

SECRET TEACHINGS

The Nomination of the Gods
AND
Mysticism



**MAT GIAO FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION
IN CALIFORNIA**

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SECRET TEACHINGS

(Translated from Vietnamese)

Preface

We would like to introduce to our members in Matgiao (secret Teachings) the book entitled: The Nomination of the Gods and Mysticism written by Scholar Duc Qui.

It contains commentaries on the mystical and religious nature found in the Chinese classic mythical epic "The Nomination of the Gods" as well as explanations on the mystical and metaphysical principles concerning the operation of Heaven by Great Spirits. They were drawn from his personal encounters with events dealing with miracles, possessions, charms and spells...

The book also has articles on the religious doctrines of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Confucianism.

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The Nomination of the Gods and Mysticism

Foreword:

The book, "Reward for the Seven Sages", mentioned the story of two monks. One monk practiced (Taoism) and the other Buddhism. Both were enlightened, had supernatural powers, and profound knowledge of the principles of changes of heaven and earth. The Taoist monk Qu Chang Chun (Wu Ch'eng en) was the King's advisor. The Buddhist monk Bai Yun (?) was the Queen's teacher. While competing for superiority they both performed many magical feats as well as causing many incidences of slander. As a result one lost all his hair and the other his temple. Subsequently, they concluded their worldly affairs and reconciled with each other. Each one wrote a book with the purpose of harmonizing Taoism and Buddhism. The books were the respectful and renowned classical Chinese mythical epics *The Nomination of the Gods* (also known as *Creation of the Gods*) and *Journey to the West*.

Overtime, secular people and those without thorough knowledge in mysticism were making more or less additions and giving their comments on the books, thus making it more difficult for others to understand mystical matters.

The purpose of the book is firstly, to entertain the readers by retelling stories in the *Nomination of the Gods* (also known as *Creation of the Gods*) and secondly, to explain the supernatural by reviewing the past to better learn the present. This is certainly not something done in vain.

Duc-Qui

KING ZHOU AND GODDESS NU WA

In the seventh year of King Zhou's reign, during the Shang Dynasty, there was a rebellion in the vassal states of the North. As a result, grand tutor Wen Zhong was ordered to the war front. Without Wen Zhong's presence, the two minions, Fei Zhong and You Hun had the opportunity to be close to the King. One day, Prime Minister Shang Rong said to King Zhou, "Tomorrow is the birthday of Goddess Nu Wa. Your Majesty should go to her temple and pray for her blessings." King Zhou asked, "Who is Goddess Nu Wa for a great king such as me to go to her temple?" Shang Rong replied: "Goddess Nu Wa is King Fuxi's younger sister. She is a powerful goddess. Legend has it that she had at one time mended the broken sky using multicolored stones and thus rendered great service to the people. That was why past dynasties have built temples to worship her. Where these temples were, favorable weather conditions existed. There was timely wind and rain and the country enjoyed peace, health and prosperity." King Zhou took the advice. The next day, he started the journey in his royal carriage, escorted by numerous officers.

Upon reaching the Temple of Goddess Nu Wa, King Zhou burned incense and put them in the cauldron in the main hall. Then he and his ministers bowed at the altar to show their respect. The altar was adorned with precious offerings; the all-enveloping smoke gave it a royal solemnity.

Suddenly, a breeze blew open the curtains, revealing Goddess Nu Wa's statue which struck the King with its life-like celestial beauty. He stood mesmerized in front of it for a moment, then ordered the Imperial guards to bring him a pen and some ink and wrote this poem on the wall:

*In the cold temple where Phoenix curtains fall
Praise whoever created such beauty
Eyebrows like lush green winding willows
Yellow dotted gown stirs up the waves
As a pear's blossom, fresh with morning dew*

*More radiant than peonies drenched with rain.
If only the Goddess's statue could come to life
I would take her to my palace,
And let her stay close to my Godly self.*

This poem shocked and scared Prime Minister Shang Rong for he considered it sacrilegious. He told the king to wash it off but his advice was ignored and all the other mandarins also kept quiet. They then escorted the King back to the capital.

Goddess Nu Wa had gone to pay homage to the three Saints: Fu Xi, Shen Nong and Huang Ti. Upon her return to her temple, she became enraged when she saw the poem and let out a tirade: "Ignorant muddle-headed tyrant! Why do you not learn to rule properly instead of writing obscenities? How dare you ignore Heaven's Laws! If I don't punish you now, how credible will my power appear?"

She immediately rode on the clouds to the King's palace with the intention of killing him. When she got there, she was met with two red beams that rose from the back of the palace which blocked her path. She then realized that King Zhou had another twenty-eight years to live and so went back to her temple.

Upon her return, she ordered a young maidservant to get the Demon Summoning Pennant (a multicolored flag) and call the goblins and demons to her service. All the goblins and demons in the world had arrived at the appearance of the Pennant to receive her command. Among them, Goddess Nu Wa chose the three demons that dwelled in the grave of Emperor Huang Ti. The first was a thousand-year-old fox, the second was a female pheasant with nine heads, and the third was a jade lute. Goddess Nu Wa told them, "King Zhou is about to lose his land. The singing of the phoenix at Mount Qi predicted the birth of a new ruler in West Qi. This is determined by Heaven and no one has the power to change what should happen. Transform yourselves into beauties and come to the palace to distract King Zhou from state affairs. I will make you gods for helping the new Dynasty and for contributing to the demise of the old one. Remember, you must not harm the innocent."

The three demons obeyed and promptly flew away.

Commentary

The notion of a Creator ruling a hierarchy of gods has existed throughout many generations and in many populations. People used to believe that any power—human or beast—that can influence the destiny of a population or of humanity, comes from the Celestial Spirits (deities, gods, genies or angels).

Since the ancient times, we have known of the following various hierarchies of gods: the god of Heaven (Dyaus), the god of the sun (Surgasavitri, Pusan), the god of early morning (Usas), the thunder god (Indara), the water god (Apas), the storm god (Bayu), the rain god (Parjanya) and many others. There are also sacred animals such as the unicorn (Kylin), tortoise, phoenix, tiger, snake, etc. and even stones, pine trees, or musical instruments (such as a harp) can become gods if they absorb enough of the essence of heaven and earth. They also consider that righteous Kings are sons of God, mandated by heaven to come down and reign on earth. After their death, they become Saints and reside in Heaven to serve the Creator, i.e. King Fu-Xi, Shen Nong, Saint Tran, etc. Royal officers with eminent records of service or those who have significantly contributed to their own people or for humanity in particular, can all become Deities. Goddess Nu Wa exemplifies this belief. Even though they reside in the invisible realm, the Deities continue to exert their influence on human beings. They may help their own race or may assume a greater mission, in which part of their duty was to oversee humanity.

THE EVIL FOX MURDERS DAJI

Since his visit to the temple of Goddess Nu Wa, King Zhou was so infatuated with her beauty that he could not sleep, eat or drink as usual, and totally ignored his numerous consorts living in the three palaces and six royal quarters. His heart was heavy and he was so sad he did not want to talk to anyone. In an effort to placate the King, Fei Zhong and You Hun suggested bringing in 100 beauties from each of the four Grand Dukes. The King was pleased and issued an edict about the matter, but thanks to Prime Minister Shang Rong, who advised the King against it, the edict was repealed.



But soon afterward, King Zhou thought again of selecting the beauties. Fei Zhong and You Hun who always disliked Su Hu—Marquis of Jizhou (a vassal state)—for not offering them bribes, took this opportunity to avenge him by introducing Su Hu's daughter Daji to the King. "Daji," they said, "is an exquisite flower; her great beauty would make that of the Moon Fairy pale in comparison." The King was

pleased and ordered Su Hu to bring Daji to the palace. Su Hu objected to the order and after writing a poem of rebellion led his officers out of the capital and back to his country. King Zhou was furious and sent his generals to the country of Jizhou to pass a verdict against Su Hu. This led to battles between the two sides in which many lives were lost. Finally, the mandarin officer Chen-Jhizeng delivered a letter from the West Grand Dukedom supreme minister San Yisheng to Su Hu, advising Su Hu that he had nothing to lose by sending Daji to King Zhou. Su Hu agreed and gave order to escort Daji to the capital.

Su Hu selected three thousand mounted soldiers and five hundred servants and had the carriage in which Daji sat, decorated.

The journey started and when the group came to Enzhou station, it was already dark. The station officer welcomed them and led them inside so they could rest. When Su Hu asked him to prepare a chamber for Daji to stay overnight, he was then told that the place was haunted. Therefore, Su Hu placed fifty service women in Daji's room, five hundred servants at her door and three thousand equestrians camping on the outside. He himself sat in the candle-lit hall and read a book as he kept watch. A leopard skin whip was beside his desk for protection.

At the third watch announcement, a cold blast of wind suddenly blew on the candle, making the flame flicker off and on. In the rear hall, the servants were screaming loudly, "Demons, Demons!!!" Su Hu picked up the lamp and his whip and rushed into the rear hall. The wind put out the light and Su Hu had to go back to light it up again. By the time he got into Daji's chamber, he saw the servants trembling and unable to talk.

Su Hu pulled the bed curtains apart and asked Daji: "My dear, did you see any ghosts?" Daji answered him: "I was dreaming when I heard the screaming. When I woke up, I saw only you coming in with the light; but no ghost." Feeling assured, Su Hu returned to the hall, not knowing that the evil fox had sucked Daji's soul out and possessed her body to answer him. In reality, Daji at that point was only a corpse whose soul was taken by the demon.

Commentary

The story of the fox demon possessing Daji might sound mythical or far-fetched at first. However, the author of this book himself has witnessed hundreds of mild to serious cases of demonic possession. There were cases that took place in broad daylight in front of fifty or seventy people, in which the possessed person talked and acted for hours in an extraordinary fashion, showing superior intelligence that is beyond imagination or fabrication. But, the adepts in mysticism are not at all surprised by these events. If the adepts have confirmed the possession of Daji by the evil fox to be 100% true, other corollaries may follow: that the Invisible can control the words, actions and thoughts of a person

and therefore the Divinities have the power to control human beings. As such, the important decisions of national leaders are controlled by the will of the Divinities, and it can be deduced that there really is a Heaven Plan which is carried out according to God's will by the Spirits in charge.

Once the above principle is understood, then one can appreciate that the story of Daji possessed by the fox demon to seduce the King and destroy his dynasty (the Shang) was ordered by the Goddess (Nu Wa), who was obeying God's will, is true to the principles in mysticism. The author of *The Nomination of the Gods* has demonstrated a very clear understanding of this principle.

Is it necessary to have another Daji of the old model in order to affect the global leaders or the people having the power to decide the destiny of a group of nations, or a world war affecting the whole humanity? Actually, there are hundreds, or thousands of different ways to control the thoughts, actions and speech of a number of important people, or if called for, the Divinities can just possess them and carry out the necessary actions while the common people would assume that these people are acting on their own. If this point is understood then one can realize that Heavenly Plan does exist and that the life of different races or humanity is under strict divine control. However, besides these events of great significance, people still have free will in their daily lives.

YUN ZHONG ZI OFFERS THE MAGIC SWORD

Yun Zhong Zi was a Taoist, an Immortal (divine man) who lived in the Zhongnian Mountain. One day, he was gathering medicinal herbs when he sensed a foul smell and saw a malevolent aura rising up from the South East direction. He knew that the Fox Demon had possessed a human body to do evil and immediately thought to himself: "I cultivate the Tao to perform good deeds. If I do not destroy this demon, the people will suffer greatly."

He asked his disciple Jin He to get him a dry pine branch and he made a sword out of it. Then he went to the capital and was introduced to the King. Yun Zhong Zi greeted the King without bowing down to him and this displeased the King. However, the King was impressed with Yun Zhong Zi's ideas, which sounded new to him, so he ordered a seat for Zhong Zi who sat down without ceremony at the King's side and said: "You did the right thing, Majesty. Did you know that although the throne's status is honorable, the three religions (Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism) are also as honorable?"

The king asked: "Tell me why Taoism is so honorable."

"The Taoist discusses and instructs the Way (Tao) with his Immortal guests. He drinks and recites poems, enjoying himself with his friends, happily laughing and talking without constraint. He has no fear of hurting anyone's feelings. He analyzes the rise and fall of generations; he researches the origins of the soul. Despite the changing of the four seasons, time does not bother him. He can turn his white hair black and rejuvenate his body. He saves people with medicinal herbs from the forest. He can foresee fortunes and misfortunes using the arts of divination. He can predict people's disasters and blessings by knowing the quality of their hearts. He transmits the Way to save the World and he exorcises ghosts and demons with charms and spells. Taoism is so profound that tigers and dragons are fearful of it. The truly virtuous Taoist earns respect from Demons and Gods alike. He rides on the clouds to reach the Purple Palace of the Supreme Being; he sits on the white crane that takes him to visit the Fairy Lands. He knows the sacred engine of Creation and penetrates the Way and Virtue of the High Spirits."

King Zhou was pleased by what he heard and asked: "What advice do you have for me then?"

Yun Zhong Zi answered: "I saw the demon's aura at Zhaoge. When I came here, I felt that it came from your palace. That is why I am asking your Majesty to kill the demon to save the people."

"So, how do I kill the demon?"

"It's easy. Your majesty just needs to hang this wooden sword up in your palace. The demon will certainly die."

King Zhou immediately ordered the court servant to hang up the sword at the Powder Tower in the palace.

When King Zhou returned from the Court, he felt uneasy when Daji did not come to meet him as usual. Upon learning that Daji was severely ill and that she was in a coma, he rushed to her chamber and pulled the bed curtain apart. Daji's face was extremely pale; her lips were as white as a sheet and she was struggling to breathe. She made an effort to open her eyes and spoke with difficulty: "This morning I escorted your Majesty to the Court. When it was time for your return, I came out to meet you but when I came upon the Powder Palace, I was so startled to see a sword hanging up there that I started sweating profusely and became greatly ill. King Zhou thought that the Taoist had used black magic to harm his beloved Daji. He ordered that the sword be taken down and burnt at once. Daji gradually recovered and her beauty was fully restored.

By now, Yun Zhong Zi was still at the capital. Suddenly he saw the evil aura soaring up from the royal palace once again. Puzzled, he worked divinations on his fingers and realized what had happened. He nodded and thought: "I wanted to use the magic sword to kill the demon and help the Shang Dynasty. However, heaven has decided its fate. This is difficult to change. That is why my sword was destroyed. The Gods and the Immortals were to be faced with disasters." He then wrote a prophetic poem on the wall:

*When a demon disturbs the royal court
The virtue of the Saints will flourish in the West
From the Year of the Mouse until the Year of the Horse
Bloodshed will stain the capital.*

Those who thought of themselves as intelligent and educated, gathered to read the poem and tried hard to understand, but no one was able to decipher its message.

Commentary

Those who are righteous always dislike those who are evil. When Yun Zhong Zi discovered that the fox possessed a human to do evil things, he immediately wanted to eliminate it. He carved an ordinary pine branch into a magic sword to kill the demon.

Why did the empowered, magic wooden sword that was put up in the palace tower make Daji sick when she walked under it? What kind of power did the sword have?

People with partial or no knowledge of mysticism would usually answer that question in a vague or superstitious manner. The wooden sword is only what it appears to be, a regular branch of a pine tree. It is a physical object used to symbolize something that is invisible so that ordinary people can understand a meaning that they cannot grasp or see with their regular senses. The invisible power or the magic hidden in the sword is in reality a god in charge of enforcing Heaven's law, which was invoked by Yun Zhong Zi, an accomplished Immortal, to come and guard the palace.

Daji is a human being and the fox is a spirit possessing her. The visible Daji and the invisible fox are both, respectively, under the power of the visible sword and the invisible Guardian of the Law.

