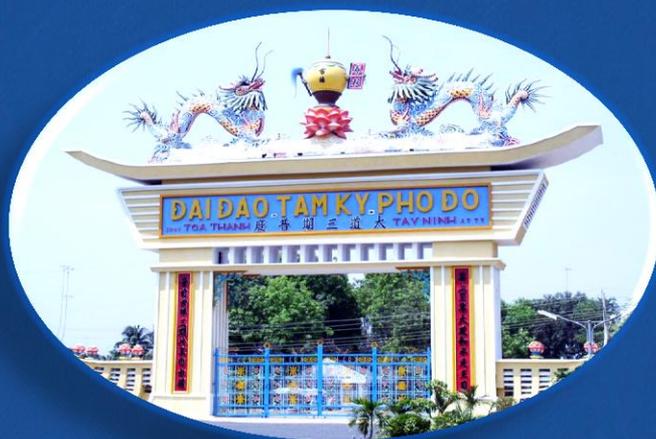


THE GREAT WAY OF THE THIRD AMNESTY ERA  
TAY NINH HOLY SEE

# A Brief Introduction to Caodaism



*Researched and Developed by Tuy Ngoc Trinh*



# **ĐẠI ĐẠO TAM KỶ PHỒ ĐỘ**

**Tòa Thánh Tây Ninh**

**(THE GREAT WAY OF THE THIRD AMNESTY ERA  
TAY NINH HOLY SEE)**

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## **A Brief Introduction to Caodaiism**

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Disclaimer: The Truth has no limits in one's mind; the author has researched and developed this booklet about the Caodai Faith to the best of her knowledge in the present time that is based on her limited wisdom restricted in human form.

Túy Ngọc Trịnh  
Jun 2014

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# 1. Introduction to Caodaism

The history of mankind will never stop its evolution of radical movements that makes us who we are today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 1926, one of these radical evolutions was born in a religious form in the province of Tây Ninh Vietnam, the Caodai Religion. Caodaism was created to promote cross-religious communications, cross-religious boundaries, and to endorse the wisdoms of living in peace and harmony for all living beings that live under one home, the Earth.

Caodaism was established through a spiritual technique that encompassed Western spiritism-séance and Eastern Taoist-Shamanistic tradition. Through this method of communication between God or other High Spirits and individuals, the Supreme Being created Caodaism. Since it was established, Caodai Religion has manifested in Vietnam and is currently spreading throughout the 4 continents of Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia. Today, there are over six million Caodaists and counting living across the planet.

“The noble effort of CaoDaism is to unite humanity through a common vision of the Supreme Being in order to promote peace and understanding of religions throughout the world. CaoDaism does not seek to create a gray world, where all religions are exactly the same; only to create a more tolerant world, where all can see each other as sisters and brothers from a common divine source reaching out to a common divine destiny realizing peace within and without.”[Ref 8, 9]

The term Caodai means “The Highest Spiritual Place” or “High Throne” where God reigns. Symbolically, it means “Kingdom of Heaven” or “The Center of The Universe”, or

a place that is beyond what Man can even imagine; a place that holds and directs the energy which always controls and keeps the galaxy in absolute balance.



Tây Ninh Holy See

### *1.1 What is Caodai's basic doctrine?*

Many philosophers who did the extensive research and study in the areas of religions have discovered in Caodaism a spiritual beauty, a philosophical truth, and a college of religion that teaches Man the ultimate Science of Truth.

The basic doctrine of Caodai Religion is that the Supreme Being was from One Divine Light (Thái Cực), the only One Being who existed before the existence of the universe when there was nothing and no space nor time (cỏi hư vô). The Divine Light was extremely dense in energy and was the origin of the universe. The Divine Light, referred to as Monad, then formed the Yin and Yang energy, the first form of protons and electrons, which interacted and created billions of other forms of energy, expanding, exploding, and signifying the beginning of the universe from the nothingness to where we are today in the galaxies...and it

continues to expand . God created the universe, the people, the animal, and everything in this universe, material and spiritual beings. (Dựa theo thuyết "Thái Cực sanh Lưỡng Nghi, Lưỡng Nghi sanh Tứ Tượng, Tứ Tượng sanh Bát Quái, Bát Quái sanh ra càn khôn vũ trụ" [TNHT])

Thus, Caodai suggests that “Man and God are linked through sacred light. The Supreme Being is the Great Sacred Light while human being is the Little Sacred Light. According to Caodai Holy Scripture, God created the universe and passed His spirit (Sacred Light) into all creatures, plants, and materials, which therefore have the same element of electrons and protons (or Yin and Yang energies). Everything in the universe comes from His spirit and therefore has a life. Whenever there is life, there is God. God is the creator of life. God exists in each living being in the universe (Thầy là các con. Các con là Thầy)” [Ref 8 & 9]

Love is eternal sacred light, the brighter this light is the stronger the connection is between you and God!

The ultimate goal of Caodai philosophies is true spiritual enlightenment and liberty for all through the most important concept of “You and God are One!”

Caodai defines only ONE RACE (Human Race) for mankind regardless of human-defined race, color, language, and sex. Every person on the earth has the same common God Father and everybody is brothers-and-sisters, figuratively speaking. This includes every living being on the globe.

The most important manuscript of Caodai Religion is The Religious Constitution of Caodaism, which includes the Doctrine of New Code and the Religious Constitution (Tân Luật - Pháp Chánh Truyền) and The Holy Scriptures (Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyển).

Caodaism upholds the concept of democracy, the respect for human rights, the respect for freedom rights, and the respect for equal rights that lead way to peace and harmony, freedom and liberty for all, through the declaration of Caodai's doctrine, written in Vietnamese:

CAO THƯỢNG CHÍ TÔN ĐẠI ĐẠO HOÀ BÌNH DÂN CHỦ MỤC  
ĐÀI TIỀN SÙNG BÁI TAM KỶ CỘNG HƯỞNG TỰ DO QUYỀN

, which can roughly be translated as:

THE GREAT WAY OF THE SUPREME BEING - PEACE AND  
HARMONY- DEMOCRACY  
THE THIRD AMNESTY ERA - FREEDOM AND LIBERTY –  
HUMANITY



## *1.2 What is the essence of Caodai's beliefs?*

The fundamental belief of Caodai Religion is simply that people must treat each other with respect and equality, regardless of race or religion; that people do have one common Father, our God, The Supreme Being. In a globalized community, human beings need to promote global tolerance in cultural, political, social, and religious affairs.

