

99 FAQ's About CAODAISM

This book is dedicated
to
the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council

AUTHOR
TÙNG THIÊN TỬ BẠCH HẠC
2010

TRANSLATOR
TỬ CHƠN

Those who are spreading the messages of Caodaism are allowed to use the material in this book providing that they tell where it is quoted from.

PREFACE

Having talked with the tourists visiting the Caodaist Temple in Tây Ninh and other believers, I realize that they have a lot of questions. They are presently interested in Caodaism, whose philosophy is based on religious tolerance, though it was founded in Vietnam, a developing country.

Hence, in spite of my little competence, I have tried to write this book. To do so, I have carefully studied the scriptures published by renowned authors or the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council. The material is basically informative enough for everyone. There will be another book on Caodaist philosophy for those who need further studies.

I really appreciate the work of Caodaist seniors and trailblazers and dedicate my work to the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council for religious purposes.

Tùng Thiên Từ Bạch Hạc
2010

QUESTION 1: Is it true that you've practiced the one-eyed religion?

Answer: The one-eyed symbol on the altar may be a bit confusing, isn't it? In fact, it is a new religion founded by God in Vietnam. Its full name is The Great Religion for the Third Salvation, or Cao Đài for short.

QUESTION 2: Why is it called Cao Đài?

Answer: Cao (high) refers to God, the Highest Divine Being in the universe. Đài is a tower, which Asians usually built to pray to Gods for something.

“Now I have come, building a High Tower, which is the Sacred Temple for Great Faith in the world. I had a humble people (the Vietnamese) in Southeast Asia to build it to fulfill my prophecy that religion comes from the East”(Caodaist Constitution).

God has descended to grant mankind the medication for resurrection, which is morality. Caodaism is where divine beings coming to unite mankind.

QUESTION 3: Where and when was Cao Đài inaugurated?

Answer: On November 11th 1926 (10 15th Year of the Tiger) the Inauguration was celebrated in Gò Kén Temple (Tù Lâm Pagoda, Tây Ninh, Việt Nam). The three-day ceremony officially marked the beginning of Cao Đài. On the guest list were the Governor General of French Indochina, the Governor of Cochinchina as well as many Vietnamese and French government officials. They all were solemnly received by Mr Lê văn Trung, on behalf of the Caodaist community. All offerings, which were presented by believers, were accepted except cash. During the ceremony over 20,000 people requested permission to become Caodaists.

QUESTION 4: Who is the Jade Emperor?

Answer: According to Caodaism, God, the creator and ruler of the universe, presently preaches through spiritual seances, naming Himself

The Jade Emperor, currently named The Highest, Great Immortal and Great Boddhisattva, who preaches in Vietnam.

Lots of people worship God without knowing who He is. Now thanks to Cao daist spiritual seances, more information is revealed to mankind. The daily prayer Jade Emperor for Cao daist believers gives more details as follows:

- God is named Đại La Thiên Đế, Đức Thái Cực Thánh Hoàng, Đức Huyền Khung Cao Thượng Đế Ngọc Hoàng in Vietnamese. In other cultures, different names (Yuhuang Shangdi, Jehovah, Allah, etc) are also used.
- God creates and nurtures everything in the universe.
- God separated The Absolute into The Two Forms, which divided into the Four Phenomena. The Four Phenomena, in turn, changed into the Eight Trigrams. Finally, the Eight Trigrams changed countless times to create the universe.
- God reigns 36 planes of Heaven, 3000 worlds, 72 planets and 4 Great Continents.
- God controls the Sun, the Moon, the stars and time.
- God is the King of Deities, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas.

QUESTION 5: What does the name CAO ĐÀI TIÊN ÔNG ĐẠI BỒ TÁT MA HA TÁT GIÁO ĐẠO NAM PHƯƠNG mean?

Answer:

- Cao Đài - the High Tower, symbolizing Confucianism.
- Tiên Ông - an Immortal, symbolizing Taoism.
- Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát - a Boddhisattva, symbolizing Buddhism.
- Giáo đạo Nam phương - founding a new religion in Vietnam.

God explained, *“Disciples, I had to demean myself by proclaiming myself an Immortal and Boddhisattva, the lowest divine ranks in order to save humankind. I should have proclaimed myself the highest rank just as people always do. That is why some adherents think I am only a junior deity. You have to be as modest as I am so that you can preach*

my words. Again, I tell you that I come to help sinners. If there were no sinners, I would not attempt to descend to the world. So try to save the sinners. That will satisfy me most.”

QUESTION 6: Who is God?

Answer: God is the source of life, which is the impetus for the evolution of living beings. God creates and nurtures everything. God both exists in an atom and covers the whole universe. Invisible as God is, He exists in everyone’s mind and is addressed as several names.

The fact that innumerable heavenly bodies travel in the universe without crashing into each other cannot be random. There must be a power to control it. That power hides in each individual who is evolving according to natural law. This proves that God exists.

According to Caodaism, God is the huge source of light, provisionally called the Great Spiritual Light. This is divided into countless Tiny Spiritual Lights. The tiny lights descend to this contaminated world together with several bodies, including the physical bodies and are called humans. God has assigned lots of divine beings to the world to instruct mankind, so people become more and more intelligent, discover new things and establish many civilizations. Born in different cultures, those divine beings also deliver religious speeches and write scriptures to wake people up so that they realize that the world is only a temporary realm and there surely is an afterlife.

QUESTION 7: How does God exist?

Answer: God is the source of life, but no one can see Him.

- Human naked eyes can only see things in the material world. Consequently, they can neither see their peri-spirits, their souls, Divine Beings nor God. Only those who attain their spiritual eyes can do so.

- Lots of people hear of God without knowing who God is. That is because they neither have a close relationship with nor truly believe Him. You cannot help the blind realize or value beautiful colors because they only hear their names. The believers who realize God exists inside can keep their minds peaceful.

In short, we humans cannot determine what God is like. God is a mass of unlimited spiritual light, thanks to which living things in the universe remain alive and evolve.

QUESTION 8: Why do humans have to worship God?

Answer: As a human, you should be grateful to your parents for their nurture by looking after them when they are old and worship them after they have passed away. Additionally, gods, patron saints, patriots, and religious founders should also be worshipped. God reigns the universe and gives life to all living beings. God grants humans souls, which are commonly called conscience so that they can differentiate between right and wrong. Without their souls humans would only be a motionless mass of bone and flesh. Consequently, humans should worship the source of life or God.

QUESTION 9: What benefit do humans gain from worshipping God?

Answer: Due to endless love, God blesses humans so much. However serious our worship is in return is not enough. In fact, that is how we try to get close to Him to be instructed how to escape the evil world. It is so fortunate for those who are present when God establishes Caodaism because they can read His precious messages and be saved.

QUESTION 10: Why does God, who is omnipotent, create an imperfect world?

Answer: This is the common complaint people often make in a devastating disaster like war, storm, earthquake, or tsunami. The complaint resembles that of an uneducated person who criticizes an unfinished construction or painting. How much humans understand

God's great plan for creation, preservation and destruction? Human mind is the same as a chicken in an egg. The chicken never knows, much less believes that there is a beautiful world outside as soon as it gets out. It never believes that it can see with eyes and fly with wings some day. There is no way to help such a chicken.

Similarly, many people do not believe in souls, eternal afterlife, karma, or the law of evolution because they cannot see beyond their physical world. Their thought is like the fragile wings, which are unable to take them out of the border of their brain. Their naked eyes cannot discover the extreme precious treasures God grants His adherents. Unable to see the invisible world, humans can feel the existence of God and the law of the universe. We humans need a strong belief to receive God's blessing as a chicken receives the heat from its mother, or we will not be able to return to the eternal world after death.

QUESTION 11: Is the Buddha superior to God?

Answer: No, it is not true that the Buddha is superior to God. According to the Caodaist prayer "The Jade Emperor", God controls the sun, the moon, the stars and is the Lord of all gods, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas. God creates humans, who morally perfect themselves to become gods, goddesses, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas. All religions are established by God or the Creator.

QUESTION 12: What is practicing a religion?

Answer: That is to purify your selves both physically and mentally and to make atonement for sin so that your soul can return to the previous status in heaven after death. Caodaists call it "to unite with God" or "to attain enlightenment". You do not need to save you head, wear a religious uniform, enter a priesthood or say prayers all the time. You can both earn a living and practice a religion. Unlike an irreligious person, however, instead of enjoying secular pleasures like gambling or drinking, you spend your free time thinking about your past activities

and morally perfect yourselves. If honestly praying to God, you will be blessed because God is inside your mind, not somewhere else. Do not think you will practice a religion when you retire. That may be too late.

QUESTION 13: Why is Vietnam chosen to be where Cao Đài is founded?

Answer: Vietnam is predetermined for the Third Salvation. It has the shape of the letter S, which looks like the symbol of Yin Yang. While the Hainan Island plays the role of Yang within Yin (Pacific Ocean), the Tonle Sap Lake is Yin within Yang (Cambodia). Vietnam, consequently, is a complete Ba gua, which makes Vietnam more spiritual. This is the best symbol which is the foundation for others during the period of transition. God says, *“Only in Vietnam are ancestors still traditionally worshipped though the country has been ruled by foreign conquerors since its birth. The people here are so kind and mild. Like Jesus Christ, I came to eradicate the false doctrines and spread the true ones in the world.”*

*“Despite a small country in the world,
It’s strange that Vietnam will govern other countries some day”*

QUESTION 14: What is Caodaism based on?

Answer: The Caodaist doctrine is based on ancient religions like Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, etc. Caodaists keep the moral principles widely accepted with some necessary changes.

- Morally, Caodaism reminds people of their own responsibilities and teach them how to behave towards their families, society and mankind.
- Philosophically, Caodaism tells people to ignore fame and fortune, to free themselves from the dominance of materialism and attain quietness for their mind.

- Religiously, Caodaism advises people to worship God and other divine beings. Caodaism accepts the Buddhist way of ancestor worship, but opposes offerings of meat, fish and hell money.
- Spiritually, Caodaism agree with other religions that human souls exist after death and constantly evolve through lots of incarnations.
- Selected Caodaists can practice esotericism.
- Caodaism emphasizes humanity, love and justice.

QUESTION 15: Why is the Divine Eye worshipped in Caodaism?

Answer: God said, *“The reason why I tell you disciples to worship the symbol of Divine Eye, not a statue of some being like other religions is I am nothingness, so I am not like anyone or anything else. Do not make my statue to worship. God is logic that covers everything in the universe. Unlike you disciplines, I have no physical body, so do not make a human shape to represent me. Worshipping the Divine Eye is worshipping me.*

*It is untimely to explain to you why, but I can tell you a little about it. Listen,
The eyes control your mind,
The two lights are the Lord,
Light is Mind,
Mind is God,
God is Self.”*

His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, *“Everyone worships the Divine Eye and judges themselves daily. Since they are afraid of the punishment from God, they dare not do anything wrong. Worshipping the Divine Eye is the best way to help observe the Divine Law.”*

“In the Third Salvation, God preaches His words via seances, not by incarnation like other religious founders. A religious leader alone is unable to unite all races in the world. The Divine Eye is the means to unite all living beings and to combine the human body, mind and soul. That is the method for a worldly person to become a Saint. Since all religions were closed and Yin surpassed Yang, the soul has not able to combine with the mind and body, so no priests have attained the

religious goal. From now on, God establishes Cao Dài and returns the soul so that it can combine with the mind and body. Those who follow Caodaist Law and have vegetarian meals 10 days a month and above are permitted to practice esotericism to achieve enlightenment. God told us to worship the Divine Eye or His Soul, who can combine with all living beings' souls, that is the Absolute or God.”

QUESTION 16: What divine beings are worshipped under the Divine Eye?

Answer: Under the Divine Eye is the North Star, the center of the universe. This is where God reigns the universe. On both sides of the North Star are the sun and the moon, which are God's three treasures. The divine beings below are:

In the first row

- In the middle is the Buddha in yellow, sitting on a lotus throne. He is the founder of Buddhism.
- On the right is Laozi in azure, holding a fly-whisk. He is the founder of Taoism.
- On the left is Confucius in red. He is the founder of Confucianism.

In the second row

- Under the Buddha is Ly Bai, the Immortal Chief. He is the First Heavenly Governor, who controls Taoism on behalf of Laozi in the Third Salvation. He is also the Supreme Leader of Caodaism.
- On the right is Guan Yin in yellow, sitting on a lotus throne and holding a vase and a branch of willow. She is the Second Heavenly Governor, who controls Buddhism on behalf of the Buddha.
- On the left is Guan Yu in green, holding The Spring and Autumn Annals. He is the Third Heavenly Governor, who controls Confucianism on behalf of Confucius.
- Under Li Bai is Jesus Christ, whose right hand points at the Heart. He is the founder of Christian.

