

The Great Faith of
the Third
Universal Amnesty



Discussion on
the Tao

ĐẠI ĐẠO TAM KỲ PHỔ ĐỘ
Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh

LUẬN ĐẠO VẤN ĐÁP

Soạn giả: Nguyễn Trung Hậu
(Bảo Pháp Hiệp Thiên Đài)

DISCUSSION ON THE TAO,
Questions and Answers

By Nguyễn Trung Hậu
(Juridical Conservator - Heavenly Union Palace)



CƠ QUAN ĐẠI DIỆN
Cao Đài Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh Tại Hải Ngoại
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Luận Đạo Vấn Đáp

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FOREWORD

In this book "Discussion on the Tao, Questions and Answers," the author describes a scenario in which a non-CaoDaist questions a CaoDai disciple on the Tao. The person who questions likes to have good knowledge on religions. The questions, although seeming somewhat critical, are reasonable and deserving of reply.

The author open-mindedly and humbly presents an expertise on CaoDai in answering these questions, hoping that the book would be useful to new CaoDaists and able to clarify concerns and doubts.

Cholon, September 2, 1927
Juridical Conservator
Nguyễn Trung Hậu

TO ALL CAODAI DISCIPLES

The Sacerdotal Council has met on the 6th day of the 8th month of the year ấinh Mão (year of the cat) and has approved and welcomed the book “Discussion on the Tao, Questions and Answers” written by author Nguyễn Trung Hậu. The explanation is correct, fluent, and easy to understand. The book is very useful for dignitaries responsible for spreading the Tao.

It therefore publish this book. Please read and contemplate so that you would be able to explain the Tao to people who have not known the mission of Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ.

The author has offered the copyright to the Sacerdotal Council and the book will be used by the CaoDai religion.

Respectfully,

**Buddhist Archbishop
Lâm Quang Bính**

OPINION ON THE TRUE TAO.

A person who gets lost in the forest, would neither sit there waiting to be devoured by the beasts nor waste time running around and getting further lost. What should he do? The only way is to keep going straight forward, and at least he would not get further lost and may have a chance to get out of the forest.

.....
People are lost in the worldly forest and want to find a way to get out, but do not know how. In this difficult situation, they cannot sit still, like a non-believer waiting to be devoured by demonic wild beasts. They must not run around, bumping into heretical cults. What should they do?

They should go straight forward to the right way. People were created by the Creator. The right way is to worship Him. Though we may not reach Nirvana, at least we may escape from the worldly forest of reincarnation.

Having respected the Creator, we should respect His dignitaries who are Angels, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas.

OPINION ON THE UNITY OF THE THREE RELIGIONS.

In order to remodel a decayed house, first we have to create a temporary shelter before we dismantle the old structure; otherwise, we would not have any place to stay. In order to build a strong, solid new house, and in order to save money, we may have to save good lumber and tiles from the old house, and buy, only necessary new items. This is the attitude of a cautious and economical person

The three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism) have been the foundation of the house of the Tao since ancient times. Over time, they have decayed. Our temporary shelter is the faith of Angels, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas. This is the time to rebuild the house of the Tao, thereby improving religions. We should not buy all new materials and discard all good lumber and tiles from the old house. We just need to buy necessary items to replace the decayed ones, and also use the good lumber and tiles saved from the old house; then we may rebuild a good, solid house of the Tao.

We may keep the old foundation (Confucianism), only making it more solid, high and dry. This is to improve Confucianism.

We then need to replace the decayed supports and walls with new ones. This is to improve Buddhism.

We need to do the same with the frame and tiles (Taoism). This is to improve Taoism.

By doing these improvements, we may then have a new and beautiful, high, dry, and solid house of the Tao that may last forever, which is the Tao of the Supreme Being, CaoDai or Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ.

So, it is Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ that moves the three religions into one according to the cycle of evolution.

What is the cycle of evolution? Every thing has an origin and an end. If there is creation of the world, there would be an end of it.

The end is the last. If the last does not stop, there would be the return to the beginning of another cycle.

Discussions on the Tao Questions & Answers

CHAPTER I

DISCUSSION ON ĐẠI ĐẠO TAM KỶ PHỔ ĐỘ.