Caodai promotes the common universal language, the Language of Love.

From a worship point of view, Caodai transmits the Virtues of God, and explains the massive connection structure that links everything in the perceptual world to the centre of energy of the universe that is God. Caodai recommends the adoration of all other religious figures and symbols, and the veneration of Superior Spirits and the worship of ancestors. Caodai implies that all religions are from the same origin of God Himself. [Ref 6]

From a moral point of view, the Caodai doctrine teaches that Man should have love and duties toward himself, his family, country, society, and in a broader essence, toward humanity and all living beings on Earth as a whole, thus promoting peace and tolerance. [Ref 6]

From a philosophical point of view, Caodai preaches the concept of self-renunciation of excessive pride, excessive riches, excessive luxury, or excessive earthly pleasures, and endorses the liberation from servitude to materialism in the attainment of spiritual tranquility of the soul. The honor,

riches, luxury, and those earthly pleasures must not dominate a culture. That does not mean Caodai would advocate a primitive or impoverished economy devoid of luxury and splendor, but caution that when earthly pleasures rule, men make abundant use of material goods as means to make life in society dignified, upright, and agreeable to body and soul; that would easily lead human beings to conflicts and wars. When human beings are in liberation from servitude to materialism, and focus on the attainment of spiritual tranquility of the soul, human beings will be less subjected to conflict of interests and more objected to peace and harmony. [Ref 6]

From a spiritual point of view, Caodai confirms, in harmony with other religions, the existence of the spirit and the soul, their survival beyond the physical body, and their evolution of successive reincarnations, which is in accordance to the Karmic Law. [Ref 6]

From the initiated point of view, Caodai calls for synchronization and acceptances in all religions. It authenticates the existence of the soul and the connection between Man and God. Caodai implies that each religion in this world is a “religious school created by God” that teaches mankind about life, about God’s Virtue, and about the Sciences of Truth. Caodaism validates that the ultimate purpose of each ”religious school” is to guide Man in cultivating Love, Wisdom, and Inner Strength, to believe in God, to believe in humanity, and to believe in Himself.

### *1.3 What is the concept of "Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ"?*

"Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ" is the official name of the new religion of The 3<sup>rd</sup> Revelation Period, The Caodai Religion. "Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ" can be translated as "The Great Way of The Third Amnesty Era".

Caodai divides the world's five thousand years' worth of religious histories into 3 revelation periods based on the development of mankind and the Earth itself.

First revelation period: before 2500 BCE. During the development of the Universe, Earth, and life, Mankind was still under-developed. God revealed Himself to inspire selected religious leaders in different parts of the world to teach humans different ways to survive and develop. He selected religious leaders (prophets/founders) for each religion: Abraham was the founder of Judaism in Middle East, Dipankara was for Hinduism in India, and Fu-His was for Yi King in China.

Second revelation period: thousands of years later, when humans established the earliest forms of society, culture, and nationalism, God created Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, and more... to bring chaos to order, to teach human different concepts of humanity, societies, and different Sciences of Truth.

Third revelation period (third amnesty period): in the 20th century and thereafter, when humans started to recognize the concept of democracy, globalization, worldwide communication, and shared knowledge, God started a new religion and called for religious unification and acceptance. In the modern days, people did not always live in peace and harmony because of the very multiplicity of religions.

Caodai was found with the purpose of solving religious conflicts and bringing all religions to their primordial unity. With that purpose, Caodai emphasizes that all religions are from the same origin: The Supreme Being. Caodai highlights that all religions teach humans the very basic need of love and justice. Caodai stresses that different religions are just different forms of the same truth. Caodai teaches humans to believe in God, believe in humanity, and believe in self, and the key to strengthen that belief is to build up Love, Wisdom, and Inner Strength.

#### *1.4 What are Caodai's primary philosophies?*

Caodai suggests that God is in you; the power of God is in you, small or large, depending on what you have learned and how you have developed that power, which is the power of Love, the power of Knowledge, and the power of the Inner Strength. These powers are the GIFTS from GOD to Man to make Man distinguished from animals and other living beings. These powers also exist to help Man overcome his inner evils, the seven-deadly-sins, and use that power in order to advance him into the higher level of philosophical and spiritual enlightenment.

In terms of practices of spirituality, Caodai teaches you to delve into your inner being, your higher self, your spirit, and to cultivate your Sacred Inner Light to unveil the “God within”. It is a journey of inner self-discovery. Your sacred mission is to unite the “God within” with the Great Divine Being.

When one can see the “God within”; one can also see the “inner God” in others: humans, animals, and other beings.

With this understanding, one will gain incredible respects for life and nurture kind-heartedness for others.

Caodai declares Love is the master key that opens the doors to heaven on earth.

Caodai suggests that God is not bound with any ethnic backgrounds or skin colors. God represents the eye of all living beings, while the Prophets from other Religions of the world is bound to human forms of certain ethnic background and cultures. On the other hand, Caodai suggests all Gods from all religions in the world are from the same Supreme Being, and that the same Supreme Being exists in every living being more than human beings can perceive in its existence.

Caodai, in simple terms, is that God exists in all living beings..., and that is why God is extremely powerful. He is full of love to give; possesses so much knowledge about each person and about each living thing in this world; has so much concern for the development of each individual's livelihood; has so much control of the development of the entire universe, because the progression and advancement of each living being in this universe is the progression of God Himself.

### *1.5 Is Caodai biblical monotheism or inclusive monotheism?*

Caodaism is syncretic religion in a context that Caodaism recognizes and respects the Sciences of Truth, the traditions, the philosophies of all great religions from ancient history. Hence, as a syncretic religion, the origins of Caodaism span the centuries. Its roots lie in the deepest beliefs and

aspirations of all great religions, thus encompassing a religious heritage as old and as varied as Man himself.