- Under Jesus Christ is Jiang Shang in yellow, holding the Divine Stick and a Yellow Flag. He is the God Chief.
 - The seven thrones for the top Caodaist Dignitaries.
- The Divine Beings in the first and second rows were the religious leaders in the Second and Third Salvation. The ones in the mid column represent the ways of religious practice.
- The Buddha represents Buddhism.
 - Li Bai represents Taoism.
 - Jesus Christ represents Christian.
 - Jiang Shang represents Shintoism.
 - The seven thrones for Caodaist represent Confucianism.

QUESTION 17: Why do Caodaists worship God the Mother? Who is God the Mother.

Answer: All religions on earth have only worshipped Yang (male leaders) such as The Buddha, Laozi, Confucius and Jesus Christ. Christians worship Mary the Mother of Jesus, but not as Yin (female leader). According to Caodism, there are both Yin and Yang in the universe for the reproduction of living beings. Only Yin or Yang will not work.

According to God's messages, the universe originates in nothingness or Đạo. Nothingness creates the only Being or the Jade Emperor and His throne called the Absolute. The Emperor divides it into the Two Forms or Yin and Yang. The Divine Being, who controls Yin, is called God the Mother. The first two Divine Being regulating the universe are called God and God the Mother.

Yin, controlled by God the Mother, combines with Yang to produce heavens, stars, earths. Then God the Mother creates all living beings and things.

God is the Buddha, the Creator of souls.

God the Mother is the Dharma, the Creator of all peri-spirits.

Everything else is the Sangha.

QUESTION 18: It is expensive to present offerings. How can the poor practice Caodaism?

Answer: It is sincerity that counts. If you are sincere, what you pray for will be granted despite your little offering. Offerings are only symbolic.

A message from God says:

“I have already reigned the universe,

So a secular status is unnecessary.

It’s your heart that matters, not wealth.

It’s the lotus throne for me to sit on”

QUESTION 19: Why are Caodaist scriptures not very polished or sophisticated?

Answer: If they are too sophisticated, it is hard for the masses to understand. God wants to save as many people as possible, so scriptures are composed with simple words. His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, *“ I think most Caodaist authors used highly educated prose and poetry. They are useless because few believers can understand it. God even preaches with simple words. Consequently, everyone can understand it. Read His poems again and you will see their profound meanings despite simple words. I remember some anti-Caodaist persons criticized God’s messages, saying they are uneducated. When asked, God answered - Disciple, most of your friends are uneducated and stupid. I come to the earth to teach the idiots, not the intelligent ones. I am not afraid the smart critics, but I am worried that the stupid cannot understand my sermons. (Laughingly) I want my sermons are easy to understand even to a three-year old child. What do you say?”*

QUESTION 20: Why do Caodaist dignitaries wear colorful vestments?

Answer: Three colors are used to refer to the three religions in Caodaism.

- Red refers to the section of Ngọc or Confucianism.

- Yellow refers to the section of Thái or Buddhism.
- Azure refers to the section of Thượng or Taoism.

Those are for dignitaries only. The other believers dress in white.

QUESTION 21: There have been lots of religions in the last 3,000 years. Why does God establish Cao Đài, a new religion?

Answer: The doctrines of current religions have been distorted by worldly thoughts. Gradually, true religions become less spiritual. God has been so disappointed to see innumerable sinners punished in Hell, so He chose to revive and unite all earthly religions for the Third General Salvation.

QUESTION 22: It's so confusing to decide to worship the Buddha, Jesus Christ or the Jade Emperor. Who should I choose?

Answer: According to Caodaism, all religions in the world come from one root, that is God. The reason why there are various religions is because there are different races in different cultures, who have different levels of education. Most Europeans are Christians and most Asians are Buddhists, etc. Caodaists are taught that all religious founders take orders from God and become incarnate as humans to preach to mankind. Jesus preached in Israel, so most Europeans follow him. The Buddha, an Indian prince, preached in India, so most Asians become Buddhists.

Despite the differences in traditions, languages, and cultures, most faiths on earth believe in a Supreme Being, beyond human knowledge. The universe is ruled by that Supreme Being or God, who is named differently in various countries.

QUESTION 23: Why is this era called the Third Salvation?

Answer: According to Caodaism, the earth has experienced Three Eras of Salvation.

1. The First Salvation

- Dipankara Buddha founded Buddhism in India.
- Thái Thượng Đạo Tổ founded Taoism in China.
- King Fuxi founded Confucianism in China
- Moses founded Judaism in Israel.

2. The Second Salvation

- Shakyamuni Buddha founded Buddhism in India.
- Laozi founded Taoism in China.
- Confucius improved Confucianism in China.
- Jesus Christ founded Christian in Israel.

3. The Third Salvation

God founded Cao Đài or the Religion for the Third Salvation in Vietnam, which will last 700,000 years.

QUESTION 24: Why is it also called the General Amnesty?

Answer: In each era God grants amnesty for sinners, but this time God grants a general amnesty to all living beings and things. God forgives, picks up and allows His children to unite with Him. The privileges granted can be listed as follows:

1. God will save both alive and dead people through the following sacraments:
 - Holy Bath for children.
 - Purification for Caodaist beginners.
 - The Sacrament of Purification for a Dead Person. An assigned Caodaist dignitary perform this sacrament in a funeral, which is said to purify the spirit before the trip to Heaven.
 - The Sacrament of Cutting Earthly Ties. This sacrament is also performed in a funeral. It is believed to cut the ties that prevent the spirit from leaving the corpse.

- The Sacrament of Deliverance. This funeral sacrament is believed to help the spirit easily return to Heaven.
- 2. God will save all souls, including original spirits, evolving spirits and evil spirits.
- 3. God has closed Hell and abandoned all conventional punishments there.

QUESTION 25: Why should we practice Caodaism?

Answer:

1. In the Third era, God grants humans unparalleled privileges. They can be saved while they are alive as well as after they are dead.
2. To practice Caodaism, we do not need to enter a priesthood, leaving the secular life behind. We can both practice Caodaism and earn a living. His Holiness Hộ Pháp says, *“Caodaism will save humans from suffering. Caodaists try to serve, not to control people.”*
3. According to a Divine Message in 1926, God said, *“All religions have been closed for over 2,000 years. Poor you humans! Lots of you have practice a religion without success. If not practicing Caodaism, you will never reach the World of Bliss.”*

QUESTION 26: What should I do to become a Caodaist?

Answer: You have to join a simple ceremony called the Entry Ceremony, where you have to swear a solemn oath in front of the Caodaist Altar. To be accepted by God and other Deities, you have to pronounce the oath loud and clear with the help of a local Caodaist dignitary. It is very important to do so, especially the oath was given by God as follows:

“I am... (name)...My surname isI vow that from now on I will only practice Caodaism, remain loyal to the Jade Emperor, get along with other believers and obey Caodaist law. If I betray later, I will be killed by God.”

After the rite, the believer will be issued a provisional Caodaist ID, which will be changed into an official one later.

QUESTION 27: What is the meaning of the Caodaist entry oath?

Answer: An official announcement was issued by the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council to explain it.

1. Remaining loyal to the Jade Emperor. A Caodaist is not allowed to follow evil religions or to form a schism within the Caodaist community.
2. Getting along with other Caodaists and obeying Caodaist Law. A Caodaist should respect the Caodaist Constitution, the Caodaist Canonical Codes and the instructions of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.
3. If betraying, I will be killed by God. Betrayal and violation of the Caodaist Law will lead to death.

QUESTION 28: Why do I have to take the entry oath to become a Caodaist?

Answer:

- To follow the normal procedure for a Caodaist ID.
- To keep the promise with determination that you will not break the Caodaist Law but try to fulfill your religious responsibilities to gain a high divine status.
- To be protect by assigned deities. *(Disciples, Satan has come to Bạch Ngọc Kinh and demanded that you be challenged by torture. I didn't allow him to do so. As a result, he mobilizes his 36 Caves to harm you. I've had Guan Yu and Guan Yin protect you all. However, most of you haven't taken the entry oath, so the deities are so reluctant.)* *The Collection of Divine Messages.*
- *To be officially considered a disciple of God. The Caodaist, who practices vegetarianism 10 days a month and above, will gain the status equivalent to that of an Earth God and be saved with all Caodaist sacraments.*

QUESTION 29: Can I practice Caodaism without joining the Entry Ritual?

Answer: Choosing a system of belief, you'd better respect its regulations. The Caodaist ritual of Entry is necessary for you to control yourself in order to achieve the ultimate goal, which is to avoid the cycle of reincarnation.

QUESTION 30: What will happen to the Caodaist, who fails to keep the promise at the Entry Ritual?

Answer: The Caodaist Entry Oath shows a disciple's determination. This is an important occasion for life, so it must be considered thoroughly. Failing to keep the promise, a Caodaist will surely be punished. Talking about Hell, the Seventh Female Buddha says, *"Despite God's grace, countless souls are punished every day for their lack of belief. I mean they're the Caodaist disciples who have failed to keep the promise at the Entry Ceremony."*

QUESTION 31: What are the responsibilities of a Caodaist?

Answer: After the Entry Oath ceremony, a Caodaist has to follow some regulations:

- Practicing vegetarianism at least 6 days a month (1st, 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd, 29th or 30th days of the lunar month).
- 6 months later, adopting vegetarianism 10 days a month (1st, 8th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, 28th, 29th and 30th days of the lunar month). (Or 27th, 28th and 29th)
- Going to Holy House on the 1st and 15th days of the lunar month.

QUESTION 32: What are the Caodaist laws?

Answer: All Caodaists must respect the Five Precepts and the Four Commandments.

QUESTION 33: What are the Caodaist Five Precepts?

Answer:

1. Do not kill.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not engage in improper sexual conduct.
4. Do not drink alcohol.
5. Do not make false statements.

QUESTION 34: What are the Caodaist Four Commandments?

Answer:

1. A Caodaist adherent must obey his seniors, be willing to take orders from a higher-ranking dignitary, who is less knowledgeable or experienced, be polite to others all the time and be willing to confess his mistakes.
2. A Caodaist adherent mustn't show off, boast, care only for himself, keep personal old hatred or hinder kind people. He must help others get religion.
3. A Caodaist adherent must be financially honest and always behave well towards both higher and lower ranking dignitaries.
4. A Caodaist adherent mustn't scorn anyone behind his back, look on an argument between Caodaists without an attempt to settle it, or consider personal interest more important than the public one. He must also seriously observe the Caodaist Canonical Codes.

QUESTION 35: Are Caodaists allowed to eat egg, shrimp and crab for vegetarian meals?

Answer: No, a Caodaist vegetarian diet excludes all animal products, including eggs, shrimp and crabs. Dairy products are allowed. There are

the Six-Day Vegetarian Diet, the Ten-Day Vegetarian Diet and the Permanent Vegetarian Diet.

- The Six-Day Vegetarian Diet (by the Chief God of Taoism): Practicing vegetarianism at least 6 days a month (1st, 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd, 29th or 30th days of the lunar month).
- The Ten-Day Vegetarian Diet (by Cundi Bodhisattva): Adopting vegetarianism 10 days a month (1st, 8th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 23rd, 24th, 28th, 29th and 30th days of the lunar month). (Or 27th, 28th and 29th).
- The Permanent Vegetarian Diet: Having vegetarian meals every day.

QUESTION 36: What should we do to create good Karma?

Answer: Creating good Karma means doing good things while you are alive so that you can have benefits in Heaven. It is not true that you can earn good Karma only by working in a Caodaist Temple. What you voluntarily do to help others in general without any payment will create good karma. In the Era of Third Salvation, you have to gain good Karma to become a Saint or a Buddha. God says, *“People in the world have to earn money if they want to be rich. If they want to become a Deity, a Saint, an Immortal or a Buddha, they have to accumulate good Karma. To save you disciples, I’ve established an environment where you can create good Karma. It’s you that decide your heavenly status. You cannot attain Buddhahood anywhere else.”*

QUESTION 37: How to arrange a Caodaist altar in my home?

Answer: As a Caodaist, you should set a Caodaist altar at home to worship God and other deities. It should be in a clean place in the middle of your house and covered by some curtain.

Here is the altar plan:

		1		
4		2		3

6	8	7	9	5
10		12		11

1. The Divine Eye.
2. The Absolute light.
3. Fruits.
4. Flowers.
5. A cup of tea (Yin)
6. A cup of water (Yang)
7. A cup of wine.
8. A cup of wine.
9. A cup of wine.
10. A candle.
11. A candle.
12. An incense burner.

There are also a wooden fish and a bell. All of them are arranged to form a Chinese word, meaning “the Lord”.

- At Thời Tý (Hour of the Rat, 23 - 1) and Thời Ngọ (Hour of the Horse, 11 - 13), the offering is wine.
- At Thời Mẹo (Hour of the Cat, 5 - 7) and Thời Dậu (Hour of the Rooster, 17 - 19), the offering is water.
- In a Cao Dai rite, five joss sticks are put into an incense burner in a specific arrangement. The back row includes three joss sticks standing for Heaven, Earth and Humans. The others are put in front of these and all of them together are called The Five Elements.

