□□□□ (old)

- □□
- English

中文

一、木本水源：三寶心法
恭喜大家，今天已經得聞天道了。這都是有緣份的，俗語說：「 有緣千里能相會，無緣對面不相逢。」什麼叫做有緣和無緣呢？
有緣份的人，就是有善根、有道德，雖是遠在千里之外，也可以來求得大道。沒有緣份的人，就是住在鄰近，
大家最親近者， 也無法渡他。因為他的品行不端正，
就是渡他來，他也不肯叩求，因為這樣的緣故，就分出有緣和無緣了。

今天我們求的是什麼呢？是上天降的先天大道，性理真傳。這天道並不是現在才有，而是從古以來就有，不過
在古代，大道是單傳獨授，一人傳一人，不是普傳的。現在三期末劫，人的良心，比古時不同了，因為造罪做惡太多，上天震怒，九九八十一種天災劫難，一齊降來世上。諸天仙佛，心中不忍，叩懇明明上帝，拯救善男信女，所以上天開恩，真道降世，大開普渡，特令濟公活佛、月慧菩薩，倒裝下來凡世，領受天命，普渡三曹，善男信女有緣份的，都可以得聞天道。今天我們能得求大道，真是三生有幸，累世有修。自古以來，修道之人，拋棄家庭，捨卻事業，千里訪明師，萬里求口訣，行功立德，三千功圓八百果滿，上天暗差仙佛指點，能成道的人，一百個裏面，難得挑選一個。現今求道太容易了，從前呂祖爺說過
：「人身中華最難生，真道明師更難逢，既得人身聞大道，務必早修早超昇。
」這本來是四難，現在變成四易了。今天我們花了幾個錢，叩了幾個頭，就得了大道，但是大家更要明白的是，「先天大道不是出錢可以買的」，因為你們都有這份佛緣，所以才有你們的引保師，費了千言萬語，勸化你、引渡你。今天領你來求大道，跪在佛前，立下大愿，保證你是品行端正、身家清白的善人。你自己剛才在佛前，也立了一道愿，才能受得明師一指點，如果沒有引保師，立愿擔保，你就是拿萬兩黃金，想求大道，也是不能的。所以這大道不是要錢的，而是要救人超生了死，脫劫避難的。這是自古以來不輕傳的大道，非到三期末劫，不降下來，不是皇胎原子，不得指傳。現在三期應運，善和惡全要分判，道和劫同時降世，彌勒祖師掌天盤，濟公活佛、月慧菩薩同領天命，普渡三曹，大辦收圓，是應時應運的先天大道。

今天我們得道，得了什麼呢？得了三件寶貝：關、訣、印。

頭一寶，指點的這個地方，叫做玄關竅，這是我們靈性生來死去的門戶。又叫「靈山」
、「靈臺」、「無縫鎖」；道家叫「玄牝之門」；耶穌叫「十字架」，從前子貢嘆曰：「
夫子之文章，可得而聞也 .
。夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也」。所以在俗語說：「讀破千經萬典，不及明師一點。」今天大家得明白這「自性」所在地，三教聖人，都是從這點修起才成功的。孔子說：「朝聞道，夕死可矣。」可以什麼呢？可以脫了輪迴之苦。世人不遇明師指點，靈性不能從這竅出來，所以說：「玄關竅、蓬萊島、點開就是無價寶」。真道有真證驗，將來到百歲年老，臨終歸空的時後，面目像生時一樣，身體四肢，軟如同棉，冬不挺屍，夏不腐爛。今天大家得這一竅，真可說是無價的寶貝，一步直超無極理天。

第二寶口訣，就是真言。大道是三極妙道，普渡三曹，彌勒古佛應運，才得這佛字真言。

倘遇著大災大難，心裡默念真言，老Φ娘自然命仙佛，保護庇佑，逢凶化吉，遇難呈祥。(老Φ娘是生天生地生萬物的萬靈真主宰)
今天得這口訣不可輕視，倘若輕視，就是輕視自己的性命。應嚴加保守，千萬不可輕易出口。

第三寶是合仝「子亥相摺懷中抱，能脫九九大劫關」這是彌勒佛領下老Φ娘古合仝，能夠脫九九大劫數。為什麼還有數呢？因為開天以來，就定下十佛應運，七佛治世，三佛收圓。三佛裡面，頭一次為燃燈佛降世，普渡眾生，在伏羲時代，為青陽劫，掌天盤一千五白年，渡回二億佛子歸天，因為那時候，人心正，所以降九劫。二次普渡，釋迦佛降世，在周朝末年，人心大變，降十八劫，為紅陽劫，掌天盤三千年，又渡二億佛子歸西。現在三期末劫，彌勒古佛掌天盤，濟公活佛、月慧菩薩掌道盤，普渡三曹，因為世人造孽太重，所以降九九八十一劫，加上青紅二次劫數，合計一百零八劫，佛珠一百零八粒，就是劫的數。我們師尊、師母領天命，普渡三曹，上渡河漢星斗，下渡幽冥鬼魂，中渡人間善男信女，倘若不是遇著這三期末劫年，我們平常的人，那裡可以得這樣至尊至貴的大道呢?

自開天闢地生人以來六萬多年，生了死，死了生，輪迴轉變，累世欠的罪孽太多了。現在上天給人來清算冤業，我們得道以後，必定要常研究，明白大道意義，多多行功立德，來清還累世債賬，將來還可以超九玄拔七祖，同返天堂。我們今天得這三寶：關、訣、印，千萬記住，上不傳父母，下不傳妻兒，不可輕易洩露天機。

> 『時至三期白陽天　普渡三曹好佳緣
> 明師應運東西奔　四處設壇點妙玄
> 奉勸有緣急惺悟　速求大道明本源
> 領受天上三秘寶　誠心修持成聖賢』

二、求道的意義

求道是什麼意義？求是追求，就是要來追求這道是什麼東西，其來源出處是什麼地方，其本體實相，有無形色，在吾們身上什麼所在，與人類萬物，有甚麼利害關係，是怎麼寶貴，怎麼奧妙，原要切切實實，追求得明明白白，才能誠心求之，信道有篤，修道有方，行道有恆，成道自然可期可必了。孟子曰：「仁，人心也。義，人路也。舍其路而弗由，放其心而不知求，哀哉！人有雞犬放，則知求之；有放心而不知求。學問之道無他，求其放心而已矣。」(告子)
求道就是要尋回失去的天理良心。大學云：「物格而后知至，知至而后意誠，意誠而后心正，心正而后身修」，此言先要格物致知，終能發出誠意正心，意誠心正，然後可以修身修道，此乃聖人遺留的證明，由此觀之，修道必須先求道(求知止所)者明矣。

詩曰：

> 篤信修為道可明　得明知止正心誠
> 有恆志念佛光照　誠意虔修賢聖成

三、為何要求道?

道為人之本性，為性命之根源，在人身中，就是人人所固有，怎麼又要求道呢?就是說人類萬靈，莫不是得此性理妙道而生的，這便是有生之始，這個性道，即已賦在人類萬靈的身上了。怎麼第一期青陽，第二期红陽，现在第三期白陽，三期末劫，都須有維皇降道的必要呢? 因為這性道，微妙得難言，雖在人身中，其出入也，並没有影象之可見，其來去也，亦没有聲響之可聞，故不論天地、人靈、萬彙，都是有而不知其自有，若無維皇上帝的天命，特降真道，授命於明師，指傳這個「性理真傳」，點開竅妙，闡明萬古奇秘的「心印大法」，那麼任你賢過顏閔，智勝范增，亦是無法可以知道這個性理妙道的来源出處—玄關善地。怎能知道他的奥妙呢? 他的寶貴呢? 怎知他與天地萬靈萬彙，具有生死緊密的關係，造化無窮的玄妙處呢? 所以古聖王軒轅氏，亦須拜師七十二; 釋迦放棄青宮之貴，而入雪山修道; 孔子求師問禮於柱下; 神光立雪少林，斷臂示誠者; 皆為要求此「性理真傳」之真道也。

孟子曰: 「人有雞犬放，則知求之: 有放心而不知求，哀哉」! 可知世人悉把本性良心放失，而不知求者久矣。然性道良心，既在吾人的身上，怎會放失呢? 因為由理天賦命與人這個性理，自入太極迷魂陣以來，經過太極的造化先天化落後天，純潔的本性，為陰陽氣稟所拘，純善的良心，為世情物慾所蔽，先天的真慧妙智（般若智），化為後天情識聰明，元神化為識神，真靈被五行所制，理性變為氣性，氣性又變為質性了，因為這樣的變遷，就把這個行道本心的主人翁，貶在一隅，真君退位，血心當權，識神用事了，耶穌教主所謂「上帝讓權」即是指此義來說的。

自是以後，世人就把這個行道本心，有如歧路亡羊，莫知所之，概不知求了，終致認賊為父，以血心當作本心，一任他肆無忌憚，胡為亂作，而不知檢點，愈變愈壞了。從此魔王專權於內，六賊縱横於外，意馬溜韁，亂踹方寸寶田，心猿脫鎖，大鬧天宮，不可復制了;
因是造罪招愆，結冤造孽，因果牽纏，輪迴不了，人心日下，道德日亡，未曾有的大浩劫，由是發端了; 從今而後，
世人一概，都是在苦海中求生活，向地獄裏尋死路，當初來時那條正路，已經沒有人問津了，這個八德真經，還有誰要去顧盼呢?
所以這條真經正路，遂至茅塞不通，天堂樂國的門前，可以羅雀了，孟子所謂「山徑之谿間，介然用之而成路，其間不用，則茅塞之矣」，即此之謂也。

因世人放失本心，不知那裏去了，甚至這條真經正路，又被荊棘阻塞不通，所以無有法兒，可以找回這個性道本心了，因為這樣的緣故，所以必要求道，又必須修道者，就是這個原因了。求道是怎樣? 就是要找回放失之本心。修道是怎樣? 就是修復要去找本心的這條正路。若不求道，不能明白本心的來源、及止處，亦不能知本心放失的原因，及被錮的地方; 若不修道，不能剷除途中這些障礙物，怎能容易進軍，不進軍，怎能叱退那些包圍着本心的妖物、魔怪，所以必須求道、修道，才能救回本心，回歸故家鄉極樂國，使吾們的主人翁，重見天日，拜見老 Φ，歡會龍華，何等的美滿啊!