On the other hand, Caodaism is a new religion, one that has the uniqueness of inclusive monotheism in the perspective that it emphasizes the GODs from all other religions are from one source, The All That Is – the Supreme Being. Caodaism offers the origin of God in a universal way, recognizes the similarity of many world belief systems, from Far East to Far West, and explains the massive connection structure that links mankind and all living beings to God.

### *1.6 What is the significance of “Tam Giáo Qui Nguyên - Ngũ Chi Hiệp Nhất”?*

Caodai suggests that different religious belief systems simply represent the Science of Truth being seen from different perspectives, forms, structures, organizations, timeframes, and cultures of civilization. But all great religions are from one origin, The Supreme Being.

Caodai introduces the oneness concept of humanity, equality of all men and women, the abolition of prejudice, the harmony of science and religion, the synchronization of all great religions, and the practices of Love and Justice without prejudice of religious background, that lead life to peace and harmony.

Caodai adores the three Asian religious traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism “Tam Giáo Qui Nguyên” and the religious philosophies of other great Western religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Caodai accumulates those “different” religious principles together under one roof “Ngũ Chi Hiệp Nhất.” On the adoration of those principles, Caodai doctrines teaches the way of Buddha, the way of the immortals, the way of saints, the

way of High Spirits, and the way of humanity. The ultimate goal of Caodaism is to bring different religions back to the primordial unity, eliminate prejudice toward different religious schools, and promulgate the oneness concept of all.

From the principles of Confucianism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Humanity, which teaches Man the three main duties (Tam Cang): the duty to his country (Quân Thần Cang), the duty to his parents (Phụ Tử Cang), and the duty to his spouse and his own family (Phu Thê Cang); and educates Man the five essential virtues: love/humanity (Nhân), integrity (Nghĩa), behavior (Lễ), knowledge (Trí), and loyalty (Tín).

From the principles of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Saints with regards to love, tolerance, forgiveness, and truthfulness.

From the principles of Taoism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Tao with regards to the three stages in human spirit and body (Tam Bửu): energy of physical body (Tinh), energy of spiritual mind (Khí), energy of transcendent soul (Thần) plus the 5 essential elements of material world (Ngũ Hành): mineral, plant, water, fire, and earth, and the Law of Yin and Yang (Luật Âm Dương).

From the principles of Buddhism and Hinduism, Caodai teaches the Doctrine of Buddhism, which instructs Man to seek refuge in Buddha (Qui Y Phật), in Dharma (Qui Y Pháp), and in Shangha (Qui Y Tăng). Caodai upholds a system of basic morality, the five Prohibitions (Ngũ Giới Cấm): do not kill thus respect life (cấm sát sanh), do not steal thus respect what belong to others (cấm trộm cắp), do not commit sexual misconduct (cấm ngoại tình - tà dâm), do not be intoxicated (cấm say rượu), and do not commit sins through words (cấm vọng ngữ). [Ref 1 & 2]

“The Lord lives in the heart of every creature. He turns them round and round upon the wheel of Maya. Take refuge in Him. By his grace you will find supreme peace, and the state which is beyond all change.” [Hinduism]

“A Muslim is one who surrenders to the will of Allah and is an establishing of peace.” [Islam]

“The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace.” [Judaism]

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” [Christianity]

“Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.” [Buddhism]

“Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.” [Taoism]

“Everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it.” [Confucianism]

“Love is the safe haven for the entire universe!” [Caodaism]

## 2. Caodaiism History and Development

*2.1 How is Vietnamese culture and history setting with the establishment of Caodai Religion in early 20<sup>th</sup> century?*

The history of Caodai Religion has been tied with the history of Vietnam since early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As for Vietnam, four thousand years of history is four-thousand-year history of wars. Vietnamese cultures reflect the effects of wars on the people, the effects of colonial rules on the nation, and the effects of the foreign cultures/religions/philosophies onto Vietnamese education systems, religions, and philosophies.

For a thousand years, Vietnam was under Chinese occupation, thus Vietnamese Cultures have been significantly influenced by China, especially of her well-known Confucian philosophy written by Master Kong (Nho Giáo/Khổng Giáo). During that time, Buddhism also extended her swings into Vietnam, and thereafter, Taoism was also enjoyed her stretch into Vietnamese cultures. Surprisingly, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other original Vietnamese indigenous religious practices did not pose challenges to each other and were rather welcomed and fitted well into the cultures of Vietnam.

By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, after 3 decades of war, Vietnam was completely conquered by French colonial forces and by 1906 the new alphabet similar to romance language was introduced into Vietnam “Chữ Quốc Ngữ” by the French missionaries. The French divided Vietnam into 3 separated states: CochiChina (South Vietnam) as a colony; Annam

(Central Vietnam) as an autonomous kingdom under the Nguyễn dynasty; and Tonkin (North Vietnam) as a French protectorate. Thus in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam started to get influenced by the West: the character set of Vietnamese language “Chữ Quốc Ngữ” became the national language and Vietnamese people became familiar with Christianity’s concepts and religions.

The people of Vietnam, surrounded by diversified religions and western influences, having endured the sufferings of war under her thousand-year history of historic heroes and myths, adapted surprisingly well to the new concepts and philosophies of the new religion “Caodai”, a faith that affects a union and summation of five thousand years of religious development from the East with the strong influences from the West. Caodai recognizes the greatness of all major religions around the world and at the same time introduces the concept of one Supreme Being representing the God of all great religions. With that idea, Caodai offers a resolution for the conflicts of religious differences, and proposes religious globalization for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## *2.2 Why Caodai Religion was born in Vietnam? What are historical milestones?*

After centuries of conflict, Vietnamese people understand the effects of wars on human condition and the sufferings endured during wars, and thus they want Peace more than anything else in the world. They understand and appreciate the value of Peace. They would adapt easily to everything that offers Peace, Happiness, and Love. That was probably why Vietnam was chosen to be one of the places for God to

create His Third Amnesty Blessing to humankind, and Caodai will spread its swing to the West at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Caodai was found in 1926. The Caodai Temple Holy See was constructed in 1931, was completed in 1947, was inaugurated in 1955, and started to set its first steps into the Western countries in 1975.