Q: I discern that you are following the way of Immortals?

A: Many people think so, because I am practicing spiritism which originates from Taoism or the way of Immortals. In reality, I am following the way of CaoDai the Supreme Being or Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ (The Third Amnesty of the Great Way).

Q: I've heard only about the Jade Emperor, the Supreme Being. Now you say it's CaoDai, the Supreme Being. So who is it really?

A: Each time when creating a way to salvation, the Jade Emperor used a special holy name. At the time of the Châu Empire, He used the name Lao Tse, founding Taoism. Later, in the middle of the Châu Empire, He incarnated into Sakya Muni, founding Buddhism in India. At the time of the Hán Empire, He incarnated as Jesus, founding the way of Saints (Christianity).

Now in His Third Revelation, He founds the Great Way in Asia, called Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ. According to modern accommodation, He does not incarnate as done previously, but uses spiritism instead, and took the name CaoDai, which is an abbreviation of Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát.

1-Cao Đài means high tower, used in Confucianism to represent the highest being;

2-Tiên Ông means Immortal, representing the way of Immortals;

3-Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát means Bodhisatva representing the way of Buddhas.

This full name indicates the unity of the three faiths. Although the Supreme Being was called by different names such as Lao Tse, Sakya Muni, Jesus, CaoDai, it is only one spirit, the spirit of the Supreme Being.

Q: Spiritism being so important, how are you sure that it is the Supreme Being's spirit that has come via spiritism to teach? Maybe it was only the spirit of some angels, or saints, or even of demons who uses the name of the Supreme Being; surely the Supreme Being would not come to such a heavy and dirty place like this earth.

A: Yes, spiritism is extremely important. In order to understand well the miraculous messages, we have to spend time to attend the seances, to study, to contemplate on messages. I let you know that the holy messages contain miraculous and secret teachings that besides the Supreme Being, no Angels, Saints, Immortals or Buddhas would be able to reveal. Spiritism is extremely important; and unless you have time to attend the séances frequently, to learn intensively the teachings, you would not be able to tell the difference between true and false. It is like music. If you do not know music, you would not be able to appreciate or to understand the symphony. Spiritism is as precious as gold or jade; if one has not seen them, one would not know how to test, to recognize them.

Angels, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas are all high spirits. They would not dare to use the name of God. Even when they come to teach at the seances, they would act according to the order of God, and they would use their own names. If you say that evil spirits use the name of God to come to seances, you couldn't be more wrong. Evil spirits are Yin spirits, heavy and dirty, hating gentle people and loving cruel ones; they would never come to teach and guide people on the right path, not counting the fact that they would know nothing good to teach. In the worse case scenario, any spirit who comes to teach and guide people on the

right path, to create a peaceful and happy world, should be worthy of being honored and worshipped. We can easily tell the difference between true and false teachings.

Look at Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism, they are all the right path that has millions of followers. CaoDai was only founded for little more than a year, and there were already hundreds of thousands of followers. It is evidently a righteous path. Moreover, the divine path is only founded by God the Jade Emperor. If it was not Him, no one could be able to found it.

When you say the Supreme Being would not come down to this dirty earth, you certainly have not understood the Tao. The Supreme Being is not like humans, does not have a physical body, and does not need to come to the seances in a physical body. Only His energy comes to the seances, so there is no problem.

Q: You say that the Supreme Being takes many different forms. How do you imagine Him?

A: We cannot use our human mind to imagine His image, because He has no image. When He incarnated in the West He took the form of a Westerner. When He incarnated in Asia, He took the form of an Asian. The Supreme Being is always the great sacred light without beginning, without end. Thanks to Him, plants, animals, and humans have life. He is the stars, the mountains, the rivers, the oceans, the forests. He is the consciousness of plants, animals, and humans. In other words, all living beings have life, and life is from the sacred light of the Supreme Being.

I just explain this briefly and superficially so that you may understand a little. You could not understand completely because in order to make you understand completely, it's like explaining about color to a person who is born blind.

Q: I agree that no one could use the name of the Supreme Being. How about mediums, are they reliable?

Q: Have you ever attended a seance ?

A: Yes, once or twice.

Q: How much did it cost you to attend?