詩曰:

> 性命根源曾不知　悲哀雞犬找回時
> 可憐心放無關要　應運知求築道基

道者路也，乃是要回天堂西方極樂的正路，卻不是凡塵俗世的人路，也不是顛入苦海的迷路，更不是墜入輪迴的末路。這條路在那裏呀？悟者近在目前，一步可以直超，迷者遠在十萬八千里，經千萬遍的輪迴，還是找不出這條正路，雖幾萬年，亦是走不到的最奇祕的路呢！原來這條路，是在吾人的本性中，來自理天的，在理天謂之無極真理，賦於人身中，乃謂之性，故曰「性理」，來時既由如是處來的，去時亦應向如是處去，這就是人人生死來去，必由之真經正路，所以又稱之曰「道者」，就是這個緣故了，孔子曰：「誰能出不由戶，何莫由斯道也」，即是此義。

簡而言之，求道就是求回本性之天理良心者是也，孟子曰：「學問之道無他，求其放心而已矣」。

如果求得着這個「性理真道」，是有甚麼好處呢？

(一) 可以超生了死 ─ ─
超生了死是甚麼意思，就是超出陰陽，跳出五行，脫輪迴，登極樂，免了生生死死、永在苦海、萬劫不能翻身。何以必要超生了死呢？因為這生死，皆不是好的事，陽世陰府，皆不是好的去處，莊子所以說：「我本不欲生，忽然生在世，我本不欲死，忽然死期至」。釋迦當時棄青宮之貴，為了生死一大事因緣而出家，可知世間並非樂土，生死皆非好事；生在陽世也是活地獄，死在陰間是死地獄，生死總在地獄苦海，陰陽兩地，皆非善地，活地獄，死地獄，皆非樂園也，因此我們必須求道，受明師指授「性理真傳」，超昇天堂極樂，免再降生塵世，受這陰陽輪迴，四生六道轉變之苦，求道所以要超生了死者此也。

(二) 可以改惡向善去邪歸正 ─ ─
求道才能找回本性良心，始能知道人心有真有假，真的就是本性良心，亦即是元神，假的就是血心、人心，亦即識神是也。世人每一興念，悉涉貪私偏邪，每一舉動，皆屬陰險狠毒、野狐伎倆者，皆因本性良心，悉被慾蔽情封，不得出現，一任血心人心之識神用事所以然也，所以必須求道，才能求回本心，生發妙智慧，才可以照見是非曲直，善惡邪正，轉識成智，守正除邪，所有作為，皆依中道本性為師，故孔子曰：「三人行必有我師焉，擇其善者而從之，其不善者而改之」，此言本性良心，即吾們的良師，舉凡有所作為，依此良心做去，則萬無一失了，其不善者，即耳目招搖之謂也，所以求道，才能改惡從善，去邪歸正，誠然有之。

(三) 可以消禍劫解冤孽 ─ ─
禍劫冤孽，皆由人自造的，因為人人放失本心，棄了八德，血心用事，所作所為，悉違反良心，不合天理正道，所以結冤孽，造因果，殃連禍結，久而久之，遂釀成古今未曾有之大浩劫者，皆因世人失道故也。禍劫冤孽，既因放失本心失道的原因，而釀成的，所以必須求道，求回本心，才可以消禍劫、解冤孽者，明矣。果能求得良心正道回來，自然知道禍劫之所由來，冤孽之所由結，自能悔既往之過失，自怨自艾，誠心懺悔，極力行功立德，以償宿孽愆尤，自然冤解孽消，無有牽纏，且從茲以往，一意一念，悉依本心為主，一舉一動，悉依八德是遵，那能再結孽債，再造劫因呢？似此新仇不結，舊恨無存，身心清靜，自然禍劫冤孽，不解而自解矣。

『了悟猶如夜得燈 無牕暗室忽光明
此身不向今生度 更向何時度此身』

四、求道有什麼好處？

(四)可以改變命運 ─ ─
命運何來？由天命乎？由神定乎？由人造乎？人自造其因，神天乃助其緣，最後自然成其果了。總而言之，三世宿緣，數世食果，雖是神天助緣，實皆由人心自造之也。觀夫世人，或生為王公將相，田園萬頃，大廈連雲，富甲一方者，乃其人前生本心常存，心不離道，兼之祖宗積德深厚，福田自種佳禾，自然今生結得好果，此自然之道也；或自有生以來，疾病纏身，一生落魄，貧無立錐之地，家無隔宿之糧，或伶仃孤苦，或災禍連綿者，皆係三世不修，本心流亡，血心識神用事，福田偏種惡草，自然不得自食好果，所謂天網恢恢，報應不爽，信不誣也。禍福無門，惟人自招，欲改命運者，必待求回本心，把福田的惡草除盡，重植佳禾，將來自得佳果，哲家洪子云：『蓋世功勞，當不得一個「矜」字，瀰天罪過，當不得一個「悔」字』，試觀丘祖，當初乃係金蛇鎖口，最兇惡的命運，求道後，努力實修，積功累果，終至冤解孽消，不知不覺之間，冥冥中，把他的陰紋，改變雙龍搶珠的大貴格了，求道之好處，由此亦可以瞭然於心矣。
行盡世間天下路，獨是修行不悞人。

詩曰：

欲脫閻羅證理天 服膺弗失臨深淵 “
來時由戶出由此 直超方能伴佛仙

『愚夫貪世利， 俗士重虛名。 “
轉眼總成空， 徒使業隨身。』

五、得道四難
(一) 人身難得：人為萬物之靈，性
藉此身以存，身藉此性以生，真不離假，假不離真，真假打成一片。「舍利子，色不異空，空不異色。」藉此身以超此性，苟無此身， 此性何以超之？語云：一失人身萬劫難，故人身難得也。

(二) 三期難遇：
茍無至道，不明真假，不明利害，糊糊塗塗，了草一生而已矣！三期末劫者，亦非三陽開泰，劫泰並行之謂也，即青紅白三陽之轉運也。然道非時不降，非人不傳，譬如人之患病垂危，必延之于醫藥，藥應病而服，道應劫而降。屆此三期末劫，三災八難齊現，空前一大險象也，非真道不足以救拯，泰在真道降世，萬靈普救，真千載難逢之佳機良辰也，故曰三期難遇。

(三)
中華難生：中華位居亞洲，亞字為白十字也，天地之樞紐，曰中國、中華、中原。中也者天地之大本也，聖人脈脈而出，開化最早，古稱天朝，真道降始之地也，若非生於中華，不易得聞天道，故曰中華難生。

(四)
真道難逢：三期萬教齊發，真者不二法門，假者貿貿皆是，佛云：「摸着根的成佛祖，摸不着根的瞎修行。」真道非佛緣深厚，祖德蔭澤之人，實難遇之，故曰真道難逢。

詩曰：

世道不古，人心日壞，一般時髦人物，自作聰明，不相信有因果輪迴天堂地獄。自家不信，還說人家迷信；不
知道說人家迷信的，正是他自己迷而不悟，絕天堂之門路，種地獄之深因，愚痴懵懂，可憫可憐。要曉得因果
輪迴、天堂地獄，是宇宙的至理，不獨是佛家一家的學說，如儒家所說：「積善之家，必有餘慶；積不善之家
，必有餘殃。」 (易經) 道家所說：「善惡之報，如影隨形。」 (感應篇) 難道不是因果麼？天堂地獄之說，耶回兩教，都極力主張的。至於輪迴這一件事，古人書上所載，不知凡幾，
就說稗官野史，不足為信，然正史上所載的，也就不少。我今姑且略擧幾條：如伯鯀為熊，見於史記正義；如
意為犬，見於漢書；羊祐前身為李氏子，見於晉書；梁元帝前身為眇目僧，見於南史梁記；劉氏戈前身為李庶
，見於北史齊紀；劉沅前身為牛僧孺，范祖禹前身為鄧禹，郭祥正前身為李太白，均見於宋史；夏原吉前身為
屈原，見於皇明通紀。載在簡編，斑斑可考。如說因果輪迴，天堂地獄是沒有的，難道各教聖人及歷代史官都
是誑騙人麼？當然是有，怎麼能說沒有呢！

因果之理，譬如種植，下種就是因，成熟就是果。種瓜得瓜，種豆得豆；一種善因，得善果；種惡因，得惡果；那是一定的道理，只看成熟的遲早罷了。輪迴之理，就是俗話所說，人死心不死，軀殼雖壞，人性常存，一日未能出世，自然隨業輪轉，前生後世，譬如昨日明朝，這種道理，更是容易明白，何須議論紛紛。至於天堂地獄，有兩種說法：如以理論，則天堂地獄，皆從自心所生；如以事論，則楞嚴經所說諸天形狀，地藏經所說各種地獄形狀，皆甚祥明，斷非虛妄。可笑現在一般飄窃皮毛的新學家，說道科學昌明，這種鬼神迷信，不攻自破。我們倒要請教，現在泰西的科學中，有一種靈學，不是專門研究鬼神情狀的麼？怎麼說科學昌明，就沒有鬼神呢！

人身中華最難生 三期真道更難逢 “
今得人身聞大道 務必早修早超生

六、因果輪迴天堂地獄果然有麼

？

「千般通理千般妙 “
一處不到一處迷」

七、十條大愿

東奔西走把道揚言口婆心訴衷腸
諸弟問心仔細想為誰辛苦為誰忙
吾乃
三天主考 奉

聖諭 來至佛堂 參
帝駕 休息再詳
隨口唱賦
十條大愿 哈哈
一嘆修 道不誠心 糊糊塗塗混光陰 洪誓大愿隨口立
試問誰人照愿行 空口立愿不去了 欺人欺天欺鬼神
望諸弟 自問心 難道不怕罪擔身 莫謂現下未遭報
應劫之時自判分 不信考查歷古事 天網恢恢饒何人
二嘆修道不懺悔 粧飾遮掩自相欺 自己有過不肯改
開言盡談人是非 常言來說是非者 其人定然好是非
望諸弟 要責己 過勿憚改聖賢希 放下屠刀成佛體
匹夫立志參天地 善惡到頭總有報 天理昭彰饒過誰
三嘆修道不實踐 虛心假意欺上天 陽奉陰違用假面
口是心非弄巧言 沽名釣譽圖體面 真功實善即不談
望諸弟 胡不參 君子慎獨為那般 暗室虧心神目電
人間私語如雷般 何況神道佛仙鑑 難道不怕遭天譴
四嘆修道志不恒 始勤終怠決無成 見逆則退順則進
忽作忽輟豈賢英 學如逆水行舟進 不進則退理難更
望諸弟 志立恒 百折不彎乃英雄 西天大路雖然遠
走了一程近一程 始終如一志立定 半途而廢打殘靈
五嘆修道不學謙 欺師滅祖膽包天 從來明師豈易見
千里訪求入深山 踏破鐵鞋無覓處 苦死無成實可憐
望諸弟 天良現 尊師重道乃順天 一指之師終北面
一世師生萬萬年 任爾功高無邊量 忘師性命難保全
六嘆修道理未精 藐視前人罪非輕 知恩不報非君子
飲水思源乃真情 草木無根何能長 人無引進路難行
望諸弟 要識清 合心共膽辦末程 當思前人引進你
洪誓大愿立壇庭 穴中螻蟻尚報義 何況人為萬物靈
七嘆修道失正規 佛規不守任胡為 修道不將佛規守
憑何修養登天梯 佛規乃是天戒律 不遵焉能故家歸
望諸弟 參仔細 謹守佛規前途追 車若無軌必遭險
船若無槳行必危 修道如不戒律守 難脫生死與輪迴
八嘆修道不慎言 天機密寶隨便談 自古明師難得遇
無字真經誰敢言 三教聖人尚嚴守 何況俗子凡夫間
望諸弟 莫欺天 洩露天機罪難擔 若非逢此良辰日
此寶豈能輕降凡 謹言慎行直前辦 愿了自然理天返
九嘆修道無慈心 匿道不現誤原人 天本無言賴人勸
人若不勸道何聞 回想自己求道日 豈非前人渡迷津
望諸弟 須三省 善與人同古聖云 從來成佛因渡世
己立立人道同聞 何況今時開普渡 九二原人齊歸根

十嘆修道心多虧　誰肯前進量力為　情枷愛鎖看不破
視財如命奇貨居　良辰佳景赴水流　苟安怠縮誤時機
望諸弟　休自欺　良辰錯過難再遇　趁此佳期尚未盡
捨財捨法捨無畏　十條大愿依此進　了愿歸根返瑤西

又訓（一）

先天大道　亘古不輕傳　今逢三期　普渡大收圓
明師一點　脫出輪迴苦　行功立德　定證九品蓮
超生了死　處處有證驗　非是旁門　熱鬧混眼前
道在自身　身外無真道　有形有象　仍在輪迴間
得受一指　超氣入理域　得者不修　至時太可憐
明師真道　非是口頭語　超玄拔祖　非是空口言
有緣佛子　得道發心愿　設立法船　廣救有緣男
佛緣淺者　得道生疑念　著形著相　兩眼往外觀
不究性理　迴光來返照　貪圖外表　真理不悟參
自古修道　跋山又涉水　功圓果滿　仙佛暗點傳
受盡辛苦　修成氣天客　天地壞時　仍墜苦海淵
現今末運　上天開慈憫　活佛降世　各處找原男
在家出家　妻朋子為伴　齊家修道　理天永團圓
六萬年載　逢此良機會　錯過此機　想修難上難
迷子不信　只因冤業重　至時後悔　哭天也枉然
有緣善信　得道速前辦　龍華大會　那時顯威嚴
按功定果　分毫天不昧　全在此時　努力行功前

