

CAO DAI TEMPLE OVERSEAS  
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# FUNDAMENTALS OF CAODAISM

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## CAODAISM, A CRY FOR UNITY

"I am the Creator of the Universe, of all beings and matters, I, therefore, need no permission from anyone to operate. Since you, My Children, are so much concerned, however, that I shall bless you with My consent," so reads a message.

Thereupon on September 29th 1926 to be exact, a group of twenty eight Vietnamese, very anxious to act openly and also to keep themselves within the strict limit of legality, filed a "Declaration" to have a New Religion registered with the authorities in Saigon. A few months later, in November, a three-day inauguration ceremony took place at Go Ken, (Tay Ninh Province, South Vietnam), where the governor general of Indochina and the governor of Cochinchina (the old name of the southern part of Vietnam as given by the French,) as well as high ranking European and Vietnamese officials were invited. Attending the ceremony were in full detail, guests from France, India, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and hill tribes of Indochina; there was naturally an additional sea of Vietnamese people. Hundreds of thousands of attendees all told crowded at a site of about five square hectares (over 12 acres).

The ceremony was planned for three days--November 18,19,20--but it lasted three months.

The International Press and observers called it then "The Advent of Caodaism", and it might as well be so. If subsequent activities and services of this religion need any explanation, the following may be of interest. After sixty years of existence in Vietnam, hereunder are some background data.

1. The Holy See and the Holy City are in the province of Tay Ninh, 100 kilometers northwest of Saigon, near the Kampuchean border, covering an area of about 350 acres. The Holy City has a population of over 100,000 Cao-daists.

2. The followers now (1985) number in the neighborhood of three millions, characteristically seen in white with black turbans. They all worship Đức Cao Đài (pronounced duk how dye), known as God the Father in Heaven in the West, and symbolically represented by an EYE.

3. The number of martyrs is over 10,000.

4. Organizationally the church is governed by a Religious Constitution in which the separation of power--between the legislative, the judiciary and the executive--are clearly defined.

5. As a religion, the church is run by the New Canonic Law, a Book of Rites and Prayers, a Sacerdotal Corps headed by a Pope. Lady ecclesiastical dignitaries can reach the rank of Cardinal as the highest and top level. The number of dignitaries for men and women is fixed: a Pope, 3 Assessors, 3 Cardinals, 36 Archbishops, 72 Bishops and 3,000 Priests.

Student priests are unlimited. They all are vegetarians, non-drinkers and non-smokers.

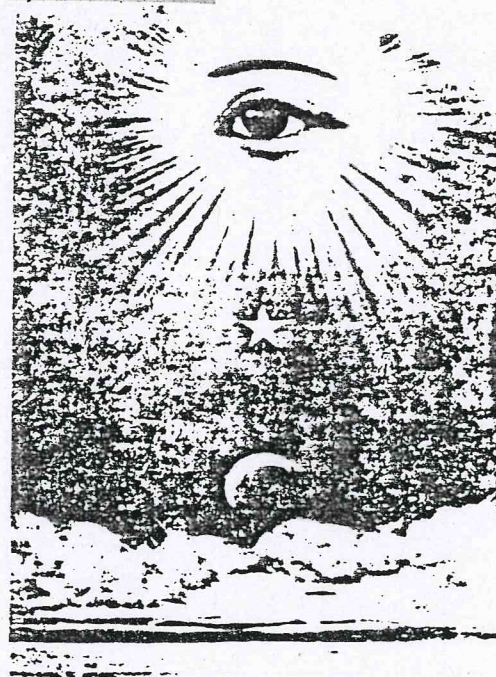
6. The religion is practiced on two planes: exoteric and esoteric. A number of clerics and followers have been "disincarnated", that is, have been deified as genii, angels, archangels and saints, etc.

7. The main classical books in use are Collections of God Selected Messages instead of the Gospel, the New Canonic Law, the Constitution, Book of Rites and Prayers, plus Book of Mystic Meditation, etc.

8. Tens of thousands of Temples or Worshipping Houses (Domus Dei) are scattered all over Vietnam, especially in the countryside, and now around the world as a result of the refugee exodus from Vietnam since 1975. The Temple has a special architecture of its own.

