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**The Treatise on Response and**  
**Retribution**

*A New English Translation*

太上感應篇新中英文版

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## FOREWORD

**The Treatise on Response and Retribution (太上感應篇) holds great relevance in our current era of moral collapse and turbid confusion. The Venerable Master Chin Kung often states that there can be no Buddhism without adherence to the precepts of virtue and morality. This is because the Buddha has explicitly stated in the Threefold Training that precepts and virtue form the fertile soil in which wisdom springs from (i.e. Sila Samadhi Prajna).**

**Spoken by Lao Tzu, the treatise's list of 170 evil deeds encompasses in detail all karmic transgressions that could be committed by a unenlightened person. Furthermore, the treatise also offers practical advice on how to cultivate virtue. Hence, it comes at no surprise that the 13th Patriarch of the Pureland School, the great Master Yin Kuang (印光大師) spared no effort to print, teach and distribute this treatise.**

**The Master also stated that those who wish to be reborn in Amita Buddha's Pureland must first cultivate himself in accordance with the precepts listed within the treatise.**

**Hence, the importance of this treatise cannot be understated and all cultivators of Buddhism should heed it's teachings and hold it in high regard.**

**Namo Amita Buddha**

*As the Author of this text, I hereby dedicate the merit from this work towards Pureland  
Rebirth.*

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## **Section One: Cause & Effect**

太上曰：「禍福無門，惟人自召；善惡之報，如影隨形。」

*The Exalted One (Lao Tzu) states: Fortune and misery do not happen at random and nor are they the result of chance or machinations; they are instead caused by the karmic actions of each individual. The rewards for a person's virtue and good deeds as well as the consequences of evil deeds follows each like a shadow.*

### **Commentary:**

Here, The Sage Lao Tzu (who like the Buddha has realized enlightenment) clearly concurs with the Buddhist concepts of karma. If a man experiences misfortune, it has nothing to do with who or what he perceives to be the cause of it but is instead brought on to himself by the evil deeds he has committed either in this life or the previous life.

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是以天地有司過之神，依人所犯輕重，以奪人算。算減則貧耗，多逢憂患；人皆惡之，刑禍隨之，吉慶避之，惡星災之；算盡則死。

又有三台北斗神君，在人頭上，錄人罪惡，奪其紀算。又有三尸神，在人身中，每到庚申日，輒上詣天曹，言人罪過。月晦之日，灶神亦然。凡人有過，大則奪紀，小則奪算。其過大小，有數百事，欲求長生者，先須避之。

*Depending on the severity of a person's individual offenses, the spirits of justice shortens his or her original lifespan in proportion to the level of wickedness involved. Furthermore, not only do offenders have their life shortened; various punishments such as misery, poverty, ill repute, misfortunes, illness, legal penalties and the like will be bestowed and last until death results.*

*Also, there are various demigods and spirits such as the Hearth Spirit and Gods of the North who shadow each individual and record (impartially and without mistake) each their offenses. If a person has committed a great evil, 12 years are shaved off his lifespan while small offenses warrant only a reduction of 100 days. There are over a hundred offenses, both severe and light, that those who wish to live a long life must know.*

### **Commentary:**

This part of the treatise describes the effects of evil karma. The Buddha also confirms in the Larger Infinite Life Sutra that there are indeed demigods and spirits who observe and record the offenses of each person. They are the agents of karma and they carry out the duty of inflicting punishments and bestowing rewards without partiality nor mistake.

When each person is born, their lifespan and fortunes have already been decided based on their prior karma. If the person decided to diligently cultivate virtue, their fortunes can be changed for the better. Likewise, if a man does evil, he will not only create karma that will result in misery but will also reduce the blessings he had accumulated in prior lives and are set to enjoy in this life. So if a murderer was originally destined to live a long and happy life, he will see his lifespan reduced and fortunes diminished or tainted as a result of his evil. Finally, death will result and he (if he did not accumulate any blessings to save himself) will most likely fall into the evil realms for his next rebirth.

This section finishes by stating that those who wish to live a long life (i.e. preserve or increase one's lifespan) must avoid all evil conduct listed in the treatise.