八、求道後修道之工夫

昔時出家修行，如今三期末劫，真道降世，救渡原人，普渡三曹，特命明師降世，指授「性理真傳」，又命千佛萬祖，齊下東林，代天宣化，大闡性理心法，直由性功入手，不用拋妻離子，放棄家庭，絕塵避世，在家夫婦子女可以同修，父不失於慈，子不失於孝，夫婦不失於義，兄弟不失於友愛，不論士農工商皆可修道。先天大道既可以進修操辦，後天事業亦可以營謀，半聖半凡，一面修道，一面進行各人工作，無論何界，均不妨害其職業，如此容易，如此簡便，這乃

老Φ

愛子心切，大發鴻慈，大開恩典，使吾們不論是誰，都可以修道，不論婦女文盲，亦得超生了死，脫輪迴登彼極樂；使文人士子，得求學問，可以列真儒，成賢，成聖，成仙成佛，似此好機，千載難遇。惟願善信，得吾道者，速速修道，成己成人。成己即修身，自己改過懺悔，一切行為，要合乎理；成人即渡人，自己得道須將道理宣揚，令諸親友，亦明道義，同登天道，人人改過，行為均合乎理。中庸云「率性之謂道」，修身也；「修道之謂教」，渡人也。代天宣化，渡人為外功。改過遷善，修身為內功也。現值三期末劫，邇來天時緊急，重外功輕內功，外功圓滿，內功自成，故修道以外功為先，而身不修，不能齊其家，其家不可教而能教人者無之。成己始能成人，正己始能化人，則似又以行內功為先，總之大道之功夫，要在內外不分，動靜無二，無內無外，可內可外，知行合一，常應常得，即此便是不二佛法，大道之真功夫也。

九、修道要行功立德
古人云三不朽，就是：「立德、立功、立言」，所謂行功立德，行者就是實行建立，功者功用，修道業要行功立德，立者樹立，德者美德，能建造功業，方能樹立美德也，總之不惜勞苦不思名利，而為社會人群福利的，叫做行功，其效果便是立德了。

（一）行功可分內功外功：

1. 內功：就是自己正心修身，克己復禮，一言一行，不敢有一毫人欲之私。
2. 外功：是開荒下種，設立法船，不惜精神物力，犧牲一切，屈己從人，為道設想，因此也就是你在行道的過程中，對眾生之貢獻所得的成果，就是外功也。行外功之法可分三種：
1. 財施：以財施捨，救難濟急，如印贈善書經文，贈藥施茶修橋舖路，助人開荒辦道、設法船，
量力助道，種種利人方便之事也。
2. 法施：就是講道德說仁義談因果玄妙，勸人為善，排難解紛，代天宣化，渡人求道，使人修善
，成全人明理修道有無量功德。
3. 無畏施：守住道心，忍辱受屈，受辱不怨，逆來順受，立標杆，
使後學效法，這也是立功的一種。

(二)
立德：立德是修道最重要的課題之一，德者，就是樹立品德也，顯化大帝云：有功無德變成魔（自高妄大）有德無功道難成（冤孽業障不消）所以功與德要相輔相成。古云：大海能容細流，故能成其大，此海之德行也，人能效法之，何憂難成大器，立德之法有三：

1. 心德；就是心存慈悲，處世公平，有禮讓與世無爭，誠心敬天地，孝父母，待人無驕無妒、無怒、無嗔，此是心德也。
2. 身德者：品行端正，修持謹慎，戒除殺盜淫，為人模範，樸實勤儉，事事平和，對上以敬，待下以慈，先行後言，言行相顧，則是身德也。
3. 口德者：言語益人，常談果報，忠言勸世，講解聖經善書，以勸化世人，言行一致，不言人短，不炫己長，為口德也。以上三德，只是修為上的論點，但實質上，我們要做到：⒈恭敬師尊、⒉和睦道親、⒊正直無私、⒋孝敬長上、⒌午夜自思，無慚愧處、⒍銀錢清白，不沾分文、⒎守己安份，老成做事、⒏講究根本，做好榜樣。

十、孝道與現代
有人說：孝道可以提倡，但在現代應該有新的解釋。此說言之成理，不過，如何解釋，迄無所見。

孝在中國，有一套完整的理論，所以成為「道」。如果對於這一套完整的理論，也就是對於孝道並不瞭解，而要作「新的解釋」，那根本只是一種「趕時髦」心理，既要趕「現代」，又要趕「文化復興」而已！

我們中國這一套完整的孝道理論，就是「孝經」。我細看這十八章孝經，沒有發現其有「不合理」處，並且也沒有發現其有「不合現代」之處；若云與現代不合，乃是現代的人不知孝道，不合孝道之故。

只舉「開宗明義章」來說：

「身體髮膚受之父母，不敢毀傷，孝之始也。」 ─ ─
這「孝之始」乃是一片父母愛護子女之心，希望子女自愛，莫使父母傷心。如果「現代人」拿它來作為拒絕剪掉長髮的藉口，那只是不肖者「扯皮」，與體會「父母心」無關。

「立身行道，揚名於後世，以顯父母，孝之終也。」 ─ ─ 這「孝之終」仍然是一片父母愛護子女之心，希望子女成人自立，好好的做人，好好的做事，使父母因為生養教育了好兒女，對人類社會有了貢獻，而感覺光榮。這有什麼「不合現代」的？難道一定要遷就今日「個人主義」的不肖觀念才算「合乎時宜」麼？

「孝，始於事親，中於事君，終於立身。」 ─ ─
這是孝之全程，希望一個人，在家庭能作好子女，在國家能作好國民，在人類社會能夠有貢獻成就。這有什麼不對呢？如果說不對，大概是指「事君」兩字「不民主」；可是，你既然知道「民主」，就也應知道「事君」兩字可體會為「為民服務」，又有什麼「不合現代」呢？

孔子歸結曰：「孝，天之經，地之義，民之行。」 ─ ─ 這裡所謂「經」，就是正常的；所謂「義」，就是適當的；而所謂「行」，就是生活法則。試問：一個人如果不孝，正常嗎？如果不正常，適當嗎，那麼他過的是什麼生活？

今日孝道不彰，即是反常，反常是對任何人都不利的！我們需要正常，所以必須從復興孝道開始。

十一

了凡四訓乃立德修身之指南
近讀了凡四訓語譯，感受良多，對袁了凡先生將其閱歷所得，著書立言，垂示後世，實乃令人欽佩。

了凡先生初時安於命運理數，不另他求！後得雲谷禪師以「命由我作福自己求」「一切福田、不離方寸，從心而覓，感無不通」「天作孽猶可違，自作孽不可活」「積善之家必有餘慶」點破先生「聽天由命」之宿命論調。繼之，禪師再以修身立命，除惡積善相勉，先生奉持，戰戰兢兢，虛心向善，證驗，「天雖諶，命靡常」「凡稱福禍，皆己求之」之言不虛。

明悉福禍自求，命由己立，便要修身積德，改過向善。在改過之法中，首先要人發羞恥心、敬畏心，並且要有勇氣，速速去惡改過。除惡之法有三：一是從事上改，犯了過失再行靜心反省。二是從理上改，事事先細細思
考，道理既明，便不犯過，但最好還是由心上改，因為心無動念無私無慾，過從何生？所以能修心明理禁過，
並賴良朋提醒，神鬼為鑒，一心懺悔向善，必能心神恬曠；智慧頓開，必能靜心安性。

改過之後還須善積功德，消除前世冤孽，改變命運，故在積善之方中，以「積善之家必有餘慶」「施比受更有
福」「護生得好報」「積德之人鬼神欽仰」「平冤減刑合天心」「敬神護法子孫昌」「真善與假善」「端善和
曲善」「陽善和陰德」「偏善和正善」「大小難易看動機」等實例來闡示行善的道理和原則。至於積善之法難
以盡述如： (一) 與人為善 (二) 存敬愛心 (三) 成人之美 (四) 勸人為善 (五) 救人危急 (六) 興建大利 (七)

捨財作福 (八) 護持正法 (九) 敬重尊長 (十) 愛惜物命，依其方法推廣修持，則萬種功德皆能圓滿完成。

最後在「謙德之效」中，以易經「天道虧盈而益謙，地道變盈而流謙，鬼神害盈而福謙，人道惡盈而好謙。」
書經「滿招損、謙受益」說明人要虛懷若谷，時時存謙，與人方便，必能感動天地。所以凡人修身立命，必須
有恆立定志向，廣積陰德，加被十方，則命運也就無法拘束人了。

「一切福田不離方寸，從心而覓，感無不通」「福禍由己」實乃給那些視吉凶福禍是前生註定之人有所警醒。
「要有怎樣的收獲，先要怎樣的栽。」個人之未來一生，皆掌握在自己手中，與其聽天由命，不如起而修身立
命。故我們在細細研閱之餘，應體先生之嘉言懿訓，安身立命，諸惡莫作，眾善奉行，如山軒子所言修道之士，以此度己度人，自覺覺他，未聞聖人心法者，閱此書而得知修身之法，洞悉人生真理，進而作為求道之階梯，求超生了死之方，故「了凡四訓」乃我們立德修身之指標。人人抱守奉行，必能使社會臻於至善，而不負先生用心之苦耳。

十二、人生何處去？
人生向何處去？亦可答稱人生必然向死的路上去。生必有死，但人死後又向何處去？此一問題，乃從人生問題轉到人死問題，其重要性決不在人生問題之下。

解答此問題，可舉三說為代表。一佛家說，佛教言，人死當歸涅槃，涅槃是不生不滅義，超脫生死義，須有高深的修持，方可誕登彼岸 ──
涅槃。人身由地水火風四大合成，人死則四大皆空。但人生時有作業，此業則不隨四大俱去，於是佛家乃有輪迴之說，生前作業，死後仍回人世，如是則死生輪迴，永無終止，譬之如一大苦海；故人生前，唯當減少作業，俾可逐漸超渡此苦海；又須大慈大悲，救苦救難，方便幫助人同出此苦海，如是乃得逐漸回歸涅槃。至於消極自殺，亦非正途，仍不脫輪迴之苦。其次是耶穌教，上帝創世，亞當夏娃，犯罪被謫，降世為人，果能知罪修行，亦可回到天堂。

中國人在此兩宗教傳入前，自己另有一套信仰，此可以儒教為主。子路問死，子曰：「未知生，焉知死。」孔子意，要懂得死後，先懂得生前。生是此人，死亦是此人。若不懂生前那人，又如何懂得死後那人。然則人究竟是什麼呢？孟子曰：「仁者人也。大家總認此六尺之軀之此一個我為人，其實以六尺之軀之此一個我，卻並不真實即成為一人。人必在人群中成一人，慈孝之道，老幼相顧，夫婦之道，兄弟之義，朋友有信，此皆人道，亦即仁道，故儒者首重人倫大道。

此刻科學昌隆，天文學生物學上種種發現，在西方有上帝迷失之難；但在中國，若把孔子儒家所傳的心性之學來體會耶穌的十字架精神，豈不反可更直接、更明白。又如在現代社會，一意信奉佛教，群相出家，為僧為尼，豈不自取自堵生路。也只有如儒家孔子講求修齊治平大道，先能自求生存，而亦並不背於釋迦大慈大悲救苦救難那一套出世精神。佛家說，做一天和尚敲一天鐘。又說，我不入地獄，誰入地獄。在今天，信中國孔子教義，也正如做和尚敲鐘，也正是先進地 獄，好救人出地獄。

三教精義，我不能在此刻深求，我再提出宋代理學家「喫緊為人」一語四字來奉獻於凡信教人，信任何教，乃至不信教人，相與共勉。（摘自聯合副刊）

十三、「人生何處去」讀後
書之價值不在以金錢的多寡來衡量，而是以書中知識對我們理性良知之啟發，才夠稱是寶，古人云：「開卷有益」，真是不虛。

「人生何處去」書中「閻王的警告信」「三位博士論鬼神」「民俗搜奇生死緣」「借屍還魂」「因果報應說起」等篇可說是文字淺顯而寓意深長，本書淺出深入，並而顯示宇宙是一元而多重的。