Laypeople only see the effectiveness of the magic through Daji being made very ill from the magic sword. However, those adept in mysticism in particular will see Daji being scared to death by the Heaven General or Guardian of the Law. If we research mysticism further, we will understand that the



Fox demon went down to earth with the decree from Nu Wa to seduce King Zhou and destroy his dynasty according to Heaven's Plan. Yun Zhong Zi only sees the demon but does not know that it was entrusted with a secret mission. When the sword was hung up, the god Guardian of the Law came and stood guard by it. The fox demon possessing Daji's human form was stopped and questioned by the god when she walked through the area. The demon showed him the decree, but out of respect for Yun Zhong Zi, a practitioner of the esoteric school, he still had to make Daji severely ill so that regular people could see some effect of the Taoist priest's power. Thereafter, it was suggested to the King that the sword be burnt. The god could then withdraw his spell and immediately Daji's face would resume her normal colors. Actually, according to the Secret Teachings, there would not have been any further effect even if the sword had remained intact. However, the visible phenomena must always harmonize with those of the invisible. Therefore, destruction of the sword ends illness.

Regarding the case of Yun Zhong Zi, he was surprised to see the malevolent aura of the demon rising again. He then worked divinations on his fingers or possibly entered into deep meditation to consult with the Divinities about Heaven's will to obtain information about the matter. He soon realized that it was arranged by Heaven. He then wrote a poem to reveal Heaven's will and returned to the mountain.

The Immortal Yun Zhong Zi had neglected to consult with Heaven's court in the first place before putting himself to the task, but he had retreated in time once he realized that his magic sword was ineffective. He was much wiser than a number of monks who knew a little about magic but were ignorant about mysticism. Even though their magic was ineffective they still persisted fighting with the demons and ended up running away in panic with the demons chasing them. In other cases, they would beat up and severely injure the possessed person claiming that they were beating the devil to drive it out of the person. In the end, they would quit

religious practice because they thought that the power of God was unable to match that of the demons.

“Oracles” in particular are often mentioned in Chinese novels. For example in “The Separation of States in the Eastern Continent” under King Xuan of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the children sang the following:

When the rabbit appears, the wicked will fall.

The Plan for helping the fox demon is the loss of the Zhou.

In “The competition between Han and Chu,” when King Qin Shi Huang (Qin Dynasty 221-207 BC) was about to lose his throne, omens such as five bright halos appeared from dark clouds on the side of the Mountain Ji. Also there was the dream of Qin Shi Huang in which he saw two children, one in a blue shirt and the other one in red, snatching the sun from him. Omens or the oracles are revelations from the Deity to worldly people before the occurrence of important events. One must be a participant in Heaven's Plan or be adept in mysticism in order to have enough data to explain prophetic riddles. The population at large including the highly educated cannot fully comprehend the matter and can only make wild guesses.

THE BIRTH OF NEZHA AT CHENTANG PASS

This chapter is about Sir Tai Yi, he resides in the Golden Light Cave of Mount Qianyuan; he is an Immortal who lives over a thousand years (at this time the Heaven's court wanted the practitioners of the Immortal way to come down to earth and help Jiang Ziya in his mission of beheading the generals from the Shang dynasty and nominating them as gods. After the Zhou Dynasty took over the Shang, and restored peace and prosperity to the people, then Grand Master Yuan Shi could resume lecturing the Tao and the Immortals could continue their spiritual cultivation). That day, Tai Yi was sitting idly in his cave when Bai He (White Crane), a young disciple, came in and said:

- Grand master Yuan Shi has ordered: "Soon Jiang Shang (Jiang Ziya) must join the world; therefore you must let Pearl Spirit be born (incarnate) on earth without delay."

Tai Yi bowed his head to receive the order of his master and said: "I already knew about it."

Bai He said good bye and departed.

At this time, Ly Jing was a divisional commander at Chentang Pass. In his youth, he had been the disciple of the Immortal Du E in Kun Lun Mountain, but he was kicked out and later served King Zhou. Ly Jing's wife was Lady Yin. She had two handsome and intelligent sons. The older was Jinzha; the younger was Muzha. Lady Yin was pregnant with her third child, but her labor was already overdue for more than a year.

Ly Jing sighed: "This pregnancy is so long, I am afraid the child will be a monster or some demon." Lady Yin was also worried and feeling helpless.

One night, she was resting in her room when she saw a Taoist with a long beard, a baldhead with two tufts of hair on the side. He was holding a cane and walking toward her. She yelled at him: "Who are you? Don't you know the etiquette! How dare you go into my room?"

The Taoist said:

- Hurry! Take this precious baby.

Then he threw a package onto her belly. She woke up startled and sweating all over. And as soon as she told her husband about what had just happened, she began her labor and moaned in great pain. After a while, the maidservant came to announce to Ly Jing: "Sir, Madame has just given birth to a monster!"

Ly Jing was frightened and rushed into the room, sword in hand. The room was filled with fragrance and he saw a big bag the size of a wheel on his wife's bed. He slashed it open with his sword and inside was a shining baby boy with a beautiful face that looked as if it was powdered. Ly Jing carried the baby to his wife. They both admired him with delight and handled him with extreme gentle care.

The next day, a Taoist came to see Ly Jing. As a previous disciple of the Tao, Ly Jing dared not take his guest lightly. He immediately invited the Taoist inside and respectfully asked him: "Sir, may I know which mountain you came from?"

"I am Tai Yi from the Golden Light Cave on Qianyuan Mountain. I come to congratulate you on your precious newborn. May I see your child?"



Ly Jing told the maidservant to bring the baby out to Tai Yi. Tai Yi took the baby in his arm and observed him carefully. He asked:

- At what time was he born?
- Exactly at the hour of the Ox, Ly Jing answered

Tai Yi said:

- That is not good then.

Ly Jing asked:

-Does it mean that it would be hard to raise him?

-If he was born at that hour, he would certainly break the commandment on killing. He would be killing more than seventeen hundred lives.

Tai Yi added:

-Would you let him become my disciple in the future?

Ly Jing replied:

-Nothing is more precious than to have you care for him.

Tai Yi asked:

- How many sons do you have?

- I have three sons. The oldest one is Jinzha. He is the disciple of Wen Shu of the Five Dragons Mountain. The second one is Muzha, disciple of Pu Xian of the Nine Palaces Mountain. If you want this one to be your disciple, please give him a name."

- I name him Nezha, so he has the same three letter-endings as his two brothers.

Ly Jing thanked Tai Yi and ordered a vegetarian feast for Tai Yi but the latter said:

- I have urgent things to do; I must go now.

Ly Jing accompanied Tai Yi out of Chentang pass.

Commentary

The latter chapters of *The Nomination of the Gods* specifically mention that the Creator entrusted the three religious leaders at the time, Yuan Shi Tian Zun, Tai Shang Lau Jung, and Tong Tian Jian Zhi to rank their students as Immortal or Genie (god) by using the nomination of the god's list. At this time, Grand Master Yuan Shi has the mission of teaching people the practice of becoming "Immortal", for that he is called the Religious leader of the "White School," or the righteous school. Grand Wizard Tong Tian Jian Zhi is the leader of the "Black School," or the evil school, because most of his students come from animals, trees, or stones... They also cultivate the Way (spiritual path) hoping to become Immortal but because of their low nature, only a few achieve the rank of Immortal, the majority becomes gods or genies.

Upon returning from the meeting in Heaven's Court, Grand Master Yuan Shi notified his disciples of Heaven's pronouncement and seriously advised them: "Many students from the Black School will die in the upcoming events. Only those of you who remain in the mountain cave and peacefully practice the Ying Ting sutra shall achieve the Immortal rank. Those who leave the mountain to get involved in worldly affairs will die for disobeying Heaven and their souls will go to the nomination of the gods' altar (to be nominated as a god instead of an Immortal, the aspired goal for spiritual cultivation). This is what the Heaven's Plan has decided."

People have many conflicting opinions concerning Heaven's Plan, which is the Plan that Heaven had previously arranged:

Those who believe in predestination easily accept such theories and even go to the extreme belief that God planned in details what people would eat or drink, and how much of it. A number of other people deny predestination and the power of Spirits on humanity, with strong arguments that negate the Creator and the Divinities as personalities with power to control the person or humanity.

Theravada Buddhism has the following argument:

-“It is the Creator who creates murderers, thieves, lustful people, hypocrites, slanderers, rude, ambitious, cruel, malicious, and misinformed people. Therefore, if there is a God being the cause of all the above then there is no need to do or to avoid any good or bad actions.”

-He who has eyes can see the miseries of life. Why does Brahma not create a perfect world with his unlimited power? Why does he not raise his hand to bless? Why are all his creatures condemned to suffering? Why does he not give happiness to all? Why is life full of lies, fraud and silly infatuations? Why do greed and ambition prevail over truth and justice? I list Brahma in the category of unfair people who had created a spoilt world (Bhuridatta Jataka sutra).

Another part of the book has the following:

-If there is an all-powerful God to grant blessings or inflict misfortunes on his own creatures by giving them good or bad actions, that God is full of sins. Human beings merely carry out his will (The Mahabodhi Jataka).

Even in Christianity theology, a religion that totally believes in the creation of the world by an Almighty and Omnipotent God, there is a number of conflicting ideas regarding the absolute power of God the Father, stating that God only creates goodness, but Satan has betrayed and defied God ever since the first human being was created (Eve was tempted by Satan in the form of a snake to eat the forbidden fruit), in a continuous battle that lasts to this day. Christian priests even went as far as saying that all governments on earth were under the command of Satan to go against God's Kingdom in a battle that neither defeat nor victory has been concluded.

The following chapter, "The Devil is the Ruler of the World" (page 60), is taken verbatim from "The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life" (Watch Tower Bible And Tract Society, New York, Inc. first published 10,000,000 prints):

Three times in the Bible -Book of John- we read that the Lord Jesus Christ called the Devil "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is referred to as "the god of this system of things." Does this mean, then, that all the nations of earth are under the control of Satan the Devil? The Bible answers: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). Thus, the Devil, as "ruler of the world," exercises great influence on man, overreaching him and even controlling political governments (Revelation 16:13, 14).

If you open your Bible to Revelation 12:9, you will see that the Devil is described as "the great dragon." In the next chapter, verses 1 and 2, we are told that this dragon, the Devil, gave power and a throne and great authority to what is symbolically called a "wild beast" out of the sea. What is this symbolic "wild beast"? Well, over what does Satan hold authority? What did he offer to Jesus Christ? - All the kingdoms of the inhabited earth. - (Luke 4:5-8)? Jesus quickly rejected that offer, but he did not deny that the Devil ruled over political kingdoms of earth. In harmony with this, revelation 13:7 says concerning the symbolic "wild beast," that "authority was given it over every tribe, and people and tongue and nation." Further, with what did the prophet Daniel identify certain beasts?—"With kingdoms or political governments." (Daniel 7:2-7, 17, 23)

That the symbolic beasts of Daniel's vision and the "wild beast" of Revelation have a similar meaning is seen from the fact that both accounts refer to the same kinds of creatures: a lion, a bear, a leopard and a ten-horned beast (Revelations 13:1, 2). So the "wild beast" represents the Devil's entire political organization that has exercised bestial rule over the earth throughout the centuries until now. No wonder Jesus Christ said: "My kingdom is not part of this world." And no wonder his followers would not be part of the world either; that is, they would avoid getting involved in its affairs (John 18:36: 17:14-16).

Unlike the doctrines of Theravada Buddhism, which denies the power of God and Divinities, and unlike Christian theology, which teaches that the world was led by Satanic governments, the religious scholars and the adepts in mysticism of the Orient have a more profound understanding in their observations and explanations of natural phenomena. The science of formal logic has difficulties encountering and dealing with opposing natural dualities such as: existence and non existence, right and wrong, good and evil, benevolent and mean, strong and soft, cold and heat, life and death, light and dark (Yin and Yang) etc... But the intellectuals of the Orient do not see these ideas as contrasting at all. The Oriental sages have solved these dualities in the following:

-Qiu Zhong Zhi wrote in one of his articles Qiu Shui: Everything in the natural world has two aspects. To want only the right and not the wrong, or to want only order and not disarray, is to ignore heaven's principles and the essence of all things. It is to dream of a heaven without the earth, a Yin (negative) without a Yang (positive), the two inseparable entities. It is contrary to normal, not to say foolish, to think of splitting these two relative aspects from each other and making them into two independent entities.

-In I Ching, the Confucian Zhou Shi stated: "Extreme inaction gives rise to action; extreme cruelty gives rise to benevolence."

-In Tao Te Ching, Lao Zhu wrote: "The Way gave birth to one, one gave birth to two, two gave birth to three, and three gave birth to the multitude of things in nature. All things in nature carry Yin on their backs and hold Yang in their bosoms. Yin and Yang are opposite each other, yet blend together to attain harmony. Calamity

is where happiness leans on; happiness is the refuge for calamity. A gusty wind does not blow a whole morning; torrential rain does not last a whole day. When the sun sets, the moon comes out. When the moon retreats, the sun rises. The moon and the sun are thus pushing on each other to give light” (Translation by Dinh Si Trang).

Zhong Zhi, an oriental sage said: “Extreme cold will give rise to heat, and extreme heat will yield to cold. Cold and heat were thus pushing on each other to produce a new year.”

In fact, if we are thorough in our quest for understanding, we will find ourselves so ignorant when we complain: “Heaven and Earth have no compassion, treating human as straw dogs.”



The above oppositions would make sense if we understand that: Humiliation is the cause of glory. Poverty is the cause of wealth. Dark is the cause of light. Wrong is the cause of right. Failure is the mother of success. Suffering is the cause of happiness. Civilization is the cause of decline. Turbulence is the cause of serenity, and sorrow is the root of Bodhi (Enlightenment).

There are other beliefs that assume related entities to be totally opposites: Devadatta is a good intellectual man, friend of Buddha (in reality a wicked cousin of Buddha and his worst enemy). Buddha’s laws are inseparable from the world’s laws; Life and death are Nirvana (paradise); Ghosts and evils are forms of Bodhisattvas’

manifestations and finally, the statement by a Zen master: "Buddha is a stick of dry shit" etc...

If we could understand the above contrasting principles, then we could understand that the battle between the Black and White School mentioned in Nomination of the Gods were arranged as a part of Heaven's Plan. But whenever religious leaders were asked to explain in detail the origin and the cause of the above subject, it seems that almost all of them were embarrassed and tried to avoid giving a direct answer by referring to these quotes: "Heaven's Plan must not be disclosed," "Respect spiritual beings but keep a distance," "The Way (religion) that can be expressed is not the Eternal Way," "...It's beyond comprehension...", "What I know is many but what I can reveal is only this handful of leaves," "Blessed are those who believe without seeing," and so on.

The students of Mysticism are not forced to believe in any dogma before they can observe, experiment, and systematize a supernatural principle. They have the responsibility to study all the different religious theories, but they should be able to verify the theories before accepting any explanation. It is with this approach that Secret Teachings (mystical doctrine) can be called the science of supernatural studies; otherwise it is only an unproven arcane subject.

The adepts in mysticism have many times witnessed the power of the Divinities in granting blessings or calamities upon people in many real life situations. Therefore their beliefs are on firm grounds and can affirm that God and the Divinities have complete power over the destiny of races and humanity on this earth, according to certain reasons, which we, of course, cannot fully understand with our small brains. The Creator does not have to explain anything about the arrangement in the Celestial Engine to anyone, except to a very few prophets who have a role to play in Heaven's Plan. Humanity needs to be humble and learn that: "everything has meaning, including things we consider meaningless".

Mysticism also confirmed that omens usually occurred before, during, or after the birth of a person having a divine mission. However, out of admiration and respect for the religious leaders,

people greatly embellished the facts of their stories to the point where they became far-fetched legends.

In addition, one could see that the author of Nomination of the Gods had sought to reconcile Buddhism and Taoism tradition by having Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and Great Virtue Bodhisattva; both are from Secret Buddhism along with Tai Yi, the Immortal from Taoism.

JIANG ZIYA LEAVES THE MOUNTAIN

The Supreme Ruler has ordered Master Yuan Shi Tian Zun to check the good and bad disciples on the nomination of the gods' list and to perform the appropriate investiture for them. For this reason, Grand Master Yuan Shi ordered the closing down of the mountain cave entrance and stopped lecturing the sutras. In addition, he planned to have his disciple Jiang Ziya return to the world, become a general of the army to carry out Heaven's Plan.

