read Fengshen Yanyi and Tây Du Ký, the most effective way to spread a religious philosophy would be mixing religious messages into similar stories. Furthermore, those stories would be easily spread and kept. That is why Caodaism is also mixed into the Path to Eternal Life.

Next, unlike conventional education in Vietnam, where students need to repeat 100 % the knowledge taught in order to graduate, learning and practicing a religious philosophy requires lots of thinking. Then believers need to apply in reality for the rest of their life. Hence, the story in the Path to Eternal Life inspires everyone to ponder on its implications a lot, which is very useful for the achievement of enlightenment.

Finally, the principle of God-and-Man-unite says that humans have to convert Tinh (body) into Khí (consciousness) and then Khí into Thần (soul) before God returns Thần to humans for them to get enlightened. To put it another way, you should have vegetarian meals and do exercise well to purify your body. Then do lots of serious thinking to receive the soul granted by God. That way, you will have a chance to achieve Nirvana before your death.

**The hidden connotation of Hộ Pháp's unlocking the entrance to Cực Lạc Thế Giới**

One of the interesting events in the Divine Path to Eternal Life is when Hộ Pháp clears the way to Cực Lạc Thế Giới. The story is told from sermon 30 to 33. Now let me summarize the story.

Taking orders from Đức Chí Tôn, Đức Hộ Pháp went to unlock the entrance to Cực Lạc Thế Giới. Arriving at the gate, he saw lots of people, who comes from various races with different forms and who are both believers and nonbelievers. They could not enter because at the two doors (one white and the other pink) two giant pinwheels are spinning so fast. Sometimes some priests chanted some prayers, looking worried and sad. Then Đức Hộ Pháp aimed his Giáng Ma Xử at a door, ordering it to stop, so several people rushed in. Next he did the same to the other and lots of people rushed in again. When the pinwheels stopped, they were actually two huge swastikas. However, a Buddha standing above performed a mudra, throwing it down, so the swastikas started to spin again. Hộ Pháp said Đức Chí Tôn ordered him for the religious people of the religiously blocked period to enter.

Now, let's analyze the story to find out the implication. However, allow me to honestly share something first. What is about to be told here is my own viewpoint. It may be unacceptable to some readers and I never intend to persuade anyone to believe it. On the other hand, I am very delighted if readers themselves have their own opinions on the story because there are a lots of ways to Rome and no opinions are absolutely correct. As a result, there may be innumerable opinions on this. If asked which opinion to follow, I answer the one that is not against the Caodaist Law is workable, but whether you can accomplish depends on your good karma and Đức Chí Tôn's grace.

As mentioned in definitions, we know that Hộ Pháp represents the consciousness of an average human. At the beginning of the story, Đức Chí Tôn (soul) orders Hộ Pháp (consciousness, thinking) to clear the way to Cực Lạc Thế Giới. Consequently, it is our thinking, which someone calls Tâm (heart, mind), that opens the door to Cực Lạc Thế Giới or Nirvana. In other words, it helps us achieve enlightenment. Of course, you have to ponder in some specific way, not the usual one.

According to Hộ Pháp, those standing outside Cực Lạc Thế Giới are the religious people in the period of blocked religions (i.e. before Caodaism). Nevertheless, I think after that period there will be more people to wait there because Hộ Pháp said the swastikas had spun again.

Let's return to the waiting people outside. They are of all kinds not only from our 68 planets but also from anywhere else in the universe. They are priests, atheists, lay people, etc. In deed, everyone try to seek happiness both for themselves and for others. That happiness is symbolized by Cực Lạc Thế Giới. Even scientists, politicians, conservationists and followers of any cults also want to create a society free from suffering though some of their methods may be a little eccentric. For example, some want to give each citizen an equal share of national properties! They think that is a society of absolute justice because there are no more competition of any kinds! Đức Hộ Pháp said they had their heads shaved, wore long beards or oddly ornamented their bodies. However strange they looked, they all had to wait outside until they met Đức Hộ Pháp.

Thus, the prominent lesson here for us Caodaists is going to Cực Lạc Thế Giới is not the privilege of priests of any

religions. Wearing a robe, chanting prayers or counting rosary beads can only help arrive at the entrance, not go through it. In life, we have seen lots of people, who are not religious, but are more praiseworthy than others. Those deserve to arrive at this entrance too. Đức Hộ Pháp has showed us that those who are righteous enough and have fulfilled their human responsibilities have the right to do so, but have to wait outside. Of course, liars and divine lawbreakers has fallen into the Bích Hải (Turquoise Sea) right in the first stage of the Path to Eternal Life. In other words, they have to reincarnate in the world.