God says, *“Most of adherents don’t worship Me seriously, thinking I would benefit their families. They don’t know that’s the way to purify themselves. Some are still so confused about why Caodaism is established. Alas! Such uninformed adherents won’t benefit the Caodaist community at all!”* The Collection of Divine Messages.

QUESTION 38: What are the meanings of the symbols and offerings on the altar?

Answer: There are twelve symbols and offerings.

1. The Divine Eye, which represents God.
2. The Absolute Light, which represents God's Throne of Absolute. It also represents a Human Heart, so it should be lit permanently.
3. The Flowers, which symbolize TINH (human body).
4. The Fruits, which symbolize the religious success or the attainment of enlightenment.
5. The cup of tea, which symbolizes THÀN (human soul).
6. The cup of wine.
7. The cup of wine.
8. The cup of wine. All of the three cups of wine (6,7 and 8) symbolize KHÍ (human mind).
9. The cup of water, which represents Yang (the tea represents Yin).
10. The candle.
11. The candle. Both candles (11 and 12) symbolize the Two Modes.
12. The incense burner, which represents Heaven, Earth and Humans and the Five Elements.

QUESTION 39: Why are the five incense sticks are arranged that way?

Answer: The incense sticks should be arranged according to the following map.

2	1	3
4		5

In a Cao Dai rite, five joss sticks are put into an incense burner in a specific arrangement. The back row includes three joss sticks standing for Heaven, Earth and Humans. The others are put in front of these and all of them together are called The Five Elements.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp says, *“I don’t care what the Confucians say about those five joss sticks, but I am sure they represent the Five Elements (Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth). God uses the Five Elements to operate the universe. Each has its own color and energy that we humans can’t feel. Consequently, in a Caodaist ritual, it’s the right things to burn those five incense sticks. We collect everything to make the offerings that will satisfy God.”*

QUESTION 40: What is the Caodaist mudra and how to perform it?

Answer: The Caodaist mudra, which is called the Mudra of the Rat, is a ritual hand gesture performed by Caodaists in a rite.

First, the tip of the left thumb is stuck onto the bottom of the ring finger, which represents the Hour of the Rat. Then, the left hand is closed into a fist. Next, the right hand covers the fist with the tip of the thumb put onto the bottom of the left index finger, which represents the Hour of the Tiger. This symbolic gesture implies that Heaven begins at Hour of the Rat, Earth at Hour of the Buffalo, and man at Hour of the Tiger. These are the three specific time of a day, according to the ancient Chinese way of telling time.

The left and the right hands stand for Yang and Yin respectively. Joining, they symbolize Yang and Yin's combination to originate the universe. They also represent a fruit, that is, the result of the First and Second Amnesty. In the First Amnesty, The Supreme God taught humans to join hands like a bud. In the Second Amnesty, Buddha showed humans to join hands like a flower in full bloom. Presently, it is the Third Amnesty, God told humans to perform the Mudra of the Rat, which is the fruit or the effect.



Picture: How to perform the Mudra of the Rat.

QUESTION 41: How to perform a Caodaist kowtow and standing bow?

Answer: The Caodaist kowtow and bow are the sign of reverence always performed in front of the Caodaist altar. Before a kowtow or a standing bow, a Caodaist has to perform the Mudra of the Rat (see question 40).

- Performing a bow.

First, stand and perform the Mudra of the Rat. Then, put the Mudra in front of your head. This is the sign of reverence to Heaven. Next, lower the Mudra and slightly bow at the same time. This is the sign of reverence to Earth. After that, put the Mudra in front of your chest to show the sign of reverence to Man. A bow is usually performed three times before and after a kowtow.

- Performing a kowtow in front of the altar of God.

First, stand in front of the altar, looking at the Divine Eye. Then, perform a bow three times. Next, kneel down with the Mudra of the Rat in front of your chest. After that, put the Mudra on your forehead, praying “Nam mô Phật”, slide the Mudra to your left, saying “Nam mô Pháp” and slide the Mudra to your right, saying “Nam mô Tăng”. Then, put the Mudra in front of your chest, saying these:

- Nam mô Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát.
- Nam mô Quan Thế Âm Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát.
- Nam mô Lý Đại Tiên Trưởng kiêm Giáo Tông Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ

- Nam mô Hiệp Thiên Đại Đế Quan Thánh Đế Quân.
- Nam mô chư Phật, chư Tiên, chư Thánh, chư Thần.

After that, put the Mudra in front of your forehead, praying what you want to God. Then, kowtow three times by putting your hands like this on the floor and let your forehead touch them four times each, praying “Nam mô Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát.”



Finally, finish the ritual with three bows.

This procedure is said to replace the complete kowtow, which includes twelve kowtows. Twelve is taught to be the number for God.

- Performing a kowtow in front of the altar of God the Mother.

The ritual is the same as above with some changes. First, while performing the first three bows, you pray these:

- Nam mô ĐIỀU TRỊ KIM MẪU VÔ CỰC THIÊN TÔN.
- Nam mô CỨU VỊ TIÊN NƯƠNG.
- Nam mô BẠCH VÂN ĐỘNG CHƯ THÁNH.

Second, kowtow three times, but let your forehead touch your hands three times each, praying: Nam mô ĐIỀU TRỊ KIM MẪU VÔ CỰC THIÊN TÔN.

- Performing a kowtow to other Immortals or Buddhas.

The same performance as you do to God the Mother, but saying the name of the Divine Being while kowtowing.

- Performing a kowtow to other Deities, Saints or your ancestors. The same performance as you do to other Immortals or Buddhas, but saying the name of the Divine Being while kowtowing. Besides, kowtow three times without letting your forehead touch your hands.

- Performing a kowtow to an irreligious dead person. First, perform three bows. Then, kneel down and kowtow twice. This shows the sign of reverence to Heaven and Earth. After that, stand up and perform two more kowtows from that position. This shows the signs of reverence to Yin and Yang. Finally, finish the ritual with one bow.

QUESTION 42: Why are Caodaist daily rituals at the specific time?

Answer: The Caodaist daily rituals are performed four times:

- At Thời Tý (Hour of the Rat, 23 - 1), Yin is the most powerful then decreases. Yang begins to increase.
- Thời Ngọ (Hour of the Horse, 11 - 13), Yang is the most powerful then decreases. Yin begins to increase.
- Thời Mão (Hour of the Cat, 5 - 7) Yin and Yang are equally powerful. Then Yang increases and Yin decreases.
- Thời Dậu (Hour of the Rooster, 17 - 19). Yin and Yang are equally powerful.

Caodaist rituals are said to be the most beneficial at those hours.

QUESTION 43: Why Caodaist should try to perform daily rituals?

Answer: According to Guan Yin or the Goddess of Mercy, the peri-spirit of the performer can contact the Divine Beings, so it becomes more enlightened. Second, it's a way to pray to God for forgiveness. Third, if you request, then you will get the responses from Deities. Fourth, you will treat others more and more humanely, so you will attain enlightenment more easily.

Rituals are the signs of reverence to God and other Deities. Also, you should respect the Caodaist Law and study religious teachings in order to be saved. Nobody can bribe Deities with lots of rituals. Additionally, religious ceremonies are only exotericism. It's important that you should take advantage of them to improve your mind so that you can reach your deepest part, the soul.

Additionally, rituals are also very helpful.

- They help control your physical body and prevent it from causing bad karma.
- Saying prayers prevent your mouth from speaking bad words.
- Looking at the Divine Eye or other symbols, you can avoid looking at bad images.
- Saying prayers, you have no time to create bad concepts.
- Listening to prayers, you can avoid harmful sounds.

QUESTION 44: Why do Caodaists offer only flowers, wine and tea?

Answer: Caodaist offerings are flowers, wine, and tea.

- Flowers represent TINH, which is the essence of material in the universe. God wants us to offer our physical body, so He can use it to serve other living beings. The physical body should be as clean and beautiful as a flower.
- Wine refers to KHÍ, which is the energy. It is also the peri-spirit or human mind, which connects the human body and soul. God wants us to offer our mind to serve mankind.
- Tea symbolizes THẦN, which is the human soul.

God wants us to take care of our bodies, making them as beautiful as flowers, cultivating and making our mind as strong as wine and making our soul as moderate as tea. When the body develops best, it will create a huge amount of energy, which will unite with the soul, producing a great spiritual power. That process is called Caodaist Esotericism.

QUESTION 45: What prayers do I say while offering my three treasures to God?

Answer:

- While offering flowers to God, say in your mind, *“O God! I offer my physical body to you, so use it at will.”*
- While offering wine to God, say, *“I offer my spirit to you, so use it at will.”*
- While offering tea to God, say, *“I offer my soul to you, so use it at will.” (Or preferable) “You’ve created my soul, mind and body. Therefore, it’s you who decide how to use it.”*

QUESTION 46: What are a Caodaist’s responsibilities?

Answer: A Caodaist is still a citizen of a nation, a member of the society and his/her family, so he needs to fulfill his responsibilities. It is called The Teachings of Man.

1. He must obey the Caodaist Canonical Codes.
2. He must remember the Caodaist Entry Oath and try to keep it.
3. He must respect the instructions of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council and other Caodaist Senior Dignitaries.
4. He must practice vegetarianism at least 10 days a month and follow the Caodaist Five Precepts and the Four Commandments.
5. He must permanently attend Caodaist Rituals.

“A Caodaist adherent should not think it’s enough to build a home altar and to perform rituals four times a day. It’s not a good idea. He also needs to go to Holy House on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month for rituals, sermons and discussions. That improves the relationships with other disciples.”

QUESTION 47: What should a Caodaist do in a ritual in the Caodaist Temple or Holy House?

Answer:

Regulations before the ceremony.

“ First, you must take a shower. Sincerely show reverence for God and other Deities. At the ceremony, seriously follow the instructions. Don’t tell jokes, speak bad words or spit in front of the altar. Male disciples kneel on the left and female on the right.”

Regulations during the ceremony.

“Keep absolutely silent during the ceremony. Drunks and impure people are prohibited in a Caodaist ceremony.” Instructions for Caodaists by the Acting Supreme Leader Lê văn Trung.

QUESTION 48: What scriptures should a Caodaist read?

Answer: Read these four books on fundamental Caodaism.

1. Caodaist Scriptures for Religious and Secular Life.
2. The Collection of Divine Messages.
3. The Caodaist Constitution.
4. The Caodaist Canonical Codes

Caodaist adherents are encouraged to read scriptures from other religions to gain more knowledge, have stronger belief, become less superstitious and differentiate between good and evil.

QUESTION 49: How should I read scriptures from other religions?

Answer:

Scriptures from other religions are written by knowledgeable authors. Those authors, however, can make a mistake some time because “To err is human”. Additionally, scriptures are affected by the time. Ancient ones may not be suitable for contemporary readers. Consequently, ponder the contents while reading. Study what is logical or suitable for the present situation. Ignore the confusing ones or those against our religious purpose. It’s not a good idea to immediately believe what is written in other scriptures though they are written by some Saint or Sage.

It’s good to gain more knowledge from scriptures from other religions, but you should not practice what they offer. Since you may harm yourself if you misunderstand it. To achieve enlightenment, you need to attain enough good karma first. Then God, our Master, will help. God

says, “*Scriptures, which help make you a Saint, are like the chop sticks for a rice meal. Without them, you can still eat the rice by hands.*”
Instructions for Caodaists by the Acting Supreme Leader Lê văn Trung.

QUESTION 50: What should I pray for during daily Caodaist rites?

Answer:

Caodaists' Five Daily Prayers:

I sincerely pray to God

Firstly, for a wide expansion of Caodaism.

Secondly, for all living things to be taught the doctrine.

Thirdly, for myself to be forgiven.

Fourthly, for a universal peace.

Fifthly, for secure Holy Houses.

Caodaists pray to God for these four times a day. At Thời Tý (Hour of the Rat, 23:00 - 1:00), Thời Ngọ (Hour of the Horse, 11:00 - 13:00), Thời Mẹo (Hour of the Cat, 5:00 - 7:00) and Thời Dậu (Hour of the Rooster, 17:00 - 19:00).

QUESTION 51: What are the Three Heavenly Governors?

Answer:

Three Heavenly Governors are three Divine Beings responsible for the development and protection of Caodaism. They, on behalf of the Three Religious Founders, controls Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in God's Third Amnesty.

1. The First Governor is Li Bai, The Immortal Chief, who leads Taoism on behalf of Laozi.
2. The Second Governor is Guan Yin, who leads Buddhism on behalf of Shakyamuni Buddha.
3. The Third Governor is Guan Yu, who leads Confucianism on behalf of Confucius.

The reason why Caodaists worship the Three Heavenly Governors is because they have the authority to make religious laws in the Third Amnesty and because (some source) they represent the three qualities wisdom, compassion and courage respectively.

QUESTION 52: Why do Caodaists need the Three Deeds?

Answer:

There are three schools for people to choose to practice Caodaism.