In 1975, after the end of the war in Vietnam, with the communists taking control of the Vietnamese government, thousands of Caodai followers emigrated to America, Europe, Australia, Canada, France, and others, to begin the new era of Caodai Religion in the Western world.

### *2.3 Who established Caodai Religion?*

Caodai history recorded 3 historical figures that made Caodai manifested into the Earthly world: Ngô Minh Chiêu born in 1878, Phạm Công Tắc, born in 1890, Lê Văn Trung, born in 1876. It was believed that all three came from very different backgrounds, were highly educated, and that all three were communicating with the Supreme Beings through the spiritual medium at different times and places in Vietnam. The three found each other, cooperated and arranged meetings, followed orders of highly authoritative messages from the Supreme Being through a spiritual medium by a holy spiritual name “Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đai Bô Tát Ma Ha Tát”. Under the Supreme Being’s guidance, Ngô Minh Chiêu, Phạm Công Tắc, Lê Văn Trung, and others such as Cao Quỳnh Cư, Cao Hoài Sang, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, and Lâm Ngọc Thanh, etc. worked together to establish the new religion of ‘Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ’.

### **3. Caodaism's Social Influences**

*3.1 What benefits does the Caodai Religion have to offer to individuals who want to learn about the TRUTH (about GOD)?*

Despite the fact that Caodaism draws on the wisdom of thousands of years, Caodaism is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century religion. It has isolated fundamental laws of life that can be applied to help people achieve a happier and better spiritual existence in the past, present, and future. Therefore Caodaism is tremendously beneficial for people of all walks of life and ages.

Caodaism answers most ancient questions about “Who are we? What do we consist of? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we doing?”

Caodaism not only provides answers to these questions but also supplies workable methods of application that made it possible to Man to reach the ancient goal he has been striving toward for thousands of years: to know himself and in knowing himself, to know and understand other people, and ultimately, understand life itself, understand the universe, and understand God.

Your mind cannot possibly understand God, however, your “inner God” knows God. The role of spiritualism in Caodai is very simple. It provides human beings with a spiritual inspirational passage; the passage of self-discovery that awakes the “God within”. Man needs to be aware that God is within himself, that the inner spirit in Him is linked to GOD. Man needs to be aware that the development of the inner spirit is the path to the incredible spiritual journey of

self-discovery...the journey in which Man shall make the world around him a better place to live in, for him and for all future generations.

The progress of discovering the inner God shall give Man the inner peace even if the whole world around him seems upset. The development of that inner peace is the development of Man's capacity for Love, Wisdom, and Courage.

“When your life is filled with the desire to see the holiness in everyday life, something magical happens: ordinary life becomes extraordinary, and the very process of life begins to nourish your soul!” [Rabbi Harold Kushner]

### *3.2 What are the influences of Caodai Religion in creating new order of life?*

Caodai upholds the Law of Balance (Luật Cân Bằng), the Law of Justice (Luật Công Bằng), the Law of Love (Luật Yêu Thương), the Law of Cause and Effect (Luật Nhân Quả), and the Law of Yin and Yang (Luật Âm Dương). These laws serve the purpose of life itself, the Law of Development and Evolution (Luật Tiến Hóa), for each living being and for the universe as a whole. Everything happens in this world would serve that purpose.

From the Law of Balance (Luật Cân Bằng), Caodai teaches Man to live life in balance, and explains how the universe sustains an astonishing harmony and balance.

From the Law of Justice (Luật Công Bằng), Caodai teaches Man the equality, the accountabilities, the responsibilities, and the consequences of his actions not only in this life but

also from his previous lives of the evolution in reincarnation cycles.

From the Law of Love (Luật Yêu Thương), Caodai teaches man to love others and to love himself. Caodai declares Love is the key to open the gate to heaven and enlightenment.

From the Law of Cause and Effect (Luật Nhân Quả), Caodai teaches Man to carry out good deeds because good deeds bring good results and bad deeds bring bad consequences.

From the Law of Yin and Yang (Luật Âm Dương), Caodai teaches Man the concept of balance of power based on complementary opposites. The negative pole is equating with the positive pole. One pole could not exist without the other, just as it is impossible for a molecule to form without a proton (+) or an electron (-); it is impossible for men to form (to have) a child without women; and it is impossible for women to form (to have) a child without men. Positive and negative can never exist in total isolation from one another; both are constantly interacting and this inseparable tandem persist through all things: Man, food, attitudes, personal characteristics, thoughts, etc. Yin and Yang are the two opposite energy which is needed for the development of all things in the universe.

As for Man, Caodai suggests that Yang represents the inner goodness that stands for Love, Wisdom, and Courage while Yin stands for inner evil also known as the seven deadly sins. The inner goodness and evilness in Man are always in constant battle against one another to either push him up to the enlightenment stage or pull him down to darkness or unrighteousness. Man goes through life facing many challenges; God gives Man the Gift of Love, Wisdom, and Courage, but also gives Man much needed challenges, the

stronger the challenge the stronger the Man will be if he can conquer it.

The Law of Development and Evolution (Luật Tiến Hóa) is the law of enhancement and progress for all things in the universe. All laws (natural laws, human laws, and religious laws) serve one purpose: The Development and Evolution of the universe!

*3.3 What benefits is the Caodai Religion providing to global religious development, to human welfare in matters of religious beliefs?*

Caodai philosophies and theories have been contributing to global religious development...

In the thousand years' history of mankind, religious wars have become a norm. Conflicts created by humans because of religious conflict go back even before the birth of Jesus Christ. Until World War II, with the introduction of Nuclear War and the results of Holocaust, in these darkest days of human history, the modern humans began to understand the lesson of Love and Acceptance. Modern humans began to realize that HATRED can lead to the destruction of mankind and thus people MUST accept each other's differences, races, skin colors and people MUST nurture Love instead of Hatred. Thus the acceptance of each other's differences and the Love for people is no longer a "Should" but it is a "Must" to survive. Caodaism promotes that concept and promotes the concepts of religious unification and religious acceptances. Caodai broadens the concept of respect for different religions, and uphold the oneness perception to all great religions in the world.