As for the power of Hộ Pháp. Why don't Giáo Tông or Đức Chí Tôn open Cự Lạc Thế Giới, but Hộ Pháp? Because the physical body (Giáo Tông) does not return to heaven and the soul (Đức Chí Tôn) has been returned to us individuals for a coming achievement of enlightenment. Hence, Hộ Pháp (mind, thinking, consciousness) is the vital factor for enlightenment.

Let's watch how Đức Hộ Pháp opens the door. He alternately aimed Giáng Ma Xử at the two doors and the spinning pinwheels consecutively stopped, showing up as two gigantic swastikas. The two doors means our dualist thinking. For us, everything is from two opposite forces like Yin and Yang, Good and Evil, True and False, Male and Female, etc. Dualism greatly affects our everyday activities almost without our knowledge. One interesting example is Caodaist adherents like posing for a photograph in front of the Temple and most of them unconsciously choose the statue of Ông Thiện, not Ông Ác as the background. This proves how greatly dualism influences our thinking. Another example, human emotions are constantly swayed by dualist thinking. People always consider someone enemy if he/she joins a group different from

theirs. That person will be portrayed as a villain. Conversely, their teammates are usually righteous and easily forgiven despite their mistakes. If you weigh everything up, everyone either has their own enemies or is ideologically persuaded to hate someone else. That is our instinctive way of thinking that has its root in dualism. *Giáng Ma Xử* is an invisible tool, which can be used only in your mind. In other words, it is the power of human will. Aiming *Giáng Ma Xử* at the two doors means directly realizing the dualist nature of our thought and try to escape it. Be careful! The term “*escape*” is temporarily used because it still comes from dualism.

Let me tell a bit more about *Giáng Ma Xử*. It is conventionally said to be in the shape of a pestle. Thus, its function is breaking something. However, what should we break? It doesn't mean “*breaking some enemy*” because that still is an action from dualist thinking. It actually means “*breaking your own self-opinionatedness*”, one of which is you only listen to what you like, not what you “*enemies*” like. Nonetheless, it is easier for most people to “*break*” or beat enemies. That is why there are always wars of different kinds on earth.

What's more, your stubbornness can cleverly transform, disguising as something attractive and noble. For example, you may one day feel tired of fighting and killing and need a peace treaty with “*enemies*”. Then you establish a party, delivering persuasive speeches on reconciliation for this or that reason. In fact, in your deep heart, that is only a luxurious opinion because who wants that reconciliation has to respect the articles designed by yourself. There has been a well-known example for this. All Caodaist believers have longed for the union of all Caodaist schisms, but the problem has been unsolved so far however many formal and informal meetings



were held.

So what deeply hidden thing prevents us from loving our enemies? This question should be put to yourself because only you know why. Each person will have his own reason and some people cannot forget that until they pass away. This action is call self-reflection and when you know what that hindrance is, just smash it with your Giáng Ma Xử. Whenever you really love your enemy as Ông Thiện Ông Ác do (the Good and the Evil) at the end of their story, you have eradicated dualist thinking or have went through the door of Cực Lạc Thế Giới.

Additionally, the two pinwheels show up as two swastikas when they stop. This implies you will know the truth when dualist thinking stops. Generally, how a fact or opinion (swastika) is named depends on culture or interest. That is why the swastikas spin. One thing worth mentioned is those names are all beautiful supported by such persuasive arguments that they can attract lots of fans. For example the term Cao Đài will be added something and become another organization. Different names or titles are also the root of disagreement among individuals, societies, religions and nations. A new name will cause another dissension exactly as planned by the dualist principle. With that way of thinking, people like dividing into small groups. Whenever you join a group, it is easier for you to hate than to love other groups. And it is so hard to eradicate hatred that you need the power of Giáng Ma Xử.

Let's go back to the story a little. Every time Đức Hộ Pháp ceased the spinning pinwheel with his Giáng Ma Xử, several people could hurry through the entrance. After the pinwheels broke off twice, they resumed spinning. Hence, the moment for you to enter Cực Lạc Thế Giới is really in the blink of an

eye. That is why those outsiders had to move in as quickly as possible. Similarly, the moment you really love your enemies is absolutely atypical and never lasts long. Our ancestors used to call it *hiệp nhất* (oneness) because there is no more hatred-and-love. It is that moment that allows you to enter *Cực Lạc Thế Giới*, Nirvana, or whatever.

Now let me summarize how to get enlightened or to enter *Cực Lạc Thế Giới*. First, find out for yourself a situation in which you are at the mercy of dualist thinking. It should be an authentic one. There is no room for a fictional story in which you yourself is the hero here.