- First, they can join the Caodaist Executive Body, moving up its hierarchy called the Nine Heavenly Statuses. The goal is the religious achievement after death.
- Second, they can join the Caodaist Philanthropic Body, moving up its hierarchy called the Twelve Divine Ranks. The goal is the religious achievement after death.
- Finally, they can enter the Caodaist Meditation House, cultivating their Three Treasures. The goal is the religious achievement before death.

Unlike the first and second schools, there is a requirement for the third schools though. Those who have completed the Three Deeds are allowed to enter the Caodaist Meditation House to practice Caodaist Esotericism.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp explains, *“Those who haven’t done religious work (i.e. spread Caodaism) are not permitted to practice esotericism. When you file for admission to the Meditation House, an investigation will prove your background, your experience of religious work and your practice of vegetarianism. Then, Hộ Pháp decides if you have enough spiritual power. Those who have completed the Three Deeds are accepted; otherwise they will be assigned to do more religious work. I emphasize that without Hộ Pháp’s decision, you’ll go nowhere at all except enlarging your belly. For the 1st Deed, which is Lập Đức (virtue cultivation), you have to thoroughly study Caodaism. For the 2nd Deed, which is Lập Công (doing religious work), you have to preach Caodaism to your relatives. And for the 3rd Deed, which is Lập Ngôn (speech improvement), you have to preach Caodaism to all over the*

world. Having succeeded in practicing these Three Deeds, you will be able to return to God by the way of Nine-Heaven Education.”

QUESTION 53: What do Caodaists do to fulfill the Lập Công (earning karmic merits by religious work)?

Answer:

To earn more karmic merits, you have to serve others. God says, to attain enlightenment, you have to accumulate as much good karma as you can. It is important that you completely volunteer for it and that you should choose the work that suits you best.

QUESTION 54: What do Caodaists do to fulfill the Lập Ngôn (speech improvement)?

Answer:

God says, *“I tell you Caodaists to watch your language. It’s better to be punished for committing a crime than for threatening to do so because both punishments are the same.”*

To fulfill the Lập Ngôn, Caodaists should first strictly follow the Fifth Precept: *“Do not make false statements.”* Then they should preach Caodaism in the media to as many people as possible.

QUESTION 55: What do Caodaists do to fulfill the Lập Đức (virtue cultivation)?

Answer:

To fulfill the Lập Đức, Caodaists should adopt the strategy called the Twelve Divine Ranks in the Caodaist Philanthropic Body. His Holiness Hộ Pháp preached, *“Taking the method called the Twelve Divine Ranks, you join the Caodaist Philanthropic Body, where, beside practicing vegetarianism, obeying Caodaist Law and obeying God’s instructions,*

you have to cultivate your virtues. You will move up its hierarchy from Minh Đức, Tân Dân, Thánh Thiện, Hành Thiện, Giáo Thiện, Chí Thiện, etc.”

QUESTION 56: Who are CỬU PHẨM THẦN TIÊN (the Divine Beings in the Nine-Ranked Hierarchy)?

Answer:

They are the Divine Beings in hierarchy of nine levels, including:

Earth Deity - Human Deity - Heaven Deity.

Earth Saint - Human Saint - Heaven Saint.

Earth Immortal - Human Immortal - Heaven Immortal.

According to the Caodaist Constitution:

1. The Caodaist believers, who succeed in keeping the promise of the Entry Oath and following the Caodaist Canonical Codes are considered equivalent to Earth Deities.
2. The Chánh Trị Sự, Phó Trị Sự and Thông Sự, who fulfill their religious responsibilities, are considered equivalent to Human Deities.
3. Lễ Sanh are considered equivalent to Heaven Deities.
4. Giáo Hữu are considered equivalent to Earth Saints.
5.

QUESTION 57: Who are the three Divine Beings in the bas-relief at the door of The Caodaist Temple?

Answer:

They are the three Saints, who are writing a Covenant between Man and God. The three Saints are: First, Thanh Sơn Đạo Sĩ or Trạng Trình Nguyễn Bình Khiêm, the famous scholar, poet and prophet from Vietnam. Second, Nguyệt Tâm Chơn Nhơn or Victor Hugo, the prominent writer from France. Third, Tôn Trung Sơn Chơn Nhơn or Sun Yat Sen, the great revolutionary from China.

The three Saints are writing the words “Man and God” and “Love and Justice” in Chinese and French:

天上天下 - 博愛公平

DIEU et HUMANITÉ - AMOUR et JUSTICE

According to Caodaism, this is the Covenant for the Third Salvation, which was announced in 1926. Since the Creation, there have been three covenants.

1. The First Covenant was announced for the First Salvation in Israel. It was the Ten Commandments granted by God to Moses.
2. The Second Covenant was announced for the Second Salvation because the First One was distorted by humans. It was the Bible, which told the story of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity.
3. The Third Covenant was announced for the Third Salvation through the three Saints mentioned above.

According to Caodaism, those who carry out the two terms of the Covenant (Love and Justice) will be allowed to return to heaven.

QUESTION 58: Is it easy to carry out the two terms of the Covenant?

Answer:

Whether it is easy or difficult to carry out those terms depends on your will. First, you should have mercy on others, do charity work and share sorrow with others. Second, you should not bully or cheat others. Pay off all your debts or your creditors will not let you go to heaven.

The best way, which is suggested by His Holiness Hộ Pháp, is to serve everyone as a Caodaist adherent.

QUESTION 59: Why is the statue of HỘ PHÁP put on the Seven-Headed Serpent Throne ?

Answer:

In the Caodaist Judicial Body in Tây Ninh Temple, there are three statues of Caodaist leaders, Hộ Pháp, Thượng Phẩm and Thượng Sanh, which are twisted around by the Seven-Headed Serpent. Three serpent heads named Joy, Love and Satisfaction rise above Hộ Pháp. The other four named Sorrow, Hatred, Anger and Desire are under Hộ Pháp's hands and feet.

Having sanctified the throne, His Holiness Hộ Pháp explained, *“The Divine Serpent represents a human with the seven emotions. The positions of the serpent heads imply how a Caodaist should behave in life in order to attain enlightenment. Love, Satisfaction and Joy are good emotions, but Sorrow, Hatred, Anger and Desire, which can destroy your soul, should be strictly controlled.”*

QUESTION 60: What is THẾ GIỚI ĐẠI ĐỒNG (the world community, the tolerant society)?

Answer:

Đại Đồng is an ideal world community, where there is no discrimination on the grounds of race or nation. That is an ideally peaceful society, where everyone is treated equally as brothers. In the Books of Rites, Confucius said, *“At that time, kind and talented people are respected, the truth is told and disagreement is eradicated. Therefore, all parents are equally respected and all sons and daughters are loved. The elderly are carefully taken care of until they die, the young have jobs, children are properly brought up and the underprivileged people are supported. People neither pick up lost things on the streets nor idle days away. There are no schemes, thefts or rebellions, so doors never need locking.”*

Lots of theories and doctrines have been proposed for such a society so far in vain because of human selfishness. In the Third Salvation, God establishes Caodaism, whose purpose is a world community and a tolerant religion.

QUESTION 61: What is the most effective way of praying?

Answer:

The key factor is deep sincerity and strong belief. Completely silence your mind and pray repeatedly. Remember you should only pray for what is predetermined by God to have the ideal result. Do not be greedy! Some people only pray selfishly for more benefits than enough and become disappointed when they do not get what they want. As a

result, they lose their faith, saying God and Deities are not sacred enough.

The Caodaist exoteric practice proposed by the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council includes the exemplary prayers. Caodaist adherents should practice it to avoid excessive praying.

QUESTION 62: Isn't it inconvenient to say Caodaist prayers in the contemporary society?

Answer:

Yes, it is, but Muslims say prayers four times a day without any complaints. According to Caodaism, however, in daily activities, Caodaists can say prayers silently without annoying others. With such a complete practice Caodaists can revive their spiritual life at least ten times a day. The most visible result is the improvement in adherents' behaviors and characteristics.

QUESTION 63: Can businesspeople pray for more better transactions?

Answer:

No, that Caodaist businesspeople always pray to Deities for success is a Vietnamese tradition, not a Caodaist ritual. This long tradition had existed before Caodaism was founded. They usually pray to such Deities as the Town God, the Earth God and the God of Prosperity. Some Caodaist adherents still keep the tradition with a few changes like vegetarian food, not meat or fish for offerings.

QUESTION 64: What do Caodaists think of Divine Beings?

Answer:

Caodaists believe that Divine Beings can influence both human physical and mental activities, teaching humans to do the right things and supporting them to escape the cycle of birth and death. Consequently, only the relevant prayers are responded.

Divine Beings are neither demons nor ordinary spirits (ghosts), so we humans must not think that we can bribe them to get more support. Caodaists are not allowed to offer the Divine Beings like the Earth God and Town God meat or fish. Caodaist offerings are vegetarian food only.

This is the spiritual message by the Town God in Cần Giuộc district, Mỹ Lộc village, Vietnam Jan 18th 1927: *“Since I took the order to govern this place, I have dutifully taken care of the locals by giving them a peaceful life and good harvests. As for the offerings, I want vegetarian meals, not meat or fish. Why offerings? They show your serious reverence, not the food for Divine Beings to eat.”* *The Collection of Divine Messages.*

Unlike demons and ghosts, who usually ask for expensive sacrifices in seances, Divine Beings are good and helpful.

QUESTION 65: Can Caodaists pray to Divine Beings for promotion at work or in school?

Answer:

Caodaists are allowed to pray for more intelligence so that they can study better, pass an exam or get a job promotion. Hence, they can lead a useful life as model citizens.

It is not superstitious to pray for more intelligence. All knowledge gained in many incarnations is stored in your memories. Those memories are not destroyed after death. Living in a new body in another incarnation, you can be intelligent due to those hidden memories. That is why a person with more past incarnations is usually more intelligent. In the Caodaist prayer before class, there is a sentence: *“God the Father, please give me more intelligence.”* That proves God can make you more intelligent. You have, however, to study hard first before your request can be granted. If you are too lazy, but want Divine Beings to help in an exam, that is really superstitious!

QUESTION 66: Why is there lots of music before the prayers in a Caodaist ceremony? What do those pieces of music mean? Why isn't music from the West used?

Answer:

You only listen to that music called *Nhạc Tấu Quân Thiên* (Musical Salute to God) in Caodaist major ceremonies, not minor ones. His Holiness Hộ Pháp asked His Holiness Giáo Tông and the answer was: *“Before the universe, God was a mass of energy, which then converted into two forms. These two forms combined, setting off an explosion which Buddhism calls Om (or Aum [ãũ], Sanskrit: ॐ). The explosion caused the eight categories of souls to transform into things, animals and humans. Wherever the sounds came, life begins. Now we make lifeless instruments (for example the buffalo skin covering the drum) resound. That means we revive the eight categories of souls so that they worship God. In short, Nhạc Tấu Quân Thiên implies we both see and hear the eight categories of souls offer their lives to God.”*

In Caodaist major ceremonies, *Nhạc Tấu Quân Thiên* is composed of seven Vietnamese pieces of music played by eight kinds of Vietnamese instruments. God says, *“The Vietnamese traditional music is the most meaningful one in the world ever, so I choose it to represent the world.”*

QUESTION 67: Is it true that God preached in seances? Isn't it some ghost who pretended to be God? I do not think God, the Creator of the universe, came to this impure world.

Answer:

First, unlike humans with a physical body, God does not have to arrive at a seance in person. What he does is to send spiritual signals to that seance. Second, it is important to differentiate between divine messages and evil messages. If you receive a message from a spirit who claims that he/she is a Senior Immortal, you should ponder over his words. A genuine immortal always discusses profound religious teachings, not the secularly ordinary things.

God said, *“Since Bạch Ngọc Kinh (the White Jade City) and Lô Âm Tự (Thunder Pagoda) made law for the Third Salvation, Caodaism has*

been severely hampered by Satan. Satan's even borrowed my name, but dared not sit on my throne. Knowing I've preached by psychic pen in seances, Satan named his Thirty Six Caves Thirty Six Heavens and borrowed the names of other Deities to establish a false religion."

"My throne" refers to the mediums God chose to use the psychic pen. According to Caodaists, only the divine messages from seances which are held in Cung Đạo Toà Thánh (the Seance Spot in Tây Ninh Temple) and which are attended by the assigned mediums are accepted.

QUESTION 68: Why do Caodaist adherents have to obey Caodaist Law?

Answer:

In the Maitreya Buddha Prayer, one of the Caodaist scriptures, Shakyamuni Buddha preached, "Taking orders from Maitreya Buddha, all of the other Buddhas often destroy evils with magical light. If someone wants to escape the cycle of eternal reincarnation after listening to my words, ponder on Phật (Buddha), Pháp (Dharma) and Tăng (Sangha) and obey Caodaist Law. You will surely be freed from the cycle of reincarnation, attain the Buddhahood and enter the World of Ultimate Happiness."

QUESTION 69: Where can I find Caodaist Law?