One day, the Grand Master Yuan Shi ordered Bai He to retrieve Jiang Ziya, who came over immediately. The Grand Master waited for Ziya to finish performing his kowtowing ceremony and asked him:

- How long have you been here?

- I came here when I was thirty-two years old. I am seventy-two now.

Yuan shi said:

- The Shang Dynasty is ending, and will be replaced by the West Zhou. You must go down to the world on my behalf and put your service to help the country, and to create the list of gods. This way, your long-time cultivation of the Way will not be wasted.

Ziya pleaded:

- I left home and vowed to cultivate the Way of the Immortal because I wanted to stay out of worldly affairs. I always know that spiritual cultivation is hard, and one cannot achieve enlightenment in a day, but I have been following your teachings for so long, please have mercy on me. How can you have the heart to kick me back out into the world of the mortals!

The elder Immortal of the South Pole advised Ziya:

- Ziya, this is your destiny. You must go down and help the world. When your mission is fulfilled you can come back to resume your spiritual cultivation. It is better that way.

Having nothing more to say, Ziya reluctantly packed his belongings and asked the Grand Master his last question:

- Now that I have obeyed your order to go back to the world; can you please advise me of my final outcome?"

The Grand Master said:

- I have eight verses that will tell you about your whole life. Remember them well.”

*Ten years in poverty, clothing is simple
Have some distraction; do not be too sorrowful
As you fish at the Panxi stream, wait for the opportunity
Until the royal carriage takes you to the palace.
At over eighty, you will have a jade belt
At ninety plus three, you will carry the seal of a General
The hundred vassal states will surrender to you
At ninety-eight, you will perform the Nomination of the
Gods' ceremony.*

Then the Grand Master added:

- Even though you are going back to the world now, you will eventually return to the mountain.

Jiang Ziya bade farewell to his master and friends, and left the palace of Jade-Emptiness. The Immortal of the South Pole accompanied Zi Ya until they reached the Unicorn Cliff. The Immortal advised Ziya:

- Grand Master has already instructed you clearly; therefore you should not be too anxious. Today we part but we shall meet each other again some time.”

Ziya bowed down to thank and bid farewell to the Immortal of the South Pole then went down the mountain.

Commentary

There are generally two stages in any religious cultivation: passive and active. In the first stage, the wayfarers go into solitude to meditate on the physical (the visible) and the metaphysical (the invisible) principles of the world and of human life in order to discover Nature's laws. In their quest for enlightenment, they practice many complicated and difficult techniques that sometimes make them appear as though they are being tortured, or that their sanity is being affected. According to Zen masters, this stage is 'leaving the mundane world' that all devotees of the Way must

experience. This stage requires getting the mind into an extreme passive condition and denying the realities of things; A Zen monk describes this state of mind as one in which: “there is no mountain, and there is no river.”

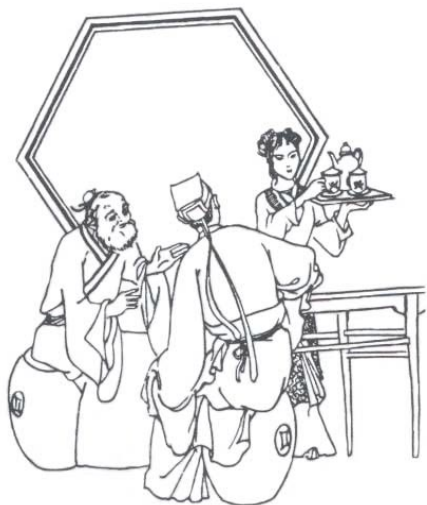
However, starting with this initial concept of dualities, and denial, in order to transcend reality and to find Nirvana (Paradise or Liberation), they have gradually realized that the Way (or Paradise) and one's spiritual value cannot be found in self-mortification; not in the discrimination between good and bad, nor in the scented lotus that is separated from its muddy pond. That is because they had come upon the light that is indicative of life beyond physical death. They had experienced peaceful serenity in their meditation, had set foot in Nirvana and had seen with their own eyes the wonderful mystery of heaven during their Samadhi (deepest state of meditation). They definitely and intuitively had come face to face with the spiritual life. They are the ones that are called by various titles of Saint, Arhat and Buddha.

From having these experiences, they have achieved peace of mind; they no longer fear that death will end their journey on this earth. They no longer feel the worries and the sufferings that too many people do during their brief chaotic moments of this ephemeral living. Instead, they step into the stream of life and accept its unpredictable changes, sharing their realizations with others, living life like everybody else but without the worries, fear and ignorance of common people. They eat and drink, rest, sleep and work like everybody else, feeling both joy and sadness, but with a liberated spirit because they have gone beyond this world of life and death following the moment they experienced what various religions used to call Nirvana (Paradise). They then returned from their isolation to the secular world to work for the benefit of mankind. This stage defines “leaving the mountain”, and the state of the mind in which “there are mountains, and there are rivers,” as described by a Zen practitioner. Instead of denying the world, they now enter the world as enlightened beings and bring benefit to it, not from their own ambition but following God's will. This is also called the active stage of spiritual cultivation, or the practice of Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Buddhism. This stage or practice

perfectly expresses these truths: Sorrows are the cause for enlightenment (Bodhi); Life and Death are Nirvana; the Buddha's Dharma is never separated from the world.

JIANG ZIYA'S MARRIAGE

After paying respect to his master and bidding farewell to his friends, Jiang Ziya left the mountain and travelled to the city. Without having any family or relatives, Jiang Ziya went to look for Song Yiren, an old friend of his who was a wealthy man in the capital. Yiren was happy to see Jiang Ziya and immediately wanted to take care of him. He also wanted to find a wife for Ziya. For this purpose, he presented himself as a matchmaker to the Ma family, and in a few days, arranged the engagement and wedding ceremonies for Ziya. Ziya showed his gratitude by doing everything Yiren wanted him to do. Everything went well and finally, old Ziya was married to the white-haired Lady Ma.



One day Lady Ma softly said to Ziya:

- Song Yiren and you are just friends, why don't you try to make a living? We cannot always depend on him for our support."

Ziya said:

-You are right. However, I practiced cultivation of the spiritual path since childhood, so I do not know anything about business. What should I do then?"

He thought for a while then said:

- I knew how to make rakes when I was young.

Lady Ma exclaimed:

- That is also a business. We can make money from it.

Ziya listened to Lady Ma and started making the rakes and carried them to the market in the capital to sell them. From morning until noon, he sat waiting in vain for customers. When he returned

home, he was hungry, exhausted and penniless. His wife met him at the door and soon they started arguing once she found out he could not sell anything. Yiren overheard the quarrel and came over. When he knew what it was about he said:

- Brother, don't worry about doing any business, I can easily support both of you for the rest of your lives. You should put away your dissatisfaction and have harmony in the family."

Lady Ma disagreed and said:

- We must make a living because we cannot depend on you for the rest of our lives.

Yiren saw her point and stopped persuading Ziya from not working.

Then Ziya went from selling flour and liquor to selling pigs and goats but all of his business ventures were unsuccessful. His wife was mad at him and yelled at him with contempt. Seeing Ziya's embarrassment and sadness, Yiren comforted him and said:

- Just as a flower blossoms in its own season, so too does a man have his own time. No matter how talented you are, you cannot achieve anything when your time has not come. Now you are poor, but you will be wealthy like anyone else when your time comes. Don't get disappointed, I have many ways to help you out.

One day, Ziya and Yiren were leisurely walking and enjoying the flowers in the garden when Ziya noticed a vacant lot. Ziya said:

- According to geomancy this is an auspicious lot. If you build a five-tower house here, your family will have thirty-six jade belted officers and numerous gold belted officials. I want to let you know this to repay your kindness."

Yi ren said:

- I have tried to build a house here many times, but it was always burned down afterward by the ghosts.

Ziya answered:

-Let me choose a lucky day for you to start the construction. You take care of the banquet to entertain the workers. I will deal with the evil spirits and make sure they don't cause any trouble.

A few days later, Yiren started the construction work, while Ziya kept watch in the house. Everything went smoothly. That midnight, a powerful wind suddenly came, blowing sand and dust through the

air. Five terrible looking demons with blue, green, white, red, yellow and black faces suddenly appeared in the midst of the wind. Ziya quickly let down his hair and pointed his sword at them, he shouted:

-Evils! What are you waiting for? Come down here now! As he finished speaking, he formed a “Mudra” (a mystical communication code) with his fingers that was immediately followed by a roaring thunder. All five ghosts fell down to their knees in front of Ziya and begged him:

- We do not know of your heavenly presence Sir. Please have mercy on us and spare our lives. We promise not to cause any more trouble.

Ziya told the demons:

-I forgive all of you this time. However, you cannot stay here anymore. Go to Mount Qi and wait there. When the war breaks out, come out and be under my command. I will make you a God.

The demons bowed down to Ziya. They transformed into air and flew away.

During this whole time, Ziya was unaware that Lady Ma was watching him to see how he was going to exorcize the demons. When she could not see any demons, she laughed and said to him: “How can you be so deceitful? You cannot even bring yourself to do the simple things and yet you want to be the master of the people!”

Commentary

Most prophets are usually not respected in their family and in their native country. Consider the following examples:

After being tempted in the desert, Jesus went back to where he grew up to preach under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. People threw stones at him and chased him out of the place. They said: “Is he not the son of the carpenter called Joseph and of that ordinary woman called Mary?”

Prince Siddhartha gave up the throne and his own family to seek enlightenment. He too couldn't avoid being considered an undutiful son and disloyal to his wife and his children. Besides his native country and family, religious leaders still have to deal with many hard situations, fierce attacks from public opinions due to

natural human cruelty- all because of people's common and shallow understanding.

Jesus Christ was condemned of having relations with the courtiers and the tax collectors. People accused him of using the power of the Devil King to exorcise demons. They made fun of him for the fact that he could save other people, yet unable to save his own life when they crucified him.

Sakyamuni Buddha had been questioned, challenged and falsely accused by other faiths and he also had suffered many attempts against his life by jealous people.

Jiang Ziya, whose mission was to carry out Heaven's Plan in the world, was no exception to the rule. His wife never respected him and thought of him as a complete loser who posed as a master with powers to exorcise and punish demons. This is the normal behavior of regular people toward those who have talent but lack opportunity.

Grand Master Yuan Shu had revealed the Heaven's Plan to Ziya when he ordered Ziya to leave the mountain. However, the time Ziya had to wait was not as short as indicated in these verses:

*Ten years in poverty, clothing is simple
Have some distraction; do not be too sorrowful
As you fish at the Panxi stream, wait for your opportunity
Until the royal carriage takes you to the palace.*

Why does Heaven arrange so many odd situations for its messengers? It seems that this is the law and good intent of Heaven before entrusting them with important missions. As such, Jiang Ziya must go through many hardships to experience the world's realities. These challenges were to train his will and enable him to deal with adversities. When the time comes, he will have enough talent as well as virtue to carry out his mission in Heaven's name. As such, was the Grand master not without intentions when he sent Ziya down the mountain ten years before the time of his mission?

The subject on exorcism has abounded in ancient sutras. Secret Buddhism had taught many methods of exorcism, the Christian bible also had many examples of exorcisms performed by Jesus and his disciples.

Today, only a few priests and monks can perform effective exorcism. This is due to the general lack of modesty and patience to learn the metaphysical laws and the proper way to exorcise, and also due to their vanity that makes them think of the subject (as seen in "The Exorcist") as low, insignificant and undeserving of their attention. But when they have encountered a possession and failed to exorcise it, they suffered humiliation because their prestige (and the congregation's) had been damaged, (as seen in "The Exorcist") and came to the conclusion that Satan was more powerful than God. As such, they unknowingly teach a doctrine that praises the supreme power of Satan over that of God even though, their goal is to protect their disciple against evil.

"The Nomination of the Gods" had very accurately described the authoritative manner of Ziya, an enlightened Taoist in subduing the demons. It clearly brings out the principle of educating and reforming the evils, making them abandon bad for good, getting them to be in service for merits to redeem their offences and contribute their efforts to carry out God's will. This is logically correct and conforms to the rules that students of Mysticism have all personally experimented.

JIANG ZIYA – FORTUNE TELLING

This chapter referred to the time when Ziya used his magic power to get rid of the five demons, and helped his friend Yiren to build a house on his auspicious lot.

Yiren happily said to Ziya:

- Brother, you are so talented. You certainly have not wasted your forty years of spiritual cultivation at all.

Ziya sincerely answered:

- Fortune telling and exorcism are my specialty. They are not important and not worthy of praises.

Lady Ma interfered:

- Why don't you make a living out of it then?

Ziya answered:

- If I have a shop in the market place, I can do fortune telling and physiognomy reading.

Lady Ma was doubtful. She said:

- I am only afraid that you will speak nonsense and say the wrong thing, then people would pull out your teeth, break your tools and tear out your books and that would be such a shame.

Yiren said:

-If you want, I will give you a shop at the market in the capital and you can do what you like with it.

Ziya was very happy with the offer. He then chose a lucky day to open his fortune telling shop, and stayed there day and night.

In front of the entrance door was pasted a couplet in bright red words:

*Highly experienced in hundreds of real life high and low events.
Having never uttered a single word of falsehood.*

And the other couplet says:

*I say the truth, as I know the good and bad fortunes of all people.
I have eyes like mirrors that observe the rise and fall of the world.*

Another couplet was at the desk where Ziya does his fortune telling. It says:

*My sleeves hold Heaven, Earth and the World.
My gourd takes in the sun and moon.*

Three months passed by. Still no one showed up to have a reading.

Lady Ma nagged:

- No one came because you are a bad fortune-teller.

Ziya smiled:

- It is because my time has not come yet.

Lady Ma glanced reproachfully at her husband and said:

- Useless people always blame destiny for their failure. Your hair is all white and what have you achieved so far?

Ziya wanted to explain himself but he could only look at his wife, dumbfounded.

One day, a woodcutter named Liu Qian entered the shop. He banged on the desk and spoke loudly: "Mister, what is your name?"

- My last name is Jiang. My first name is Shang. My pen name is Jiang Ziya, or Feixiong.

- You claim that you know the past and future. I now want you to tell my fortune. If you are correct, I will reward you twenty coins, if not, I'll let you have a taste of my fist and ask you to go back to your country. You cannot stay here to cheat people any longer.

Ziya said:

- Just tell me what you want to know.

Liu Qian answered:

- I sell firewood for a living. Show me what direction I should take, and how much would I get selling them.

Ziya cast the coins and wrote down these four verses:



*Go directly South
And meet an old man under a willow tree
The wood sells for one hundred and twenty coins
Four dishes of refreshments and two bowls of wine.*

Liu Qian protested:

- This cannot be right. I have been selling firewood for over twenty years. No one ever gave me refreshments and wine.

Ziya said:

- Just go ahead, do what I said and find out for yourself.

Liu Qian followed the instructions and things turned out for him as predicted. He sold the wood for one hundred coins and he got another twenty coins for tips. He also got the refreshments and a small bottle of wine.

Liu Quang exclaimed:

- Jiang Ziya must be a Saint, or a God. Let me pour the wine out and see how accurate he is.

In fact, the bottle of wine filled exactly two bowls.

Commentary

Every one of us has at least once in our life met a fortune-teller who has predicted our future accurately. However, at the time of the reading, we can only verify past happenings and usually have to wait five or ten years to verify the predictions for the future. By the time these predictions came true, the fortune-teller was nowhere to be found.

For a fortune-teller to become famous, he must have invisible mentors to tip him off. Some invisible mentors are lesser Spirits whose mission is to guide and show people the right way through the fortune-teller, especially those in extremely desperate situation who needed help and also those who have some blessings and worthy of their support.

Fortune-telling uses many different forms, such as palm reading, card reading, physiognomy reading, divining with coins, dream analysis, charting of the horoscope and many other unusual methods. But in summary, in order to give an amazingly accurate

reading there must be a Spirit revealing the secrets to the fortune-teller for him to pass it along to his client. Those fortune-tellers who rely solely on their own judgment are usually wrong. There are times when the Spirit cannot reveal the truth as this may harm the other person more than help him/her; this is a situation that calls for a white lie. That is why any fortune-teller, even with the help of his Spirit mentor get praises as well as blame for their readings.

