

**HISTORICAL PARADIGMS
HANDOUT #2**

recording their key teachings on the Stone as well as recording how well received they had been—apart from the one period of trouble in 698—the Church was doing what Chinese culture generally was doing: ensuring the survival for later generations of its most important texts. The fact that we are discussing these teachings today bears witness to the wisdom of this action.

THE STONE SUTRA

PART ONE

[Across the top of the monument:]

¹The Record of the Transmission
of the Religion of Light
of the West in China

²The Minister of the Administration of Monasteries bestows
the Purple Robe to Yeli,
the Chief Priest of the Monastery.

[At the bottom of the monument:]

³The erection of this monument is supervised by the monk
Gongdong
[with] monk Lingbao.

[At top upper right:]

⁴Monument commemorating the transmission of the Religion
of Light in China

[At middle right:]

⁵Related by the monk Jingjing of the Da Qin Monastery

PART TWO

¹In the beginning was the natural constant, the true stillness of the Origin, and the primordial void of the Most High.²Then, the spirit of the void emerged as the Most High Lord, moving in mysterious ways to enlighten the holy ones.³He is Joshua, my True Lord of the Void, who embodies the three subtle and wondrous bodies, and who was condemned to the cross so that the people of the four directions can be saved.

⁴He beat up the primordial winds and the two vapors were created.⁵He differentiated the gray emptiness and opened up the sky and the earth.⁶He set the sun and moon on their course and day and night came into being.⁷He crafted the myriad things and created the first people.⁸He gave to them the original nature of goodness and appointed them as the guardians of all creation.⁹Their minds were empty; they were content; and their hearts were simple and innocent.¹⁰Originally they had no desire, but under the influence of Satan, they abandoned their pure and simple goodness for the glitter and the gold.¹¹Falling into the trap of death and lies, they became embroiled in the three hundred and sixty-five forms of sin.¹²In doing so, they have woven the web of retribution and have bound themselves inside it.¹³Some believe in the material origin of things; some have sunk into chaotic ways; some think that they can receive blessings simply by reciting prayers; and some have abandoned kindness for treachery.¹⁴Despite their intelligence and their passionate pleas, they have got nowhere.¹⁵Forced into the ever-turning wheel of fire, they are burned and obliterated.¹⁶Having lost their way for eons, they can no longer return.

¹⁷Therefore, my Lord Ye Su, the One emanating in three subtle bodies, hid his true power, became a human, and came on behalf of the Lord of Heaven to preach the good teachings.¹⁸A virgin gave birth to the sacred in a dwelling in the Da Qin Empire.¹⁹The message was given to the Persians who saw and followed the bright

light to offer Him gifts.²⁰The twenty-four holy ones have given us the teachings, and heaven has decreed that the new religion of the "Three-In-One Purity that cannot be spoken of" should be proclaimed.²¹These teachings can restore goodness to sincere believers, deliver those living within the boundaries of the eight territories, refine the dust and transform it into truth, reveal the gate of the three constants, lead us to life, and destroy death.²²The Religion of Light teachings are like the resplendent sun: they have the power to dissolve the dark realm and destroy evil forever.

²³He set afloat the raft of salvation and compassion so that we can use it to ascend to the palace of light and be united with the spirit.²⁴He carried out the work of deliverance, and when the task was completed, He ascended to immortality in broad daylight.²⁵He left twenty-seven books of scriptures to inspire our spirit; He revealed the workings of the Origin; and He gave to us the method of purification by water.

²⁶Borne on gentle winds and brilliant clouds of purity, the white seal carves the words, gathering the four radiances to be united with the void.²⁷The sound of wood striking propagates the voice of virtue and benevolence:

²⁸"The Eastern-facing Rites can give you the path of life.²⁹Those who choose to grow beards, shave their heads, travel on the open roads, renounce desire, have neither male nor female slaves, see all people as equal, and do not hoard material goods, are followers of My rites of purification."

³⁰We use abstinence to subdue thoughts of desire; and we use stillness to build our foundation.³¹At seven we gather for service to pray for the salvation of all.³²Every seven days we have an audience with heaven.³³We purify our hearts and return to the simple and natural way of the truth.³⁴This truth cannot be named but its function surpasses all expectations.³⁵When forced to give it a name, we call it the Religion of Light.³⁶As it is with the Way, that which is sacred is not sacred unless it is highly sacred, and that which is the Way is not the Way unless it is the Great Way.

PART THREE

¹The sacred doctrine that has brought light to the world came here during the reign of the Emperor Taizong.²The glorious teachings were carried by Aluoben, a man of high virtue from the Da Qin Empire.³He came on azure clouds bearing the true scriptures, and after a long and arduous journey, arrived in Chang-an during the ninth year of Zhenguan.⁴The emperor sent his minister Fang Xuanling to greet him at the western suburb.⁵The visitor was welcomed into the palace where he was asked to translate his scriptures.⁶When the emperor heard the teachings, he realized deeply that they spoke the truth.⁷He therefore asked that these teachings be taught, and in the seventh month in the autumn of the twelfth year of Zhenguan, he issued a decree:

⁸"The Way does not have a common name and the sacred does not have a common form.⁹Proclaim the teachings everywhere for the salvation of the people.¹⁰Aluoben, the man of great virtue from the Da Qin Empire, came from a far land and arrived at the capital to present the teachings and images of his religion.¹¹His message is mysterious and wonderful beyond our understanding.¹²The teachings tell us about the origin of things and how they were created and nourished.¹³The message is lucid and clear; the teachings will benefit all; and they should be practiced throughout the land."

¹⁴On the street named Yining in the capital, the Da Qin Monastery was erected for twenty-one Religion of Light monks.¹⁵Through His great virtue and His ascension to the blue skies in the west, the light of the Way and the Religion of Light spirit has reached the Great Tang.¹⁶On the eastern gate of the monastery is an imperial declaration penned by the Emperor: "Reveal the splendor and brightness of heaven; glorify the Religion of Light saints; and let the benevolent teachings illuminate this realm of existence."

¹⁷According to the maps of the western territories and the records of the Han and Wei histories, the southern part of the Da Qin Empire touches the coral seas.¹⁸Northward it stretches toward