As mentioned above, I choose the example of “*loving your enemy*” because it is easier for everyone to imagine. In fact, everyone has his own situation in life and it can repeat myriad times. Thus, select the one that badly affects or extremely annoys you the most. For instance, you are forced to get an unwanted job, but unable to quit it, what you consider the right thing is criticized by others and someone belittles your religious leader while you think his is a heretic.

Whenever you have found out the “*two doors*” to *Cực Lạc Thế Giới*, prepare your *Giáng Ma Xử*. That is, seriously ask yourself “*why*”. Generally, you cannot answer it instantly. It usually takes most of your life to do. Mahayana Buddhism calls it *Công Ấn* (koan). Anyway, try to look for as many answers as you can until you get one that helps annihilate that dualist contradiction and reverse your situation.

Your persistence may (or may not!) be rewarded one day when you suddenly realize why you suffer. Everything suddenly becomes crystal clear and you easily abscond from the entanglement of dualist thinking. Previously you did not

enjoy your job, but now you are a real workaholic. Before you stubbornly refused to admit, but now you don't mind admitting to your mistakes. Formerly, you call other religions evil ones, but now you respect their leaders. Thinking so, you have already entered Cự Lạc Thế Giới.

It is imperative that you be 100% honest while thinking so because even a tiny fallacy can block the entrance instantaneously. Moreover, it is sometimes back-breaking to ascertain our own fallacy. For example, though you know someone is a heretic, you still shut your eyes to that and respect his religious leader like yours because you need to enter Cự Lạc Thế Giới. Remember that with just a little thought like you can fail right away.

Therefore, in the past priests always needed a guru (spiritual mentor) for good advice. It is really difficult to find such a guru now because you do not know who has truly achieved enlightenment. Furthermore, Kim Quang Sú (Satan) is allowed to impersonate God's name, even to use some divine power to deceive everyone. However, don't be afraid. Đức Chí Tôn told Caodaist believers to believe "*His throne*" not "*His name*". His throne is your conscientiousness. Therefore, listen to your conscientiousness, not to somebody with a high-ranking post.

What's more, each time the swastika only stops for a second and you may have only one chance after millions of interruptions to crowd into the place together with others. Isn't it too difficult? But not everyone can achieve enlightenment easily. Like what Caodaist divine messages have said, "Children, therefore, in Asia for 2,000 years very few people have achieved Buddhahood. You only know Huệ Mạng Kim Tiên<sup>93</sup>". (21/8/1926

<sup>93</sup> The monk in Mount Lady Den in Tây Ninh, Vietnam, who is said to have achieved enlightenment.

The Collection of Divine Messages I). However, I myself think it is neither difficult nor easy, but the question is whether your religious practice is extremely apposite to your current situation or not.

### Conclusion

St. Peter's Square in Vatican City was built in the shape of a key because Jesus Christ said he would give St. Peter the key to Heaven. Similarly, Đức Chí Tôn left lots of keys to the heavenly Bạch Ngọc Kinh at the earthly Bạch Ngọc Kinh, which is the Caodaist Temple in Tây Ninh. The hard part is whether His children can find one to open it. One of those is the Statue of Ông Thiện Ông Ác (Good and Evil) symbolizing our dualist thinking. And in the Path to Eternal Life, Đức Hộ Pháp has already taught Caodaist adherents how to use it.

In fact, the Founders of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism bequeathed how to do it a long time ago. Confucius taught Doctrine of the Mean, Laozi Wuwei (effortless action) and Gautama Buddha Sunyata (emptiness). They all are the approaches to escape the trap of dualism, attaining enlightenment. However, since thousands of years elapsed with lots of social and cultural changes, we may read them without any comprehension or understand them the way we want to. As a result it is really difficult to practice. In the Third Salvation, apart from the teachings of Đức Hộ Pháp, we Caodaist disciples are given an extra treasure, which is "*Đức Chí Tôn will return our peri-spirits to ourselves*". This is a vital factor for those who want to free themselves from the cycle of rebirth.

What has been discussed above is how to get through the door to Cực Lạc Thế Giới, but how long you can stay there

will be debated in another article. However, those who can enter Cự Lạc Thế Giới know exactly what they will do next. They will probably create another universe or just descend to the earth as a tiny grasshopper in a meadow. Đức Hộ Pháp usually called it “*establishing a career*” in the Divine Path to Eternal Life.

**Từ Chơn**

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*The Divine Path* .....  
.....*To Eternal Life*

.....  
**HỘ-PHÁP PHẠM CÔNG TẮC**  
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