The fortune-teller's task may be small but they do indirectly guide people toward the right direction and reveal to them some secrets of the Spirits' world. It also serves to predict the future for an individual or a family in order to help some of them whilst earning a living for the fortune-teller.

To benefit from fortune-telling, one must be objective in judging the outcome, and should not be hasty in praise or criticism. One always has to use logic when analyzing the reading's accuracy and especially avoid superstition. Keep in mind that if the divination is accurate, predictions will definitely happen whether one believes in it or not.

Prophesying is a broader subject. It is a revelation about the future of important people, such as kings, tribal leaders, and religious founders, or the destiny of a clan, a country or humanity. Prophets usually give out important revelations they receive from a higher rank of Divinities – The Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Archangels, Superior Angels, etc—to a large number of people. The prophets are usually the leader of a tribe, kings, kings' advisors, and great missionaries. Prophets also have the duty of warning a certain nation as well as guiding it to follow the path that God had chosen for them.

Buddhist history has mentioned the prophet Asita, who wept after predicting that Prince Siddhartha would become a great man of humanity or attain the rank of Buddha because this sage knew he was going to die and be reborn in the immaterial realm and that he would miss the rare opportunity to learn from the Great Enlightened One. Besides Asita, there were many other talented and knowledgeable Brahmins who came to visit Prince Siddhartha when he was only five days old. Among them were eight outstanding astrologers who, following their careful observation had

also predicted that he would become a universal monarch or a Buddha.

Throughout the Judeo-Christian Bible there is much more data about prophecies than there is in the Buddhist Sutras, and it seems that it is closely tied with divine revelations from the beginning to the end. The numbers of patriarchs, prophets or disciples of Christianity who had the Holy Spirit's gift of prophecy are so many that it is hard to list them all in here, but let's just mention a few specific cases:

* The story of Noah

The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence, so God said to Noah: "Make an ark of gopher wood for yourself" (Gen. 6:11-15).

* The story of Abraham

God told Abraham to leave his country to go to a land chosen by God to establish a large population there (Genesis 12:1-3).

* The story of Isaac

God appeared to Isaac and said: "Do not go to Egypt. Stay in the country that I will tell you. I will bless you and your descendants will be as many as stars in the sky" (Genesis 26:2-4).

* The story of Jacob

Jacob dreamed of a stairway resting on the earth with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. The Lord said to him: "I will give you and your descendants the land that you are sleeping on right now and I will make your population as many as sand and dust on the earth" (Genesis 28:10-15).

* The dream of Joseph

He said to them, this is my dream: We were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf stood straight while your sheaves bowed to mine. He had another dream, and told it to his brothers: "I have a dream, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me" (Genesis 37:6).

In another occasion, Joseph analyzed the dream with the butler and high-ranking officer of the Pharaoh. Joseph said: "Are the analyses of dreams not coming from God in Heaven? Please tell this dream to me" (Genesis 40).

* The story of the Pharaoh feeling uneasy following a dream he had. "He ordered the magicians and doctors of Egypt to come over and told them about his dream. None of them could explain it except Joseph" (Genesis 41).



* The story of the burning bush God appeared to Moses at the burning bush. He identified himself as the Great I AM and told Moses: "Say unto the children of Israel, that I AM has sent you to them" (Exodus 3:10-14).

In another instance, God told Moses: "But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under my compulsion. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my miracles, which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go" (Exodus 3:19-20).

* After the death of Moses, God appeared to Joshua and told him: "Moses, my servant is dead; now arise, cross this Jordan, you and all your people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I had been with Moses, I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:1-2, 5).

* Gideon wanted to confirm the will of God wanting him to save Israel. (Judges 6:37-40) Gideon said to God: "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." That is what happened (Judges 6:37-40).

* When Gideon came, a man was relating a dream to his friend and he said: "I had a dream. A loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of the Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat" (Judges 7:13). Gideon returned to the camp of Israel and said: "Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of the Midian into your hands." (Judges 7:15)

* The angel of God appeared to Manoah and said to her: "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children. You shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines" (Judges 13:3-5).

* The Lord called Samuel four times and said to him: "On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end" (1 Samuel 3:3-12).

* The Lord revealed to Samuel about Saul. He told him to anoint Saul as the first king: "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people [of Israel]; and he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines" (First Samuel 9:15-16).

* Samuel got the order from Jehovah to anoint David. From then on the Spirit of the Lord is with David. Because of Saul's disobedience, God's Spirit departed from Saul and allowed an evil spirit to trouble him (First Samuel 16:13-14).

* When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, neither by dreams, Urim, nor prophets. Then Saul ordered his servants to bring him a medium. He ordered the medium to conjure up the soul of Samuel. The medium said that she saw a divine being coming up out of the earth and by her

description; Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage.

Samuel told him: "The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David." Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel (1 Samuel 28:5-20)

* Jehovah ordered the prophet Nathan to reproach David: "I anointed you and set up the throne for you to be the King of Israel. I rescued you from danger caused by Saul. I also bestowed houses of your boss, gave you the wives of your boss, and if you feel this is not enough, then I will give you other blessings, why did you use a sword to kill Uri and take away his wives" (2 Samuel 12:7-9)?

* The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for anything he wanted. Solomon asked for wisdom to lead the Israelites. God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life or riches for yourself, or the life of your enemies, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days" (1 Kings 3:11-13).

* God sent a prophet to Jeroboam. The prophet gave a sign: the altar split apart and the ashes poured out from the altar. Jeroboam stretched out his hand to threaten the prophet, and was himself made another sign, by the withering of his hand, and the restoring of it upon his submission and the prophet's intercession (1 Kings 13:1-10).

* God said to Prophet Elijah: "You shall anoint Hazael King over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint King over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place" (Kings 19:15-16).

* Jehovah told King Ahaz: “A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

* The prophecy about the Messiah: A child will be born and His name will be Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Other prophecies: About the pagans and fall of Babylon (Isaiah 13:19-23), the destruction of Assyria directed to Ethiopia (Zephania 2:12-13), against Duma and Arabi (The Burden of Duma, Edom and Seir 21:11-12, the burden of Arabia 21:13-17), the siege of Jerusalem (Ezekiel chapters 4-7), the prophecy against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (Ezekiel chapter 25), the fall of mainland Tyre (Ezekiel chapters 26-28), Egypt (Ezekiel chapters 29-32), the rebuilding of Israel (Amos 9:11, 13).

* God said to Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations. To whomever I shall send you, you shall go, and whatever I shall command you, you shall speak. Don’t be afraid because of them for I am with you to deliver you” (Jeremiah 1:1-8).

* The Prophecy about Christ: “But you, Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old” (Micah 5:2).

* The prophet Isaiah spoke about John the Baptist: “A voice of one calling in the desert: ‘Prepare the way for The Lord, make straight paths for Him’” (Matthew 3:1-3).

The Bible ends with the Revelations and prophecies about the end of the world.

As such, the prophetic and fortune-telling abilities have their differences and common points. In later times, a number of priests

who were not able to research mysticism appeared confused and self-contradicting when discussing the subject of fortune-telling. At times, it was they who taught too many superstitions and it was also they who arbitrarily forbade their disciples from believing in fortune-telling without giving them any thorough explanation.

Let me give you a specific example: The story happened in a province in Vietnam. The bishop assistant of the parish had his radio stolen, and nobody was able to discover who the thief was. A few days later, a group of parishioners had gone to consult a Hindu Muslim fortune-teller, a psychic from Chau Giang village, hoping to have some clues about the thief. As a result, they were able to recover the radio. It was stolen by a member of the religious community.

JIANG ZIYA BURNS THE “JADE LUTE” DEMON

In the Huang-Ti grave at the South Gate lived a Demon called Jade Lute, friend of Daji. They had not seen each other for a long time and so when Jade Lute came to the capital to visit Daji, the latter was very happy and the two enjoyed themselves day and night in the palace. As a demon, Jade Lute was used to eating human flesh and unable to refrain herself for a long time, every night she would kidnap the palace servants and devoured them.



One day, she bade farewell to Daji and made herself invisible as she returned to her cave. On her way, she passed by Ziya's shop and heard people praising his talents in divinations. She thought:

- What a cheater! What is so good about his divinations? Let me take the human form and test him.

She transformed herself into a young woman and called out to Ziya:

- Master, please give me a reading for my fortune.

Ziya quickly sensed the odd evil energy emanating from her face. He grinned and thought to himself:

- Vicious ghost, how dare you come here and irritate me? If I do not eliminate this demon, how can I prove my superior talent?

Ziya said to Jade Lute:

- Let me see your hand

As she gave him her hand, he held her wrist tightly and pressed hard on her pulse, using his magic so that she could not transform herself and disappear, and picking up a stone ink slab he struck a heavy blow on her head, causing her to bleed profusely. Jade lute uttered a big scream and struggled frantically.

The crowd of clients was indignant and furious at Ziya. At that time, the King's first minister Bi Gan came by on his horse. Seeing

the commotion, he stopped and inquired about the incident. The people reported: "That old fortune-teller has broken the law by taking advantage of fortune-telling to hold the woman's hand. She resisted him and he used force to strike and injured her with the ink pot".

Bi Gan looked at the unconscious woman lying on the ground and told Ziya: "You have beaten this woman to death already. What else is there for you to still hold her hand?"

Ziya said: "No, she is only faking it. This woman is a demon. I cannot release my hold lest she disappears and I will no longer have any evidence to prove my innocence. Even if you behead me without looking into the matter, I still won't release her."

Commentary

The author of this book had witnessed how the Buddhists or Taoists handled hundreds of cases of possessions and had personally performed exorcisms in front of fifty to seventy people; some of the cases had been the source of sensational rumors and great excitement in local public opinions throughout the entire district.

Each possession case has its special characteristics. The way the evil spirits talk and torment the person, controlling him/her to conduct witty repartee with the monks and how they treat the monks attempting to drive out demons is very particular, resourceful and dynamic. Especially the meaning of each demonic possession impressing upon the consciousness of the possessed, his family and relatives and the onlookers who had the chance to witness the event is totally different for each one.

It is impossible to present all of these typical possessions in the narrow content of this article, and if needed, there must be a book for this subject alone. This chapter only summarizes some issues relating to exorcism specifically mentioned in the Bible and provides some practical rules on exorcism with which the author has personally researched and experimented, in order to compare them with the classic biblical opinions on this subject.

The following are Biblical stories about demonic possession:

Story 1: The Demon tempted Jesus Christ

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for the devil to tempt him. After He fasted forty days and forty nights, He became hungry. The tempter came and said to Him: "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." Then the devil took Him into the holy city and said to Him: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bear you up... Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and he said to Him: "All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him: "Go, Satan! For it is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and serve him only." Then the devil left Him and the angels came and began to minister to Him (Matthew 4: 11).

Story 2: Two possessed persons in Gadara

Jesus was on another rim in the country of Gadara. He met two persons who were possessed by the devil. They shouted loudly: "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Now there was a herd of pigs feeding at a distance from them. The demons said to him: "If you are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of pigs." He said to them: "Go!" and they all came out and entered the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters (Matthew 8:28-30).

Story 3: A mute person possessed by evil

As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed, and were saying: "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees were saying: "He who casts out the demons uses the power of the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 9:32).

Story 4: Jesus gave the power of exorcism to the twelve disciples

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness (Matthew 10:1).

Story 5: Jesus treated the demon-possessed person

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. But when the Pharisees heard this, they said: "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." Jesus said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Therefore, I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, shall be forgiven him but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, shall not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:22-32).

Story 6: Jesus healed a lunatic

When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill, for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. I brought him to your disciples, and they could not cure him." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said: "Why could we not drive it out?" And He said to them: "Because of the littleness of your faith" (Matthew 17:14-20).

Story 7: Jesus exorcised the devil

Just then, there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying: "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are the Holy One of God!" And Jesus rebuked him, saying: "Be quiet, and come out of him!" Throwing the man into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came

out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying: "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." Immediately, the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee (Mark 1:23-28).

Story 8: The devil revealed the identity of Jesus

Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout: "You are the Son of God!" And He earnestly warned them not to tell who He was (Mark 3:11).

Story 9: The possession of the man from Gerasene

Immediately, a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces. Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting in a loud voice, he said: "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God, do not torment me!" And Jesus asked: "What is your name?" He answered him: "My name is Legion; for we are many" (Mark 5:2-8).

Story 10: The demons talked about Jesus

The demons were coming out of many, shouting: "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ (Lucas 4:41).

Story 11: The story of Job

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. Then Satan said to the Lord: "Does Job fear God for nothing? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions and given him many wives and children. But put forth your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse you to your face." The

Lord said to Satan: "all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him" (Job 1:6-12).

Satan started his test on Job. Soon, the robbers took the oxen, the donkeys, and the camels, and killed the servants. The fire burned up the sheep, his sons and daughters died when the house collapsed on them.

In those challenging events, Job has proven himself worthy of God when he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1-21) Then Satan has God's permission test Job again. He smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. Still, Job did not curse God. And God rewarded him with twice his property and he was praised for his loyalty (Job 2: 7-10).



From biblical evidence of demonic possessions, and from the mythical book *The Nomination of the God*, the writer of this essay will present some principles relating to the invisible realm that are related to the method of exorcism that he has personally experienced, observed and systematized:

1. The Demon devouring the maidservants (Eastern style ghost story), and Dracula sucking human's blood (Western style ghost story) are pure fictions. The fact that Jiang Ziya struck a blow to the ghost's head, making it bleed profusely is against the principle of mysticism. It is actually a foolish action of an ignorant person (*The Nomination of the Gods*).

2. To say that the ghost appeared in human form to have a reading in front of the crowd is incorrect and against the principle of mysticism. The students of the esoteric can see ghosts, spirits, and

demons with their “third eye” while other people cannot. It would be more correct to say that the demon has possessed a woman's body and led her to see the fortune-teller (*The Nomination of the Gods*).

3. Satan played the role of an examiner to test Jesus and Job as well as the religious leaders and disciples in later times. In story 1 (Matthew 4): “The Spirit led Jesus to a deserted field to be tempted. After being tested three times the devil left Jesus and the angels came to minister to him.”

The story of Job pointed out clearly that God gave a secret order allowing Satan to test Job's faith in God. Those are the three tests from Heaven for the religious disciple in which the examiner is a Deity called Satan.

4. A person can be possessed by evil spirits and later have Saints or angels works miracle through him/her at the same time. In reality, there is only one character playing both roles, and that is the Holy Spirit in charge. The scenario of Jesus being taken to the deserted field by the Holy Spirit and later being possessed by Satan who led him to the top of the temple, took him to the mountain to tempt him, all of this can be performed by a single divine messenger entrusted by God.

5. Satan knows clearly the mission of Jesus in this world while worshippers and the people are still completely ignorant of him.

As stated in the story: the possessed person in Gerasenes (Matthew 8:28) and other cases of possession Mark 1:23, 5:2 and Luke 4:40): “the demons clearly indicated to the people the mission of Jesus: He is the Saint of God, the Son of God, and the Christ.”

The demon itself was the Holy Spirit playing the role of Satan to enhance the prestige of the Messenger sent by Heaven and to introduce him to the people. This case coincides with the famous Buddhist teaching: “Ghosts and evils are forms of Bodhisattvas’ manifestations.”

6. In real life, possessed persons can be made to climb trees, fall into rivers, run many miles, cross immense fields, gesticulate

frantically with arms and legs, pound their chest with their fists, destroy furniture and altars, and curse the dishonest, hypocritical monks and priests. They usually suffer terrible headaches, cannot talk and have colic, seizures or paralysis... Their families often have to use chains to restrain them, giving them tranquilizers or taking them to a mental hospital. Story 9 (Mark 5:4) accurately described the case of a man controlled by an evil spirit who broke his chains and shackles to come outside. Story 6 (Matthew 17:14): the possessed person is an epileptic and often made to fall into the fire and into the water; story 3 (Matthew 9:32): the possessed person made to be mute "become speechless"; and in story 5:" the evil spirit causes the person to be blind.

