

The Treatise of The Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution

English Liturgy Version

太上感應篇英文讀誦本



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Foreword

The Treatise of the Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution is both efficacious and of key importance in this morally turbid era we now live in. The Great Master Yin Guang (1862-1940), with his keen foresight, knew that with the downward spiral of the standards of virtue worsening with each passing day, profound and succinct scriptures like this Treatise will be needed more than ever before. For without virtue and repentance, neither Samadhi nor Wisdom could manifest. Thus, he printed millions of copies of this Taoist Treatise, more than all the Buddhist Sutras he printed combined. Careful cultivation and daily recitation of this Treatise will generate efficacious responses, eliminate evil karma and calamities, create limitless blessings for our ancestors, and prosperity for ourselves and our posterity! More importantly, the foundation of virtue needed for further cultivation of Samadhi would be secured.

Merit Dedication

As the author of this text, I hereby dedicate all the merits from this book to my mother, father, teachers, benefactors and elders, to repay their kindness. I wish for them long, happy and healthy lives.

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Canto I: The Words of Laozi

The Divinely Illustrious Sage
Prays for every soul to heed:
That neither woe nor weal
Heaven has foreordained,
But wrought by men alone,
The fruits of virtue and vice
Pursue the begetter like
A shadow following the form!

Canto II: The Celestial Justiciars

Between Heaven and Earth
Dwell the Demigods of Justice,
They weigh the deeds of men
And shorten their lifespans,
Inflicting upon the wicked
The cruel fruits of iniquity:
Distress, decay, disgrace
Poverty and proscription.
Fortuna holds her head aloof
As they drown in misfortune
Until death claims their souls.
The Triumvirs of the North
Glide atop every man—recording
Each of their wicked misdeeds—
Shaving away their allotted years!
The Three Spirits of the Flesh,

Aboding in men's bodies,
Mount up to Heavenly Tribunal
In seasons of sixty days each
To report their wayward deeds,
And so too the Hearth Deity
Upon the end of each lunar month.
Those guilty of high crimes
Lose a dozen years of life
And every misdemeanor
Warrants a fine of one season,
There are hundreds of vices that
All who yearn for long life must
Know and discern between!

Canto III: The Way of Virtue

Seek virtue and eschew vice,
Be righteous without hypocrisy,
Delight in charity and mercy,
In loyalty and filial piety,
Cultivate good character then
Convert others to goodness,
Succor the orphaned and pity
The widowed, esteem the elderly
And cherish the young, fail not
To protect the flora and fauna.
Be a well of kindly sympathy,
A harbor of vicarious joy,
Neither deny the needy nor

Ignore those mired in peril,
Abstain from schadenfreude
And exalt not your own glory,
Never prate the scandals of others
But skillfully discourage vice
And encourage virtuous deeds!
Take little but grant much,
Be patient in humiliation,
Modest in acclamation,
And generous without desire
For recognition and recompense,
Refrain from revoking what
Has been bestowed upon others.
All who abide by such virtues
Are revered by men, blessed by
Heaven and graced with fortune,
Impervious to evil and guarded
By a host of celestial gods,
Their every move is successful
And Immortality is their right—
With 300 good deeds, they become
Demigods ; with 1300 good deeds,
They attain Heavenly Immortality!

Canto IV: Vices to Eschew

Think not vicious thoughts, and
Forsake not mercy and prudence,
Neither gloat over brutality nor
Labor with a hardened heart,
Never scheme to hurt the virtuous
Or be treacherous and unfilial,
Treat not one's teacher with
Haughty disdain and guard
Against dereliction of duty.
Do not deceive the ignorant
Or slander one's colleagues,
Entrap no one and level not
Accusations against family and kinfolk,
Neither be cruel and inhumane nor
Iron willed in foolish recklessness,
Fail not to be discerning and
Refrain from befriending scoundrels,
Never derive honor by oppressing
Inferiors and cajoling superiors,
Be neither ungrateful nor resentful
And treat not the people with arrogance.
Abstain from subversive misdeeds,
Neither reward evil nor punish
The innocent, be not murderous brigand,
Scheming official or war criminal,
Purge not Sages nor reject their Words,
Do not grind the faces of orphans and