Answer:

In these books:

- The Caodaist Constitution.
- The Caodaist Canonical Codes.
- The Caodaist Law in Year of the Tiger (1938).
- The Eight Caodaist Laws.

QUESTION 70: What is the Caodaist Constitution?

Answer:

Like a nation, Caodaism needs a constitution for its organization and hierarchy of dignitaries. The Caodaist Constitution, however, was not prepared by humans, but by God through seances and it is not amendable. His Holiness Hộ Pháp has added an explication that was later edited by His Holiness Giáo Tông Li Bai.

The Caodaist Constitution elaborates on the functions of the three Caodaist Bodies (Hiệp Thiên Đài, Cửu Trùng Đài, Bát Quái Đài), vestments and dignitaries' responsibilities.

Following the Constitution, Caodaist adherents can operate and develop their community. Unlike a secular organization like a government, the authority is based on love, not violent power.

QUESTION 71: What are the Caodaist Canonical Codes on?**Answer:**

The Caodaist Canonical Codes are also call the New Law, because they are different from those in the First and Second Salvation. Made by all Caodaist adherents by a Caodaist organization called Quyền Vạn Linh, those laws are ratified by God before enforcement, so they are called The Divine Law for the World. The Codes contain three sections: Religious Life, Secular Life and Meditation Houses.

QUESTION 72: What is NGỌC HƯ CUNG?**Answer:**

Ngọc Hư Cung is said to be the palace in heaven where God and His court govern the universe. It is on the 10th heaven called Hư Vô Thiên whose Governor is Dipankara Buddha. Ngọc Hư Cung includes Linh Tiêu Điện, Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá and Cung Nam Tào Bắc Đẩu.

1. Linh Tiêu Điện is the headquarters of God's court.
2. Cung Hiệp Thiên Hành Hoá is the Heavenly Court, where the Three Heavenly Governors work.
3. Cung Nam Tào Bắc Đẩu is where all souls review what they have done in previous lives by looking at the Wordless Book.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, “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.”

“The only language in that realm is thought; communication is spiritual. Whatever you think about, you have it immediately.”

“We arrive at *Cung Ngọc Hư*, the place which holds the political power of the Universe. *Ngọc Hư Cung* controls every star and sun in this universe. The power that governs the earthly world is in the image of *Cửu Trùng Đài*, but people imagine it differently. Does it govern anyone? I have explained that the soul governs the self and *Ngọc Hư Cung* only protects and blesses us. This place doesn’t govern, it only blesses, because it wants these souls to be sanctified; often they aren’t blessed because of their previous life.”

(Translated by Christopher Hartney, Đào Công Tâm and Từ Chơn)

QUESTION 73: What is **DIÊU TRÌ CUNG**?

Answer:

Diêu Trì Cung (the Jewel Pond Palace) is where God the Mother dwells. The Eighth Female Buddha said, “In the Jewel Pond, a tower that can detect Yin Light receives Yang Light from the Absolute and then combines the two to create *peri* spirits for all living beings in the universe. God the Mother, who controls the creation on behalf of God, combines *Thập Thiên Can* (Ten Heavenly Stems) and *Thập Nhị Địa Chi* (Twelve Earthly Branches) to create living beings and things. *Diêu* is a kind of jewel and *Trì* is a pond, so it is the palace made of jewel next to *Ao Thất Bửu* (the Pond made of seven types of jewel).”

God the Mother’s assistants are the Nine Female Buddhas, who are responsible for education in the universe. Additionally, there are also innumerable Buddhas who are responsible for salvation. The leader is *Đức Quan Âm Bồ Tát* (Guan Yin), who dwells in *An Nhân Động*, *Nam Hải* (the Cave of Leisure, Southern Sea).

QUESTION 74: What is BÁT QUÁI ĐÀI?

Answer:

Bát Quái Đài (The Octagonal Tower) is where God and other Deities, Saints, Immortals and Buddhas dwells. Caodaism is established based on three organization:

- CỬU TRÙNG ĐÀI (Nine-Leveled Tower), which is considered the physical body of the religion or the secular section. The leader is Giáo Tông.
- HIỆP THIÊN ĐÀI (Communion Tower), which is considered the mind of the religion or the haft secular haft religious section. The leader is Hộ Pháp.
- BÁT QUÁI ĐÀI (Octagonal Tower) which is considered the soul of the religion or the religious section. The leader is God.

Thanks to the peri spirit, a human physical body can have contact with the soul. Similarly, Hiệp Thiên Đài acts as the intermediary between Cửu Trùng Đài and Bát Quái Đài.

QUESTION 75: Describe the arrangement of BÁT QUÁI ĐÀI in Tây Ninh Temple, please.

Answer:

It is a twelve-leveled octagonal platform, whose top is the Eight Trigrams.

- In the center rises a column that supports Quả Càn Khôn (the Universe Sphere). The sky-blue Universe Sphere is 3,333 meters in diameter and displays 3072 stars, symbolizing the material universe. Its facade shows the Divine Eye on Ursa Major.
- Below the Universe Sphere is the altar, on which are the memorial tablets of the founders of the three religions: Shakyamuni Buddha, Laozi and Confucius. Below are the memorial tablets of the three Heavenly Governors: Guan Yin, Li Bai and Guan Yu.

- Under the memorial tablet of Li Bai are Jesus Christ, Jiang Shang Jiza.

This arrangement shows Caodaist principle “Restoration of Three Religions and Union of the Five Religious Branches.” Besides, there are memorial tablets of Caodaist martyrs and late senior dignitaries. This shows another Caodaist principle “Communion between God and Man.”

Above this platform is an octagonal construction connecting with Cửu Trùng Đài, whose roof is a huge lotus throne. On the top are the sculptures of the Brahmanist Trinity, the highest gods of Brahmanism (now Hinduism): Brahma standing on a crane, facing west, Shiva standing on the seven-head snake, facing north and Vishnu (Christna) standing on a jiaolong, facing south. Caodaists call them the three ancient Buddhas.

QUESTION 76: What is HIỆP THIÊN ĐÀI?

Answer:

It is the legislative and judicial body of Caodaism. Hiệp Thiên means communion between God and man. It is also the organization that holds seances to receive divine messages. It includes Pháp Chánh (Caodaist Court) and Phước Thiện (Caodaist Charity).

I. PHÁP CHÁNH

Caodaist Court operates based on the principle: “*Law is fair, but religious punishment is reasonable. True religion is not amendable, but good or evil depends on each case.*”

II. PHƯỚC THIÊN

Caodaist Charity operates based on the principle: “*God blesses living beings and things so that they all have a good life. Earth contains good karma and all Buddhas help the original souls return to Heaven.*”

QUESTION 77: What is CỬ TRÙNG ĐÀI?

Answer:

Literally meaning a nine-leveled structure, Cửu Trùng Đài is the executive body of Caodaism. Its dignitaries are divided into three sections: Thái, (yellow vestments) representing Buddhism, Thượng (azure vestments) representing Taoism and Ngọc (red vestments) representing Confucianism. The dignitaries are assigned to either Administration or Counseling.

1. Administration:

The Administration is composed of Cửu Viện (Nine Departments), each of which is governed by a Chánh Phối Sư.

- Thái Section is in charge of the Department of Finance, the Department of Food and the Department of Construction.
- Thượng Section is in charge of the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture.
- Ngọc Section is in charge of the Department of Promotion, the Department of Rite and the Department of Conciliation.

2. Counseling:

The Caodaists dignitaries assigned to this body are to console and help people, who committed a sin, who became so discouraged or who quit office because of legal problems. Their operation is based on the principle in the couplet:

Rehabilitating and converting all sinners to Caodaism.

Helping all victims and eradicating evils according to the Third Salvation.

QUESTION 78: What is the advantages of Caodaist Governing System?

Answer:

The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council is divided into:

- The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Cửu Trùng Đài led by Giáo Tông.
- The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài led by Hộ Pháp.

The advantage is to attain checks and balances internally, even in the lowest level like Chánh Trị Sự, Phó Trị Sự and Thông Sự.

QUESTION 79: What is the organization of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Cửu Trùng Đài?

Answer:

The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Cửu Trùng Đài is led by Giáo Tông (Caodaist Supreme Leader). The lower dignitaries are:

- 03 Chưởng Pháp (Dharma Master)
- 03 Đầu Sư (Master Chief)
- 36 Phối Sư (Assistant Master)
- 72 Giáo Sư (Religious Teacher)
- 3000 Giáo Hữu (Religious Associate)

QUESTION 80: What is the organization of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài?

Answer:

The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài is led by Hộ Pháp (Dharma Defender). The lower dignitaries are divided into three branches.

- Pháp led by Hộ Pháp.
- Thế led by Thượng Sanh.
- Đạo led by Thượng Phẩm.

The lower dignitaries are Thập Nhị Thời Quân (the Twelve Time Superiors) and Thập Nhị Bảo Quân (Twelve Academicians).

Those dignitaries operates the Department of Justice, the Caodaist Philanthropist Body and the Secular Dignitaries.

QUESTION 81: What is the organization of the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Philanthropist Body?

Answer:

Despite its name, this organization is controlled by The Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài.

The dignitaries in this organization are:

Phật Tử (Buddha)

Tiên Tử (Immortal)

Thánh Nhơn (Saint)

Hiền Nhơn (Sage)

Chơn Nhơn (Enlightened Person)

Đạo Nhơn (Religious Person)

Chí Thiện (Highly Ethical Person)

Giáo Thiện (Ethic Teacher)

Hành Thiện (Ethic Practitioner)

Thính Thiện (Ethic Learner)

Tân Dân (New Person)

Minh Đức (Virtuous Person)

QUESTION 82: What is Hành Chánh Đạo? Is it necessary?

Answer:

Hành Chánh Đạo is the Caodaist Executive Branch, which puts Caodaist plans, actions and laws into effect if they are ratified by God. The dignitaries in Cửu Trùng Đài take charge of this branch. Unlike a secular government, the purpose of this branch is education, not ruling. The system is as well-organized as that of a secular government.

- Phó Trị Sự or Thông Sự leads the adherents in a village.
- Chánh Trị Sự leads the adherents in a ward.
- Lễ Sanh takes the position of Đầu Tộc, leading the adherents in a district.
- Giáo Hữu takes the position of Khâm Châu, leading the adherents in a province.
- Giáo Sư takes the position of Khâm Trấn, leading the adherents in a region.

QUESTION 83: What Caodaist organization does a Hiền Tài belong to?

Answer:

A Hiền Tài (Talent) belongs to the Department of Secular Dignitaries, which is controlled by Hiệp Thiên Đài or the Caodaist Judicial Body. This organization operates based on the slogan “*Without life, religion lacks strength; Without religion, life lacks power.*” Caodaism spiritually helps people by showing them the way of returning to Heaven as well as helps improve human society. Lots of people love to work for Caodaism, but still have to earn a living. Those people can join the Department of Secular Dignitaries without joining the priesthood.

I. Establishment

Under the instructions of Li Bai, Caodaist Supreme Leader, on January 7th 1954 and according to Caodai creed, the Caodai Sacerdotal Council established the Department of Secular Dignitaries in order to facilitate more Caodaiism practice among non-priest people, who are able to work for Caodai without entering the priesthood.

II. Hierarchy:

There are four titles.

- Hiền Tài (Talent).
- Quốc Sĩ (National Intellectual).
- Đại Phu (Expert)
- Phu Tử (Mentor)

Hiền Tài's are selected and ordained by the Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài while Quốc Sĩ, Đại Phu, Phu Tử's are selected by the Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài and presented to Divine Authority for acceptance.

III. Ordination:

Under Hộ Pháp's Decree 49, July 4th 1951, a Hiền Tài with five-year experience can request a transfer to Hiệp Thiên Đài or Cửu Trùng Đài dignitaries after a complete investigation by Bộ Pháp Chánh.

A promotion to Quốc Sĩ, Đại Phu and Phu Tử is also decided by Divine Authority. After the transfer, the new dignitaries have no more responsibility with the Department of Secular Dignitaries and have to obey the New Canonical Codes and the Religious Constitution of Caodaism.

QUESTION 84: What are local Caodaist organizations like?

Answer:

Beside the Caodaist Central Temple, other Caodaist organizations in Vietnam are Trấn Đạo, Châu Đạo, Tộc Đạo and Hương Đạo, all of which take orders from the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

- In a hamlet there is a Ấp Đạo led by a Phó Trị Sự and Thông Sự, who are selected by an internal election.
- In a village there is a Hương Đạo led by a Chánh Trị Sự, who is selected by an internal election.
- In a district there is a Tộc Đạo led by a Lễ Sanh, who is appointed by the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.
- In a province there is a Châu Đạo led by a Giáo Hữu, who is appointed by the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.
- In a region there is a Trấn Đạo led by a Giáo Sư, who is appointed by the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council.

In each Caodaist administrative unit there are always two independent communities, one for male and one for female adherents.

QUESTION 85: What is Bàn Trị Sự responsible for?