我們人並不是個個都是聖人，而只是一個凡夫俗子，對於死，在人的心目中是一種茫然飄泊不定的境界，死是
生的結束，人的視覺是短視的，只重視目前可見的，認為生是快樂的是值得眷戀留連的，所以對於死好像是永
遠發生在別人身上的一件事，而貪生怕死，只有智者才能殺身成仁捨生取義。

在「人生何處去」書中告訴我們，人生的最高境界。人生雖然必向死的路上去，又生必有死，儘管人們貪生怕
死，但卻不能免去死亡，試觀自古又有誰是長生不死的呢？人死後到底又是以什麼姿態存在呢？記得有人說過
「當我死的時後，我的身體就分解，但我的人格 ──那真正的我卻繼續的活下去 ‧‧‧‧‧‧ 」他所指的身體正是佛家所云肉體之我並非真我，而是四大假相 ──
地水火風的暫時聚合，會隨著時間散壞、衰老而死亡。他所指的人格就是佛家所云一靈真性，是我們的靈魂才
是真我，是永不幻滅。生就是靈和肉的契合，死就是靈魂和身體的分離，那在人死後靈魂又是歸向何處呢？

人死不是如燈滅，就可了事的，在此書中又提及輪迴一說，人死後肉體終歸自然，靈魂卻是要接受審判，人在
世上如無惡不作，喪天害理、背天逆行，便將入地獄，飽受苦果，投胎再生、生生死死、死死生生輪迴不息。
如果能求得真性之解脫，訪求明師，直指性命根源，能修聖學賢，行功立德，自覺覺他，覺性圓滿，必能超生
了死，永脫輪迴之苦，見性成佛，達涅槃境界。

人們不必再以肉體的死為最後的歸宿，不必再被有限的時空所局限，時間和永恆是完整不可分割，生和死應是
等量齊觀。「知天命識天時」，我們要知生之莊嚴可貴，要覓見真我，認理歸真，行功立德，那死歸何處便可
不言而知。「人生何處去」這書中各篇的含意，實有值得我們思想再三。

十四、認理修真 ─

「心靈研究專輯」讀後
心靈學的研究，在十九世紀中葉創始於英國劍橋、牛津、倫敦等大學，百年來以推廣到世界各地，變成一種新
興的學問，吸引不少數的學者專家從事這項研究，並證實宗教的靈魂論。

當代大教育家蔡元培先生（歷任北京大學校長多年）曾說：「佛法的目的，在『脫輪迴苦而得涅槃樂』茍證明
輪迴為可信，則解脫輪迴的需要，自然起信。」輪迴的種子，就是這個靈魂（佛家叫做佛性）。大文學家兼儒
醫的丁福寶先生說：欲明今世後世之輪迴果報，宜先明人死之後，確有靈魂之存在。（見學佛起信編）心靈學是以客觀的科學方法，尋求證明人除了肉體外，還存在著靈魂，它的本質是為靈魂而靈魂，承認這種客觀的事實而已，非為宗教而設。但我們認為借用它來證實宗教道理的正確性，幫助我們了解人生的真理，以便遏止人

English

I. Wood Roots, Water Source: The Three-Treasures Heart Method

Congratulations to everyone—today you have already heard the Heavenly Dao. This comes from affinity. As the saying goes: “When affinity exists, people can meet though a thousand miles apart; without affinity, they may face each other and never meet.” What do “having affinity” and “lacking affinity” mean? Those with affinity possess good roots and moral character; even from a thousand miles away, they can come and seek the Great Dao. Those without affinity may live right next door, close to us, and still cannot be ferried across, for their conduct is not upright. Even if you were to bring them in, they would refuse to bow and seek. For this reason we speak of those with affinity and those without.

What are we seeking today? The Primordial Dao bestowed from Heaven—the true transmission concerning (human) nature and Principle. This Heavenly Dao is not newly appearing now; it has existed from ancient times. In antiquity, however, the Great Dao was transmitted singly, one person to one person, not spread broadly. Now, at the end of the Third Epoch’s calamities, people’s consciences are not what they were in antiquity. Because sins and evils have become too many, Heaven is angered, and the eighty-one calamities descend together upon the world. The immortals and Buddhas could not bear this in their hearts and petitioned the Supreme Lord (Shangdi) to rescue good men and faithful women. Therefore Heaven showed mercy: the True Dao descended into the world and the great universal ferrying opened. The Holy Teacher (Ji Gong) and Bodhisattva Moon-Wisdom (Yuehui) took on mortal form, received the Mandate of Heaven, and universally ferried the Three Realms (heavenly, human, and netherworld). Those good men and faithful women who have affinity may all come to hear the Heavenly Dao. That we are able to seek the Great Dao today is truly fortune gained over three lives and the fruit of cultivation over many lives.

Since antiquity, those who cultivated the Dao left their households and set aside their affairs, traveling a thousand li to visit an enlightened master and ten thousand li to obtain the oral key, accumulating merits and establishing virtues until three thousand merits were complete and eight hundred fruits were full. Only then would Heaven secretly dispatch an immortal or Buddha to point the way; out of a hundred people, it was hard to select even one who could realize the Dao. Seeking the Dao today is far too easy. Long ago, the Patriarch Lü Zu said: “To be born human

within China is most difficult; to meet a bright master who reveals the True Dao is harder still. Having obtained a human body and heard the Great Dao, you must hasten to cultivate and swiftly transcend.” These were originally the “four difficulties,” but now they have become “four eases.”

Today we spent a little money and knocked our heads a few times in prostration and thus obtained the Dao. Yet everyone must understand: “The Primordial Dao cannot be bought with money.” It is because you have Buddha-affinity that your introducer and guarantor exhaust themselves with a thousand words to exhort and guide you. Today, leading you to seek the Dao, they knelt before the Buddhas and made a great vow, guaranteeing that you are a good person of upright conduct and clean family life. You yourself just now also made a vow before the Buddhas so you could receive the enlightened master’s one-point transmission. Without the introducer and guarantor making a vow on your behalf, even if you brought ten thousand taels of gold and wanted to seek the Dao, you still could not. Thus the Dao is not sought with money; it is to save people—to transcend birth and death, to escape calamity and avoid disaster. This is the Great Dao that from antiquity was not lightly transmitted. Until the end of the Third Epoch it would not descend; unless one were a “royal embryo, primordial seed,” one could not receive the pointing transmission. Now, as the Third Epoch unfolds, good and evil must be judged; the Dao and the calamities descend at the same time. Maitreya, the Ancient Buddha, governs the heavenly register; the Holy Teacher and Bodhisattva Moon-Wisdom jointly bear the Mandate to universally ferry the Three Realms and to carry out the great work of the final gathering in this opportune time of the Primordial Dao.

What have we obtained today in obtaining the Dao? We have received three treasures: the Gate (or Pass), the Formula, and the Seal.

The first treasure is the place indicated by the pointing: it is called the “Mysterious Pass Aperture.” This is the portal through which our true spirit comes at birth and returns at death. It is also called the Spirit Mountain, the Spirit Terrace, and the Seamless Lock; the Daoists call it “the Gate of the Mysterious Female”; Jesus called it “the Cross.” In the past, Zigong sighed: “The Master’s writings, we can hear; but the Master’s words on human nature and the Heavenly Dao—these we cannot hear.” Thus it is said among the people: “Even if you read through a thousand scriptures and ten thousand classics, it does not equal one pointing from an enlightened master.” Today you have come to know where this “true nature” resides; the sages of all three teachings began their cultivation from this point and thereby succeeded. Confucius said: “If in the morning I hear the Dao, I may die in the evening.” What does this mean? It means one can be freed from the suffering of rebirth.

If people do not encounter an enlightened master’s pointing, their true spirit cannot exit by this aperture. Hence the saying: “The Mysterious Pass, the Isles of Penglai—once opened, it is a treasure beyond price.” The True Dao has true verifications: when one reaches a hundred years and, at life’s end, returns to the Origin, the face looks as in life; the body and limbs are supple like cotton; in winter there is no rigid corpse; in summer there is no corruption. That everyone receives this Aperture today truly is an inestimable treasure—one step straight to the Realm of Non-Ultimate Principle.

The second treasure is the oral formula—the True Word (mantra). The Dao is the wondrous Dao of the Three Epochs, universally ferrying the Three Realms; only because the Ancient Buddha

Maitreya comes in this cycle do we receive this Buddha-word True Formula.

Should you encounter great calamity or danger, silently recite the True Word in your heart; Heavenly Mother (Lao Mu) will naturally command the immortals and Buddhas to protect and shelter you, turning misfortune to auspiciousness and danger to safety. (Heavenly Mother—Lao Mu—is the true sovereign of all spirits, who gave birth to heaven and earth and the ten thousand beings.) Having received this formula today, do not take it lightly; to treat it lightly is to treat your own life lightly. Guard it with utmost care; never let it pass your lips casually.

The third treasure is the combined hand seal: “Zi and Hai interlock, embraced at the chest,” by which one can pass through the eighty-one great calamities. This is the ancient combined seal granted by Heavenly Mother and borne by Maitreya; it can release one from the tally of the ninety-nine times nine calamities. Why is there a fixed number? Because from the opening of heaven it was ordained that ten Buddhas would respond to the cycles: seven Buddhas govern the world; three Buddhas complete the gathering. Of these three, the first was Dipamkara (Lamp-Lighting) Buddha, who descended to universally ferry beings in the era of Fu Xi—this was the Green (Qing) Era. He governed the heavenly register for 1,500 years and ferried two hundred million Buddha-children back to Heaven. In those times people’s hearts were upright, so nine calamities descended. The second universal ferrying was when Śākyamuni descended near the end of the Zhou, when human hearts had greatly changed; eighteen calamities descended—this was the Red Era. He governed the heavenly register for 3,000 years and again ferried two hundred million Buddha-children to the West. Now, at the end of the Third Epoch, the Ancient Buddha Maitreya governs the heavenly register; the Holy Teacher and Bodhisattva Moon-Wisdom govern the Dao register and universally ferry the Three Realms. Because the sins of the world are too heavy, there descend eighty-one calamities; adding the movements of the Green and Red cycles, the total is one hundred and eight calamities. The 108 beads on a Buddha-rosary tally precisely these calamities.

Our Patriarch and Matriarch have received the Mandate and universally ferry the Three Realms—above, ferrying stars of the Milky Way; below, ferrying the spirits of the netherworld; in between, ferrying the good men and faithful women of the human world. Were it not for meeting this end-time of the Third Epoch, how could ordinary people like us obtain so supremely noble a Dao?

From the opening of heaven and earth and the birth of humankind—over sixty thousand years—there has been birth then death, death then birth, revolving through rebirth; the sins and debts we owe from life to life have piled up too many. Now Heaven causes people to reckon their grievances and karmic debts. After receiving the Dao we must diligently study and understand the meaning of the Great Dao, and we must abundantly perform merit and establish virtue to repay our debts from former lives so that in the future we may elevate nine generations and redeem seven ancestors, returning together to Heaven. The three treasures—the Gate, the Formula, and the Seal—must be remembered without fail. Do not transmit them upward to parents or downward to spouse and children; do not casually divulge Heaven’s secrets.

> “Now that the time has arrived for the White Era of the Third Epoch,
> The universal ferrying of the Three Realms is a fine affinity indeed.
> The enlightened master, responding to the cycle, hastens East and West,
> Establishing altars everywhere to point out the wondrous Mystery.
> I earnestly urge all with affinity: quickly awaken!
> Swiftly seek the Great Dao and clarify the Root and Source.
> Receive the Three Secret Treasures from Heaven above;
> With sincere heart, cultivate and become a sage or worthy.”