A: There is no cost. Anybody may come to attend. They just need to dress respectfully.

A: So what benefit would a medium gain for spending times, days, and months to create those seances ?

If they try to create false seances they would lie to themselves. They would not dare to use the name of the Supreme Being for such an amusement.

Q: You say that Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism are righteous paths, so what is the reason to create a new faith?

A: The Tao has existed since the creation of the universe. When there is life, there is the Tao. The nothingness is the Tao. Yin and Yang are the Tao. Heaven and Earth are the Tao. Human beings and all beings are the Tao. The three faiths have been the right paths since the beginning, but they have been modified by people and become profane.

The Supreme Being, so heartbroken seeing human beings immersed in crime and exiled in Hell, decided to bring the three paths into unity to improve religions, to renew the guiding divine light to guide the people of lost virtue.

Q: Why didn't the Supreme Being choose a strong and prosperous country for religious unity instead of choosing Vietnam, a small and weak country? If all people are the children of God, is it fair to love Vietnamese people more than others?

A: The Supreme Being chose Vietnam, which has been a very poor country, because this was not just if the Tao was not founded there, Vietnam would never be able to get out of the darkness.

Q: Aren't there other countries that are even poorer?

A: Yes indeed there are. But because people of those countries are less virtuos, they have not yet received blessings of God. Although Vietnam is poor, Vietnamese people have always been virtuous. The Supreme Being is the father of all, and virtuous people would deserve His blessings. For example, a father of 3 or 4 children would love his children equally, but would choose a virtuous child to assign important responsibilities. Vietnam is indeed the chosen child of the Supreme Being.

Q: Why are spirit seances no longer allowed?

A: At the beginning, when we did not know enough about the Tao, the Supreme Being used spiritism to teach us all about the Tao, how to spread and organize the new faith. Now we have a well-developed religious constitution, and we just need to follow it. At the beginning we were like a baby who started to walk, and the Supreme Being used seances to guide our steps, but now we can walk steadily ourselves, our legs are strong enough to walk alone, and the Supreme Being trusts us to use our own human power.

CHAPTER II DISCUSSION ON DIVINELY ORDAINED DIGNITARIES.

Q: Most divinely ordained dignitaries of Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ are married and have to work to take care of their families, so how can they follow the way of Immortals (Taoism)?

A: If one has to leave family in order to practice the Tao, one would not complete one's duties toward family, or in other words, toward humanity. If one has been remiss in one's duty toward humanity (the way of humanity), how can one follow the way of the divine Tao? However, practicing the Tao on one hand and taking care of the family on the other hand are not exclusive. What is "tu" (practicing the Tao)? It is the improvement of one's virtues, to return to the right and to change the wrong. Everyone has the right to do so. According to your reasoning, the person who has a family would not be allowed to improve her or his self, to return to the right, and to change the wrong? There are many levels in the practice of the Tao. At the lowest level, one has to complete one's duty to humanity. Once one advances to high level, one has to sever all secular attachments in order to be enlightened. For most, enlightenment is still far away; at this present time, one just needs to take one step at a time, not too fast, not too slow. If because of the Divine Tao, you have to sever all human relationships, you would not complete your duties to humanity, so how could you follow the divine Tao?

Q: I notice that among the divinely ordained dignitaries, many are not always virtuous and have done bad things in their secular lives.

A: Humans are not perfect. Even Confucius, who was extremely holy, needed to reflect on his moral conduct every day. Not even

divinely ordained dignitaries can avoid occasionally making errors in their duties toward humanity. The important question is whether or not you can realize your mistakes and repent. If you can do so, you are a sage. Who knows whether this noble person was a wicked person before? Who knows whether a tyrannical person will become a sage later?(1) Different situations in life often affect personality and virtue of a person. It is not right to judge a person based on his past.

Q: If in following the Tao, one has to wear coarse dress and canvas shoes, why are divinely ordained dignitaries wearing colorful silk robes and elaborate headdresses, which are not consistent with the economic and simple life of virtuous persons?

A: The Tao is important. It is necessary to have a well established organization in which orders should be honored within a religious fraternity. Orders may be recognized by colors that represent the three faiths, red representing Confucianism, yellow representing Buddhism, and blue, Taoism.