When people see there is no different God in different religions, there will be fewer conflicts; people will gain respect for each other's religions and belief systems. When

people see there is no difference in term of origin between the core Western religious belief system and the core Eastern religious belief system, there will be more support and understanding between the East and the West. Caodai will create harmony for different schools of beliefs by introducing the new theory and concept; there was only one God; and the same God revealed himself as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Moses from the West, and as Sakya Muni, Lao-Tzu, Nhiên Đấng Cổ Phật, Thái Thượng Lão Quân, Khương Thái Công from the East... And the same God is in the Divine Eye of CaoDai religion, which is from a country that has endured war for more than four thousand years, a country where people could understand the term “Desperation for Peace”, and a country where “multiple religious belief systems from far East to far West could coexist” in peace through war-time.

This new concept teaches humans the fundamental truth and answers most questions Man has been asking himself since time immemorial. That is why all religions teach LOVE and ACCEPTANCE.

From a humanity perspective, Caodai teaches you to love your family, your friends, the people in your community, and the people in your country. Additionally, Caodai teaches you the love for mankind, the love for the people who endorse you, the love for the people who hate you, the love for the people who are different from you, the love for your enemies, and the acceptance of the differences and similarities of each different individual.

From a being perspective, Caodai teaches you to love all animals and respect for life of all living beings in this world.

Caodai announces Love is the safe haven for the entire universe!

*3.4 What contributions has the Caodai Religion made to the development of religious beliefs and the global spiritual connection in the 21st century and thereafter?*

Caodai theory of primordial unity introduces the concept of the Supreme Being always existing within each person (Thuyết Thiên Nhơn Hiệp Nhất). In broader terms; God exists in any form of body as small as a molecule of any substance that forms the body. God is the creator of everything and at the same time, God exists in everything (Dựa theo thuyết Thiên Địa Vạn Vật Đồng Nhất Thể hay là Nhất Bản Tán Vạn Thù và Vạn Thù Qui Nhất Bản).

Because GOD exists everywhere in any form on anything living in the physical and spiritual world, everything links to GOD through a massive interconnected divine network where the cause and effect of everyone's doings will ultimately lead to a balanced state.

When this theory is widespread and educated, the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will understand it effortlessly and may apply it to comprehend their daily spiritual practices and physical activities.

Only the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can understand the concept of this divine network through the understanding of the internet or the global satellite network, which are elementary examples of how this massive divine network functions. That is probably why Caodai Religion was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and proudly stepping her first steps into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this divine network, at some point in time, in certain areas, there can be imbalance, but the imbalance of one place will force an offsetting balance of another place; thus as a whole, this network is always in balance. The out-of-balance area can always regain its connected powers and therefore the massive interconnected network to God is perfect. The stronger the bond of this massive network, the better the universe will be. Only the practices of love and compassion, respect and democracy from mankind will bring peace and harmony to all living beings, which will strengthen this interconnected structure that is controlled and supported by the central energy of the universe, our God.

#### **4. Divine Symbols in Caodai Temple**

Caodai Holy See (Temple) was built in Tây Ninh Vietnam. Its architecture, symbols and construction were directed by God through a spiritual medium, and it has become a beautiful national landmark in Vietnam. Currently, there are many smaller versions of Caodai Temple with similar architecture and design being built in the many towns of Vietnam and in cities in Texas, California, Louisiana, Australia, Canada, etc. These Caodai Temples, once completed, will typically become a landmark for the respective city/town in which they reside because of their unique characteristics of housing thousands of different spiritual religions under one roof.

*4.1 What is the philosophy behind the symbol of “The Divine Eye-Biểu Tượng Thiên Nhân”?*

The Divine Eye with radius lights in the iconic symbol of God’s wisdoms represent the ultimate truth at the central of

the universe, the enlightened mind in each individual, the inner God that exists in the mind and the heart of each living organism. God also exists even in the smallest nucleus proton of a molecule, which is the foundation make up of every physical form of life.

#### *4.2 The Symbol of Celestial Sphere (Quả Càn Khôn)*

The Universal Globe that has the Divine Eye on the Celestial Sphere has a perfect spherical shape, with a diameter of three meters, three decimeters, and three centimeters representing God's chamber. The Globe Sphere has the constellation of the Big Dipper and the 3072 stars representing Caodai's cosmology of 36 heavens, 3000 worlds, 4 Great Cosmic Regions, and 72 planets.



Symbol of Celestial Sphere

### 4.3 What does “The Image of Caodai’s Three Saints - Biểu Tượng Tam Thánh)” imply?

Victor Hugo, Sun Yat Sen, and Nguyễn Bình Khiêm are the 3 Saints that are spiritual representatives for Caodai Religion.

- Victor Hugo - the most famous figure ever to have lived in France who is also a Great Poet, a political celebrity, and a great influence in French literature history. Victor Hugo represents Western cultures and beliefs.
- Sun Yat Sen - a revolutionary and political Leader, the founder of modern China establishing the first ever Chinese democratic government, represents Eastern values.
- Trạng Trình aka Nguyễn Bình Khiêm - a great Writer and Poet, a physiognomist, and the most famous prophet from Vietnam that represents Vietnamese Principles.

The 3 Saints signing the treaty symbol represents the Universal World Peace treaty between GOD and human to unite mankind and to create a visible connection between human beings and the Supreme Being that encourages humanity to follow the principles of **Love and Justice**. The 3-Saints symbol also represents the bridges between Eastern and Western philosophies.