II. The Meaning of Seeking the Dao

What is the meaning of “seeking the Dao”? To seek is to pursue—to come and pursue what this Dao is, whence it arises, what its original body and true aspect are, whether it has form or shape, where it resides within us, what its stake is in relation to humankind and the ten thousand beings, in what way it is precious, in what way it is profound. One must earnestly and concretely pursue until one understands clearly; only then can one sincerely seek it, firmly believe in the Dao, have a method to cultivate it, persevere in walking it, and thereby reasonably expect to realize it.

Mencius said: “Ren (humaneness) is the human heart; righteousness is the human path. To abandon the path and not follow it, to let one’s heart go and not know to seek it—alas!” (Gaozi) Seeking the Dao is precisely to search out our lost Heavenly Principle and conscience. The Great Learning says: “When things are investigated, knowledge is brought to its utmost. When knowledge is at its utmost, intentions become sincere. When intentions are sincere, the heart becomes upright. When the heart is upright, the person is cultivated.” This means that one must first investigate things and extend knowledge; in the end, sincerity of intention and rectification of the heart will arise. With sincere intention and an upright heart, one can then cultivate oneself and the Dao. This is the proof left by the sages. From this we see that to cultivate the Dao, one must first seek the Dao (seek to know where to stop—*zhi zhi*).

> *Verse:*
> Firm in faith and cultivation, the Dao becomes clear;
> Once clear, you know where to stop, and your heart is upright and sincere.
> With constancy, the Buddha-light shines upon your thoughts;
> With sincere devotion and reverence, you accomplish sagehood and worthiness.

III. Why Seek the Dao?

The Dao is a person's original nature—the root source of one's nature and life. It is within the human body and thus innate to every person. Why, then, must we still "seek the Dao"? Because all beings—humans and the myriad living things—receive life through this wondrous Dao of nature and Principle; it is the very beginning of life. This nature-Dao is already endowed within us. Why, then, in the first (Green) Era, the second (Red) Era, and now the third (White) Era at the end of the Three Epochs, is it necessary that the Sovereign Lord on High (Wei Huang) descend the Dao?

It is because this nature-Dao is so subtle that words fail. Though it resides within us, its coming and going leaves no visible trace; its movements make no audible sound. Thus, whether in heaven and earth, among human and spirit, or throughout the myriad kinds, all have it yet do not know that they have it. Without the Heavenly Mandate of the Sovereign on High specially sending down the True Dao and entrusting it to an enlightened master—to transmit the "true tradition of nature and Principle," to open the subtle Aperture, and to disclose the age-old marvelous secret of the "Great Dharma of the Heart-Seal"—then no matter how virtuous, wiser than Yan and Min, or shrewder than Fan Zeng, one still could not know the origin and locus of this wondrous nature-Dao—the site of the Mysterious Pass. How could one know its profundity? Its preciousness? How could one know that it bears a life-and-death bond with heaven, earth, and all beings, and that its transformations are inexhaustibly mysterious? Therefore, even the ancient sage-king the Yellow Emperor had to bow to seventy-two teachers; Śākyamuni relinquished the honors of the Blue Palace to enter the Snowy Mountains to cultivate; Confucius sought out a teacher and asked about ritual beneath the pillar; Shen-guang stood in the snow at Shaolin and cut off his arm to show sincerity—all of these were in order to seek this "true transmission of nature and Principle," the True Dao.

Mencius said: "When a man's chickens or dogs are lost, he knows to search for them; but when his heart is lost, he does not know to seek it. Alas!" From this we see that people have long misplaced their original nature and conscience and do not know to seek it. But if this nature-Dao and conscience are in us, how could they be lost? Because from the time the Celestial Realm endowed us with this nature-Principle and we entered the Taiji Maze of Soul-Delusion, passing through the transformations whereby the former-heaven (innate) becomes latter-heaven (acquired), our pure original nature has been constrained by the endowment of yin and yang energies; our purely good conscience has been veiled by worldly feelings and material desires. The innate true wisdom (prajñā) became acquired intellection and cleverness; the Original Spirit became the conscious mind; the true numinous nature came under the control of the five phases; rational nature turned into temperamental nature, and temperamental nature into coarse disposition. Through such changes, the true master of our Dao-walking heart was pushed into a corner; the True Lord abdicated, the blood-heart seized power, and the conscious mind took charge. This is what the Lord Jesus meant by "God relinquishing authority."

From then on, people treated the Dao-walking heart like a lost sheep at a crossroads, not knowing where to turn and not even thinking to seek it. In the end they "recognized a thief as their father," taking the blood-heart as the true heart, indulging it without restraint to act recklessly without

self-examination, worsening ever more. The Demon-King then ruled within; the Six Thieves ran rampant without. The mind-horse slipped its reins and trampled the precious field of the square inch (the heart); the heart-monkey broke its lock and wreaked havoc in the Celestial Palace—no longer controllable. Thus we sinned and drew in transgressions, formed grievances and made karmic debts; cause and effect entangled, rebirths unending. People's hearts declined by the day; morality perished by the day; an unprecedented great catastrophe thereby began. From then on, people at large sought life within a sea of suffering and looked for the road of death within hell. The proper road we came by at first—no one inquired after it. As for the true classic of the Eight Virtues, who cares to look back to it? Thus this true scripture and proper road became blocked by thorns; before the gate of Heaven's joyous land, sparrows could be netted. This is what Mencius meant: "A path becomes a road when it is used; if it is not used, it becomes overgrown."

Because people have lost their true heart and do not know where it went—and because even the proper road to retrieve it is blocked by brambles—there is no way to find back this nature-Dao. For this reason we must seek the Dao, and we must cultivate the Dao. What is seeking the Dao? It is to retrieve the lost true heart. What is cultivating the Dao? It is to repair the proper road by which to seek that heart. If you do not seek the Dao, you cannot know the origin and resting-place of the true heart, nor the reasons for its loss and where it has been confined. If you do not cultivate the Dao, you cannot clear away the obstacles along the way; without advancing, how can you command back the goblins and demons encircling the heart? Therefore you must seek the Dao and cultivate the Dao in order to rescue the true heart, return home to the native land of Ultimate Bliss, let our true master once more see the light of Heaven, pay respects to Heavenly Mother (Lao Mu), and gather at the Dragon-Flower Assembly—how perfect that is!

> *Verse:*
> The root of nature and life—unknown till now;
> Alas, we search for lost chickens and dogs—but not the heart!
> Pity that the heart is let go without a key to guard it—
> In the destined cycle, know to seek and lay the foundation of the Way.

> "To awaken is like finding a lamp at night:
> In a windowless dark room, light suddenly dawns.
> If this very body is not ferried in this life,
> Then when shall this body ever be ferried?"

IV. What Good Comes from Seeking the Dao?

“Dao” means road—the proper road back to the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. It is not the road of the dusty mundane world, nor the confounded road that falls into the bitter sea, nor the dead-end road that plunges into rebirth. Where is this road? For the awakened it is near at hand—one step and you can directly transcend; for the deluded it lies one hundred and eight thousand li away—after ten thousand cycles of rebirth, it is still not found. Though countless years pass, it remains the most mysterious path, unreachable. In truth, this road is within our own nature, coming from the Realm of Principle. There it is called the Non-Ultimate True Principle; when endowed within us it is called “nature”—hence “nature-Principle.” Since we came from there, we should return there. This is the true scripture and proper road by which all must come and go through life and death; hence it is called “the Dao.” Confucius said: “Who can go out without passing through the door? Why does no one follow this Dao?”—this is the idea.

Put simply, to seek the Dao is to seek back the Heavenly Principle and conscience of one’s true nature. Mencius said: “The way of learning is nothing else but to seek the lost heart.”

If one obtains this “true Dao of nature-Principle,” what good comes of it?

(1) One can transcend birth and death. To transcend birth and death means to transcend yin and yang, leap beyond the five phases, escape the wheel of rebirth, ascend to Ultimate Bliss, and be spared the cycle of life and death—never again drowning in the sea of suffering through aeons without end. Why must we transcend birth and death? Because both life and death, as ordinarily experienced, are not good things. The world of yang and the underworld of yin are not good destinations. Zhuangzi said: “I did not originally desire life—suddenly I was born into the world. I did not originally desire death—suddenly the time of death arrived.” Śākyamuni left the royal palace because of the great matter of birth and death. From this we know the human world is not a paradise; life and death are not good in themselves. Life in the world of yang can be a living hell; death in the realm of yin is a dead hell. Both are seas of suffering. Therefore we must seek the Dao, receive from the enlightened master the “true transmission of nature-Principle,” ascend to Heaven’s Ultimate Bliss, and be spared further descent into the dusty world and the suffering of transmigration among the four forms of birth and the six paths. This is why we must transcend birth and death.

(2) One can turn from evil to good and return from deviation to uprightness. Only by seeking the Dao can one retrieve the true nature and conscience and learn that the mind has true and false. The true is the conscience of original nature—namely the Original Spirit; the false is the blood-heart, the human heart—that is, the conscious mind. People’s every thought tends toward greed and self-interest, partiality and deviation; their every act inclines to craftiness and cruelty. This is because the conscience of original nature is sealed up by desire and emotion, unable to

appear, and the blood-heart's conscious mind runs the show. Therefore we must seek the Dao to recover the true heart, bring forth marvelous wisdom, discern right and wrong, good and evil, upright and crooked, transform consciousness into wisdom, uphold the upright and dispel the deviant, and make our deeds follow the Mean, taking our original nature as our teacher. Hence Confucius said: "When three walk together, there is always a teacher among them: choose the good and follow it; see the not-good and change it." This "teacher" is the conscience of our original nature. If we act by this heart, we will not err; the "not-good" refers to what is enticed by the senses. Thus seeking the Dao truly enables us to turn from evil to good and from deviation to uprightness.

(3) One can dissolve calamities and untie karmic enmities. Calamities and karmic knots are self-made. Having lost the true heart and abandoned the Eight Virtues, we let the blood-heart rule. Our deeds violate conscience and contravene Heavenly Principle; thus we form enmities, create causes with effects to come, and weave disasters into a net. Over time this brewed into an unprecedented great catastrophe—all because humanity lost the Dao. Since calamity and enmity arise from losing the heart and the Dao, we must seek the Dao and retrieve the heart in order to dissolve calamity and untie enmity. If we truly regain the upright heart and the proper Dao, we naturally know whence calamity and enmity arise; we can repent past faults, blame ourselves and reform, sincerely confess and change, and exert ourselves to perform merit and establish virtue to repay old debts. Then enmities naturally untie and karmic stains naturally dissolve, without any more entanglement. Henceforth every thought and intention takes the true heart as its master, every word and deed follows the Eight Virtues—how could new debts be made or new calamities be sown? When no new hatred is formed and old grievances vanish, body and mind become clear and still; calamities and enmities, without being "dissolved," dissolve of themselves.

(4) One can change one's destiny. Whence comes destiny? From Heaven's decree? From the gods? From what people themselves create? People create the causes; the gods and Heaven assist the conditions; the end naturally yields the results. In short, past-life affinities across three lifetimes and the fruits eaten across several lives—though Heaven and the spirits assist, destiny is truly shaped by the human heart. Look at people: some are born princes and ministers, with fields of ten thousand acres and mansions towering into the clouds, wealthy beyond compare. Such a person in a former life kept the true heart present and did not depart from the Dao, and ancestors had accumulated deep virtue; sowing good seed in the field of blessings, they naturally reap good fruit in this life—this is the natural Way. Others, from birth onward, are hounded by illness, spend a life in destitution without even a place to plant a stake, with no grain for tomorrow, or are lonely and bereft, or beset by disasters without end. These are cases of not cultivating across three lives, letting the true heart wander, letting the conscious mind rule, and sowing weeds in the field of blessings—how could they reap good fruit? "Heaven's net is vast; retribution misses not"—this is no lie. Disaster and fortune have no fixed gate; people themselves summon them. If you would change destiny, you must first seek back the true heart, pull out the weeds from the field of blessings, and plant good grain anew, so that later you yourself will reap good fruit. The philosopher Hong Zi said: "Merits that cover the world cannot withstand one word—'pride'; sins that fill the skies cannot withstand one word—'repent.'" Consider Patriarch Qiu: at first his fate pattern was the most ominous—"golden snake locking the mouth." After seeking the Dao he exerted himself in true cultivation, piling up merits and fruits; in the end enmities untied and karmic stains dissolved. Unbeknownst to him, in the unseen his inauspicious lines were altered into

the grand auspicious pattern of “double dragons vying for the pearl.” From this you can see the good that comes from seeking the Dao.