Regular followers will wear white, representing purity. Followers have to keep themselves pure like the white color of their tunics in order to advance to the higher level of dignitaries. The colorful vestments of dignitaries are to be worn only for worshipping ceremonies, not for going out in public.

Q: I see many new followers who have not contributed many years of service but still are divinely ordained. Why is divine title so cheap and given so easily?

(1) If Tào.Tháo (Cao Cao) who tried to assassinate Đổng Trác (Dong Cong) was killed by Đổng Trác, who would not say that Tào.Tháo was a chivalrous person? And if Quan Công (Guan Yu) surrendered to Tào and then died of illness, who would not say that he was a traitor?

A: At the beginning, there has to be a quick way to recruit people to serve. If we have to wait to have for years of service in order to be ordained, there would not be enough dignitaries to serve the Tao.

For this reason, high dignitaries were chosen according to their service in a previous life. Once they have been given the title of dignitary, people have to serve accordingly to build up their moral merit. So the titles are not an honor but just another way to encourage service to the Tao.



CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION ON THE PRACTICE OF THE TAO

Q: This is the era of money. The strong will win, the weak will lose, the wise will survive, the stupid will die. This is the time of widespread competition between the glittering Western and American civilizations. Our country is weak and underdeveloped, so it should theoretically hurry to follow the footsteps of civilization. Instead, our people keep meditating and praying, and disregarding secular matters. I think our country may soon fall apart and our race may become extinct.

A: I explained previously that there are many levels of practicing the Tao. At basic levels, followers live a normal life as all others, but in keeping with being gentle, sincere and spiritual. If all people of our country would do the same, they all would be in peace, happiness, concordance with each other without jealousy, without cheating, with sincerity and trust. In this way of life, there would be no difference between the wise and the stupid.

Competition is a part of life. Thanks to competition, agriculture and commerce are active, industry developed. But the competition should be spiritual and intellectual as well, developing ideas of justice and virtue. Otherwise, if this competition turns to violence, then our lives would descent to the level of the barbarians rather than rising to the level of the civilized. If all of humanity follows the Tao, loving each other like children of the same father, then violent struggle would be unnecessary. People would not kill each other and so we would not have to worry about extinction.

Our country is weak and underdeveloped in terms of education and military resources, but not in terms of virtue. We must accept

our weaknesses but should be proud of our virtues. Should we not keep cultivating our virtues? People who practice the Tao at a very high level and sever all secular attachments are few. In education, there are hundreds of candidates for examination, but only a few will pass and become mandarins. If all of them became mandarins, there would be no one left to do the other work. Although there are many candidates at the examination, some succeed and others do not; some are lucky, some are unlucky; and the people who succeed to become mandarins are not many. If all the people in the country practiced the Tao, not all of them would be at the higher levels, but at different levels according to their capability. They would all reach the results according to their level, exactly as in education the students are placed according to their previous background. The one common benefit is that all of them who practice the Tao would become more virtuous, as all of the students in school become more educated. So even if all the people of the country would practice the Tao, secular matters would still not be neglected.

Q: Why didn't the Creator create human beings all perfect, rather than some cruel, some gentle, and then have to teach them the Tao?

A: All human beings were created equally perfect and from the same sacred light of the Creator. It is because not all human beings cultivate that sacred light that some become cruel, and others gentle. The Creator is the common father, and human beings are all his children. Any father wishes that all his children will be good. But what happens when not all of them follow his wishes? This is why there is Karma and Reincarnation, so that good will be compensated and bad punished. It's the divine law of justice of the Creator. Because He loves the lives He created, He did not want human beings to be punished unless it was necessary, so He created the Tao for them to follow to avoid bad Karma and Reincarnation.

Q: Can you be certain about karma and reincarnation?

A: There is strong evidence for karma and reincarnation. If you want to understand this better, you need more than a brief explanation, but a lot of time and study. I refer you to the book “Tiên Thiên Tiểu Học” (Elementary Study on Precreation) pages 21 and 22, and the book “Luân Hồi Quả Báo” (Karmic Reincarnation).