Image of Caodai's Three Saints

#### 4.4 What is the meaning of the Statue of Maitreya on Tiger (*Trượng Phật Di Lạc cỡi cọp*)?

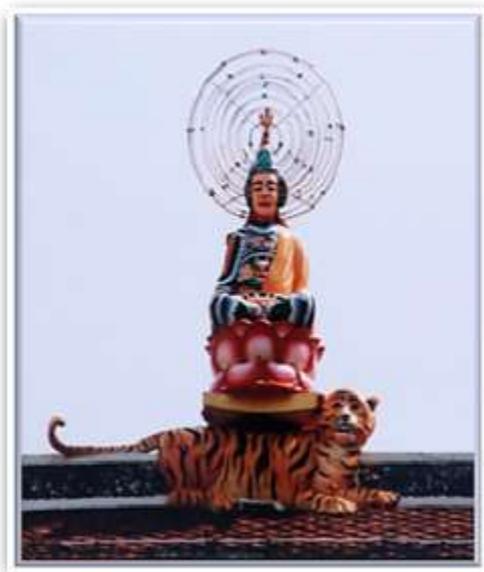
The image Maitreya Buddha riding on the tiger signifies the unforgettable anniversary that Caodai Religion was born in the year of the Tiger (1926).

On the other hand, this symbol also implies another spiritual philosophy. According to the Caodai Doctrine, Man is born with a special gift from God that gives him the protection that would protect Himself from Seven Deadly Sins from self and from others.

The image of Maitreya (Đức Phật Di Lạc) wearing the armor implies a distinguished individual who has reached the enlightenment stage, who has reached the highest level of happiness and highest love to all living beings. The armor that he is wearing represents the gift from God, which is His capability of Love, Wisdom, and Courage.

The tiger implies the power of inner Evil (the Seven Deadly Sins) that exists in each person. The image implies Maitreya using His Love, Wisdom, and the Inner Power to conquer his own inner evil desires and neutralize others' inner evil desires to prevent them from harming Him.

The image also suggests that He observes the level of Love, Wisdom, and Courage of each person who enters the Caodai temple to attend the ritual service, and most importantly, He has the responsibility of presiding Convention of The Judgment Day (Hội Long Hoa).



Statue of Maitreya on Tiger

#### 4.5 The Symbol of iconic Dragon Columns (*Cột rồng*)

Spiritually, the twenty-eight dragon columns symbolize the Immortals, the High Spirits, the Saints, and the Buddha in attending the spiritual congregation with God.

From the perspective of construction, only columns that have enough strength can be used to build the House of God, thus dragon columns are essential in building a Caodai Temple because they symbolize power, prestige and strength.

From the perspective of religious cosmology, Caodai temple represents the universe, and the dragon columns represent powerful core functions that will keep the universe in balance. Caodai's cosmology addresses questions about the universe which are beyond the scope of science.



Dragon Columns

4.6 What are the conveying messages of the symbols of “Brahma Buddha (Thể Phật Brahma), Civa Buddha (Thể Phật Civa), and Christna Buddha (Thể Phật Christna)”?

The Holy Embellishment of Brahma Buddha, Civa Buddha, and Christna Buddha on the roof of Caodai Temple symbolizes the “Three Life Cycles of Progress”. Each Buddha symbol characterizes an important natural function of Life.

- Brahma Buddha (West-facing) - represents The First Cycle, which is the Cycle of Creation – this is when something is born (Tượng Trưng cho Tạo Hoá). It is also called the Cycle of Innocence (Chu Kỳ Thánh Đức).
- Civa Buddha (North-facing) – represents The Second Cycle, which is the Cycle of Struggle and Destruction – this is when something has matured and will inevitably die (Tượng Trưng cho sự trưởng thành, già nua, và diệt vong).
- Civa Buddha (South-facing) – represents The Third Cycle, which is the Cycle of Conservation (Bảo tồn) and Reproduction (Tái tạo) - (The Stage of Christna Buddha) - this refers to something that reborn in different form(s), also known as reincarnation. All Cycles are applicable to all things in all forms that exist in this universe.



Brava-Civa-Christna (3 Stages of Buddha)

#### *4.7 Why are Divine Symbols from other religions engraved in Caodai Temple?*

Caodai believes in the concept of “Unity of Gods”. Caodai implies that all iconic symbols of Gods in different religions that were created in different time and at different places in different cultures are from the same source The All That Is. At the Caodai Temple, the central canopy at the Alta is a celebration of many of the great religious influences on Caodai.

Across the top from left to right is the God of three main religions of Asia (Tam Giáo).

- Lao Tzu (Đức Lão Tử còn gọi là Thái Thượng Đạo Tổ), a historical figure that is the foremost master of Taoism

- Sakya-muni Buddha (Phật Thích Ca còn gọi là Tây Phương Giáo Chủ), a historical figure that represents the master of Buddhism.
  - Kong Zi (Đức Khổng Tử còn gọi là Khổng Thánh Tiên Sư), a historical figure, the master of The Great Way of Humanity, represents Confucianism
- On the next row down, from left to right, are:
- Kuan Yin (Đức Phật Bà Quan Âm), the Goddess of mercy and guardian angel, is a figure of compassion in Buddhism.
  - Immortal Li Po (Đức Lý Thái Bạch), the spiritual Pope of Caodai Religion
  - Guan Gong (Đức Quan Thánh Đế Quân còn gọi là Quan Công), the famous Chinese Image of war hero and loyalty, the High Spirit who guided the establishment of Caodai Religion to the early Caodaism followers through spiritual medium.

On the next row down is:

- Jesus Christ (Đức Chúa Jesus), historical figure of God, represents Christianity belief system (including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

At the bottom Centre is:

- Jiang Taigong (Đức Khương Thượng còn gọi là Khương Tử Nha), represents the Sini-Vietnamese tradition of Geniism.



#### 4.8 The Flags of Caodai (Cờ Phướn và cờ vàng, xanh, đỏ)

There are two flags of Caodai.

- The Spiritual Flag of Lá Phướn is the symbol of God's Guidon, which signifies that God is the commander-in-chief. This Guidon is displayed wherever the commander-in-chief is present. The Guidon symbolizes the ultimate spiritual supremacy and signifies the cosmos' operations. Wherever this flag is standing, that place is filled with blessings from "the commander-in-chief". The Flag is hung on the thin tower of triangular pole in the front of Caodai Temple. The top of flag has the shape of a dragon. At the four corners of the pole are the four spiritual lions. The pole is 40-feet high while the length of the flag is 36-feet tall.
- The Institutional Flag of Caodai Religion represents the Great Religion for the Third Amnesty of God. The Chinese text on the yellow section means Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ.