> *Verse:*
> To escape Yama and verify the Realm of Principle—
> Keep it close and never lose it, as if standing by a deep abyss.
> As you came by the door, so you must go out by it;
> Only by direct transcendence can you dwell with Buddhas and immortals.

> “Foolish men covet worldly profit; common folk prize empty fame.
> In a blink, all becomes void, and only karma follows the body.”

V. The Four Difficulties in Obtaining the Dao

(1) The human body is hard to obtain. Humans are the most spiritual among beings. Nature relies on this body to abide; the body relies on this nature to live. The true does not leave the false; the false does not leave the true—the two are woven together. “Śāriputra, form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form.” We rely on this body to transcend with this nature; if we lacked this body, how could this nature transcend? As the saying goes: “Miss the human body once, and for ten thousand kalpas it is hard to regain.” Hence, the human body is hard to obtain.

(2) The Third Epoch is hard to encounter. Without the Supreme Dao, we cannot distinguish true from false, profit from harm, and will muddle through a lifetime. The “end of the Third Epoch” does not mean simply “three yangs in flourishing peace”; rather, Dao and calamity proceed side by side as the Green, Red, and White Eras turn. The Dao does not descend except in its time; it is not transmitted except to its people. Just as a gravely ill person must be treated with medicine suited to the illness, so the Dao descends suited to the calamity. Now, at the end of the Third Epoch, the three disasters and eight difficulties appear together—an unprecedented peril. Only the True Dao is sufficient to save. Thus, the Supreme Dao has descended to the world, universally rescuing all beings—truly a once-in-a-thousand-years blessed season hard to meet. Therefore, the Third Epoch is hard to encounter.

(3) Being born in China is hard. China stands in Asia; the character “Ya” (□) resembles a white cross. It is the pivot of heaven and earth—called the Central States, Central Florescence, Central Plain. “Centrality” is the great root of heaven and earth. Sages have arisen in succession here and

enlightenment began early; in antiquity it was called the Celestial Court—the very place where the True Dao first descended. If not born in China, it is not easy to hear the Heavenly Dao. Hence, being born in China is hard.

(4) Meeting the True Dao is hard. In the Third Epoch, the myriad teachings all arise. The true is the non-dual gate; the false is a bustle of pretenses. The Buddha said: “Those who grasp the root become Buddhas and patriarchs; those who cannot, grope in blind cultivation.” Without deep Buddha-affinity and ancestral virtue providing shade, it is truly hard to meet the True Dao. Therefore, meeting the True Dao is hard.

> *Verse:*
> To be born human in China is hardest of all;
> Harder still to meet the True Dao in the Third Epoch.
> Now that you have the human body and have heard the Great Dao,
> You must hasten to cultivate and swiftly transcend.

VI. Are Karma, Rebirth, Heaven, and Hell Really Real?

The world is not as in antiquity; people’s hearts worsen by the day. Many fashionable folks, thinking themselves clever, do not believe in karma, rebirth, heaven, or hell. Not only do they not believe, they call believers “superstitious.” They do not know that those who label others superstitious are themselves deluded and unawakened—cutting off the road to Heaven and planting the deep causes of hell. Pitiful and lamentable!

Know that karma and rebirth, heaven and hell, are the very principles of the cosmos—not just the doctrine of Buddhism alone. As the Confucian tradition says: “A household that accumulates goodness will have surplus blessings; a household that accumulates non-good will have surplus calamity” (*Book of Changes*). The Daoist tradition says: “The recompense for good and evil follows like a shadow” (*Taishang Ganying Pian*). Are these not karma? As for the teaching on heaven and hell, both Christianity and Islam strongly affirm it. Regarding rebirth, countless accounts appear in the writings of the ancients. If one dismisses unofficial histories as untrustworthy, still the official histories record not a few: Bo Gun becoming a bear (*Shiji* commentary); Yi becoming a dog (*Hanshu*); Yang You’s former life as the son of the Li family (*Jinshu*); the Liang Yuan-di’s former life as a one-eyed monk (*Nan Shi*, *Liang ji*); Madam Liu Ge’s prior life as Li Shu (*Bei Shi*, *Qi ji*); Liu Yuan’s

former life as Niu Sengru, Fan Zuyu's former life as Deng Yu, Guo Xiangzheng's former life as Li Taibai (all in the *Song Shi*); Xia Yuanji's former life as Qu Yuan (*Huangming Tongji*). These are written in bamboo and silk—plain to examine. If one claims karma, rebirth, heaven, and hell do not exist, does that mean the sages of all traditions and the historians of all dynasties have been deceiving people? Of course they exist—how can one say they don't?

The principle of karma is like planting: sowing is the cause; ripening is the result. Plant melons and you get melons; plant beans and you get beans. Sow good causes and you obtain good results; sow evil causes and you obtain evil results. This is a fixed principle—the only uncertainty is how soon the fruit ripens. The principle of rebirth is expressed in common speech: when a person dies, the heart does not die. Though the body decays, human nature endures. Unless one transcends, one is naturally carried along by one's karma, circling through former and later lives—like yesterday and tomorrow. This principle is easy to grasp; why argue? As for heaven and hell, there are two ways to explain them. In terms of principle, heaven and hell both arise from the mind itself. In terms of concrete phenomena, the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* describes the forms of the heavens, and the *Sūtra of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha* describes the various hells—very detailed and certainly not illusory.

It is laughable that some modern dabblers who have skimmed only the surface say that since science is flourishing, "superstitions" about spirits collapse of themselves. Yet in Western science there is a field called psychical research that studies just such matters of spirits and souls. How then can one say that because science flourishes, there are no spirits?

> "A thousand principles understood—then a thousand marvels appear;
> Miss one place, and that one place remains dark."

VII. The Ten Great Vows

Running east and west to uplift the Dao; with earnest words and a motherly heart we pour out what is within.
Younger brethren, search your hearts and think carefully: for whom do we toil, for whom do we busy ourselves?

I am the **Chief Examiner of the Three Heavens**. By **sacred decree**, I have come to the **temple** and pay respects to the Imperial Presence. Let us rest, **then** explain in detail. I will extemporaneously sing-chant the **Ten Great Vows**—ha-ha!

First sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without sincerity.*
Confused and muddled, you let the days slip by.
You proclaim grand vows with an offhand mouth—
Who has actually followed vows with deeds?
Vows made with empty words and never fulfilled—

You deceive men, you deceive Heaven, you deceive spirits and gods.
I hope you, younger brethren, will question your own hearts—
Do you not fear that sin will be borne upon your body?
Do not say that retribution has not yet come;
When the karmic cycle matures, judgment is apportioned to each.
If you do not believe it, examine histories through the ages—
Heaven's net is vast indeed; whom has it ever spared?

Second sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without repentance.*
You decorate and cover up to fool yourself and others;
You have faults of your own and refuse to change,
Yet open your mouth and speak only of others' rights and wrongs.
As the saying goes: those who love to talk about right and wrong
Are surely themselves fond of right and wrong.
I hope you, younger brethren, will blame yourselves—
"Do not fear to change your faults"—then you approach the sages.
Lay down the butcher's knife, and the Buddha-body appears.
Even a commoner who sets his will can join Heaven and Earth.
Good and evil both receive their due report in the end;
Heaven's Principle is manifest—whom does it let off?

Third sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without practice.*
With empty mind and false intent you try to cheat Heaven.
Outwardly you comply; inwardly you defy—wearing a false face.
Your mouth says "yes," your heart says "no," weaving clever speech.
You angle for name and fish for praise to save appearances;
As for true merit and real goodness—you do not speak of them.
I hope you, younger brethren—why not reflect?
A gentleman is cautious when alone—why is this so?
Whispered words among men resound like thunder—
How much more are they seen by gods, the Dao, Buddhas, and immortals!
Do you not fear incurring Heaven's reproof?

Fourth sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without constancy of will.*
Diligent at first, lazy at last—no success can come.
You retreat when you meet adversity and advance only when all is smooth;
On and off, stop and start—how could that be the work of a worthy or hero?
Learning is like rowing upstream—
If you do not advance you will surely retreat; this principle cannot be changed.
I hope you, younger brethren, will set your will on constancy—
To bend in a hundred trials is no hero at all.
The great road to the Western Heaven may be far,
But with each stage you walk, you are a stage nearer.
Be the same from start to finish—fix your resolve;
To abandon halfway cripples the spirit.

Fifth sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without learning humility.*
Daring to insult teachers and extinguish patriarchs—your gall reaches heaven.
Since ancient times, how could a bright master be easy to meet?
People have trod iron shoes through mountain depths to find one.
They wore out their shoes and found no place;
They suffered bitterly and achieved nothing—truly pitiable!
I hope you, younger brethren—let your Heavenly conscience appear:
Honor the teacher and revere the Dao—this accords with Heaven.
For the one-pointing master you must face north all your life;
The teacher-student bond endures through myriad years.
However high your merits tower without bound,
Forget the teacher—and even your very life is hard to preserve.

Sixth sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without depth of understanding.*
To look down on the Elders is no light offense.
To know grace and not repay it is not the conduct of a gentleman.
“When you drink water, remember the source”—this is true feeling.
How can grass or trees grow without roots?
Without someone to introduce you, how could a person walk this road?
I hope you, younger brethren, will recognize this clearly—
Unite heart and courage to carry out the final phase.
Think how the Elders introduced you,
Making grand vows and setting up the altar on your behalf.
Even ants in their holes repay loyalty—
How much more should humans, foremost among beings!

Seventh sigh: *Cultivating the Dao while losing proper regulation.*
You do not keep the temple rules and do whatever you please.
If you cultivate without keeping the rules,
On what will you rely to climb the ladder to Heaven?
The temple rules are Heaven’s commandments.
If you do not follow them, how will you return to your native home?
I hope you, younger brethren, ponder carefully:
Keep the rules reverently and press on ahead.
A cart without rails will meet with danger;
A boat without oars sails in peril.
If you cultivate without keeping the precepts,
How can you escape birth and death and the wheel of rebirth?

Eighth sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without caution in speech.*
You casually talk about Heaven’s secrets and the precious mysteries.
From of old, enlightened masters were hard to meet—
Who would dare speak the “scripture without words”?
The sages of the Three Teachings guarded it most strictly—
How much more should ordinary folk among the common crowd!
I hope you, younger brethren—do not deceive Heaven.

To leak Heaven’s secrets is a crime hard to bear.
If it were not for this felicitous season and day,
How could this treasure lightly descend among mortals?
Be guarded in word and careful in deed; press straight ahead—
When your vows are fulfilled, you will naturally return to the Realm of Principle.

Ninth sigh: *Cultivating the Dao without a compassionate heart.*
You hide the Dao and do not reveal it, harming the original beings.
Heaven itself is wordless and relies on people’s exhortation;
If people do not exhort, how will others hear the Dao?
Think back to the day you yourself sought the Dao—
Was it not an Elder who ferried you across the ford of delusion?
I hope you, younger brethren, will examine yourselves thrice a day.
“Share goodness with others,” said the ancient sages.
Those who become Buddhas ever did so by ferrying the world:
Having established yourself, establish others; let the Dao be heard together.
How much more now that universal ferrying is open—
The ninety-two original beings return to the Root together.

Tenth sigh: *Cultivating the Dao with many failings of heart.*
Who is willing to advance according to their capacity?
The fetters of sentiment and locks of attachment—you cannot see through them;
You treat wealth as life and hoard rare goods.
A fine season and lovely scene flow away like water;
Complacent and slack, you miss the timing.
I hope you, younger brethren, do not deceive yourselves—
A missed good season is hard to meet again.
While this great season is not yet spent,
Practice the Three Givings: giving of wealth, of Dharma, and of fearlessness.
Advance according to these Ten Great Vows;
Fulfill your vows and return to the Root, going back to the Jasper West.