Q: The Creator is supposed to have great supernatural power. If He used this power to perform miracles, couldn't the Tao be accomplished in one day?

A: If He used his power to perform miracles as you say, then bad people would follow the Tao because they were afraid of Him, not because of faith. Would they deserve to be saved just because they were terrified? Should they not act out of faith and sincerity? The Tao is changing all the time, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, so that people can take time to contemplate their lives, and follow the Divine will to repent in order to deserve Divine Salvation.

Q: You say that following the Tao means to cultivate virtue, to avoid evil and to do good. I have been doing that, I am not doing evil to anyone, I do not steal, why do I need to follow the Tao?

A: I say that no one is perfect. The sages of ancient times also needed to reflect on their moral conduct daily. Now we are gentle, but who knows whether we would not become cruel in the future? Following the Tao is to adhere to religious rules in order to keep oneself always pure. However, people who have been doing good and avoiding evil, although they are not physically following the Tao, are spiritually part of it (in their hearts) without realizing it. I have said that where there is life, there is the Tao.

Human beings receive from the Creator a spark of sacred light, which is the Tao. Their physical body is from their parents, and that is the Tao of Parenthood . They live in a country, and that is the Tao of Nationhood. They are educated in a school by their teachers, that is the Tao of Education, etc. A perfect man would recognize the Tao to follow and understand how to practice the Tao of humanity. If you follow the Tao of humanity (practicing only in your secular life) without following the Divine Tao you are not yet a fully realized person.

Q: Is it certain that people can become Immortals or Buddhas by following the Tao?

A: If you do good deeds only because you expect honor or blessings, then you are not following the true path. To follow the Tao is to be grateful to Heaven and Earth, to recognize the Tao of humanity, to complete the duties of a person. Following the Tao with the purpose of becoming an Immortal or Buddha is not the result of true faith. If people follow the Tao faithfully, completing their duties toward humanity, people will naturally rise to the level of Immortals and Buddha (without expectation).

Q: According to your explanation, it is good to follow the Tao, but one also has to spend time to praying day and night, and going to the temple. First, it is time-consuming. Second, one does not have time to work hard and might as a result become poorer. Who would be responsible for this condition?

A: The praying ceremony is performed after working hours. It may be skipped without any problem if one does not have enough time. Only your sincerity and respect are important and esteemed. Going to temple on the 1st and 15th days of the month is totally voluntary and depends on your ability to spend the time. Praying at home with sincerity is much better than going to the temple without respect. You are mistaken in saying that

the prayers might lead to negligence of one's duties at home. As I said, praying time and working times are totally separated. Poverty and richness depend on one's good fortune, and whether one lives frugally or extravagantly. It is not right to say that following the Tao would lead to poverty. Only greedy people and cheaters are afraid of becoming poor by following the Tao, because they think they would not be able to cheat anymore.

Q: If all people of the world followed the Tao and became Immortals and Buddha, would this world become empty of humanity?

A: It would be nice if the world became emptied of humanity. Unfortunately, it will never come to pass. The persons who follow the Tao are like rice plants. Even if we keep growing rice, we never stop needing more. And the persons who are not following the Tao are like weeds, which we can never eliminate no matter how we try. Thinking that the earth would become empty is like thinking that the rice field would have no more weeds

Q: According to what you say, following the Tao is just worshipping the Deity, and following religious rules toward humanity, and that would be enough. So why do we have to follow a vegetarian diet as well? Buffaloes eat grass for their whole lives--why don't they reach the status of Immortals and Buddha?

A: Following a vegetarian diet is one of our religious rules. It's really too involved to explain here. Please refer to the book "Trai Kÿ" (Vegetarian Diet Cycle). As for the buffaloes who eat grass for their whole lives without reaching the status of Immortals and Buddha, buffaloes do not have a sense of spirituality and do not know how to cultivate themselves as humans do. For example, in order to build a house, besides having materials ready such as plaster, tiles, lumber, bricks, rocks, sand, etc., one should know how to build; otherwise, all these materials left to their own devices would not make a house. To construct a house, one should

know how to build; to reach the status of an Immortal and Buddha, people should know how to cultivate themselves.