Answer:

Bàn Trị Sự is the Caodaist basic management group, whose job is to regulate all religious activities in a village or a small town. It is led by a Chánh Trị Sự (Chief Administrator), who is assisted by several Phó Trị Sự (Administrative Assistant) and Thông Sự (Religious Law Assistant).

These dignitaries have to take orders from the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council or their higher-ranking dignitaries. They are not allowed to do anything at will. They are to help other Caodaist adherents both in their religious community and in life. A Chánh Trị Sự is chosen among other Phó Trị Sự and Thông Sự by an internal election and works for a five year term. Each believer with an official Caodaist ID is eligible for full suffrage.

QUESTION 86: What is Quyền Vạn Linh?

Answer:

Quyền Vạn Linh (General Spirit Power) is the Caodaist Legislature. Founding Caodaism, God divided its power into three branches: the Legislative, the Executive and the Judiciary Branch.

1. The Legislative Branch is Bát Quái Đài led by God.
2. The Executive Branch is the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Cửu Trùng Đài led by Giáo Tông.
3. The Judiciary Branch is the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài led by Hộ Pháp.

Then God announced “Man is God”, so God allowed Caodaist adherents to make law on behalf of Himself. Now each Caodaist bill has to be accepted by three assemblies.

1. The Public Assembly, which is composed of representatives of Caodaist believers and dignitaries such as Thông Sự, Phó Trị Sự, Chánh Trị Sự and Lễ Sanh.
2. The Assembly of Dignitaries, which is composed of Caodaist dignitaries such as Giáo Hữu, Giáo Sư and Phó Sư.
3. The Supreme Assembly, which is made up of Caodaist seniors like Đầu Sư, Chuông Pháp, Giáo Tông, Hộ Pháp, Thượng Phẩm, and Thượng Sanh.

QUESTION 87: Who is Hộ Pháp?

Answer:

In the seance on Dec 12th 1935 Li Bai, Giáo Tông (Caodaist Supreme Leader) granted a poem:

HỘ giá Chí Tôn trước đến giờ,
 PHÁP luân thường chuyển máy thiên thơ.
 CHUỖNG quyền cực lạc phân ngôi vị,
 QUẢN xuất càn khôn định cõi bờ.
 NHỊ kiếp Tây Âu cầm máy tạo,
 HỮU duyên Đông Á nắm thiên thơ.
 HÌNH hài thánh thể chừ nên tướng,
 ĐÀI trọng hồng ân gắng cậy nhờ.

Translation

Having assisted God ever since,
 You regulate the operation of the universe.
 Having authority over heavenly promotion,
 You govern all heavenly bodies.
 With two former incarnations in Western countries,
 You are now a religious leader in Southeast Asia.
 The Caodaist organization has been accomplished.
 Its development will depend on you.

According to this poem, Hộ Pháp is a divine being, who has been helping God regulate the universe since its beginning. He has come to earth in human form so many times with different names including Phạm Công Tắc, who is the Dharma Guardian of Caodaism in the Third Salvation. In Caodaism Hộ Pháp is in charge of protecting Caodaist Teachings and Law.

QUESTION 88: Why was poet Li Bai chosen to be Giáo Tông, the supreme leader of Caodaism?

Answer:

Caodaists worship the spirit of Li Bai, not poet Li Bai. Like Hộ Pháp, Li Bai is a divine being, who has been existed since the Creation. This is determined by the divine message:

*“Ánh Thái Cực biến sanh Thái Bạch.
Hiện Kim Tinh trọng trách Linh Tiêu .
Quyền năng vung thừa Thiên triều.
Càn khôn thế giới dặt dìu tinh quân ”*

Translation:

The Absolute produced a Huge Mass of White Light.
He was a leading Divine Being in God’s Court.
He has taken orders from God,
Teaching all souls in the universe.

Hence, at the beginning of the universe he was nameless, but a huge mass of white light. Then, according to another divine message:

*“Tinh quân thọ sắc thuở Phong Thần.
Cho đến Đường triều mới biến thân.
Thái Bạch Kim Tinh đang trị thế,
Trường Canh trích tử đến thăm trần ”*

Translation:

He was ordained in the era of Fengsheng Bang
And had an incarnation in the Tang dynasty.
Then he came to the Earth,
With the name of Lý Trường Canh.

So he had an incarnation as poet Li Bai only during the Tang dynasty. Now Caodaists call him “The Immortal Chief and Giáo Tông of Caodaism.”

QUESTION 89: Who are the Nine Lady Immortals? Who are the Nine Lady Buddhas?

Answer:

The Nine Lady Immortals are God the Mother's assistant. They are responsible for education in the universe.

1. The First Lady, who is believed to have an incarnation as a Vietnamese woman named Hoa, is in charge of Ngạn Uyển (the Heavenly Flower Garden) in the First Heaven, where each flower represents a spirit. The flower blooms when the spirit incarnates and fades when the spirits returns to Heaven.

2. The Second Lady, who is said to have an incarnation as a Vietnamese woman named Cầm, takes care of vườn Đào Tiên (Heavenly Peach Garden) in the Second Heaven.

3. The Third Lady, who incarnated as a Vietnamese woman named Tuyền, manages the Third Azure Heaven. She takes spirits across the ocean of sorrow by Prana Boat.

4. The Fourth Lady waits for spirits in the Yellow Heaven. She is the judge in various competitions, who will supports true talents to help develop the world. It is said She also incarnated as a Vietnamese woman named Gấm.

5. The Fifth Lady governs the Red Heaven, where all spirits are led to Minh Cảnh Đài (Transparent Glass Tower) to review whether they have done good deeds or committed sins on earth. She also incarnated in Vietnam as a woman named Liễu.

6. The Six Lady, who is said to have incarnated as Jeanne d'Arc (1412-1431) in France and as a woman named Huệ in Vietnam, is responsible for the Golden Heaven, leading all spirits to cung Vạn Pháp (Multiple Dharma Palace) to review their previous acts.

7. The Seventh Lady see spirits in Hạo Nhiên Thiên (Immense Heaven), leading them to report to Đức Chuẩn Đề Bồ Tát and Đức Phổ Hiền Bồ Tát. So kind-hearted is She that She volunteers to educate female spirits in Hell. In Vietnam, She incarnated as Miss Vương thị Lễ.

8. The Eighth Lady sees spirits coming to Phi Tưởng Thiên (Beyond Thought Heaven). She granted a lot of poems and scriptures, especially the Prayer to God the Mother and the Esoteric Practice. She incarnated as a Chinese woman named Bạch Liên.

9. The Ninth Lady sees spirits coming to Tạo Hóa Thiên (Creation Heaven), leading them to report to God the Mother. One of Her incarnations was in Vietnam as Miss Cao Thị Khiết.

In Caodaist prayers, the Nine Lady Immortals are also called the Nine Lady Buddhas. The two different titles refer to the same divine beings. The reason why there are different names is because the Vietnamese traditionally call a female divine being Tiên Nương (Lady Immortal) or Phật Bà (Lady Buddha) without paying attention to the rank.

QUESTION 90: When was the Caodaist Temple in Tây Ninh inaugurated?

Answer:

The Caodaist Holy See in Tây Ninh or the Caodaist Main Temple in Tây Ninh (also called Đền Thánh, Tổ Đình and Tòa Thánh Trung Ương). Currently situated in Long Thành Bắc Commune, Hòa Thành District, Tây Ninh Province, Việt Nam, the Temple represents the new religion, Caodaism.

According to Caodaist history, the selection of the site, the blueprint and the construction were directed by divine beings, especially God and Li Bai, the Caodaist Supreme Leader.

Li Bai, the Caodaist Supreme Leader said:

"You believers should cooperate in building the Temple. The Temple should be in Tây Ninh whatever happens. That is because this is the Holy Land, where there is a climate good enough for other nationalities to come to study Caodaism. I want to choose another site, but God did not accept. Thượng Trung Nhật, you should somehow spare at least 50 acres for the building site. Go to find it then tell me later. Remember to pray to God for it."

In a seance in Gò Kén pagoda, God said:

"Disciples!

Where I stay is the Holy Land. I have decreed that the Town God in Long Thành town be promoted to Văn Xương governing Hiệp Ninh town to educate the irreligious people. He is allowed to educate and discipline them until they become good people. Therefore, you can feel secure about it.

As for the site for the Caodaist Temple, I want unanimity between man and holy beings. It's my nature to do so and you should follow that.

Since I founded the religion, I've never acted as a dictator. I'll be pleased with what location you choose for the future temple provided that also satisfies the Sacerdotal Council. You should work well together to built the temple right in Tây Ninh however hard it is. You should know that I want the construction to be as economical as possible.”

However, although the divine instructions were released in 1927, the Temple was not built until 1931 because of a lack of finance and workers. Meanwhile a provisional thatched Temple was built for services. The construction completed 1947, but it was not inaugurated until February 1st 1955.

QUESTION 91: Where is the Temple for God the Mother?

Answer:

Presently, Báo Ân Từ (The Gratitude Temple) is a provisional Temple, where Caodaists worship God the Mother. There are the statues of God the Mother, the Nine Lady Buddhas and their divine servants on Chim Loan (a female Phoenix). Below is the statue of Dongfang Shuo, who is receiving the divine peach from God the Mother. There is also the statue of His Holiness Cao Thượng Phẩm¹.

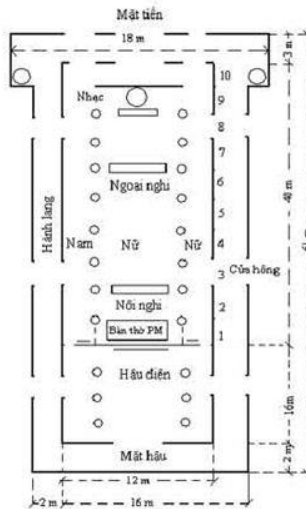
On the altar are two incense burners. The one with five incense sticks is for God the Mother and the other with nine incense sticks is for the Nine Lady Buddhas.

His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, “*After kowtowing to God the Mother, you have to turn around and bow to Khí Sanh Quang (the Energetic Gas for Life), which is the source of all beings. God the Mother is Pháp (Dharma), which is one of the three treasures of the universe (Phật, Pháp and Tăng). Since God the Mother gives birth to everyone and everything, that dharma is closely related to Hiệp Thiên Đài, where Khí Sanh Quang is worshipped. Consequently, in the Temple of God the*

¹ The senior dignitary under the Caodaist Sacerdotal Council of Hiệp Thiên Đài.

Mother you have to bow to Khí Sanh Quang though there is no statue of it.”

On the left and right of the altar is where the late male and female Cao daist dignitaries, who had great contributions to Caodaism, are worshipped.



KÍCH THƯỚC MẶT BẰNG BẢO ÂN TỪ

QUESTION 92: What is the significance of the ceremony Hội Yến Diêu Trì (the Diêu Trì Banquet)?

Answer:

This is an important annual ceremony for Cao daists, which is held in Tây Ninh Temple on the 15th of the 8th lunar month. His Holiness Hộ Pháp said, *“Thinking for yourselves, Cao daist adherents, you’ll see that nobody can convince and teach yourselves better than your mother. The situation is the same in Heaven. God’s established religions, but His children just ignored them. He’s called them, but no one’s come. He*

Himself has descended to the world several times, but 9.2 million original souls have been blind and deaf to His teachings. They have failed to receive both His love and the happiness He granted. Consequently, He gives God the Mother the authority to pick up the enlightened souls. If attaining the divine status, you have to return to God the Mother. The ceremony Hội Yến Diêu Trì, in fact, is the opportunity for you to meet our Divine Mother.”

So the meanings of this ceremony are

- To show the boundless love of God the Mother to all of Her children.
- With Her esoteric doctrine, God the Mother helps liberate all living beings.
- To commemorate the day on which Caodaism was established.

QUESTION 93: What are Caodaist Cỗ Pháp ?

Answer:

The Vietnamese term “Cỗ Pháp” has three meanings: ancient law, ancient dharma and religious emblems. The Caodaist emblems include three objects.

1. The begging bowl which is usually used by Buddhist monks represents Buddhism.
2. The fly-whisk which is usually used by Taoists represents Taoism.
3. The Spring and Autumn Annals which is one of the major scriptures of Confucians represents Confucianism.

QUESTION 94: What is the meaning of the Caodaist banner?

Answer:

The Caodaist banner is 9m x 1.2 m. Yellow, azure and red, which represents Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, are the colors of the surface.

On the top is the Divine Eye, under which is the Caodaist emblems. Then there are the Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ in Chinese.

In the middle of the banner is a basket of flowers, which belongs to Lan T'sai Ho, a mythical Chinese goddess.

There are also the twelve dashes, which is said to be God's numbers.

At the bottom are another nine dashes, which represents the Nine Heavens.

QUESTION 95: What is the meaning of the Caodaist flag?

Answer:

The Caodaist flag is also in three colors: red, azure and yellow representing Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism respectively.

There are the Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ in Chinese, the Divine Eye and the Caodaist emblems.