Both flags are color-coded; Yellow stands for Buddhism; Blue stands for Taoism; and Red stands for Confucianism. The three colors in the Flags symbolize three religion institutions are under one religion.



The Spiritual Flag of Caodaism, The God's Guidon (Lá Phương)



The Institutional Flag of Caodaism



Iconic figure on the Institutional Flag represents three sacred symbols of three religious traditions.

Alm Bowl (Bát Vu) - Buddhism

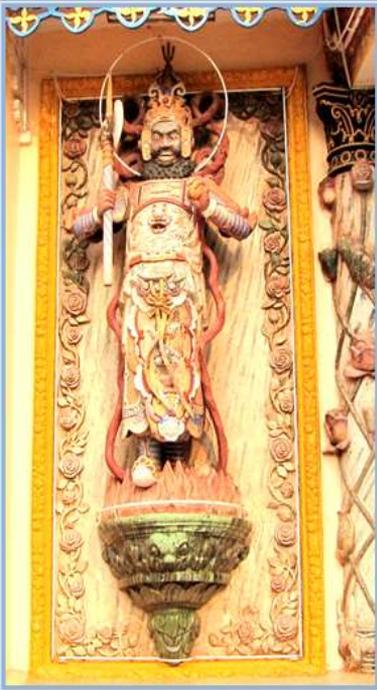
Book (Xuân Thu) - Confucianism

Whisk (Phất Chủ) – Taoism

#### *4.9 What are the meaning of the status of God's Altar custodians (Ông Thiện / Ông Ác)*

On the left side of the Caodai temple is the statue of the custodian of goodness for God's Altar while the statue on the right is the custodian of evilness for God's Altar. These two statues symbolize good and evil, and imply that Caodai welcomes all different human personalities regardless of whether they are moral or immoral. Anyone who has committed sins in the past who wishes to redeem himself is always welcome at the Caodai Temple.

The fact that the guardians of the House of God consists of both good and evil implies an important concept of Caodai philosophy: the process of judging whether an act is moral or sinful. This process is very complex, because the perception of goodness and evilness would depend relatively on the perception of time, ethnic background, personality, location, etc. An act of evilness in a right place, at a certain time, for a certain purpose, may be perceived as an act of goodness at another time, another place, or another purpose. An example of this perception can be illustrated in the United States atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. To many Americans, this was an act of goodness since it helped ended WWII and thus potentially saved millions of lives and property damages. The Japanese and many other people, on the other hand, may consider it as an act of "evilness" because the bombing resulted in over 100,000 deaths and mass destruction of the two cities. Thus the perception of good or evil is very relative to the perception of a person.



Custodian of Evilness



Custodian of Goodness

## 5. Structure of Caodaism

The structure of Caodaism consists of 3 main holy palaces which govern all of Caodai's religious affairs.

### 5.1 *The Bát Quái Đài*

The Bát Quái Đài is the holy spiritual Eight Trigram Palace serves as the Council of the Great Spirits. Bát Quái Đài is Supreme Holy Body that directs and creates all activities of the religion under the leadership of God and the Holy Spirits such as Sakyamuni Buddha, Lao Tzu, Kong Zi, Kuan Yin, Li Po, Guan Gong, Jesus Christ, Jiang Taigong. The Bát Quái Đài represents the holy invisible government of the new religion (Tượng Trung cho THẦN - Vô Hình). [Ref 4]

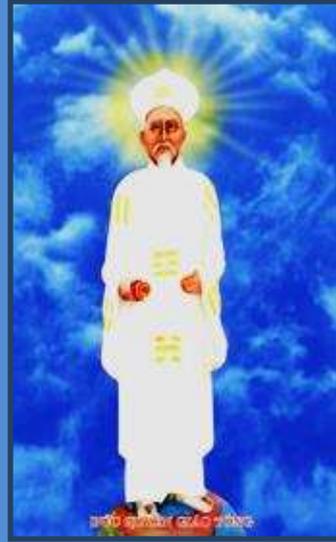
### 5.2 *The Hiệp Thiên Đài*

The Hiệp Thiên Đài is the sanctuary of the Divine Alliance which is also referred to as the Heaven-and-Earth-Union Palace whose main purpose is to serve as the Legislative Body that has the duty of communicating with the occult/esoteric power to receive divine messages to preserve and enforce religious laws. This hybrid palace is used by the spiritual and physical worlds to establish communication (Tượng Trung cho KHÍ - bán hữu hình)

The Hiệp Thiên Đài is placed under the authority of the His Holiness Hộ Pháp, who is the Head of Religious Legislative Affairs. He is assisted by the Head of the Spiritual Realm/Religious Affairs (Đức Thượng Phẩm) and the Head of the Temporal Realm/Secular Affairs (Đức Thượng Sanh). [Ref 4]



The Dharma Protector:  
Phạm Công Tắc  
(The Head of Religious  
Legislative Affairs –  
Hiệp Thiên Đài)



The Acting Pope:  
Lê Văn Trung  
(The Former Head of  
Executive Administration  
Cửu Trùng Đài)

### 5.3 The Cửu Trùng Đài

The Cửu Trùng Đài is the Temple of Nine Degrees of Evolution that is also known as the Nine-Sphere-Palace. This physical entity (Trượng Trung cho TINH - hữu hình) serves as the Executive Body of Caodai which is in charge of the administration of the religious and missionary activities such as training disciples and organizing and controlling the Church program. The Head of Cửu Trùng Đài the spiritual Pope (Immortal Li Po- Đức Lý Giáo Tông), who has the duty to teach God's virtues to his Disciples. For dignitaries in the College of Men, the Executive Body actually has three branches corresponding to the three religious traditions; each of these branches also has a name

and a color: Buddhism is “Phái Thái”, color-coded in yellow, Taoism is “Phái Thượng”, color-coded in blue, and Confucianism is “Phái Ngọc”, color-coded in red. The Cửu Trùng Đài’s hierarchy is ranked in nine levels and the number of dignitaries in the College of Men is very limited. [Ref 4]