Widows, nor pervert law by bribery,
Never say that virtue is vice and vice
Is virtue, and punish not misdemeanors
Like high crimes. Mock not those
Punished by law and be not willfully
Unrepentant nor slothful in charity.
Neither shirk responsibility by framing
Others nor keep medicine hidden,
Never ridicule the Sagely nor
Violate the virtuous and ordained,
Do not hunt or disturb the hibernating,
Destroy not nests, burrows and eggs,
Hurt not gravid animals and insects,
And neither hope for others to fail nor
Obstruct the welfare of the public,
Do not neglect public safety nor
Profit at the expense of others,
Never seek to trade the worthless
For the valuable nor sacrifice
Public benefit for private profit,
Refrain from stealing credit and
Obscuring other's achievements,
Publish not scandal nor prate faults,
Never divide families and fail not to be
A diligent steward. Neither seize
That which is held dear nor abet outrage,
Be not imperious and insolent. Hinder not
The planting and harvest of crops, and
Abstain from shattering marriages,

Never gloat over plunder nor shirk
From repentance after pardon,
Neither take credit for kindness not
Shown nor scapegoat others, and
Indulge not in false honors and malice.
Do not hinder another's talents and
Conceal one's own shortcomings,
Neither coerce nor tolerate wantonness,
Waste not fabric nor slaughter animals
Without cause of piety. Waste not grain,
Impose neither corvee nor conscription,
And seek not wealth by burglary.
Never cause flooding and arson,
Make not discord, and sabotage not
Another's tools of trade. Do not envy
The rich and honorable and wish them
Poverty or disgrace. Harbor neither
Lustful nor adulterous desire,
And show no wrath to one's creditors or
To those who refuse with reason,
Do not be aloof to the pain of
Others nor dismiss their suffering as
Just punishment for past sin, and
Ridicule not the disfigured or deformed,
Do not disparage the commendable,
Never poison trees and plants,
And refrain always from black magic.
Neither show an irritable face when
Tutored nor fail to be filial and pious,

Abstain from avaricious encroachment,
Seek not unjust wealth nor advance by
Intrigue. Do not reproach or reward
Without fairness. Shun decadence
And refrain from cursing Heaven.
Treat not servants with haughtiness
Nor instill fear through coercion,
Be not litigious nor fan the flames
Of sectarian strife. Lend no ear to
Immoral pleas from one's wife but
Do not allow the teachings of one's
Parents to fall upon deaf ears,
Neither forget old friends nor
Speak what the heart does not believe,
Be not a deceiving servant nor one
Greedy for bribe. Never spread rumors,
Libel or ruin the innocent, do not
Self-righteously accuse or blasphemy.
Neither forsake virtue nor
Embrace strangers and shun kinsmen,
Never demand Heaven bear witness to
Feigned innocence. Do not rue charity
Or borrow without will to restore,
Harbor neither burning ambition nor
Lustful passions, refrain from imposing
Crushing burdens, mask not malice
Behind a gentle facade and serve not
Food unfit for consumption. Never
Seek to lead the world astray with

Evil or occult ideas. Neither adulterate
Nor use false scales and weights,
Do not force lowliness upon the noble
And abstain from deceiving simpletons,
Fail not to stay avarice and refrain from
Invoking curses against foes,
Be not drunkard nor instigator
Of quarrels within one's household.
As a man, be not treacherous and cruel;
As a woman, be not vulgar and mean.
Wives must respect their parent's in law
And fail not to treat their husbands with
Courtesy, parents must refrain from
Abortion and fail not to show kindness
To their children. Be not pompous
Narcissistic and envious without cease,
Fail not to revere one's forefathers nor
Disobey lawful orders. Be neither idle
Nor frivolous. Never betray family
And community for intruders,
Do not seek mutual destruction
Nor harbor bias, favoritism and bigotry.
Neither leap over wells and stoves nor step
Over another man or his food. Perform
No abortions and abstain from covert sins,
Clamor and revel not during Holy Days.
It is profane to urinate towards
The Northern skies, weep and revel in front
Of the stove, burn incense with stove fire