QUESTION 96: Is it beneficial to believe in the law of karma and reincarnation?

Answer:

Originating in Buddhism, the law of karma or the law of causality holds that one's actions will affect his/her future lives. Good actions will lead to happy consequences and bad actions will lead to suffering. There are two categories: individual karma and collective karma. Collective karma happens when lots of people are killed in disasters like earthquakes, tsunami, plane crashes, etc.

Buddhist scriptures imply that karma will affect a person in three incarnations consecutively. Living now, you have to suffer the results of bad deeds in former life and your present actions also result in consequences in the next incarnation. That is why people are entangled in the cycle of reincarnation forever. To escape it, you have to avoid bad deeds in life.

God said, "*Children, where will you go after death? None of you understand that miracle. Listen! It takes innumerable times for materials to evolve into vegetation, insects, animals and then humans. Humans are categorized as classes. A king on this 68th planet is not equal to a poor man on the 67th planet. The higher the planet, the richer the people. Higher than the first planet is the three thousand*

worlds, the four great continents and the thirty six heavens. After that you have to practice religion more in order to enter what Buddhism calls Nirvana. Following that route, you might never come back to Me! Therefore, I grant humans a great privilege: you can return to Me after one incarnation if you practice religion well enough. Unfortunately, I haven't seen such a person!"

The law of karma gives us thorough insight into our present suffering and how to avoid it in the future. You will never be disappointed in life if you believe in the law of karma. Every good action you are having now will contribute to your happy future. With that in mind, you will not waste your time on worldly pleasures anymore.

QUESTION 97: What is the difference between the law of karma and predestination?

Answer:

Predestination is the theory or the belief that everything that happens has been decided or planned in advance by God or by fate and that humans cannot change it. Following this theory, you will be passive and pessimistic in all situations. On the contrary, you will have satisfaction and confidence if you believe in the law of karma.

QUESTION 98: Why are some cruel and incompetent people so rich?

Answer:

Based on the law of karma, it can be understood that those people had a lots of good deeds in their previous lives. That is why they are so rich now in spite of their wickedness and incompetence. However, they will be unhappy in their next incarnation if they take bribes, exploit others or be drug traffickers in their present life.

It is not a good idea, however, to compare your lifestyle with others'. It is to live and work for your own spiritual evolution that counts. You should be content with your present situation, even the worst one. Then patiently try to deal with it for future success. Remember that might be the consequences of our own bad karma in previous incarnations.

QUESTION 99: Can we decide our own life though we humans are created by God?

Answer:

That's true. Humans have the rights to act in life. There is no unchanged fate. The law of karma gives us an opportunity to decide whether we have a good or bad life. The law of karma is not only the discipline but also a good friend to help liberate us.

It is a good idea to perfect our daily characteristics and behaviors. Do not criticize others. Be more unselfish, tolerant, generous and forgiving. Consequently, you will be able to solve all problems in life. Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu scripture says, *“Act as you don't know you act. That is, act without a bad intention for any personal benefit. That is a noble action that causes no bad karma.”*

Additional information

Annual Cao daist ceremonies in Tây Ninh Temple.

Lunar Calendar	Ceremonies	Category
1-1	The Reception of Divine Beings	Lesser
9-1	The Birthday of God	Major
15-1	The Mid-First Lunar Month	Major
15-2	The Birthday of Laozi	Major
19-2	The Birthday of Guan Yin	Major
8-4	The Birthday of Shakyamuni	Major

10-4	The Death Anniversary of His Holiness Hộ Pháp, His Holiness Thượng Phẩm, His Holiness Thượng Sanh and the Twelve Time Lords.	Lesser
24-6	The Birthday of Guan Yu	Major
15-7	The Mid-Seventh Lunar Month	Major
15-8	The Banquet of God the Mother	Lesser
18-8	The Birthday of Li Bai, the Codaist Supreme Leader.	Major
27-8	The Birthday of Confucius	Major
13-10	The Death Anniversary of His Holiness Lê Văn Trung, the Đầu Sư and other Saintly Dignitaries.	Lesser
15-10	The Mid-Tenth Lunar Month and Anniversary of Codaist Inauguration.	Major
25-12 (DL)	The Birthday of Jesus Christ	Major
24-12	Godspeed to Divine Beings' Journey to Heaven	Lesser
	Monthly Ceremonies on the first and fifteenth days.	Lesser

**THE HIERARCHY OF THE CAODAIST SACERDOTAL
COUNCIL OF CỬU TRÙNG ĐÀI.**

GIÁO TÔNG			
	NGỌC CHUỖNG PHÁP	THƯỢNG CHUỖNG PHÁP	THÁI CHUỖNG PHÁP
NỮ ĐÀU SƯ	NGỌC ĐÀU SƯ	THƯỢNG ĐÀU SƯ	THÁI ĐÀU SƯ
NỮ CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (Unlimited number)	NGỌC CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (1 position) CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (11)	THƯỢNG CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (1 position) CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (11)	THÁI CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (1 position) CHÁNH PHỐI SƯ (11)

positions)

positions)

positions)

NỮ GIÁO SƯ
(Unlimited
number)

NGỌC
GIÁO SƯ
(24
positions)

THƯỢNG
GIÁO SƯ
(24 positions
)

THÁI
GIÁO SƯ
(24
positions)

NỮ GIÁO HỮU
(Unlimited
number)

NGỌC
GIÁO HỮU
(1000
positions)

THƯỢNG
GIÁO HỮU
(1000
positions)

THÁI
GIÁO HỮU
(1000
positions)

NỮ LỄ SANH
(Unlimited
number)

NGỌC
LỄ SANH
(Unlimited
number)

THƯỢNG
LỄ SANH
(Unlimited
number)

THÁI
LỄ SANH
(Unlimited
number)

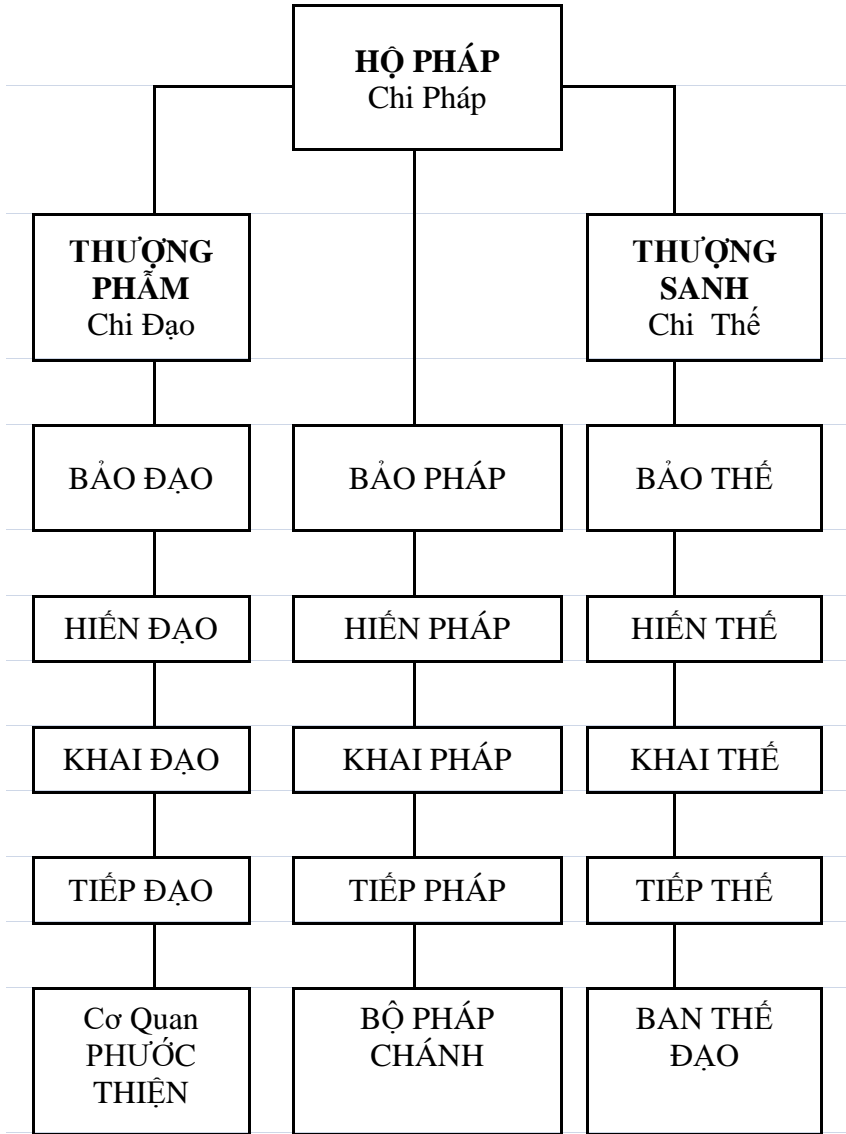
BÀN TRỊ SỰ:
Chánh Trị Sự,
Phó Trị Sự,
Thông Sự

BÀN TRỊ SỰ:
Chánh Trị Sự, Phó Trị Sự, Thông Sự

TÍN ĐỒ

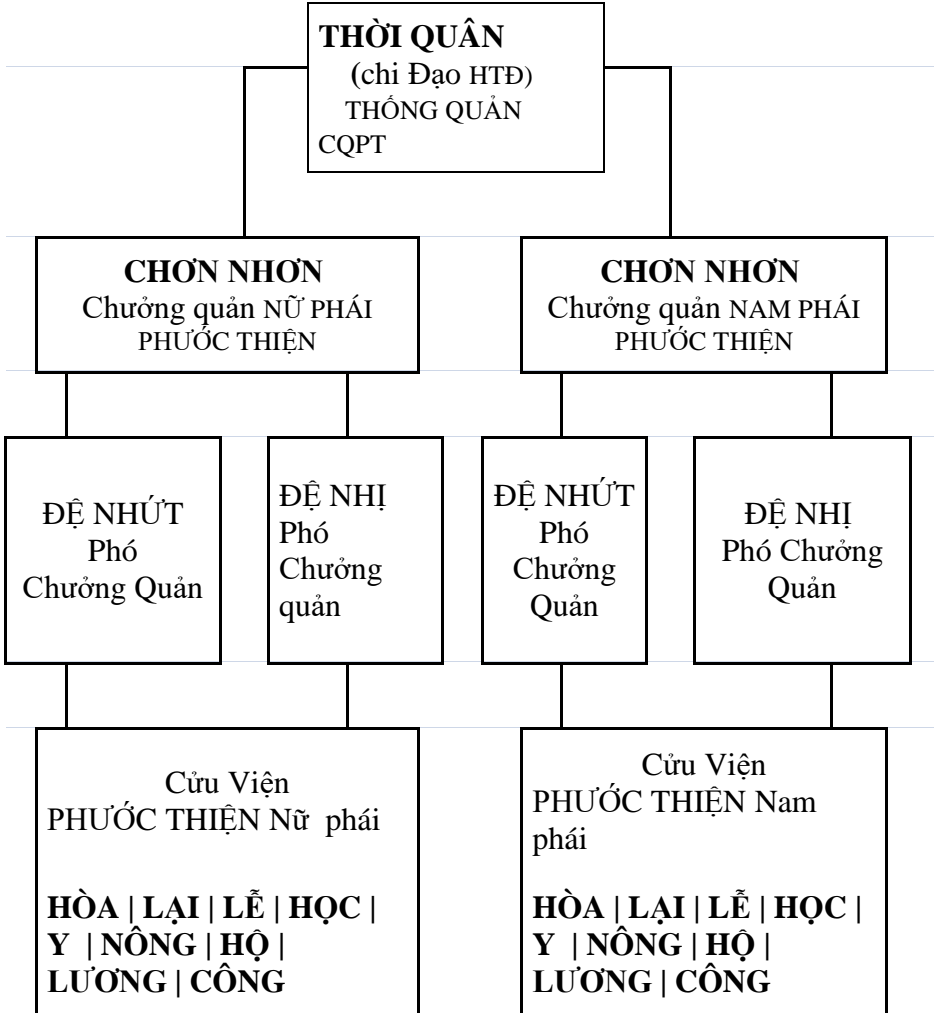
TÍN ĐỒ

**THE HIERARCHY OF THE CAODAIST SACERDOTAL
COUNCIL OF HIỆP THIÊN ĐÀI.**



<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phật Tử 2. Tiên Tử 3. Thánh Nhơn 4. Hiền Nhơn 5. Chơn Nhơn 6. Đạo Nhơn 7. Chí Thiện 8. Giáo Thiện 9. Hành Thiện 10. Thính Thiện 11. Tân Dân 12. Minh Đức 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tiếp Dẫn Đạo Nhơn 2. Chương Ấn 3. Cải Trạng 4. Giám Đạo 5. Thừa Sứ 6. Truyền Trạng 7. Sĩ Tải 8. Luật Sự 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phu Tử 2. Đại Phu 3. Quốc Sĩ 4. Hiền Tài
--	---	--