Dignitaries of Cửu Trùng Đài



Dignitaries of Hiệp Thiên Đài



Buddhism - Yellow  
 Taoism – Blue  
 Confucianism – Red

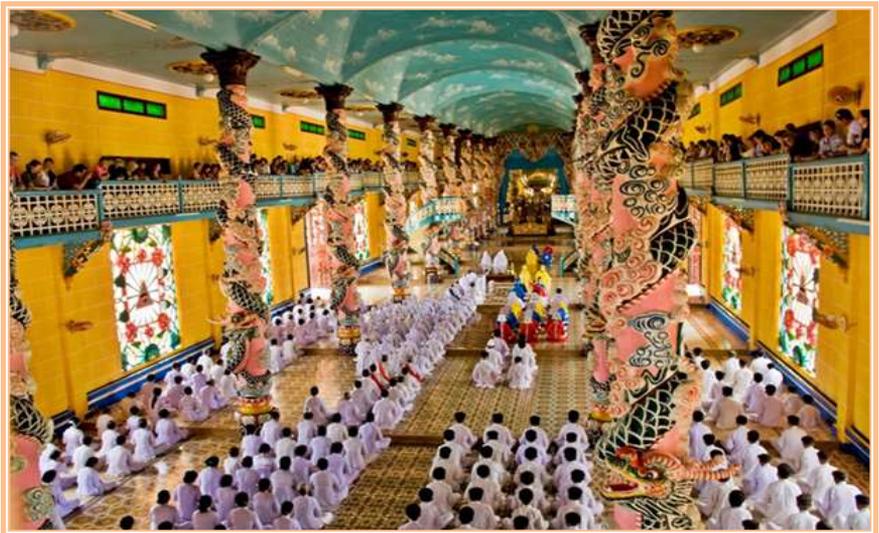
5.4 There are 3 Bodies of Council governing the Holy See:

- The Council of People (Hội Nhơn Sanh)
- The Council of Sacerdotium (Hội Thánh)
- The Council of Highest Authorities (Thượng Hội)

All plans made by the The Council of People and favored by The Council of Sacerdotium are submitted to The Council of Highest Authorities for approval.

### *5.5 Who are Caodai worshipers?*

Caodai worshipers are ordinary people who dress in white outfit (Áo Dài) when attending the ceremonial service at the Caodai temple on a weekly-basis or during self-conducted prayer services at home 4 times a day (12:00am, 6:00am, 12:00pm, 6:00pm). A Caodai worshiper may adopt a vegetarian diet six days or 10 days a month and learn Caodai's doctrine and philosophies.



Ritual Service at Caodai Temple

### *5.6 What are the benefits of attending weekly ritual service (đi cúng) at Caodai Temple?*

Attending the weekly ritual service at Caodai Temple is similar to attend a training session, which is a combination of both physical and spiritual exercises; an exercise of physical endurance, and an exercise of making transcendent connection between Man and God or other High Spirits. During this exercise, an individual, while silently listen to the rituals of music and singing, would learn to be more patient, would be trained for physical endurance, would learn to listen to the inner mind, would learn to relax the mind and the body, would learn to direct the mind toward the positive energy, would feel the increase of confidence in dealing with challenges in life, would sense the spiritual love that encircles the surroundings, and would feel the strong connection to the center energy of the universe...that is God... thus cultivating the realization that you and God are one (trạng thái của Thiên Nhân Hiệp Nhất) and feel the salvation of the soul and the energy of the love spreading to the surroundings and to all the people in one's world.

The ritual service is filled with prayers. Prayers are the most powerful form of abstract energy that one can generate. It gives one a sensational power that one cannot even perceive.

If a young kid attends the ritual often, he/she will be more likely to have an open heart, care for others, do well in school, see life in positive perspectives, have respect for others, respect life, live attentively, be less selfish, and never

dare to commit a crime that may deeply hurt or kill other person(s) for personal gain.

Prayer is miraculous. “There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” [Albert Einstein]

“Open yourself to the miracle of life going on around you. Sense your intimate part in the great scheme of it.” [Kristen Zambucka]

## **6. Conclusion**

Caodai announces that God created the universe from nothingness, and while creating the universe God puts in His spirit into all lives, all living beings: humans, creatures, plants, and materials.

Caodai suggests that your sacred mission is to bring peace and harmony to humanity (nhơn đạo thái bình) and to unite the “God within” with the Great Divine Being to achieve true enlightenment and liberty (thiên đạo giải thoát).

Caodai declares all Great Religions in the world are from one origin, The Supreme Being.

Caodai defines only ONE RACE for all mankind, regardless of human-defined races, skin colors, languages, genders, or geographical locations within the globe.

Caodai preaches that upon birth, GOD has given each one of us the gift to protect ourselves and our loved ones. These three simple yet powerful gifts are: the ability to express Love and Compassion, the ability to obtain Knowledge and

Wisdom, and the Inner Power to withstand life's tough challenges. The level of power of these three capacities will increase as an individual will continue to work and study hard and self-train to be a better person.

Caodai's iconic symbol, The Divine Eye (Thiên Nhãn), represents the inner God that exists in the mind and heart of each individual human being regardless ethnic background, sex, skin colors... and symbolizes the concept that the eye not only represents human beings but also all other living beings.

Caodai theories and concepts do not conflict with the development of natural sciences: physically and spiritually. It explains in a simple way why God possess so much knowledge, power and love simply because God does exist in each living being in the universe, and every living being connects to God. God can understand each individual's heart, read each individual's mind, recognize each individual's reason for existence, and has the utmost concerns for the development of each living being because the development of each individual being will lead to the development of his Virtues.

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# LAY DIGNITARIES CAODAI INTERNATIONAL BAN THẾ ĐẠO HẢI NGOẠI

When Man achieves the highest level of Love,  
Knowledge, and Courage; he shall find himself  
capable of dealing with the most difficult situations  
in life, shall have a better understanding of the  
Truth, shall possess extraordinary beliefs in God, in  
humanity, and in himself, and thus, shall have much  
greater inner peace and satisfaction.

May you all achieve a higher level of Compassion,  
Wisdom, and the Inner Strength each and every  
day!



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