Q: You say that if we practice the Tao with all our sincerity and heart, we would become Immortals and Buddha as a natural outcome. Now you say that we have to cultivate the self in order to reach the rank of Immortals and Buddha. But in doing so, wouldn't we be realizing our ambitions, thus contradicting other ideals?

A: Nothing is contradictory about it. I say that if we practice the Tao with all our heart and sincerity we would naturally attain the rank of Immortals and Buddha even without expecting to do so. Self cultivation is a mandatory, necessary step in practicing the Tao. Following the Tao, one has to cultivate the self. Without cultivating the self, one could not accomplish practicing the Tao. It's like when you want to eat, it's not because you want to be full, but because you are hungry, yet eating would naturally make you full. Similarly, when one cultivates the self, it's not because we want to reach the rank of Immortals and Buddha, but because it is a mandatory step in the practice of the Tao. Yet cultivating the self will naturally lead to attaining the rank of Immortals and Buddha.

In following the Tao, if one does not cultivate the self, one would not accomplish the practice of the Tao and therefore would not become an Immortal or Buddha; yet, one may reach certain other dimensions like the dimension of Angels and Saints, or may reincarnate into a better life with more blessings on earth. The ranks of Immortal and Buddha are very highly esteemed and reserved for people who have fully completed the cultivation of the self.

Q: How does self-cultivation work to allow us to become Immortal and Buddha?

A: I cannot give a complete explanation because this is a secret and miraculous matter of the Tao which can only be understood when one practices the Tao.

Q: The Tao is for saving all living beings, but not for any single particular person. You say that it is a secret and miraculous matter not easily revealed, so how could you say that it will save all living beings?

A: The government, in establishing education, has the intention to help all children to complete their education and graduate. If one does not graduate, it is because one is lazy and does not study enough. The government wants the children to graduate, but could not do anything if the children don't want to study. The Tao is established so that living beings may graduate into being Immortals and Buddha, but if living beings do not graduate into being Immortals and Buddha because they do not cultivate self, what is to be done? If you cannot find it in yourself to strenuously practice the Tao, and wish only to know the secret and miraculous key of the Tao and without making the effort to rise to the rank of Immortals and Buddha, this is exactly like a lazy student who wants to graduate without studying.

Q: I see many CaoDai followers who don't know much about religious teachings, so of what use to them is participating in worship ceremonies?

A: The worship ceremony is designed to show respect and sincerity. It's understandable that CaoDai followers do not know much about CaoDai teachings at the beginning. They are like children, who, at the beginning of school, would not know much about history and literature; in order to have a good knowledge, one has to study progressively. CaoDai followers number in the millions; it would not be possible to teach each individual separately. Therefore the Sacerdotal Council is planning to publish books, and to translate prayers in order to spread the Tao.

Q: I also see many CaoDai followers who are still living in moral weakness. Is this any way of practicing the Tao?

A: They are in the minority when compared to millions of followers. Despite a few people who have not escaped their weaknesses completely, they have tried to improve themselves a little. Slow, faltering improvement is still better than doing nothing or ever increasing in evil ways. Spiritual levels are like a ladder; the determined mind may decide quickly to ascend out of evil to good, while the average soul may repent and change progressively.

Q: Since the followers are already in the millions, couldn't they help each other?

A: The number of followers will increase more and more as the Tao spreads. Therefore many groups will be established at many local regions. Each group will be headed by a dignitary responsible for guiding followers both in the Tao and in secular life. They all will follow the same goal and the same rules. Although there are many groups, they function as one.

As for helping one another, followers not only help each other, but should lend their hands to all people whether or not they are CaoDai followers, or even to enemies, when they are in need or in danger. Loving others is the same as loving oneself, and this is really universal love.



CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION ON WORSHIP CEREMONY.

Q: If one becomes a CaoDai, one has to worship four times daily. Why is it so often? Isn't that wasting time?

A: Worshipping four times a day is a way to practice one's endurance and dedication to ascetic life. In order to succeed, one has to practice progressively. Worship ceremony is useful for people only, not for God. Daily worshipping helps open people's hearts, move people's bodies, change people's minds. By neglecting worshipping, people's spirits would be neglected, and respect of the Deity would fade; then one would disregard the sacred principles.