**THE HIERARCHY OF THE CAODAIST SACERDOTAL
COUNCIL OF PHƯỚC THIÊN .**



TRẦN ĐẠO
PHƯỚC THIỆN
ĐẠO NHƠN
Nữ Quản Trần

TRẦN ĐẠO
PHƯỚC THIỆN
ĐẠO NHƠN
Quản Trần

CHÂU ĐẠO
PHƯỚC THIỆN
CHÍ THIỆN
Nữ Quản Châu

CHÂU ĐẠO
PHƯỚC THIỆN
CHÍ THIỆN
Quản Châu

TỘC ĐẠO
PHƯỚC THIỆN
GIÁO THIỆN
Nữ Quản Tộc

TỘC ĐẠO
PHƯỚC THIỆN
GIÁO THIỆN
Quản Tộc

BÀN CAI QUẢN
HÀNH THIỆN
Nữ Chủ Trưởng

BÀN CAI QUẢN
HÀNH THIỆN
Chủ Trưởng

**CHỦ SỞ và ĐẠO SỞ
HÀNH THIỆN,
THÍNH THIỆN,
TÂN DÂN, MINH ĐỨC**

**CHỦ SỞ và ĐẠO SỞ
HÀNH THIỆN,
THÍNH THIỆN,
TÂN DÂN, MINH ĐỨC**

COMPARISON OF CAODAIST BODIES

BÁT QUÁ I ĐÀI	CỬU TRÙNG ĐÀI	HIỆP THIÊN ĐÀI	CƠ QUAN PHƯỚC THIÊN	BỘ NHẠC	BAN THỂ ĐẠO	CƠ QUAN KHÁC
Thiên Tiên	Giáo Tông	Hộ Pháp	Phật Tử			
Nhơn Tiên	Chưởng Pháp	Thượng Phẩm Thượng Sanh				
Địa Tiên	Đầu Sư	Thập nhị Thời Quân	Tiên Tử			
Thiên Thán h	Chánh Phối Sư Phối Sư	Tiếp Dẫn Đạo Nhơn, Chưởng Ấn	Thánh Nhơn Hiền Nhơn	Tiếp Lễ Nhạc Quân	Phụ Tử	Thập nhị Bảo Quân

Nhơn Thánh	Giáo Sư	Cải Trang Giám Đạo	Chơn Nhơn Đạo Nhơn	Nhạc Sư Độc Nhạc Đề Nhạc	Đại Phu	Hộ Đoàn Pháp Quân. -Hữu Phan Quân. -Tả Phan Quân.
Địa Thánh	Giáo Hữu	Thừa Sử Truyền Trạng	Chí Thiện	Lãnh nhạc QuảnNhạ c Đội Nhạc	Quốc Sĩ	Tổng Giám
Thiên Thần	Lễ Sanh	Sĩ Tài	Giáo Thiện	Cải Nhạc Bếp Nhạc	Hiền Tài	Phó Tổng Giám
Nhơn Thần	Chánh Trị Sự Phó Trị Sự Thông Sự	Luật Sự	HànhThiện ThínhThiện	Nhạc Sĩ Lễ Sĩ Giáo Nhi		Tá Lý, Đầu PhòngVă n
Địa Thần	Đạo Hữu		Tân Dân Minh Đức			Thơ Ký

REFERENCES

Kinh Thiên Đạo & Thế Đạo	Hội Thánh
Luật lệ của ba hội lập quyền Vạn Linh	Hội Thánh
Lời thuyết Đạo	Phạm Hộ Pháp
Luật Tam thể	Cao Thượng Phẩm & Bà Bát Nương
Luận Đạo vấn đáp	Bảo Pháp Nguyễn Trung Hậu
Trên đường tấn hóa	Tiếp Pháp Trương Văn Tràng
Lịch sử Đạo Cao Đài	Gabriel Gobron
Bí pháp	Nguyễn Long Thành
24 giờ hành Đạo	Nguyễn Long Thành

Cổ pháp

Trần văn Rạng

Đại Đạo Sử Cương

Trần văn Rạng

Bước đầu học Đạo

Nguyễn văn Hồng

Ngôi thờ Đức Phật
Mẫu

Tùng Thiên Từ Bạch Hạc

INDEX

Mục Lục

Lời Nói Đầu

- ▶ : Nghe nói anh tu theo Đạo Một Mắt phải không?
- ▶ 2: Sao gọi là Cao Đài?
- ▶ 3: Khai đạo Cao Đài tại đâu? khi nào?
- ▶ 4: Ngọc Hoàng Thượng Đế là ai?
- ▶ 5: Ý nghĩa của danh xưng trên?
- ▶ 6: Vậy Thượng Đế là ai?
- ▶ 7: Thượng Đế biểu hiện sự hiện diện của ngài như thế nào?
- ▶ 8: Tại sao nhân loại phải thờ Trời?
- ▶ 9: Thờ Thượng Đế có ích gì cho nhân loại?
- ▶ 10: Đức Thượng Đế toàn năng sao tạo dựng thế gian đầy khuyết điểm như vậy?

- ▶ 11: Phật có phải lớn hơn Trời chăng?

- ▶ 12: Tu là gì?
- ▶ 13: Vì sao chọn Việt Nam để mở Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ?
- ▶ 14: Nền tảng giáo lý của Đạo Cao Đài?
- ▶ 15: Vì sao chọn Thiên nhân để thờ?
- ▶ 16: Phía dưới Thiên nhân, còn có hình các Đấng nào vậy?
- ▶ 17: Tại sao Cao Đài giáo thờ Phật Mẫu? Phật Mẫu là ai?
- ▶ 18: Cúng kiếng tốn kém nhiều, như nghèo quá thì làm sao?
- ▶ 19: Sao văn chương dạy đạo đọc thấy không được cao siêu, trau chuốt, cầu kỳ?
- ▶ 20: Sao mấy vị Thiên phong ăn mặc chỉ đủ màu?

- ▶ 21: Lịch sử nhân loại trong vòng 3000 năm trở lại đã có nhiều nền tôn giáo, sao phải lập thêm tôn giáo mới?
- ▶ 22: Thật bản khoán không biết nên thờ Phật, thờ Chúa hay thờ Thượng Đế?
- ▶ 23: Tại sao nói có ba thời kỳ phổ độ?
- ▶ 24: Tại sao gọi là Đại Ân xá?
- ▶ 25: Tại sao buổi này nên tu theo Đạo Cao Đài ?
- ▶ 26: Muốn vào Đạo Cao Đài thì thủ tục như thế nào?
- ▶ 27: Ý nghĩa của lời minh thệ ?
- ▶ 28: Tại sao muốn vào Đạo phải minh thệ?
- ▶ 29: Không nhập môn tu đặng chẳng?
- ▶ 30: Còn người thất thệ thì sao?

- ▶ 31: Sau khi nhập môn rồi, người tín đồ có những bổn phận gì?
- ▶ 32: Luật hình trong Đạo Cao Đài như thế nào?
- ▶ 33: Giải thích ngũ giới cấm?
- ▶ 34: Giải thích tứ đại điều qui?
- ▶ 35: Nghe nói trong Cao Đài Giáo, tín đồ ăn chay được phép dùng trứng, tôm cua...?
- ▶ 36: Làm công quả là làm gì?
- ▶ 37: Cách thiết lập Thiên bàn tại tư gia?
- ▶ 38: Ý nghĩa các phẩm vật trên bàn thờ?
- ▶ 39: Cách cắm nhang thấy khác lạ?

- ▶ 40: Ấn Tý là gì? cách bắt Ấn Tý như thế nào?
- ▶ 41: Cách lạy và xá trong Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ?
- ▶ 42: Vì sao chỉ cúng vào 4 thời Tý, Ngọ, Mẹo, Dậu ?
- ▶ 43: Vì sao phải siêng năng cúng kiến ?
- ▶ 44: Phẩm vật hiến lễ sao chỉ có hoa, quả, rượu, trà?
- ▶ 45: Luyện tam bửu bằng lời cầu nguyện?
- ▶ 46: Bốn phận người tín đồ?
- ▶ 47: Khi dự lễ cúng đàn tại Đền Thánh hay Thánh thất, người tín đồ có bốn phận gì?
- ▶ 48: Người tín đồ cần đọc kinh sách nào?
- ▶ 49: Đọc kinh cầu lý, vậy phải xem kinh sách thế nào cho đúng?
- ▶ 50: Hàng ngày, khi dâng lễ lên Thượng Đế và các Đấng, tín đồ nên cầu nguyện gì?
- ▶ 51: Giải thích danh từ Tam Trấn Oai Nghiêm ?
- ▶ 52: Tại sao tu phải cần có đủ tam lập ?
- ▶ 53: Lập công là gì?
- ▶ 54: Lập ngôn như thế nào ?
- ▶ 55: Lập đức ra sao ?
- ▶ 56: Cửu phẩm Thần Tiên là ai?
- ▶ 57: Khi bước vào cửa chánh Đền Thánh, ta thấy bức tranh ba vị mặc áo mào. điều đó nói lên ý nghĩa gì?
- ▶ 58: Nội dung của đệ tam Thiên Nhơn hòa ước tuy chỉ có bốn chữ, nhưng muốn thực hiện trọn vẹn bốn chữ đó không phải là điều dễ?
- ▶ 59: Tượng Hộ Pháp sao đứng trên thất đầu xà?
- ▶ 60: Đại- Đồng là gì?
- ▶ 61: Cầu nguyện như thế nào mới có kết quả?
- ▶ 62: Trong sinh hoạt hàng ngày ngoài xã hội, thật bất tiện khi cầu nguyện ?
- ▶ 63: Đối với người buôn bán có thể cầu nguyện trong việc làm ăn?
- ▶ 64: Tín đồ Cao Đài quan niệm như thế nào về Thần linh?
- ▶ 65: Cầu nguyện trong việc thi cử, thăng quan tiến chức thì thế

nào?

▶ 66: Sao trong đàn cúng, thấy đứng nghe nhạc lâu quá mới đọc kinh? ý nghĩa các bài nhạc ấy? sao không dùng tân nhạc cho thích hợp giới trẻ và người Âu Mỹ?

▶ 67: Có chắc Thượng Đế giảng cơ dạy Đạo? không biết chừng ma quỷ nhập cơ, rồi mạo danh Thượng Đế, chớ bực Chí Tôn lẽ đâu giảng chôn phàm trần ô trược?

▶ 68: Pháp-điều của Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ là gì?

▶ 69: Chơn truyền luật pháp của Đạo được ghi rõ ở đâu?

▶ 70: Tại sao Pháp-Chánh-Truyền được xem là hiến pháp của Đạo?

▶ 71: Tân-luật qui định những gì?

▶ 72: Ngọc-Hư- Cung là cung gì?

▶ 73: Diêu-Trì Cung là cung gì?

▶ 74: Bát-Quái-Đài là gì?

▶ 75: Cách thờ phượng nơi Bát-Quái-Đài Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh?

▶ 76: Hiệp-Thiên-Đài là gì?

▶ 77: Cửu-Trùng-Đài là gì?

▶ 78: Cơ cấu của Hội Thánh Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ có ưu điểm gì?

▶ 79: Xin cho biết cơ cấu của Hội Thánh Cửu-Trùng-Đài ?

▶ 80: Cơ cấu của Hội Thánh Hiệp-Thiên-Đài ?

▶ 81: Cơ cấu Hội Thánh Phước-Thiện ?

▶ 82: Hành-chánh Đạo là gì? có cần thiết không?

▶ 83: Ban Thế-Đạo, phẩm Hiền- Tài trực thuộc ai?

▶ 84: Hành chánh đạo địa phương?

▶ 85: Nhiệm vụ của Bàn-Trị-Sự?

▶ 86: Quyền Vạn-Linh là gì ?

▶ 87: Hộ-Pháp là ai? Vì Hộ-Pháp hay Phạm Hộ-Pháp?

▶ 88: vì sao chọn thi sĩ Lý Bạch làm Giáo-Tông của Đ.Đ.T.K.P.Đ.?

▶ 89: Cửu vị Tiên-Nương & Cửu vị Nữ-Phật là ai?

▶ 90: Đền Thánh Tây Ninh khánh thành năm nào?

- ▶ 91: Nơi thờ Đức Phật Mẫu?
- ▶ 92: Ý nghĩa lễ Hội yến Diêu-Trì-Cung?
- ▶ 93: Cổ-Pháp của Đạo Cao Đài?
- ▶ 94: Ý nghĩa lá phướn?
- ▶ 95: Đạo-kỳ Cao Đài như thế nào ? xin cho biết ý nghĩa ?
- ▶ 96: Luật Nhân-Quả & Luân-Hồi: tin vào hai luật ấy có ích lợi gì?
- ▶ 97: Thuyết tiền định & luật Nhân-Quả?
- ▶ 98: Sao có những người vừa bất tài, vừa độc ác mà lại giàu sang?
- ▶ 99: Thượng Đế sáng tạo ra con người, con người tự tạo lấy kiếp sống của mình?

▶ Phần Phụ Lục