7. Before exiting from the possessed person, the evil spirit commonly knocks down the person to the ground, or passes their hands on their face, clap their hands, and make loud noises before returning the person to normal. As in story 7: "the Devil knocked down the dead, yelled out loud and got out of him."

8. Many entities can possess one person at one time, as shown in story 9 (Mark 5:9): "the Devil said: 'My name is Legion because there are many of us.'"

9. If the evil spirit can possess a human being, they can also possess animals such as cows, snakes, turtles, tigers, butterflies, etc. Many cases have taken place in real life, as seen here in story 9 (Mark 5:13): "The devil got in the herd of pigs that jumped out into the sea."

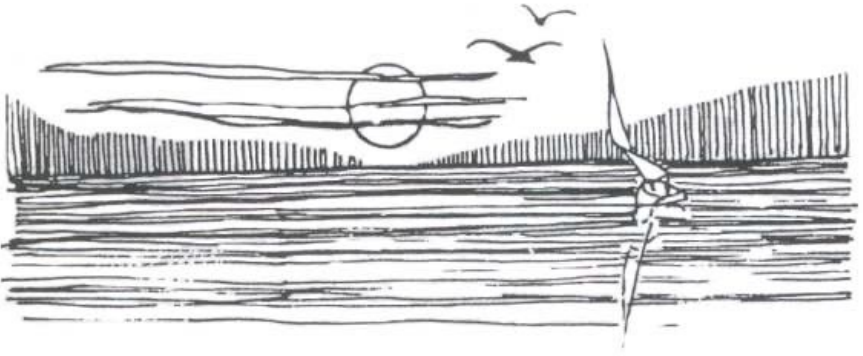
10. The Spirits who possess a person to encourage good deeds and to perform miracles are called Holy Spirits (angels). The Spirits who possess those with bad karma (involving cruel actions) to punish them or make them insult the arrogant and stupid monks - or to enhance the prestige of the true monk or priest are called evil spirits (demons).

11. The persons with much bad karma (sinful) or the religious persons without merits, who are arrogant, self centered, or who follow the dark path often meet with ghosts and demons and if necessary the Spirits could destroy their body if they do not listen to reason. Thus, the ancient sages were very correct in saying: “Devils and Gods respect virtuous people.” The Devils are indeed the heavenly army of the Supreme Being whose mission is to punish the violators of Heaven’s Laws but who admire the ones with great righteousness and generosity.

12. In story 6, the disciples of Jesus had been given the power to cast out evil spirits but had failed to do so in a particular case, so they came and asked Jesus about it. Jesus answered that it was because they had little faith. In reality, there are other factors besides faith: The Holy Spirit wanted the disciple to submit themselves fully to Jesus, who was entrusted by God to preach religion at that time – the disciples did not have enough virtue - the Holy Spirit wanted them to be humble and prevented them from spiritual pride whenever they used the powers in serving religion and assured that they would bring glory to God’s name through performing miracles.

In summary, the person who understands the principles in Mysticism and applies them correctly in the religious path (abides by Heaven’s laws) will have all the ghosts and demons (the Evil Axis) and the saints and angels (the Holy Circle) come to manifest themselves and to pay homage to him/her, because in reality Good or Evil are under the control of God’s Divinities (archangels).

The Holy Spirit would educate and teach a foolish and ignorant person, but if the latter does not understand the lesson and arrogantly offends the Holy Spirit, he would definitely suffer the consequence which was mentioned in the Bible: “If a person offends another person (Jesus), he will be forgiven but if he offends the Holy Spirit, he will not be forgiven in this life and the next.”



RELIGIOUS OPINIONS ON THE ORIGIN OF LIFE AND THE UNIVERSE

In attempting to study religion, people often get frustrated and have much to think about the many serious controversial religious theories about the origin of life and the universe (the First Cause). One theory criticizes the other as if it alone is the true representative of Truth. In reality, which religion has seen the hidden truths of life and the universe? Or they too were like the blind men who each gave out disparate descriptions of the elephant after touching it! This is not an issue for the naive believers who do not seek the truth. All they have to do is to close their eyes and believe in the dogmas. But the objective persons still feel that they need to research the validity of the religious dogmas while studying religions. Those cautious people understand very well that there are subjects belonging to the supernatural that cannot be understood with simple reasoning and logic, and that can only be perceived by intuition or the ability to grasp mystical phenomena. But either through the reasoning ability or the super senses, when using oral or written language to express these physical or supernatural truths it should naturally be presented in a coherent and sensible way and especially in a way that everybody can understand it.

Now, let us try to take on the subject of the origin of life and the universe through the various explanations presented by different religions and critique them.

Religions had put forward three main theories when researching the First Cause of the universe and human beings: either accepting a First Cause as an omnipotent God or a personal Creator (Judeo-Christianity, Hinduism); or accepting the First Cause as a principle or universal energy (Taoism, Confucianism); or rejection of the First Cause (Theravada or Original Buddhism).

I. The omnipotent God or the personal Creator

The personified Creator has many names in many religions: The Supreme Being, The Creator, God the Father, The Jade

Emperor, Brahma, Jehovah and more. In summary, God is the supreme master of the universe and all beings. He is the Whole Truth, The All Good, and the All Perfection. He resides in Heaven and controls all as the Sovereign. It was written in the Judeo-Christian bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. On the earth, where the waters gathered, was the sea and there were fishes in the sea. There was vegetation on the earth, plants yielding seeds and trees bearing fruit. There were lights and the stars in the expanse of the heavens. Below the heavens were the birds and other animals; insects and wild beasts were on the ground. Then God created man in his own image and took a rib from him to create a woman. Each species, male and female, then united to multiply."



According to the ancient Hindu tradition: "Lord Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Supreme Being, the All Knowing, the Authority of all decisions, the Founder, the Creator, is the all Victorious, the Self-existing Lord, and the Father of past, present and future of all beings. Brahma created all these beings. Why? Because Brahma had a thought, "I wish to have other creatures!" It was from

his wish that other beings were born." Muslims conceive that Allah is the Unique and Eternal Being. He is of a different nature from the things he created and nothing can compare to him. Muslims also recognize Adam as the ancestor of all human beings. He was formed out of clay and Allah breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Next, Allah created Eve from his rib and they both lived in Paradise until they sinned against Allah and were expelled to earth. Adam was thrown to the top of a mountain in Ceylon and Eve to Jidda near Mecca. Two hundred years later, they met on Mt. Arafat.

Legend has it that Adam's emotional tears dyed the stone black, which is still worshipped at the Kaba temple.

Muslims believe that Allah created the heaven and the earth in six days. The first two days he created the earth; the next two days he created all beings that lived on the earth; and the last two days he created the heavens. Muslims also believe that there are seven heavens and six realms of hell.

In summary, Judeo-Christianity, Hinduism and Islam believe that God is the Supreme Being with a personality. He is the cause and origin of the creation of the world; all things come from his will.

II. Rejection of creationism

There was absolutely no mentioning of a Creator in Theravada Buddhism's original collection of scriptures (The Tripitaka). Buddhism does not accept a Creator either as a Supreme Being, a manifestation of Power or as a multitude of beings. About the beginning of life, the Theravada Buddhist affirms that this subject is beyond human comprehension.

The first reason presented by the Theravada Buddhist in order to avoid answering thorny metaphysical questions was: for example, when an arrow struck a person, and that person asked: "who shot me, where did the arrow come from, what kind of metal was it made of, what were the motives of the person that shot the arrow at me, what kind of poison was on it?" And so on. Likewise, one who wants to know about the origin of humans and the limited or unlimited borders of this world would die before 'The Teacher of the World' could answer him."

The following story was related by a monk named Malunkyaputta (Malunkya sutra):

“Blessed One, You have not explained those theories clearly. You put them aside and did not lecture on them. Is the world eternal? Is the world limited or unlimited? If you could explain those things clearly for me, I will continue to follow you and live a life of purity as a monk. If not, I will leave you... If you know these things, say that you know, and if you don't know then just say so...and if a person is ignorant or is not enlightened, it is best to say, 'I do not know because I am not enlightened.'”

The Buddha answered: “The Tathagata did not mention these issues because they do not lead to enlightenment or to Nirvana and a person would die before he could hear the explanations.”

The second reason Theravada Buddhists presented in order to avoid answering the questions on the beginning of life and the universe was that it is impossible to discover that beginning. It was written in the Nikaya sutra: “Oh disciples! The first step of this very long journey cannot be conceived. Living beings are obstructed by ignorance and cravings, bound tightly by ropes of passion so that they cannot perceive the starting point of the endless and undetermined journey”. And to clarify the matter, someone had quoted this following reasoning: “There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our thoughts.” (Bertrand Russell 1872–1970, English author, mathematician, & philosopher)



If the Theravada Buddhists did not have the intention to solve all the philosophical problems of humanity by giving out the two reasons: one is because these matters are not beneficial in

escaping from suffering and because they are beyond the understanding of people who were submerged in ignorance and if they stopped at that, their point was in part reasonable. However, they cannot on one hand refuse to research metaphysical matters in depth, and on the other hand step into those metaphysical questions by criticizing the Hindu's reasoning about the matter. By doing so they were actually sinking deep into that arena of metaphysics in which they had consistently evaded the questions by alleging that it was impossible to know.

The Theravada Buddhists had the following apocryphal tale in order to refute God's creation and to bring the Creator Brahma's down, making him lower than Buddha. The story was written as if they were experts in the metaphysical, that which they had formerly left unanswered.

The following story was in the so called Patika Sutra: ...as a result of his karma, a being falls to an empty Brahma place. One day he wishes, "If only there were other beings!" Immediately other beings come into existence. Those beings came from another world, also because of their karma. However, the first being thinks that he created those other being. Later on, one of those beings chose to leave home and become a monk. From his diligent spiritual cultivation, he rises to a level where he can remember his past existence and only the very last one. Therefore he thinks, "Brahma, the Supreme, All-Knowing one, the Ruler, the Founder, the Creator, the Victorious, The Lord, the Father of all past, present and future beings. He created me. He is eternal, stable and will remain so forever. He created us, we came from him and so we are impermanent, ephemeral and unstable. Our life is brief and we must die."

The Theravada's competition for superiority with Hinduism becomes more apparent in the following made up story and named it Kevaddha Sutra: "A bhiksu asked Brahma, "Where do the elements of earth, water, wind, and fire end without leaving any trace?" Brahma answered: "In front of my students, I cannot say I

do not know. Why do you leave Buddha to come here and ask me? This is very wrong and contrary to reason. You should go back to Buddha and believe what he says”.

On the other hand, the Buddha’s disciples had fabricated many other stories to find faults in the supreme Creator of Brahmanism whom they had previously admitted they knew nothing about.

The Jatakamala and the Mahabodhi Jataka Sutra alleged that because life in this universe is chaotic, imperfect, full of ugly dishonesty, trickeries, greed and ambition then God, the creator of the universe and life is an unjust person who created a world full of inequity and injustice, and if that God really exists then he is really full of sins; humans only carry out His will.

However, it is not that Buddhism does not look into the origin of the universe and life as Theravada Buddhists monks used to assert, Mahayana Buddhists, on the contrary, had proposed many doctrines about this extensive and far-reaching subject.

About the universe and life, Mahayana Buddhists believed that this infinite and vast Dharma-realm was an illusory manifestation similar to a long dream from each living beings’ mind. In fact, it was written in the Shurangama Sutra that: “All the innumerable realms appear in the Emptiness of space, and Emptiness appears in the mind similar to clouds appearing in the blue sky.”, and in the Great Immense Wisdom Sutra that: “The worlds, the realms, the roots of beings...are like illusions, transformations, like the dreams... the vapor fading away, the moon under the waters... displayed by a great magician squatting at a cross road” Besides, the Mahayana Buddhism sutras such as: The Lankavatara Sutra, the Adornment Flower Sutra (Avatamsaka Sutra), the Dharma Flower Sutra (Dharmapundarika Sutra) the Earth Store Sutra (Kshitagarbha Sutra), the Supreme Prajna Sutra all have complete and detailed answers on all the metaphysical topics: the Buddha’s realm, the Heaven’s realm, the many realms of Hell and the many realms of beings etc.

It was so written in The Adornment Flower Sutra:

“All the innumerable immense realms, and all the innumerable Buddha’s land of the World Flower Store (meaning the universe) are gathered and established by the cosmic ocean of energy of the Buddhas, the vows of Great Bodhisattvas, and the sea of karmas of all kinds of living beings”. It is clearly stated in the Adornment Flower sutra that as such, the superior and pure realms of the universe were created by the higher supernatural power of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, while the lower and dark realms were created by their lower power.

But the Buddha’s higher power also supports and preserves the lower realms as well as exerts great influence on all living beings... “Without such supporting and preserving power, this universe could not have existed even for a 'ksana' (smallest unit of time 1/75 of a second), and this world could not have had the slightest happiness...” (The Adornment Flower Sutra-Avatamsaka).

In summary, without in-depth research into the sutras in the Theravada and Mahayana, people who call themselves Buddhists can easily be confused about Buddhism since there are as much contradictions in the doctrines of the Theravada and Mahayana as there are within the Theravada and Mahayana sects. For someone to unexpectedly come upon one Buddhist sutra and read a few theories on the universe, on life and ways to cultivate the spiritual path...then hastily think that those are the general views of Buddhism is greatly mistaken!

Within the content of this article, we only study the origin of the universe and life through various Buddhist doctrines by examining the discrepancies in the doctrines and summarizing them as follow:

-The Theravada tradition holds that the question about the First cause is inconceivable and incomprehensible and absolutely refuses to recognize any personal God or any invisible power as the first cause.

-The Mahayana believes that life and the universe is a production of the mind, all are manifestations from one's consciousness.

-Various Mahayana sects believe that the universe and life comes from the supernatural power of the Buddha (primal cause as non-theistic philosophy).

- Other people believe the Dharma Body of the Buddhas – the Prime cause of the universe represents a first principle that is both theistic (the personal Creator) and non-theistic (the supernatural power) because the body is of theistic nature (Vairocana Buddha) and the Dharma is one of non-deistic (supreme principle).

- A number of Buddhist sects from Tibet and Nepal, who believe in a spiritual creator (theistic standpoint) stated that: "Adi Buddha (a Dhyani Buddha) was an omnipotent and omniscient Early Buddha who through his mediation had created this universe and all living beings (similar to the creation of the universe and living beings of the God of Christianity or Brahma, the Creator of Hinduism).

Despite the many different opinions about the Primal Cause, most Buddhists regardless of their schools were using the argument of not recognizing God as a person or as a Power controlling the universe and life in order to differentiate Buddhism from Christianity or Hinduism. Even though, there are certain similarities between the different religions and that no one could self proclaim thorough understanding about God and the supreme principle, many people still harbor prejudices against each other.

III. First Cause as a principle

Regarding the origin of the universe and life, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam use monotheism (Creationism) to explain it,

Early Theravada Buddhists treat that subject as irrelevant, Confucianism and Taoism both favor the non-theistic opinion.

Before going deeper into the teachings of Confucianism and Taoism, it is necessary to research the beliefs from the ancient Chinese people because Confucius and Lao Tzu had built their own doctrines based on it.

Early cultures in ancient China, and also in similar primitive races believe that the Spirits or gods control every aspect of the lives of mortals. The fear of and respect for the gods have spread to all things that are gigantic in size, have motions and that can greatly impact on their daily lives; all of which were considered to be divine. There are many gods, namely the Sun god, the Moon god, the Star god, the Mountain god, the River god, the Lightning god, the Wind and the rain gods, and so on. And naturally, rituals of offerings and prayers to the gods have appeared since then. By observing natural laws one can deduce that if the father is the head of the household, the vassal states have their kings, the people have their emperors, then the cosmos and the gods must also have a Spiritual Ruler, Shang Ti; defined as the Emperor of Heaven (Supreme Being) governing all Deities and all things in the universe. Later on, someone thought deeper that it was not possible for the Supreme Being to be as small and sharing the same form as humans, and so changed the Supreme Being figure into a sacred and most efficient principle. That principle governs all things in nature.