Q: If one's mind is strong, would one worry about negligence?

A: People with a strong mind are few. We worry about new followers. For people with a strong mind, hardship would not discourage them; even when they have to sacrifice the self for the Tao, they would not hesitate.

Q: Why is the eye used to worship God?

A: There are many reasons to worship using the eye:

1.- In seeing the eye every day, we feel God watching over us. Any time when we think about evil, the eye seems to tell us: "I, your Master, am always with you, watching you. Don't do evil things." It's a good way to cultivate our heart and our virtues.

2.- The Supreme Being is a mass of sacred light, immense, boundless, existing everywhere from Heaven to Earth, and especially in our heart. The eye reflects the way to the heart. Worshipping the eye is worshipping God. God teaches: "The eye is the master of the heart; the two sources of light, Yin and Yang,

are the masters of all. Light is spirit. Spirit is God. God is Me.”

3.- Since the closure of the Tao, people practiced the Tao without result. Some people cultivated the self, but could only transform “Tinh” (physical energy) into “Khí” (Chi, vital energy), but not transform “Khí” into “Thần” (spiritual energy). Because of the lack of “Thần” in the secret and miraculous mechanism, worshipping the eye allows us to bring the “Thần” back to unify with “Tinh” and “Khí” to complete the set of the Three Treasures and to facilitate the process of becoming saints and entering Nirvana.

Q: Why don't we worship two eyes?

A: Every thing comes from One and then returns to One. Number 1 is the principal number of the Supreme Being; therefore we should worship one eye. It's also the secret and miraculous mechanism of cultivation of the “Thần.” You are not a CaoDaist, I cannot explain everything to you but only the basics. During worship ceremony, in order to cultivate the “Thần,” we have to concentrate on the eye, without blinking our eyes; and our mind will calm down after about thirty minutes. If we worshipped two eyes, our mind would be confused, and therefore we could not concentrate with our undivided attention.

Q: Why are Thái Bạch (Li Po), Quan Âm (Kwan Yin) and Quan Thánh (Kwan Kung) worshipped together with the Supreme Being? I am thinking, it would not be the right relationship between the king and his subjects, as is indicated in the saying, “Kings and subjects should not be on the same mat.”

A: On this Third Amnesty, Thái Bạch represents the way of Immortals, Quan Âm the way of Buddha, and Quan Thánh, Confucianism, in order to move the three religions into one and to save all living beings. They are worshipped as the three lords representing the three religions, in the private home. At

the temple, the three religions are represented by Sakya Muni, Lao Tse, and Confucius. The saying, “Kings and subjects should not be on the same mat” is not appropriate here, because the Supreme Being is on a higher position on the altar, while the three lords of the three religions are placed at lower levels and therefore not “on the same mat.”

Q: Are we allowed to worship other Immortals and Buddha?

A: Followers should worship the three lords of the three religions. They may worship other Angels, Saints, Immortals, and Buddhas as they wish, but not evil deities

. I'll also explain to you about the worship of the ancestors. The old tradition of worshipping ancestors has not changed, but we have to reserve the most esteemed place to worship the Supreme Being and the three lords of the three religions, because the ancestors themselves still have to worship the Supreme Being and other deities.

Q: Worshipping is costly. What if we are very poor?

A: I said that the heart is the most precious factor. With sincerity, a simple branch of tree, a cup of pure water would be enough for God to witness your heart. The respect and sincerity to God and Buddha are manifested by worship. God approves our sincerity, not the rituals. There was a saying: “Heaven and Earth are just. Wise spirits are watching. Blessings are not granted because of offerings. Disasters are not given because of lack of rituals.” I remember a holy message given by the Supreme Being:

“I have been reigning from the White Pearl Palace,
I do not need a high throne on earth.

Whether poor or rich, only the heart is precious.

It is the lotus throne where I stay.”

That would prove that your respect and sincerity are precious only from the heart, not from ceremonial offerings.

Q: If sincerity is enough, why is the praying ceremony necessary

A: Your question is tenacious. I have said that ceremony is the manifestation of sincerity and respect. If you can afford it, you should not neglect it. For example, the respect and sincerity to your parents are from your heart, but you have to treat them in such a manner to reflect your heart. If you should respect and love your parents but do not care for them, would it be enough?