9. The Caodaist banner consists of three bands in yellow, blue and red, horizontally arranged in this order; the bands are rectangular and equal in size.

Next: HOW CAODAISM WAS  
CONCEIVED





Đức Cao Đài explains:

"From the very beginning, I had the Five Branches of The Great Way (Đại Đạo) established as follows: Confucianism (Nhơn Đạo), Geniism (Thần Đạo), christianity, Islam (Thánh Đạo), Taoism (Tiên Đạo), and Buddhism (Phật Đạo).

As regions of the World were distant from one another, and communications were impossible, Religions were thus established so that they might fit into the mores of each segment of humanity. Each people was able to practice religion only in his local region.

However, now that humanity has become one and the world has shrunk, the people turn against one another because of these many religions. I have therefore decided to bring all of these religions back to their only original source.

One more point: because I had previously entrusted the Gospel to human beings, God-Path deviated gradually to become Man-Path. It pains Me very much to see that during the last 10,000 years or so Humanity has fallen into the pit of sins and has been consequently dammed in Hell. I AM NOW DETERMINED TO COME MYSELF to save you, My Children; I do no longer entrust the Gospel in the hands of the fallible human beings".

As we have seen, the Five Religious Branches were emanated from the Great Way. And to the Great Way they are now reunited. So is The Great Way, so is Caodaism. In the beginning there was the Great Way. The Great Way was with God. The Great Way was God.

Caodaism is therefore the synthesis of all the main Religions of the World, i.e., Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Geniism and Taoism... It is syncretistic in its doctrine, ritual practice, organization, divinities and philosophy. It is unity in diversity. It is inclusive, all encompassing if you will, and not exclusive. This syncretism goes further to even allow the ritual practice to be modified according to the mores or traditions of a people, culture or civilization. It therefore offers something particular to every belief and religion, and something common to each and every one: Đức Cao Đài, our common Father in Heaven.

#### WHY CAODAISM IS TO BE FOUNDED NOW?

"I see the World undergoing changes: the times are in turmoil; humanity is heading towards the road of materialism, forsaking its spiritual values, therefore losing its way into the path of sin. Indeed, mankind keeps on existing aimlessly and does not collect its thoughts and repent, crowding and jostling, encroaching and disputing over wordly honors and fortunes, thereby distorting higher ideals.

The Three Main Religions (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) have lapsed into retrogradation. Humanity has turned towards materialistic things, no longer needing the profoundness of spiritualism.

The eon of time has now completed its cycle, and The Way finds it necessary to redeem Humanity".

Indeed. Đức Cao Đài has founded the Religion. He Himself organized it, drafted the Constitution, the New Canonic Law, taught all the rituals, chose the Holy Land, inspired the architecture of The Main Temple, wrote the Prayers, showed the way



of Music in the ceremony, designed the daily and ceremonial dresses ... in a word, He helped His disciples through a Medium System with the what, where, when, why and how of all the facets of this cult and organization. The reason for this detailed guidance is that His disciples did not know anything at all about this New Religion -- new not only in name, but also in form and substance. Even the name "Cao Đài" was Self attributed.

He has gone into so much trouble because He could foresee His Children steadfastly moving toward self-annihilation, and could not bear the thought of it. He therefore united all the religious forces to form one colossal force, big enough to move humanity back to the road of love, forgiveness, charity, compassion. To all these teachings, He added one more lesson: JUSTICE. He therefore UNITES AND SHOWS THE WAY for salvation. Because of this infinite love for His Children, He now institutes with the advent of Caodaism a period of AMNESTY until the time of Last Judgment (Thời Kỳ Đại Ân Xá).

This is why Caodaism is also called "The Great Way for Third Redemption of Humanity" (Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ), the formal name of this New Faith.