Confucius (551-479 BC) derived his doctrine from studying the thoughts of ancient sages and revising the principles of changes of Heaven and Earth. He then used the principle of Oneness (Heaven, Earth and all things are of one nature) and made it his basic doctrine. It is that principle of Oneness that circulates everywhere and was the cause for life and transformations in the universe. That principle was also called Heaven, Supreme Being or Taiji (literal translation is Supreme Ultimate). Taiji is very mysterious; its nature cannot be known. However, people can understand its motions by observing the cyclical changes of living things. In other words for

better understanding it is impossible to imagine who and what the Supreme Being is but we can understand His activities through the creation of the universe and all things. The very foundation of the I Ching (the Book of Changes- or oracles) and Confucianism is the analysis of the Universe in motion.



In the beginning of time, there was only chaos. There was a mysterious, powerful and very potent principle – called Taiji, Great Extreme – which gave rise to two opposite and relative forces, called Yin and Yang (or Liang Yi –the digram symbolic for Yin and Yang). The myriad of things might have existed before Yin and Yang appeared but that was impossible to know, therefore it might just be considered non-existent. After Yin and Yang appeared, then it might be said that everything else that is in the world had already existed. The Yin and the Yang, the negative and positive force, pushes and pulls on

each other, and compensates one another to create a myriad of beings and many forms of existence. All the myriad of things came from Yin and Yang. “To understand the principle of Yin and Yang is to understand Nature; to understand that simple principle is to understand the cause of human existence.” (I Ching – Xi Ci Shang)

Yin and Yang does not have any form or shape; they are the first two symbols of changes and transformations in nature.

According to Confucianism (Ru Jia), man has a very important position in Nature: “Man has the spirit and intelligence to thoroughly understand nature. “Man is the virtue of heaven and earth, the interaction of Yin and Yang, the coming together of the devils, the

essence of the stars and of the five elements” (Book of Rites ‘Li Ki IX).

In summary, Ru Jia School does not discuss the nature of Heaven; but only tries to understand Heaven through the observable changes and transformations in nature. The initial motion of Heaven is Taiji. Taiji first gave rise to Liang Yi -two opposite forces (or elements), Liang Yi then gave rise to the Four Phenomena and the Four Phenomena gave rise to the Eight Hexagrams which ultimately gave rise to the many multitudes of things. Any beings that absorb the most of the pure essence become Saints and Deities and those who absorb little of it become humans or other things.

As for Taoism, the Tao (translated as the Path, the Way of things physical and spiritual) is the absolute principle of the cosmos that existed since the creation of heaven and earth. It is so absolutely mysterious and beyond imagination that it seems non-existent. Therefore, according to Zhi Bei Yu, “The one who asks about the Tao and the one who answers that question are both ignorant of the Tao; or “When a foolish person hears of the Tao, he laughs out loud at the very idea” (Book of Virtue-Tao Te Ching) Similar to Confucianism, when talking about the Taiji, Taoists have used the term Tao to indicate the origin of life and nature.

Lao Tzu (old sage founder of Taoism 604 BC) wrote:

“The Tao gave birth to one, one gave birth to two, two gave birth to three, and three gave birth to the multitude of things in nature. All things in nature carry Yin on their backs yet hold Yang in their bosoms. Yin and Yang are opposite of each other, yet they blend together to attain harmony.” The one mentioned above can be likened to Confucianism’s Taiji in motions, creating and transforming all things in nature. As such, the nature of Tao appears to be non-existent and idle but in reality there is nothing that is not created from it. And it is exactly because Tao is the ruler of creation that all species following innumerable changes and transformation ultimately return to Tao: departing and returning.

That is a simple sketching of Tao but in reality, it is said in Tao Te Ching: "Approach it from the front and you will not see a beginning; follow it and there will be no end."

Lao Tzu did not directly talk about man's position in the universe as compared to other creatures, but indirectly he said, "Man models himself (follows) after Earth, Earth models itself after Heaven, Heaven models itself after the Tao, and the Tao models itself after Nature." Therefore, whether human beings are dignified or not, they all have to look upon the changes and activities of Heaven, of Earth, of Tao and live according to these mystical and natural laws.

Both Confucianism and Taoism taught the metaphysical principle as the First Cause of creation but that does not appeal at all to the majority of the Chinese people and their beliefs. It is impossible for the Chinese people to understand the abstract concept of Taiji or Tao of Confucius and Lao Tzu respectively; moreover even if they try hard and understand it fully, they still cannot accept that a 'principle' is creating a universe with all things and especially human beings. The idea that makes the most sense to them in their thinking is one of a Creator in their likeness, regardless of him being omnipotent, omniscient, all good, all perfect and what ever else! At least, to them such a Creator is easy to understand and reasonable above all. Since then, the Chinese people have thousands of stories built around the Heavenly Jade Emperor in his White Jade Palace together with his entourage of Saints, Deities, and Immortals and Spirits controlling the universe and all species; they do not really care for the mysterious and abstruse metaphysical principle that Confucius and Lao Tzu had spent much effort creating. That is truly so.

In summary, there are many conflicting theories about the First Cause among different religions, but in general, they all agree on the existence of something that is beyond words and that governs all. That absolute One - either personified and called the Creator or a metaphysical principle (metaphysical power) or both - is only a

relative notion referring to something absolutely inconceivable to the human's mind. For those people who have the "third eye" and have visions of the wonderful, and unimaginable heavenly realms: of the Creator, the Buddhas in the ten directions, the angels, saints, deities, the Buddhas' lands of salvation, the dharma assembly and more, they see those visions as coming from that metaphysical Power. And if they have some experience in mysticism they will understand that the metaphysical power can manifest clearly and in innumerable forms (mystical transformations) according to one's religious preference and levels of spiritual and intellectual understandings. For the believers of polytheism, they will see countless deities. For the followers of Mahayana Buddhism, they will see the Buddhas of the Ten directions, for the Tibetans – the vision of Kwan Yin as a male but as a female for the Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese people...; and a variety of other visions and spiritual experiences to suit one's belief: The Taiji digram for the Confucians and Taoists; feeling of Emptiness for the Theravada Buddhists; the God of Fire for Brahmanism and the Hindus; the Mountain God for the mountain dwellers; the God of the Banyan tree (the pagoda tree) for the simple peasant in Vietnam; and the family patriarch for those who worship their ancestors etc...

It is indeed thanks to these countless spiritual manifestations of heavenly realms that people have always and will forever believe in religions, no matter how foolish, obscure, or simplistic their views are about the Tao, Supreme Ruler, Buddha, and Deities-and no matter how they mock each other's fallacies!

What matters most is that they have firm faith in something far greater than they are and in someone that can reward and punish them for their good and bad deeds on this earth; and that is sufficient.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF BUDDHISM BASED ON THE DOGMAS OF VARIOUS BUDDHIST SECTS

Buddhism started in India, a country where religious faith has priority over all and occupies a victorious position. From history, we know that India has four classes led by the Hindu priests who specialize in offerings, prayers and rituals. The class of Brahmins priests has absolute power over the thoughts and life of generations of royal families and all of society. They monopolize religion and directly conduct offerings to the Gods and Spirits. Their supreme God is Maha - Brahma. The priests (Brahmins) conduct the daily rites, the purification ceremonies, and the sacrifices, and teach the Vedas (Brahmanism Bible). The clergy was divided into three degrees of initiation:

- The highest degree was the priests who had no direct relations with the populace; they studied the physical and supernatural forces in the universe.

- The intermediate degree included the priests specializing in divination and prophecies; they communicated with the spirits and produced supernatural phenomena. They read and commented upon the Atharva-Veda which was a collection of magical conjurations, the highest among the sutras.

- The lower degree included the priests of the popular cult, directing regular religious ceremonies at the pagodas. They were taught to read and recite the three first books of the Vedas (Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, and Sama Veda).

The lower clergy had to study for twenty years before promotion to the intermediate level was possible, and another twenty years were needed to get to the superior level. Above all the degrees was the Supreme Chief assisted by a council of seventy monks.

Each Brahmin must keep the following ten precepts:

- 1) Patience
- 2) Right doing
- 3) Regularity
- 4) Sincerity
- 5) Purity
- 6) Control of the senses
- 7) Thorough knowledge of the Veda sutra
- 8) Thorough knowledge of Brahma
- 9) Honesty in speech
- 10) Good temperament



Prince Siddhartha Gautama (Sakyamuni, c. 563-483 BC) was born into a royal family. He lived in a society where royalties and the people had strong faith in Brahmanism. Thus the prince's first study was the teachings in the Vedas. The highest aspiration of the Indian people at that time was to become none other than a Brahmin priest, who was the highest in the society and to unite one's soul with Brahma the Creator. That same desire had certainly prompted Prince Siddhartha to leave home for the ascetic life.

Rejecting all empty religious theories in the traditional sutras, the prince abandoned all personal attachments and wandered alone, sacrificing himself in search of the Truth. He had studied with various teachers and gurus, practiced various methods of religious cultivations such as the way of the ascetics, or the "Middle Way," was challenged by the devil kings... and finally achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

It is hard to know what the Buddha's internal experiences (realizations), but the Buddhist sutras in general said that He had achieved liberation and became Buddha (the enlightened one) endowed with many transcendent powers: the power of

remembering His past lives, the power to clearly see the decease and rebirth of beings, the power of eradicating all defilements and all the Dharmas (religious, philosophical doctrines or laws).

According to Buddhism: "...after about six years of extraordinary battle, at age 35, monk Gautama had eliminated all impurities, defilements, and realized the true nature of all Dharmas. He became known as the Buddha – The omniscient and fully Enlightened One."

He started to lecture his true doctrine for the first time at the Mrigadava (Deer Park) for the five disciples (led by Ajanata-Kondanna) on the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Noble Eightfold Path". This sermon was known as "The first turning of the Dharma wheel". Legend says that numerous heavenly beings and Brahma came to listen to the teaching and praised him incessantly. Thereafter, he continued to preach the Dharma and took in disciples for about forty years before he passed away."

Today, research into Buddhism reveals that Buddha's teachings were verbally taught to the disciples who listened without writing anything down. Even after his death, his disciples gathered at what is known as the first Council under the leadership of Kasyapa to compile Buddha's teachings by reciting from memory what each of them had heard and remembered. Still, there was no written record.

A hundred years later, as all close disciples of Buddha had passed away, Buddha's Dharma easily became distorted and it was no longer true to Buddha's original doctrines. Many conflicting arguments developed in the sangha (monk community), giving rise to the need of another meeting to organize the Buddha's teachings. At that time, strong arguments about Buddha's real teachings took place between the clergy and the monks. The conflicts occurred for many reasons: in part due to the rivalry between the sects and their competition for reputation; plus the difference in the intellectual, and

the diverse personal interpretations of the Buddha's teachings from each clergy.

From then on, Buddhism split into two distinct warring factions: the Sthavira and Mahasanghika. The Sthavira referred to "the Teaching of the Elders," the intimate and older disciples, composed of elder conservative monks who proclaimed sole keepers of Buddha's original teachings. The Mahasanghika referred to the "Members of the Great Order," composed of the younger monks who were more open-minded and liberal in the study and explanation of Buddhism. Even though this second Council had stirred up much heated debates but it was done orally and nothing was recorded in writing.

After that time, the Sthavira and the Mahasanghika increasingly attacked each other making it impossible to repair the rift. Prominent masters in each sect have produced many quality essays to justify and promote their philosophies, securing their reputation and fiercely attacking others. Thanks to those essays, different sects had in the later times built voluminous collections of doctrines. Four hundred years later following Buddha's death, under the reign of King Asoka (268-232BC), the sangha had split into over twenty sects, ten from Sthavira and ten from Mahasanghika.

The writing of the teachings finally occurred at the third Council under the reign of King Asoka and Kanisha. Buddhist doctrines were written in two languages: Sanskrit (north India) and Pali (south India). Afterwards, Buddhism had declined on the very soil of India due to the competition of Hinduism and Islam, but it was preserved through the promulgation to neighboring countries. The sutras written in Pali, distinctive of the Theravada (smaller vehicle) spread to Southern India and became the Southern Sect. The sutras written in Sanskrit were disseminated to the North outside of India becoming the Mahayana or Northern sect.

Buddhist faith prospered and grew larger in Asian countries for the past thousand years. The Theravada sects are in Ceylon,

Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma. The Mahayana sects are in Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. The Theravada and Mahayana both have their different three collections of Sutras, Laws and Essays. Today's research on the Southern and Northern Buddhist sect is based on the sutras that were written in Pali from Ceylon, and those written in Chinese or Tibetan dialect because the original sutras from India had been destroyed by Islam and therefore incomplete. The two sets of sutras collection of the Three Baskets of sutras that were circulating then were:

1. The Three Baskets collections of the Southern Sect, called the Agamas are composed of: The Digha-nikaya (Collection of Long Discourses), the Majjhima-nikaya (Collection of Medium Length Discourses) the Samyutta-nikaya (The Collection of Grouped Discourses), the Anguttara-nikaya (The Collection of Discourses on Numbered Topics) and Khuddaka-nikaya (The Collection of Miscellaneous Discourses).

2. The three collections of the Northern Sect: the Nikayas, the Saddharmapundarika Sutra (Lotus of the Good Law Sutra, popularly known as the Lotus Sutra), the Vimalakirti NirvedaSutra, the Avatamsaka Sutra (Garland Sutra), the Lankavatara Sutra, as well as a group of writings known as the Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom), the Diamond Sutra (Vajracchedika Prajna Paramita Sutra), the Amitabha Sutra, Nirvana Sutras (Mahaparinirvana Sutra) and others.

The existence of the two sets of canons from the Theravada and Mahayana claiming that they are original teachings of the Buddha is not enough proof for the scientific minded scholars who feel that such conclusion is not solid. The first thoughts of the Buddhist tree were certainly not the forest of Buddhist philosophies of today. The question regarding the initial message of Buddha has been and will forever be a subject of doubt.

Even though the monks had tried to unify all the Buddha's teachings in either Theravada or Mahayana by a doctrine about the

Five Periods which encompassed all the Buddha's Dharma, they were not able to satisfy the hostile parties at that time, or answer the questions that were asked by other Buddhist scholars.

The five periods of the Buddha's Teachings are:

I. The first period: Following his enlightenment, Buddha remained under the Bodhi tree for another twenty-one days. At that time he was high-spirited. The teachings from his Realization were so profound that it could not be understood by any layperson but, only by the Divinities. The teachings are recorded in the Avatamsaka sutra. The first period is called the Avatamsaka.

II. The second period: The Buddha went to Varanasi (Deer Park) and as he realized that no one could understand his teachings, he simplified them and instead preached the Four Noble Truths and the Twelve Causes. This period is called the Agama.

III. The third period: The Buddha's doctrine became popular and was conflicting with other religious groups and philosophical schools, thus forcing the Buddha to justify his theories. All discussions and rationalizations are recorded in the Vimalakirti and the Tripitaka. (The teachings from this period are a mixing of Theravada and Mahayana, called the Vaipulya (extensive)).

IV. The fourth period: The Buddha lectured to the disciples with superior intellect about the supreme principles of the universe. This is the Prajna (wisdom) period.

V. The fifth period: This period marked the maturity of Buddhism. Buddha lectured the Bodhisattva Vehicle doctrine to his most advanced students. This is called the Lotus-Nirvana period.

It is definitely hard for the Theravadians to accept the classifications of all Theravada and Mahayana teachings according to the above point of view. However, regardless of Theravada or

Mahayana, as logic sees it - all theories come from the continuous and persisting work of many monks and determined scholars, the first one being the genius Sakyamuni, followed by many other patriarchs over a long period of time. A group of religious scholars, famed or anonymous have devoted themselves to searching for the Truth. They have invented many different methods of spiritual healing for humankind that have resulted in today's Buddhism.

Nowadays, the intellectuals were not concerned whether or not a particular sutra came from Buddha or some other sages but whether it was true and useful, or did it have any practical benefits? Buddhists monks themselves were often reminded that they should not let faith and superstition impede their learning of Buddha's words. The following mental set was advised: Do not believe in anything just because it was repeated by someone. Do not believe it because of tradition or because the majority believed it or because rumors had it so. Do not believe it because it was written in the sutras, because someone said it, because it came from a Venerable monk or from Buddha, because it was presumed so or because it fits in with one's prejudice... but to question with reason, to experience and see if it correlates to the truth.