Further Admonition (I)

The Primordial Dao has not been lightly transmitted since time immemorial. Now we meet the Third Epoch, the universal ferrying, the great final gathering. With one point from the enlightened master, you escape the suffering of rebirth. By performing merit and establishing virtue, you will assuredly verify the Nine-Ranked Lotus. Transcending birth and death has confirmations everywhere; this is not a side-gate’s spectacle to bedazzle the eyes.

The Dao is within one’s own body—outside the body there is no true Dao. Whatever has form and appearance still lies within the round of rebirth. By receiving the one pointing, you transcend from qi into the realm of Principle. If one receives it yet does not cultivate, then at the crucial time—how pitiable!

The True Dao of the enlightened master is not mere talk; “elevating the mysterious and redeeming the ancestors” is not an empty boast. Those with Buddha-affinity who have received the Dao should arouse the vow-heart, establish the Dharma-boat, and widely save those with affinity among men. Those with shallow affinity who, having received the Dao, give rise to doubt—fixating on forms and appearances, letting the two eyes gaze outward—fail to investigate nature-Principle and turn the light around to reflect back. Greedy for externals, they cannot awaken to true principle.

Since ancient times, those who cultivated the Dao climbed mountains and forded waters. When their merits were full and fruits complete, the immortals and Buddhas secretly transmitted the pointing. Having endured all hardships, they cultivated to become guests of the Realm of Qi; yet when heaven and earth decay, they still fall into the abyss of the bitter sea.

In this end-cycle today, Heaven has opened great compassion. The Living Buddha descends into the world, searching everywhere for the original beings. At home or having left home—wives, friends, and children as companions—you can cultivate together as a household and be forever reunited in the Realm of Principle. In this sixty-thousand-year span, we have met this excellent opportunity. Miss it now, and cultivation will be difficult indeed. The deluded sons do not believe only because their karmic grievances are heavy; when the hour arrives, regret comes and crying to Heaven is in vain.

Those with affinity and good faith—having received the Dao—must quickly advance in the work. At the Dragon-Flower Assembly the majesty will be displayed; fruits will be apportioned exactly according to merits. Heaven does not obscure even a hair’s breadth. It all depends on this very time—exert yourselves in works of merit!

VIII. The Work of Cultivation After Seeking the Dao

In former times one left home to cultivate. Now, at the end of the Third Epoch, the True Dao descends to save the original beings and universally ferry the Three Realms. A special mandate sends the enlightened master into the world to transmit the “true tradition of nature-Principle,” and commands the thousand Buddhas and ten thousand patriarchs to descend together to the Eastern Grove to proclaim Heaven’s transformation and greatly expound the heart-method of nature and Principle—beginning straightaway with cultivation by nature, without the need to abandon wife and children or family, to flee the world or shun society. Husbands and wives and sons and daughters may cultivate together at home: fathers do not fail in kindness, children do not fail in filial piety; spouses do not fail in righteousness; brothers do not fail in fraternal love. Whether scholar, farmer, artisan, or merchant—all can cultivate the Dao.

While the Primordial Dao can be advanced and administered, latter-heaven enterprises can also be pursued. Half-sage and half-common, one may both cultivate the Dao and carry on one's work. Whatever the field, one's occupation need not be harmed. So easy, so convenient—this is because Heavenly Mother (Lao Mu) loves Her children deeply, issuing great compassion and opening great grace so that whoever we are, we can cultivate the Dao. Even women and the illiterate may transcend birth and death, escape rebirth, and ascend to the Realm of Ultimate Bliss; while scholars and gentlemen can pursue learning, become true Confucians, and accomplish worthiness, sagehood, immortality, and Buddhahood. Such a fine opportunity is seldom met in a thousand years. May those of good faith who have received our Dao quickly cultivate it—**accomplish yourself and accomplish others**. To accomplish yourself is to cultivate the person: repent and change; let all deeds accord with Principle. To accomplish others is to ferry others: having received the Dao, spread its truth so that relatives and friends also understand and ascend the Heavenly Path. When everyone reforms, deeds will accord with Principle.

The *Doctrine of the Mean* says: "To follow one's nature is called the Dao"—this is self-cultivation; "To cultivate the Dao is called teaching"—this is ferrying others. Proclaiming Heaven's transformation and ferrying people is **external work**; reforming faults and returning to goodness—cultivating the person—is **internal work**.

We now stand in the end-times of the Third Epoch; Heaven's timing is urgent. Emphasize **external work** and do not neglect internal work. When external work is full, internal work completes of itself. Yet if one's person is not cultivated, one cannot set one's household in order—and a household that cannot be set in order cannot teach others. Only by accomplishing oneself can one accomplish others; only by rectifying oneself can one transform others. In short, the Dao's work must make no division between inner and outer, and no duality between movement and stillness—no inner and no outer, yet able to be inner and outer; knowledge and action as one; constantly responsive and constantly attained. This is the non-dual Buddha-Dharma—the true work of the Great Dao.

IX. In Cultivation, One Must Perform Merit and Establish Virtue

The ancients spoke of the three that do not perish: **establishing virtue, establishing merit, and establishing words**. "Performing merit and establishing virtue" means this: *performing* is actual practice and building up; *merit* is efficacious work; *establishing* is to set upright; *virtue* is moral excellence. By building up deeds that benefit others without sparing toil and without seeking fame or profit for oneself—for the welfare of society and humankind—this is called **performing**

merit; the resultant effect is the **establishing of virtue**.

(1) Merit is of two kinds—internal and external.

1. **Internal merit:** to rectify one's heart and cultivate one's person, to subdue the self and return to ritual; in every word and act, dare not harbor even a hair's breadth of selfish desire.
2. **External merit:** to open new ground and sow seed—to establish Dharma-boats (temples and works of ferrying), not sparing spirit, wealth, or effort; to sacrifice all, yield oneself and follow others; to plan for the Dao. Thus, the fruits of your contributions to living beings as you walk the Dao—these are **external merits**. External merit may be carried out in three ways:
    1. **Giving of wealth:** giving material aid; rescuing in hardship and urgency—for example, printing and giving away virtuous books and scriptures, providing medicine and tea, building bridges and paving roads, helping others open ground and run Dao-work, outfitting Dharma-boats, contributing to the Dao within your capacity, and all manner of acts that make things convenient and beneficial for others.
    2. **Giving of Dharma:** speaking of morality and benevolence, discussing cause and effect and the profound; exhorting people to goodness, resolving disputes; proclaiming Heaven's transformation; ferrying people to seek the Dao so they cultivate goodness. Helping others understand and cultivate the Dao accrues immeasurable merit.
    3. **Giving of fearlessness:** keeping the heart of the Dao steadfast; bearing insult and enduring humiliation; when insulted, bear no resentment; accept adversity with equanimity; set up a standard for those who come after—this too is a way of establishing merit.

(2) Establishing Virtue. Establishing virtue is one of the most important lessons in cultivation. The Manifest Emperor revealed: "With merit but without virtue, one becomes a demon" (proud and arrogant); "With virtue but without merit, the Dao is hard to accomplish" (karmic debts remain unpaid). Thus **merit and virtue must complement each other**. The old saying goes: "The great sea is able to accept tiny streams; therefore it becomes great." This is the sea's **virtue**. If people emulate it, why worry we cannot become vessels? There are three ways to establish virtue:

1. **Virtue of the heart:** harbor compassion; be fair in dealings; courteous and yielding; contend with no one; sincerely revere Heaven and Earth; be filial to parents; toward others, harbor no arrogance, jealousy, anger, or hatred—this is the virtue of the heart.
2. **Virtue of the body:** keep conduct upright; practice with caution; abstain from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; be a model for others; be plain and industrious; peaceful in all things; toward superiors be respectful; toward subordinates be compassionate; act before speaking; keep words and deeds consistent—this is the virtue of the body.
3. **Virtue of the mouth:** speak in ways that benefit others; often speak of karmic consequences; offer loyal words to exhort the world; explain the classics and virtuous books to transform people; keep words and deeds consistent; do not speak of others' faults; do not flaunt your own strengths—this is the virtue of the mouth.

Beyond these three, in concrete practice we should do the following: (1) revere the Patriarch; (2) live in harmony with those in the Dao family; (3) be upright and unselfish; (4) honor elders with filial devotion; (5) examine yourself at midnight and find nothing to be ashamed of; (6) keep money matters clean, not taking a single improper cent; (7) keep to your place and be steady in work; (8) attend to the root and be a good example.

X. Filial Piety and the Modern Age

Some say: “Filial piety may be promoted, but in modern times it should be reinterpreted.” There is some sense in this, but *how* to interpret it—so far, nothing convincing has appeared.

China possesses a complete theory of filial piety—hence it is a **Dao**. If one does not understand this complete theory—that is, does not understand filial piety—and yet wants to make a “new interpretation,” this is merely chasing fashion: hurrying after the “modern,” and also after a so-called “cultural renaissance.”

Our complete Chinese doctrine of filial piety is the **Classic of Filial Piety** (*Xiaojing*). I have read its eighteen chapters closely and find nothing unreasonable, nothing at odds with modernity. If one says it is out of step, it is only because modern people do not understand filial piety and therefore do not live up to it.

Consider the opening chapter “Clarifying the Teaching”: “The body, hair, and skin are received from one’s parents; do not dare to damage them—this is where filial piety begins.” This *beginning of filial piety* expresses parents’ love for their children, hoping they will cherish themselves and not cause their parents grief. If “modern people” use it as an excuse not to cut their hair, that is merely unfilial sophistry and has nothing to do with understanding the parents’ heart.

“It is by establishing oneself and walking the Dao, making one’s name known to later generations and thereby glorifying one’s parents—that filial piety comes to completion.” This *completion of filial piety* again expresses parents’ love, hoping their children become upright and independent, doing good work and living well, so that parents feel honored that the sons and daughters they raised have contributed to human society. What about this is “unmodern”? Must we cater to a shallow, individualistic notion to be “timely”?

“Filial piety begins with serving one’s parents, proceeds to serving one’s ruler, and ends with establishing oneself.” This is the full course of filial piety—hoping that a person will be a good child in the family, a good citizen in the nation, and a contributor with achievements to human society. What is wrong with this? If someone objects to the phrase “serving one’s ruler” as “undemocratic,” then if you understand democracy you should understand that “serving the ruler” can be taken as “serving the people.” What about that is unmodern?

Confucius sums up: “Filial piety is the norm of Heaven, the righteousness of Earth, and the conduct of the people.” Here “norm” means what is proper; “righteousness” means what is fitting; “conduct” means the rule of life. If a person is unfilial, is that normal? If not normal, is it fitting? Then what sort of life is he living?

That filial piety is not flourishing today is abnormal; and abnormality harms everyone. We need normalcy—therefore we must begin by reviving filial piety.

XI. *Liao-Fan’s Four Teachings* as a Guide to Establishing Virtue and Cultivating the Person

I recently reread the vernacular *Liao-Fan’s Four Teachings* and was deeply moved. It is admirable that Mr. Yuan Liao-Fan set down his life lessons in writing to instruct later generations.

At first Mr. Yuan rested content in fatalism, seeking nothing else. Later, the Chan master Yun-gu awakened him with teachings such as: “Destiny is made by me; blessings are sought by oneself,” “All fields of blessing are not apart from a square inch—seek them in the heart and all responses will be unhindered,” “Calamity made by Heaven can yet be avoided; calamity made by oneself cannot be lived through,” and “A household that accumulates goodness will have surplus blessings.” These shattered Mr. Yuan’s fatalistic views. The master then further exhorted him to **cultivate the person and establish destiny**, eliminate evil and accumulate goodness. Mr. Yuan upheld these teachings with reverence, moved cautiously toward goodness, and personally verified that “Though Heaven be truthful, destiny is not fixed,” and that “Whatever is called fortune or misfortune is all sought by oneself.”