With this infinite love, Đức Cao Đài shows the way for salvation, but if Humanity does not want to save itself, Đức Cao Đài does not know what else to do. It all depends upon the individual, the human being, the existing religions. Human beings must choose to save themselves, which is their freedom to choose. And this is also justice "vox populi vox dei"

#### THE ROLE OF THE EXISTING RELIGIONS

The Caodaists are taught to believe in the Laws of Evolution, of Cause and Effect, of Reincarnation, in Divine Justice, in the occult Realm of Spirits, in the ever readiness of the All Compassionate Đức Cao Đài to help and save His Children be they Christian, Buddhist, Islamic... be they black, white, yellow etc... if they really want to be saved and to be helped. They also believe that only human beings are endowed with all the sanctified elements and faculties to make this Planet Earth a Paradise for all beings to live in happiness, peace and concord, or to transport them, metaphysically speaking, to the Realm of Immortality, that is to say, of Deities and Divinities up to the level of Đức Cao Đài Himself. That is Đức Cao Đài's will, but it is also Đức Cao Đài's order to release all the evil forces to put them to this test, for they have to deserve it. Everyone, including Đức Cao Đài Himself, must submit to JUSTICE, to the LAW.

God does not discourse alone, He also shows us the way, perhaps the only way, i.e., to live by the words of God, and to unify our honest and sincere efforts, in order to overcome the evil forces actively in the working against God's pious Children. It is God's judgment that Humanity did not live by His words, evidence of which is that the world is "suffering all kinds of vicissitudes. I sent Allen Kardec. I sent Flammarion. I also sent Elijah and John The Baptist, precursors of the advent of Jesus Christ. One was persecuted, the other killed. Who did it? -- Humanity. Even My Son was killed by you; you worship Him in spirit but not in holiness..

I wanted to talk to you just once during Moses' day on Mount Sinai, but you could not understand Me. The Promise



I made to your ancestors for your redemption, the advent of Christ, was prophesized but you did not care to listen."

Indeed, the World has gone down hill. Upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility of helping Humanity live by God's words, so that it may help itself escape from annihilation? The answer is very obvious: the existing Religions in the World today, including Cao-Đài Religion, but on one condition that they have to work together in stimulation, and not in competition against one another as in the past. They have to unify their force, they have to join hands, they all have to serve one Master, whom mortal human beings in their own culture may call as God. Allah, Jehovah, Đức Cao Đài, Jade Emperor or T'ien (天). etc... For all of them, as shown above, originated from only ONE source, that is God Himself, and the followers of any Religion are God's and not any particular religious Leader's.

If Vietnam can serve as a case-work, I personally venture to think Đức Cao Đài chose the Land and People of Vietnam for a pilot-project, a starting point, if you will. He always emphasized in His teaching UNITY, LOVE, COMPASSION, JUSTICE... but He later admonished that "the people who appreciate the most valuable, the priceless jewel are so few. So few a number that the effect is not great enough to make an impact". Upon the loss of South Vietnam, the spirit of one of our departed Elders, now deified, exclaimed in the following most incredible terms: "the catastrophic self-destruction has happened; it is beyond repair". I believe our Elder was thinking of one particular case.

The Vietnamese people in general, and the Caodaists in particular must have been giving a lot of thought to that "catastrophic self-destruction". Had they been UNITED in their efforts, their determination, their capabilities, their heart and soul... Had they heeded seriously the warning and the teaching of Đức Cao Đài... The Caodaists, had they been UNITED, they would have been able to make the Catholics, Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists, Ancestor Worshipers... more aware of Caodaism, and we would have been saved. "Help yourself. and God will help you", the old cliché still works wonders, I am quite sure.

Christ in one of the teaching seances to the Caodaists said: "In time of high wind and very rough weather, passengers in the same plane must not embroil themselves in any turbulent and violent fight. The internal turbulence may help the outside weather condition to sink the ship". This is a figurative speech. The World is in turmoil. Đức Cao Đài's Children are bewildered.

In light of the above, CAO ĐÀI TEMPLE OVERSEAS takes upon itself the delicate duty of crying for UNITY among Religions now in existence in the World, each in each own way, within its own Law, with its own method to arouse the Conscience of Man so that the UNIVERSAL CONSCIENCE may prevail. This is the only way to save Humanity, and to earn the Amnesty from Đức Cao Đài.

The DIVINE EYE perceives, sees, scrutinizes, follows, enquires, reminds, even solicits... all with much Compassion and Justice.

Would you answer the brotherly call? The answer is not for us, it is for THEM.

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