If such approach is used in examining Buddhism and the theories it proposed to humanity in order to verify their practicality, reasonability and usefulness then it could be compared to other scientific subjects that serve humanity. Otherwise it could not avoid being doubted, ridiculed, or treated with indifference by the majority of people because what they put forward is full of darkness from superstition, fanaticism and illusion of the uneducated.

We will successively examine to objectively and scientifically understand the complete general outlines put forth by Buddhism promising the goal of liberation from delusion to the researchers, and the believers of past and present.

The “Middle Way” of Buddhism

In Sakyamuni Buddha's time, there were over sixty different religious philosophies in India's society. Each school proposed a different method of cultivation and advocated its way as the unique way leading to supreme enlightenment.

Prince Siddhartha had practiced many methods for spiritual cultivation before coming up with his own. The Buddhist sutra says that Sakyamuni Buddha attained Buddhahood and gave the first sermon (turned the Dharma wheel) to the group of five monks led by Kodanna. The Theravada then proclaimed this teaching – The Four Noble Truths - to be the most admirable and without precedent Truth. The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutra says:

...Monks, until the absolute and true realization of mine, with its three aspects and twelve permutations concerning these Four Noble Truths became truly clear, then I did claim to the world, which is composed of Devas, Maras, Brahma, among the Bhiksus, Brahmin, heaven and the common people that I have realized the unexcelled, supreme right knowledge.

At that time, many earth Devas were present and they acclaimed, “At Varanasi, in the Game Refuge at Isipatana, the Blessed One set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dharma that cannot be explained by priests, Deva, Mara, Brahma (the Creator-god of Hinduism) or anyone else in the cosmos.” The Theravada sutra also says that at the time ten thousand-fold cosmos trembled and shook violently.

What exactly did Sakyamuni Buddha say about his realization of liberation from suffering to Kodanna's group, for the Theravada sutras to call it the supreme realization that men, Devas, Devas Kings and even God had not yet known?

Let us read further “The Teaching that Set the Wheel in Motion” about the Four Noble Truths: O bhiksus, there are these two extremes that one who cultivates monkhood should avoid:



1) The one that is devoted to sensual pleasure is vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable, and not worthy of the nobles and sages.

2) The one that is devoted to self affliction is painful, ignoble, unprofitable, and not worthy of the nobles and sages.

By avoiding these extremes, the Tathagata has realized the “Middle Way—the way that produces vision and knowledge and leads to serenity, superior knowledge, self-awakening, and Nirvana.”

Buddha went on explaining: “O bhiksus, this is the ultimate truth about suffering (the noble truth of suffering): Birth is suffering; Decay is suffering; Death is suffering; Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair are sufferings, not to get what one desires is suffering; in short: the five groups of Existence (clinging aggregates) is suffering.”

“And now bhiksus, this is the supreme truth of the origination of suffering (Noble truth of origination of suffering): It is that lustful craving which causes rebirth. The craving binds up with lust and passion, here and there (life) to find fresh delights. It is the craving that clings to the sensual pleasures; the craving that clings to existence and the craving for self annihilation (emptiness after death).”

“And now, bhiksus, this is the supreme truth of the elimination of suffering (the Noble Truth of elimination of suffering): it is the

elimination, the renunciation, the relinquishment and the letting go of such sensual craving.”

“And now, Bhiksus, this is the Truth about the path leading to the termination of suffering: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path” (Samyutta Nikaya).

We need to review how the Buddhist monks explained the philosophy called “the Middle Way” in the Sutra: “Setting the Wheel of Laws” (Dhammacakra Pravartana).

In Buddha's time, the society of India had two main schools of thoughts: They were the “Sasvata” and the “Uceda.” The former believed in the permanency of the soul and the body whilst the latter in its destruction after death. The Uceda advocated that death was certain for everyone and with it, everything ended. Therefore, as life is the only reality, one should enjoy pleasure as much as possible. Morality is an illusion; religion is craziness. Pleasures are real and there is no need to control cravings and instinct because they are the natural heritage of human beings.

Meanwhile, the Sasvata sects, believers of the permanency of the soul, had presented many strange ways of spiritual cultivation to mesmerize the superstitious and uneducated people. Among the Sasvata, there were sects that practiced nudity, filthiness, and self-mortification, and asceticism— even bizarre rituals such as the practice of long-drawn-out standing on one leg.

Prince Siddhartha was also involved in the practice of asceticism for many years. He ate very little, until he became only skin and bones and fainted from exhaustion. He realized then that self-mortification only led to degeneration of the body and not to liberation, and returned to normal living. The first five bhiksus who practiced together with the prince were disappointed at his decision and left him, saying: “Monk Gautama loves luxury now. He has ceased to make efforts and has gone back to a comfortable life.” The belief in a devoted ascetic and peculiar life as the way to

achieve liberation was certainly not easy to erase in the Hindu's mind.

That is why Buddha emphasized the Middle Way in his first sermon to his first five companions. The Middle Way is not to enjoy worldly pleasures as advocated by the Uceda (annihilation of the soul), and not to be attached to the practice of asceticism.

The Middle Way practice sounds easy at first. In reality, it has many variables depending on different understandings of the concept. To what extent can one enjoy life without being a slave for sensual gratification and to what extent does one refrain oneself without becoming an ascetic? This is something quite hard to clearly define.

The fact is that during Buddha's time, Devadatta had the ambition to displace Buddha and assumed for himself the leadership of the sangha. To that end he used the mask of holiness, purity and preached according to the Hindu's inherent belief in asceticism and bizarre practices, and requested as well as putting pressures on Buddha to implement these five rules on all members of the sangha:

1. Monks should spend all their lives in the forest.
2. Monks should accept no invitations to meals, but live entirely on alms obtained by begging.
3. Monks should wear only robes made of discarded rags picked up from trash piles and the cemetery.
4. Monks should live at the foot of a tree and not under a roof.
5. Monks should be vegetarians for life.

In front of Buddha, Devadatta argued his case by asking: "Monks, consider the rules I requested and Buddha's words, whose statement is superior—The Tathagata's or mine? If you want to be liberated from suffering, follow me."

By emphasizing outward appearances as a way of life, and the unusual and eccentric dress code, as befits the virtues of a saint, Devadatta has attracted many novice monks who had many ideals but lacked practical experience. A great number left Buddha for Devadatta. Later on, Buddha sent Sariputta and Moggallana to those lost monks and preached hard to persuade them to return to Buddha.

The tendency towards extolling virtues and queer practices as a means to dazzle and mislead others about one's reputation and holiness seems to be inherent in the psychology of the Hindu's in that period of time, especially those who do not possess any real talent except for their ambitious desire for liberation.

That subject matter was seen once again following Buddha's death: By tradition of the Buddhist Order of Elders, monks who have left secular life must live a life of celibacy in the monastery so to facilitate spiritual cultivation and to devote the time in promoting the doctrine. As this concept gained popularity, people with the tendency toward extraordinary feats had exaggerated the matter by circulating the rumor that monks had overcome and totally eliminated all sexual desires etc... But, during a meeting of monks, a bhikshu had come forward and definitely asserted that even those who had achieved the rank of Arhat continued to have nocturnal emissions.

The days after Buddha entered Nirvana, disputes about the Middle-Way doctrine for liberation arose among the sects. There were more than 40 sects claiming to be the right heirs to Buddha's teachings, of which the general outlines of differences were mainly in the Theravada and Mahayana, the two principal Buddhist traditions. The gradual differences in opinions about Buddha, the cosmos, humans' life, paths to liberation etc., have become more contradictory with time, to the point that Theravadians, with probable reasons, has called Mahayana "the heretics" who have forgotten Buddha's history and have gone beyond Buddha's teachings. Meanwhile, the Mahayana is also not unreasonable

calling the Theravadians “the outsiders” who are narrow-minded, superficial, arrogant and bookish – hence, unworthy to represent the essence of Buddhism. This article only examines the major characteristics of both sects as it relates to today’s civilization and sociological realities based on objective rules and real life.

First of all, Theravadians contend that since life is an ocean of sorrows, and there are no Deities to save people from this miserable world, they must themselves cut one’s rope of sensual cravings that binds them to the cycle of rebirths. To escape from this world, one must strive to avoid life’s tribulations, to learn to act selflessly as having no ego, and to leave behind all that belonging to the secular world because they are illusions that must be hated. Viewed as such, there is only one unique way –that of monkhood-that would hopefully lead to the other shore (liberation). As to the majority of laypeople, there is no hope for them in this matter.

This attitude shows total disappointment with this world, and with oneself—moreover, a very selfish view of salvation. That is the goal and guidelines proposed to humanity by the Theravada Buddhist. This is exactly why many people used to view Theravada Buddhism as a highly pessimistic and negative religion.

But in carrying out the eradication of the ego as promised, Theravada Buddhists have left much evidence proving clearly that they have not achieved much eradication of their pride about their religious leader, their denominations, their religion, their monastic rank and that their egos have grown even bigger than anybody else’s.

We should read a number of the main thoughts from the Theravada sutras below for us to appreciate the above observations:

1. From the Collection of the medium length discourses of the Buddha – the Noble Search (Majjhima Nikaya -Ariyapariyesana Sutra #26):

On his way, Buddha met the wandering ascetic Upaka, who asked him: Who is your teacher? Whose teachings do you propagate? Why did you leave family life? Buddha answered:

“Buddha has overcome everything and knows everything. Buddha has left behind all attachments, Buddha has eliminated all desires, Buddha has realized all there is to know and therefore has no teacher. No one is Buddha's teacher; no one is His equal, including the Deities and Brahma. Buddha is perfect in this world, an Arhat. Buddha is the supreme Teacher; Buddha is the only supreme teacher. There is only one enlightened, peaceful and serene Buddha. Calm and without desires, Buddha is going to the city of Kaasi to set the wheel of the Precious Teaching rolling in this blindfolded world, and to sound the drum of no beginning and no end.”

2. Chapter 5 of *The Buddha and His Teachings*, by Venerable Narada).

“On one occasion, soon after the Enlightenment, Buddha was dwelling at the foot of the Ajapāla Banyan tree by the bank of the Nerañjarā River. As he was engaged in solitary meditation, the following thought arose in his mind: “it is painful to live without someone to pay reverence and show deference to. What if I live near an ascetic or Brahmin, respecting and reverencing him?”

Then he thought, “Should I live near another ascetic or Brahmin, respecting and reverencing him, in order to bring morality, concentration and wisdom to perfection? However, I do not see anyone in this world, including Gods, Māras, and Brahma, and among beings, including ascetics, Brahmins, gods and men, who are superior to me in morality—and with whom I can associate—respect and reverence.”

Then he thought, “Or should I respect and revere this very Dharma, which I myself have realized?”

In reality, the wise and the sages are humble and unpretentious. Socrates, a Greek philosopher (469 – 399 BC), had said: “That which I know the clearest and best in my life is that I don’t know anything.” In the same vein, Confucius said, “That which we know that we don’t know is the right knowledge.” What would a great leader as Buddha himself think if he knew about the flattering

praises and statements full of vanity that were attributed to him by his disciples? What would the scientifically minded people think about that spiritual path structured around eradication of egoism?

The desire to elevate one's teacher to the number one position in the world so that it reflects admirably on oneself clearly shows itself in the following narrative: "As the Sangha is also endowed with greatness there is also the reverence in Buddha for the Sangha." - This discourse was delivered by Buddha while residing at Jetavana, Sāvattthi, long after the establishment of the Order of the Sangha. He showed His reverence for the Sangha by requesting the Queen Mahā Pajāpati Gotami to offer to the Sangha the robe specially prepared for Him" (Buddha and His Teachings by Narada Ch.5).

The Mahayana Buddhists have gradually built their dogma over the past thousand years for the following reasons: To prevent the Theravada Buddhists from going overboard, to correct their extreme pessimistic viewpoint towards life, to adjust the extreme vanity about themselves and their doctrines, to open their eyes to their duty and responsibility with society, to tell them truthfully that they have not reached any enlightenment at all and that they are still inferior to a layperson in many aspects, to teach them a lesson to be more modest because it is contrary to virtue if they continue to boast about themselves with the Heavenly Beings or the Deities in many realms, to wake them up from their illusion of being smarter than nature while they are practicing against nature's law; to let them know that their understanding is still very superficial and that they will easily mistake themselves for the All-knowing, worthy of the offerings and respect of the world, to point out that their behavior, far from being of great virtue as they imagine, is in fact quite ordinary.

And it's true that while the Theravada monks considered the teaching of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path supreme, the Mahayana has tactfully reminded them that those are ordinary teaching reserved for the less developed mind, the slow learner, and the people of poor root whom Buddha must instruct.

While they (Theravada Buddhists) reject the help of the high-virtue monks in this world and those in heaven, the Mahayana reminds them of the ten realms with myriad of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who had been Buddhas since many lifetimes ago and who can support and help them.

While they are afraid of sorrow, the Mahayana gently tell them that sorrow is the origin of Bodhi (enlightenment).

While they want to run away and separate themselves with the world to find ways to merge with Nirvana, the Mahayana reveals to them that life and death are indeed Nirvana.

While they want to achieve liberation for themselves, leaving others in this world, the Mahayana teaches them that many primordial Buddhas still helped sentient beings, and vowed not to enjoy Nirvana as long as one single being remains in this world.

While they, being misanthropic and pessimistic, are running from responsibility, the Mahayana advises them to return to normal life to pay off their debts to humankind, to their country, their family, and the Triple Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) before considering self-liberation.

While they imagine they are enlightened, they are reminded that even the great disciples of Buddha: Saraputra and the great intellectual monks, as well as five other thousand monks that were in the Dharma Flower assembly at the time still have to cultivate for many more lifetimes in order to be enlightened (becoming a Buddha), and that such imagination of enlightenment belongs to extremely arrogant monks.

While the Theravada monks haughtily think that they are superior to the Heavenly Beings, the Mahayana affirms that the Heavenly Beings are manifestations of Great Bodhisattvas who are a million times more superior to them.

Even though there were great differences in the above opinions over the first thousand years of Buddhism, both sects later agreed that purity and celibacy was an inflexible rule for monkhood. Gradually, a number of Mahayana sects in Tibet, China, and Japan abolished that rule. Monks could get married and dressed like ordinary people, and yet were still successful in their religious

practice and in the propagation of the doctrine. Padmasambhava (lotus-born), the founder of the Red Hat sect, was considered a great Bodhisattva by the people in Tibet; he was married and was the first one to preach Buddhism in Tibet with remarkable success. After him came Marpa Lotsawa (1012-1097), a great teacher of the Kargyutpa sect. He was also married and the people of Tibet regarded him as a Saint.

In China, the story of a monk called Ji Tien (or Jig Gong, Mad Monk, in 12th Century) who ate dog meat publicly, was constantly drunk, but had great supernatural powers, was circulated with the popular belief that the monk was the manifestation of an Arhat (enlightened being).

In Japan, Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), founder of Shin Buddhism, related a dream in which Kwan Yin Bodhisattva told him to get married and showed the Way to the world in order to set an example for the people to see that the spiritual Path is not only reserved for the celibate monks; secular people can cultivate spiritually and thereby become enlightened in just the same way. This sect has the most disciples and temples in Japan where most of the monks were married.

In summary, up until today, Buddhism, especially Mahayana Buddhism, believes that the purpose of religious practice of the sages is not to do things that are against nature, but to live freely amid the sorrow, helping humanity and propagating the path of virtue untiringly.

Will Buddhism have any other major changes in the explanation of the religious doctrines and other means for liberation? That still remains an issue of the future.