Q: In the big ceremony, when prayers are recited, there is very noisy music. What is this music good for?

A: Rituals and music are based on the Confucian tradition and also various national traditions. The music is moreover used to harmonize the prayers in rhythm, very similar to the bell and wooden gong of Buddhist tradition.

Q: In the middle of the altar, what is the reason for a continuously lit lamp?

A: It's the "Thái Cực lamp" (Tai Chi). Before the creation of Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang energies reacted to each other, creating a mass of light called "Thái Cực" (Tai Chi), which is the emanation of the Supreme Being. The "Thái Cực" lamp represents the Supreme Being.

Q: What is the meaning of the two lamps outside?

A: They represent Yin and Yang energies.

Q: Why are there offerings of wine and tea, and flowers and fruits?

A: Five-color fruits represent the five elements. Though many people could not come up with five colors, it's still OK. Flowers represent "Tinh" (physical energy), wine represents "Khí"

(Chi, vital energy), tea represents “Thần” (spirit). “Tinh, Khí, Thần” are the Three Treasures of human beings.

Q: What is the reason behind the five incense sticks?

A: Burning incense is to purify the air. The three incenses inside represent trinity (Heaven-Earth-Man). The two incenses outside make the total of five representing five kinds of energy corresponding to the five humors inside the human body

1-Giới hương (Fragrance of restriction) means experiences of flavor of restrictions of secular matters.

2 -Định hương (Fragrance of calm), experiences of flavor of calmness of one’s mind.

3-Trí huệ hương (Fragrance of enlightenment), experiences of flavor of enlightenment.

4-Tri kiến hương (Fragrance of wisdom), experiences of flavor of wisdom.

5-Giải thoát hương (Fragrance of liberation), experiences of flavor of liberation.

Q: In the praying ceremony, why do you put your hands together before you prostrate in wrapping the left hand with the right hand?

A: In rituals, everything has a meaning that one has to try to find a way to understand.

When the Tao was founded, it was like the blooming of a lotus flower, and as a result, forming a fruit. The hands joined together are like a fruit. One should not enjoy fruit alone by oneself, but must share with all humanity, which is called “Phổ Độ” (saving all). Therefore when one prostrates, one spreads one’s hands as if to sow seeds. This way of prostration is based on the principle of creation of Heaven and Earth. The right hand wrapping the left hand symbolizes Yin-Yang interaction (right is Yin, left is Yang). Interaction between Yin and Yang energies leads to the formation of “Thái Cực” (Tai Chi or Monad) represented by the

two hands joined together. Then from “Thái Cực” (Tai Chi or Monad) comes the “Luồng Nghi” (Diad) represented by the two thumbs. Two thumbs crossing each other form the “Tứ Tượng” (Four directions), then the eight fingers spread represent the eight trigrams. Thanks to the mechanism this symbolizes, human beings are able to reach holy dimensions.

Q: Why does one make the gesture with hands joined together on one’s forehead, first in the middle, then on left and then on right sides?

A: It’s a symbol of the Trinity as set out in Buddhism. Hands in the middle represents homage to Buddha (or Spirit of God), on the left, homage to Dharma (spirit of sacrifice, right living), and on the right, homage to Sangha (monks and nuns, spiritual humanity).

Q: In prostration, why does one have to nod four times per kowtow?

A: Nodding four times per kowtow would make twelve nods for three full kowtows. This would be considered as twelve kowtows altogether, which is reserved for prostration to the Supreme Being, the Creator of the twelve dimensions, the Creator of Heaven and Earth and Universe, holding sway over the twelve zodiacal lords who are Tý, Sửu, Dần, Mẹo, Thìn, Ty, Ngọ, Mùi, Thân, Dậu, Tuất, Hợi. Number twelve is the mystical number of the Supreme Being. That’s enough for now; I would like to stop here and hope that you may contemplate my explanations a bit so that my answers will not be in vain. For those people who are too narrow-minded to consider the meanings of these gestures, and keep criticizing without knowing the symbolic references, I have no comment.

THE END



God and Humanity
Love and Justice