And to cook with unclean fuel. It is lewd to
Be nude at night and impious to
Metre out punishment during the sacred
Solstices and equinoxes, or gawk at the stars,
Comets, rainbows, Sun and Moon.
Neither curse facing the Northern Skies
Nor set the hills and valleys ablaze.
Do not slaughter snakes and turtles
Without urgent and just cause.

Canto V: The Punishment for Iniquity

In accordance with the severity,
The crimes proclaimed above
Will cause the Magister of Destiny
To shave off allotted years until
Death results. If at death, the
Balance of justice has not been
Restored, the difference will be
Paid by the offender's descendants.
Those who have amassed riches
Through plunder and deceit
Will be punished by the death of
Their wives and children, if not,
Then fire, water, proscription
Disease, disgrace, robbery and
The like will see the filthy lucre repaid.
Those who have murdered will
Be caught in massacres. To partake

In bribe and plunder is akin to
Consuming putrid meat and poisoned wine
To satiate thirst and hunger, whatever the
Fleeting relief, the end is death.
Virtuous thoughts attract blessings
While wicked ideas pull in calamities,
The deed need not yet be done
For woe or weal to take form!

Canto VI: The Fruits of Repentance

Offenders who repent and thereafter
Embrace virtue and eschew vice
Shall be blessed with great fortune
After a while, this is to turn woe to weal!
As the virtuous man speaks kindly, sees
Only good and does works of mercy,
He accrues three good deeds a day.
After three years, Heaven will bestow
Upon him reason for revelry.
The evil man slanders, leers, gawks
And indulges in iniquity, accruing three
Wicked deeds a day. Thus, Heaven will
Smite him with misfortune after three years!
Thus, who could afford not to heed this treatise?

Historical Accounts of Efficacious Responses:

Translated by Frederic Henry Balfour (1884)

Fang Shih-k'ò, a native of Hsing-an, had been very sickly from a child. Afterwards he began to enquire into the mysteries of Taoism, with a view of procuring the secret of immortality. Arrived one day at the Cloud-capped Mountain, he met a person of strange appearance, who said, "With such a face as yours, how can you expect to get the blessings that you seek? It is impossible—unless you first plant a root of goodness." Then Shih-k'ò went home; and although he was a poor man he found means to print off an edition of the Book of Recompenses and distribute copies among his friends. By the time he had printed ten pages, his sickness was half-cured; when the work was completed, he found himself entirely recovered; and from that time forward he became robust in body, and quite different from what he had been before in appearance.

Wang Chu, a native of Hsien-chü Hsien, had a son named Wang Tsing, who fell sick and died when only four years old, to his father's deep-felt grief. Whereupon Wang Chu formed a resolution to print a number of copies of this book, which he distributed among the people with the object of causing his lost son to enter once more into his mother's womb. Some time afterwards, his wife found herself *enceinte*; and one night she dreamt she went to the Ting-kuang Temple at Huang-yen Hsien, whence she returned carrying her little boy home in her arms. When she awoke she experienced a movement in her womb, and soon gave birth to a son, vastly resembling the one that she had lost. In fact, the same body was born twice over; the bones and flesh had actually been brought together a second time!

**“Eschew Vice and Embrace Virtue,
Let faults discerned at dawn
Be repented of by dusk,
To uphold the sutras and precepts
Is akin to a pauper entering paradise!”**

**-The Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment,
Purity, Impartiality and Enlightenment Sutra**