GOOD AND EVIL

The concepts of good and evil are timeless. Almost all religions and various other moral institutions have established fixed models to differentiate from good and evil. They promise their believers Paradise in their afterlife as the reward for good deeds and threaten them with the flames of Hell as punishment for evil actions. But among the believers, there are always a few who occasionally doubt the good and evil criteria set by their religion and societal tradition. It may be because the realities happening around them do not really seem to match with the dogmas they were taught to believe in, or is it the desire to live free, and outside the imposed rules that give them good reasons to doubt? Is there reward and punishment for human beings? Is there such a thing as Divine Law to separate the good people from the bad? Why is it that so many violent or cunning fellows are blessed with good fortune and are favored with wealth and rank? And for the decent people to often meet with disaster and poverty? Is there Heaven? If there isn't one, then one has no business blaming Heaven and Earth. But, if it is obvious that Heaven exists, is it possible that Heaven is unjust, biased, and blind? What observations do the researchers of metaphysics and mysticism have in order to clearly solve the issue of good and evil that have left so many people feeling uneasy and doubtful? In this chapter, we will attempt to examine this dilemma of good and evil based on the above questions and by coordinating with mysticism, to try and answer them to some extent.

Firstly, it is necessary to limit the position of human beings in their intellectual ability to understand themselves, others, nature, and the physical cosmos gained through their five senses, and also to limit the number of opportunities about the actual intervention and manifestation of the deities by punishing or by blessing a selected few who serve as real life examples that the metaphysical researchers or a few common people had the chance to witness.

It is possible to derive physical and metaphysical principles based upon the observation and logical reasoning of the physical and metaphysical phenomena.

Since the ambition of modern scientists to know everything about our physical world has been a clear failure, we cannot therefore be too greedy to demand to understand everything about the Deities and the Creator. To accept with one's modest knowledge is the reasonable and most sensible attitude to research the world, the cosmos along with Divine Law, Heaven's Plan, Deities and... the Creator.

Physical science has been somewhat successful in discovering the cosmos, its surrounding and humans in their physical existence. It has also discovered a number of physical laws that help to conquer nature and improve human life. During the past two centuries, there have been many useful discoveries in the natural and social sciences; applied science has also brought many comforts to humanity. But after that ebullient and exiting time, today, despite its advancements, science is the first to admit that it still does not fully understand about the minute elements within the smallest atoms, let alone the immense outer space with its billions of planets, many of which resemble the earth we live on. The most erudite scientist of today still cannot see the shape of his own nose, and does not know how many hairs there are in his eyebrow as well as thousands of other parts within his own body. So we can arrive to a conclusion without fear of being wrong that science's knowledge is not worth a grain of sand compared to that which is still unknown in this material universe.

Stepping into the field of mysticism, we encounter an even more difficult issue which is one thousand times more challenging than that of the physical sciences. However, mankind's destiny seems to be closely related to the keen mind of this tiny creature who, despite its littleness always aspires to understand unfathomable matters, and somehow thinks that he could be in touch with that deep unknown while he is totally ignorant about it.

Occasionally, in his daydreams, he enthusiastically imagines that he is even more superior to Shang Ti (the God Above). That tiny being had acted upon his dream by making chaos in the celestial palace with his magic iron wand, but finally he had to fall back to reality and had to submit himself humbly to punishment under the Wu Jing Mountain for more than 500 years (Journey to West-The Monkey King).

As such, we must know ahead of our own arrogance and clearly recognize that our own intellect is not worth a billionth of a grain of sand before we start a happy journey into the supernatural world.

If we'd like to, we may take along some scientific tools, although they are not worth much, to make us feel safer in our exploration of the supernatural realm. We can use the tools of observation, differentiation and generalization to evaluate the supernatural facts that are manifested as physical realities. In addition, as we should be content with science's partial discoveries of the cosmos and of this planet, we should also be happy with partial discoveries accessible through divine revelations in the metaphysical field. With this in mind, we are now ready to examine the issue of good and evil mentioned above in the following chapters.

As we observe real life events happening in front of us, in the skies, on the earth, and in the sea, we can clearly see a number of incidents in the wild life that relate apparently to the concept of good and evil. The animal world in the dense forest is ruled by the immutable law of 'might over right.' Lions, tigers, panthers, bears and the rest require no justification for using their strength to bring down and devour deers, goats, lambs, cows, and all. When confronted by the stronger and ferocious beasts, smaller and weaker animals can only run as fast as they can for their lives. And what happens in the deep ocean? Tiny creatures eat plankton near the water surface. Small fishes eat the tiny creatures. Larger fishes eat the small fishes to stay alive, and the giant fishes survive by

eating a great quantity of various fishes. The same event occurs in the sky. Birds eat worms and bugs, small animals and fishes. In the animal world as a whole, it is hard to determine whether or not any principles of good and evil exist! And how does it differ from men? History of mankind has left us much evidence of how people of small clans, races, nations, or even groups of nations have fought with each other for survival and domination. There have been races of people that were completely annihilated or assimilated into other races. Right in the heart of any society, the shrewd, the strong and the cunning tend to overpower the weak and the naive in the competition of interests. And that is because of these realities that a number of people had been compelled to exclaim this following remark: "Man is to man, a wolf."

Facing these societal realities, some practical people decide to advocate that they should sharpen their claws to be as powerful and wily as lions and foxes to dominate and to get rich at the expense of others. They even consider it a principle of living that is closest to the way of the society for the wise.

Nevertheless, in human society, although there have been much ruthless wars and slaughters for survival, conscience and righteousness have always persisted thanks to the teachings of true masters and prophets about fairness, compassion and love among one another. Their teachings of living a moral life in order to gain Paradise has always been remembered and adhered to by a part of humanity.

Even though men still conduct in a bestial way towards others, in reality they are not quite like animals. Right judgment and human conscience remain even after terrible internecine barbaric warfare. Society has laws and regulation to prevent bad intentions toward one another and gives out a constant reminder of the principles of equality, goodwill and justice.

Public opinions and public international laws more or less compel nations to respect certain rules of conduct in the conflicts

and competition of interests. But in real life, there will always be some entities that will continue to use various schemes to cheat national or international laws for their own benefit.

Under normal circumstances, followers of a religion or any school of morality have faith in the power of God and the Divinities and lead an honest life as their religious doctrine dictates. They feel safe, and trust that nature and divine laws will protect them from injustices inflicted upon them by others, or they accept their destiny and patiently wait for the final judgment. And so, the religious believers have handed down many adages: "A good deed calls for a return; cruelty meets with same; who sows the wind reaps the storm; a violent life results in brutal death; blessings overcome bad destiny; God is just; and others...

Religion has played an important role in encouraging people to practice kindness and in getting them to accept their fate and endure life when they have to deal with the many rivalries from greedy and deceitful people.

But unexpectedly, and due to social relations, there are times when a person finds himself being looked down upon, bullied and made to feel bad by rich people who do so with or without intention; he would feel self-pity and raise these questions: is it true that good deeds bring rewards? Why is this or that person so rich and powerful while, as he sees it, that person has no morality and is even sinful? Their religious faith is therefore shaken. And perhaps there are many other incomprehensible circumstances that make him lose his faith totally, and reject all religious tenets which he had devotedly observed in the past. In the end, he too, refines the deceitful arts and joins the competition for wealth and power of this world.

For the majority of people, it is hard for them to see that the rewards and punishment for the good and the bad come from the Divinities. We usually can only see a certain incomplete part of a lifetime of a good or a bad person, and we mainly see the time when the bad person is in his successful period of his life, while we

rarely can witness his downfall when he is paying for his bad karma. A bad person does encounter many tragedies and disasters in his life, but that is hard to see because of our short-sightedness, and our assumption that it does not happen. In contrast, ancient wisdom of many who have experienced or witnessed many years of changes throughout several generations offers this proverb: "The mess of Heaven's net may be coarse but it does not let a hair pass through," seemingly to remind us of the constant presence of a divine system of laws that observes, and rewards or punishes fairly and straightforwardly each and everyone.

How could we understand the measures used by the Divinities in evaluating, judging, reforming, or punishing a family, a race, in the cohabitation of humanity? It is an immense task involving tremendous details that entangle with each other in a complex and puzzling way. Moreover, it contains many other hidden factors that we are not aware of and so, when we hastily complain about the absence of justice, it is only by assuming and guessing in a shallow and superficial way.

The Spirits still intervene in people's life at the present time, however the majority of people fail to take notice when it happens in those cases that seem normal in their eyes. And even in obvious cases, few people have the chance to witness the events, except the adept, the main person involved and his/her family.

We will now relate three typical stories involving the intervention of the Spirits in regard to good and bad actions of a few common individuals in the society and how the Spirits reward or reform these people.

Following April 30, 1975, under the new communist regime, a communist officer took control of L.D. village, C.T. county in the province of VB. Being a fanatic advocate of dialectical materialism, he ordered the destruction of communal houses and temples. As a result, a number of monks, priests and psychics had to leave the village to look for safety in other places.

Sometimes later, a Spirit possessed that officer's son, making him sick. Every evening, the son would frantically thrash his arms and legs and harshly criticize his father, in addition to many insults. This went on for hours before the Spirit exited. This happened many times and greatly annoyed the dad, who attributed the disturbances to the ghosts. He said that he had used an M16 rifle and shot many rounds up in the trees surrounding his home, hoping that it would scare away the demons. But things did not happen the way he thought and the same event went on every night. He then showed me three bullets from a handgun that he had kept for souvenir, and told me that on one occasion, the demon possessed his son challenged him and he had fired three times toward his son's feet to scare it away, however none of the bullets fired. He was impressed and intimidated by this miracle and kept the bullet as souvenirs.

Shortly afterward, he, himself was possessed and was forced to become a vegetarian, because whenever he ate meat he would vomit it all out (at the time of this conversation, he had already been a vegetarian for seven months). Every night the Spirits possessed both him and his son at the same time and directed them to fight against each other for hours on end. The Spirits had coordinated their actions in making the fighting appear as they were using magical powers against each other, and the father always ended up collapsing and surrendering; all of this was to reform the officer.

Since he was afflicted with this illness, he knew no other way but to listen to his wife and his mother in law, and went with them to visit the small temples and places of worship for treatment. And from such places, he came to know many practitioners of mysticism in the province. Some advised him to worship this Buddha or that Bodhisattva by putting them up on the altar; others explained this religious story or that sutra. Because of his illness, he had to listen to them against his will and did everything he was told to do. Eventually, the mediums and psychic practitioners gradually returned to the village and they no longer had any problems with the officer.

One night, as the Spirits were fighting against each other through the officer and his son, the mediums in the village were suddenly possessed and came running to their home to aid the spirit in the father to battle against the spirit in his son. But eventually all of them, the women psychics and the father were struck down by the magical power of the son. The Spirit possessing the son often used body gestures mimicking a big bird, and claimed that he was the Peacock that Cundi Bodhisattva rode on when she came down to earth, and that he was only afraid of the Cundi Dharani and the Cundi Mudra. This story spread widely among the religious practitioners of mysticism and finally was known to a friend of mine who then told me about it. At this time, I was propagating the Cundi Dharani Sutra, translated to Vietnamese by Venerable Thich Vien Duc. I understood that this was a predestined affinity (fate or chance that bring people together) that the Divinities brought about in order to convert the non-believer, and that the Divinities needed me to play a part in his reformation. Being a cautious person, I consulted the Divinities once more about the matter and was authorized to treat his condition.

It was quite amazing for an atheist and a loyal member of the Communist party for 20 years to submit himself fully to the power of the Spirit which caused him to have a big altar in his home with four big statues of Buddha and Bodhisattva on it, a bookcase cabinet with over twenty volumes of Buddhist sutras. His home was definitely transformed into a sort of temple if we could call it that. The officer in particular is now a diligent temple guardian, respectfully going about his daily business of keeping the incense burning on the altar.

As soon as he saw me, the son was immediately possessed and strongly blamed me for my intent to help the father. The Spirit acted through the son's body as if he was resisting me and trying to attack me. Being an adept in mysticism and understanding the Spirit's intention, I had played the role of an exorcist, by forming the Cundi mudra (fingers coding representing divine authority) and the supernatural force directed my hand to point at the son. The boy

immediately fell down from his seat and hit the ground with a loud bang and laid there unconscious. About five minutes later, the son was possessed by another Spirit, who had a serious and distinguished look, and demanded me to pay for the life of his disciple whom I just killed with the Cundi Mudra. I pretended to explain and justify my actions and promised to bring his disciple back to life. The Spirit nodded happily. I stood in front of the altar and prayed aloud for everyone in the family to hear, asking The God Above and the Buddha in the ten directions to grant me their protection, and the supernatural force guided my hands in a gesture of sweeping the air toward the area where the son had fallen down. The Peacock was instantly revived. As a peacock, the Spirit displayed gestures of submission and admiration towards me.

This ended the play in which I was the main actor. The spectators (the family members) were overjoyed and exclaimed that they had met their spiritual mentor. Afterwards I explained the reason for the spiritual illness of the father and showed him the spiritual cultivation and practices of the Cundi Dharma (Teachings of Cundi Buddha).

About a month later, I heard from someone that he had completely recovered from the supernatural illness and that his whole family had performed a ceremony to thank the Jade Emperor (the God Above) which his mother-in-law and his own family had previously promised to do.

Similar events have happened to many other Communist party members following April 30, 1975. This chapter cannot present them all.

2. This story is from the head of the family whom I have initiated and taught the Dharma during my last trip to France. She told me the following story: After her father passed away he had worked wonders. He appeared to many members of the family who asked for and received his help in various matters. My host was particularly excited to tell me about a specific happening she

considered a miracle. On one occasion close to the New Year, her mother, seeing the wonder workings of her husband, had burned incenses at the altar and solemnly told him at length about how poor they were and challenged him to give her the numbers for her to win the lotto so that she could afford to buy new clothing for the kids to celebrate Tet (lunar new year). He appeared in her dream and gave her the winning numbers. She won some money but regretted that she did not dare to bet a lot of money. So she burned the incense for him again and asked for another number. As a result, this time she won a larger sum from the given number. Still not satisfied and regretted that she could have bet a larger sum, she asked him for another number. This time, he gave her yet another number. Fully convinced from past results, she and her relatives put out all the money they had for the betting. And again they won. The host said that her mother took home a large sack (used to stuff cotton) of money. From then on, they neither see him in their dreams nor giving them any more numbers.

As an adept in the supernatural principles, I asked my host if her father had any spiritual cultivation when he was alive. She recalled that the most characteristic thing about her father was his compassion for the beggars. Regardless of who came for alms he would personally go and get the rice for that person. As time passes, this became a habit for the beggars who came constantly to beg for food. This caused a lot of noises and was troublesome for his wife who nagged at him for it. She used to scold and chase them away. Knowing how she felt, the beggars often waited for her to leave home before they came one after the other to ask him for food or money. This was the only thing he had done throughout his lifetime which had made him a god after his death, and Heaven's laws even allowed him to help his family win a fortune through the lottery, to be set as an example for others.

This story reminds me of a saying in the Christian Bible: "To give to the poor is giving to God." In this case, this was a perfect example.

3. My colleague's wife had an abortion and the couple had kept it a secret. Eventually, the wife was possessed and caused to be ill for many months. Her family believed that she was mentally ill and took her to various places to be treated with magical charms, and even took her to Cho Quan, a mental institution. Finally, the spirit possessing her spoke through her and revealed that he was her aborted child, and by having the abortion, they had prevented his birth which was against Heaven's laws. They had to sincerely repent their action and practice spiritual cultivation to redeem for their sins before she could recover from her illness.

In reality, many Deities manifestations were quite ostensible in their reward and punishment of people in their daily lives. The adepts in mysticism have personally witnessed countless of such specific cases, while laypeople were limited to see only one or two in their lives.

In order to change a person for the better or to warn the sinful, the Divinities do not hesitate to interfere in small violations committed by a common person. From this, we can deduce that the Divinities also correct and warn important people in high status and power who commit bigger crimes. The issue remains as to which crime, depending on each case, is considered criminal and therefore punishable by the Divinities' standard. Or, there are cases where the criminal is only a puppet, whose strings are pulled by the Divinities to perform certain bad but necessary actions for the Divinities. This is what makes people puzzled because the sinner, being only a puppet controlled by the Divinities, is totally innocent. Therefore, mysticism concludes that there is a definite Divine interference in human affairs which can reward or punish them. However there are certain exceptions, which is when the sinner is innocent and spared from Heaven's laws.

By any means, practicing goodness instead of wickedness evidently conforms best to Heaven's laws, to which the majority of people should strictly obey.