Knowing clearly that fortune and misfortune are self-sought and that destiny is self-made, we must cultivate the person, accumulate virtue, and turn away from evil toward good. In methods of correcting faults, we must first arouse a **sense of shame** and a **sense of awe**, and have the **courage** to change quickly. There are three ways to eliminate evil: (1) **Change from the level of action**—when a fault is committed, afterward sit quietly and reflect. (2) **Change from the level of principle**—think things through carefully in advance; once the principle is clear, you will not commit the fault. (3) **Best of all, change from the level of the heart**—when the heart stirs not, with no selfish desire, whence can faults arise? Thus, if we cultivate the heart, clarify principle, restrain faults, rely on good friends to remind us, keep spirits and deities as witnesses, and

sincerely repent and head toward goodness, then the mind becomes tranquil and open, and wisdom swiftly unfolds—we will surely be able to calm the mind and settle the nature.

After correcting faults we must still **accumulate good deeds** to dissolve past karmic enmities and change destiny. Hence the book explains the logic and principles of doing good with examples such as “A family that accumulates goodness will have surplus blessings,” “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” “Protecting life brings a good reward,” “Those who accumulate virtue are revered by spirits and deities,” “Easing grudges and reducing punishment accords with Heaven’s heart,” “Revering the gods and protecting the Dharma brings flourishing descendants,” “True goodness and false goodness,” “Upright goodness and crooked goodness,” “Open goodness and hidden virtue,” “Partial goodness and proper goodness,” and “Great or small, hard or easy—look to the motive.” As for methods of accumulating goodness, they are countless. Among them: (1) cooperating with others in goodness; (2) harboring respect and love; (3) helping others to perfect their good; (4) exhorting others to goodness; (5) rescuing those in peril; (6) initiating great benefits; (7) giving wealth to create blessings; (8) protecting the True Dharma; (9) revering and honoring elders; (10) cherishing living beings. By practicing and promoting such methods, myriad virtues can be perfectly fulfilled.

Finally, in “The Efficacy of Humility,” the *Book of Changes* is cited: “Heaven’s Way diminishes the full and augments the humble; Earth’s Way shifts away from the full and flows to the humble; the spirits harm the full and bless the humble; the human Way dislikes the full and favors the humble.” The *Book of Documents* says: “Fullness invites harm; humility receives benefit.” This shows that one must be as open as a valley, always maintaining humility and giving others leeway—thus one can move Heaven and Earth. Therefore, to cultivate the person and establish destiny, one must be constant, set firm resolve, and broadly accumulate hidden virtue to bless the ten directions—then destiny can no longer bind us.

“All fields of blessing are not apart from a square inch—seek them in the heart and all responses will be unhindered.” “Fortune and misfortune are self-caused.” These should awaken those who think fortune and calamity are fixed by a previous life. “Whatever harvest you want, sow accordingly.” Your future rests in your own hands. Rather than resigning yourself to fate, rise up to cultivate the person and establish destiny. After careful reading, we should receive Mr. Yuan’s fine admonitions—establish the person and destiny, do no evil, practice all good. As Master Shanxuan said, those who cultivate the Dao should take this to ferry themselves and others—awaken yourself and awaken others. Those who have not yet heard the sages’ heart-method, by reading this book can learn the way of self-cultivation, discern the truth of life, and then use it as a **stairway to seeking the Dao**—to seek the method of transcending birth and death. Thus *Liao-Fan’s Four Teachings* is our guide to establishing virtue and cultivating the person. If all hold to it, society will surely move toward the utmost good—thus repaying the author’s painstaking heart.

XII. Where Does Life Go?

Where does life go? One may answer: life inevitably goes toward death. If there is birth, there must be death. But after a person dies, where then do they go? This shifts the question from life to death—no less important than the question of life.

Three representative answers:

First, the Buddhist answer. Buddhism teaches that after death one returns to **nirvāṇa**—the state of no-birth and no-death; to transcend life and death requires deep cultivation to reach the other shore. The human body is a union of the four great elements—earth, water, fire, and wind. At death the four great elements disperse. But the **karma** made in life does not disperse with them; hence Buddhism teaches **rebirth**. According to the karma created before death, after death one returns again to the human world. Thus death and life revolve without end—like a vast sea of suffering. Therefore in life one should lessen karma so as to gradually cross this sea; one should also harbor great compassion to rescue those in suffering—helping others out by expedient means. Suicide, being a negative escape, is not the right path and does not escape the suffering of rebirth.

Second, the Christian answer. God created the world. Adam and Eve sinned and were punished—descending into the human world. If people recognize their sins and practice rightly, they can return to Heaven.

Third, the Confucian answer, native to China prior to the arrival of these two religions. When Zilu asked about death, Confucius said: “Not yet understanding life, how can we understand death?” Confucius’ meaning: to understand what comes after death, one must first understand life. The one who lives is this person; the one who dies is also this person. If you do not understand the person in life, how could you understand the person after death? What, then, is a person? Mencius said: “Ren (humaneness) makes one a person.” Most people think this six-foot body—this “I”—is what makes a person. In truth, this physical “I” alone does not truly make a person. One becomes a person within the community of humans: the Dao of kindness and filial piety, of care between old and young; the way of husband and wife; the righteousness of brothers; the trust of friends—these are the human Way, the Way of **ren**. Thus Confucians first value the great human relations.

Today, with science flourishing and astronomy and biology revealing much, in the West there is a crisis of a “lost God.” In China, however, if we use Confucius’ learning of the mind-and-nature to understand the spirit of the cross, do we not reach it more directly and clearly? And in modern society, if everyone were to follow Buddhism one-sidedly—leaving home en masse to become monks and nuns—would this not block the way of life? Only by following Confucius’ teaching of the great Dao of self-cultivation, ordering the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world can we first secure our livelihood, without being contrary to Śākyamuni’s great compassion to rescue those in suffering. Buddhism says: “Be a monk that strikes the bell as long as you are a monk.” And: “If I do not enter hell, who will?” Today, to live by Confucius’ teaching is likewise to strike the bell; it is also to **step first into hell**, to better rescue others out of hell.

The refined meanings of the Three Teachings cannot be fully expounded here. I offer instead the Song-dynasty Neo-Confucian motto “Be earnest in being a person” as mutual encouragement for all—whether one believes in any religion or none.

(Excerpted from the United Daily News supplement.)

XIII. After Reading “Where Does Life Go?”

The value of a book lies not in its price but in how the knowledge within awakens our rational mind and conscience—only then is it a treasure. The ancients said: “To open a scroll is to gain benefit”—not a vain saying.

In *Where Does Life Go?*, such pieces as “The King of Hell’s Warning Letter,” “Three Doctors Discuss Spirits,” “Curios of Folkways and the Bond of Life and Death,” “Borrowing a Corpse to Return the Soul,” and “On Cause and Effect” are written in plain language yet rich in meaning. The book proceeds from shallow to deep and shows that the universe is one and yet manifold.

We are not all sages; we are common people. Death, in human eyes, is a vague, drifting realm. Death ends life; human vision is short and values only what is before the eyes—thinking life is joyful and worth clinging to—so death seems always to happen to someone else. People cling to life and fear death; only the wise can “give up life to realize ren,” “sacrifice life to uphold righteousness.”

This book tells us the highest state of life. Though life must go toward death, and though people cling to life and fear death, none can escape dying. Since antiquity, who has not died? After a person dies, in what form do they continue to exist? Someone once said: “When I die, my body returns to its elements, but my **personhood—the true me—continues on….” By “body” he meant what Buddhism calls the physical self, not the true self—the temporary aggregation of the four great elements (earth, water, fire, wind), which will dissipate, age, and die. By “personhood” he meant what Buddhism calls the **true spirit**—our soul, the true self that never perishes. **Life** is the union of spirit and body; **death** is their separation. After death, where does the spirit go?

A person’s end is not like a lamp being snuffed. The book also speaks of **rebirth**: after death the body returns to nature, but the soul must undergo judgment. If, while alive, one did every evil—betraying Heaven and harming reason—one falls into hell and suffers the fruits, then is reborn again; birth after death, death after birth—rebirth without cease. But if one can obtain true liberation of one’s nature, visit an enlightened master, receive direct pointing to the root of life and nature, cultivate the learning of sages and worthies, perform merit and establish virtue, awaken oneself and awaken others so that the awakened nature becomes complete—then one can transcend birth and death, forever leave the suffering of rebirth, realize Buddhahood by seeing one’s nature, and reach nirvāṇa.

We need not take the death of the body as the final destination, nor be bound by limited time and space. Time and eternity are a seamless whole; life and death should be viewed together. “Know

Heaven’s decree and recognize Heaven’s times”: we must know the dignity and value of life, seek to see the true self, recognize Principle and return to the True. Perform merit and establish virtue—then where one goes at death needs no words.

The meanings within *Where Does Life Go?* are worth our careful thought again and again.

XIV. Recognize Principle and Cultivate the True — After Reading the “Spiritual Research Anthology”

The study of psychical phenomena began in mid-nineteenth-century Britain at Cambridge, Oxford, and London, and in a century spread worldwide, becoming a new field of learning that attracted many scholars and experts, and **confirmed the religious doctrine of the soul**.

The great modern educator Cai Yuanpei (longtime president of Peking University) once said: “The aim of Buddhism lies in ‘escaping the suffering of rebirth and gaining the joy of nirvāṇa.’ If rebirth can be shown credible, then the need to escape rebirth will naturally be believed.” The seed of rebirth is this **soul** (Buddhists call it Buddha-nature). The great man of letters and Confucian physician Ding Fubao said: to understand the karmic fruits of rebirth in this and the next life, first one should understand that after death there **truly exists** a soul. (*See Primer to Faith in Buddhism* .) Psychical research uses objective scientific methods to show that beyond the body there exists the soul. Its essence is to study the soul for the sake of the soul—acknowledging this objective fact. It is **not** set up for religion; yet we deem it useful to confirm the truth of religious doctrine and help us grasp life’s truth, so as to restrain the flood of desire, turn back the great tide, purify hearts, and nurture a wholesome social ethos.

This anthology gathers views of contemporary scholars and experts, selecting materials by an objective standard and striving for truth—not simply repeating hearsay. For example, Dr. Wu Yan-fang was among the first students sent abroad, absorbed Western thought, and later served as minister of foreign affairs and ambassador to the United States—an eminent figure of the early Republic. If what he saw were not true, he would never have risked his reputation to speak boldly of “ghost photography.” Hence Mr. Ding Fubao said: “Ghost photographs I have personally seen, and I have no doubt of the matter. Dr. Wu was a gentleman of accomplished virtue—he would certainly not deceive. The photographing of a ghostly image is precisely the departed person’s **soul**.” For this reason, the British physicist Sir Oliver Lodge (former president of the University of

Birmingham) advocated **spirit-attachment** theory. (*See* Prof. Li Mai-xian's translation of *Modern Western History*, vol. 2, p. 275.)

Prof. Song Xi-shang, a contemporary hydraulic engineer, promoted the printing of *Evening Talks by the Stove* and gave it to students; in his *Scattered Notes of a Floating Life* he often speaks of karmic retribution—also a man of heart. Prof. Mao Peng-ji's *Qi Xie* anthology gathers ancient and modern stories of spirits and karmic recompense to warn and transform people. The late-Qing man of letters Xue Fu-cheng's *Notes from the Thatched Study* likewise records karmic affairs. Prof. Xiao Yu spread Chinese culture overseas; his *Records of the Inexplicable* speaks extensively of spirits. If these were not real events involving real people, given their social standing, would they have spoken so lightly?

The American philosopher William James once said: "If there really is a God, and I neither know nor acknowledge Him, then will I not suffer a great loss after death?" If you would avoid that loss, quickly study this truth: recognize your own Buddha-nature; seek an enlightened master's pointing; only then can you escape rebirth and realize nirvāṇa.