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### **Section Two : The Virtuous Individual**

是道則進，非道則退。不履邪徑，不欺暗室；積德累功，慈心於物；忠孝友悌，正己化人；矜孤恤寡，敬老懷幼；昆蟲草木，猶不可傷。宜憫人之凶，樂人之善；濟人之急，救人之危。見人之得，如己之得；見人之失，如己之失。不彰人短，不炫己長；遏惡揚善，推多取少。受辱不怨，受寵若驚；施恩不求報，與人不追悔。

所謂善人，人皆敬之，天道佑之，福祿隨之，眾邪遠之，神靈衛之；所作必成，神仙可冀。欲求天仙者，當立一千三百善；欲求地仙者，當立三百善。

*He walks the path of virtue and avoids the path of vice and evil. He does not stray from what is proper and avoids committing offenses in secret, thinking that no one will know.*

*He amasses merit and treats everything with gentleness and compassion. He is loyal to his countrymen, filial to his parents and kind to his brothers and sisters. He cultivates himself and reforms others. He shows concern for the welfare of the lonely, widowed and orphaned.*

*He respects the elderly and cares for the young. He does not hurt or damage even the little insects, animals, grasses and flowers. He rejoices in the virtue of others and pities the evil. He saves those in danger and helps those in need. He harbors no thoughts of envy; feels joy at another's prosperity and empathizes with the loss of other people.*

*He does not publish the faults and scandals of others (be they true or not) and acts with modesty in regards to his own merits. He prevents evil and encourages virtue. He reserves for himself little but gives much and reacts with equanimity to slights and slander. He does not abuse favor bestowed and nor does he give with strings attached. Lastly, he does not regret what he has given others.*

*By such conduct, a individual becomes virtuous. Those who are virtuous command the respect of men and earn the blessings of the heavens. Furthermore, demigods protect them ; fortune and success follow them and disasters avoid them. Moreover, heavenly rebirth is open to them. Those who wish to be reborn as a demigod should accumulate 300 virtuous deeds while those who wish to attain heavenly rebirth should amass 1300 good deeds.*

### **Commentary:**

This section describes the conduct of the virtuous and also illustrates the karmic rewards of virtue. If you can successfully implement all of these requirements to a high degree, you are considered a man or women of exemplary character. "Path of virtue" means that one avoids the crimes and

offenses listed in the treatise while at the same time doing whatever possible to amass good deeds. The virtuous will not only enjoy having their dreams come true in this life but can also hope to achieve heavenly rebirth in the next. Demigod rebirth requires 300 good deeds to attain and they enjoy long pleasurable lives and immunity from pain and deprivation. Celestial Devas cost 1300 good deeds to achieve and the pleasures and powers they enjoy is considerably superior.

However, not all deeds are equal. For instance, merely introducing a copy of this treatise to someone who will publish it will result in 10000 virtuous deeds and the rewards of planting good deeds in the Buddha Dharma (e.g. printing the Shurangama Sutra or Infinite Life Sutra) are limitless and beyond comparison. Furthermore, even small acts of kindness done out of true selfless compassion can be worth tens of thousands of virtuous deeds.

Finally, one should not seek to amass virtue just to be reborn in the heavens. Instead, the Buddha kindly advises us in the Larger Infinite Life Sutra to whole heartedly dedicate all of our good deeds for the attainment of Amita Buddha's Pureland, which will grant us liberation from the Samsara.

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### **Section Three: Crimes and Offenses.**

1.) 苟或非義而動，背理而行

*To harbor vicious thoughts and disregard one's conscience; acting contrary to what is fair and reasonable.*

2.) 以惡為能，忍作殘害

*To boast of one's evil as a strength and to inflict cruelties with a cold heart.*

3.) 陰賊良善，暗侮君親

*Secretly plotting to hurt the good and kind; being maliciously dishonest to one's superiors and parents behind their back.*

4.) 慢其先生，叛其所事

*To treat one's teachers and mentors with arrogance; to disregard ones duties or perform them with willful incompetence.*

4.) 誑諸無識，謗諸同學

*To lie to and mislead those without expertise or knowledge while holding a advantage in know-how and information; to slander one's colleagues and fellow students.*

5.) 虛誣詐偽，攻訐宗親

*Employing lies, fraud, espionage, plots, sting operations and entrapment against another; to maliciously slander and criticize one's extended and immediate family members.*

6.) 剛強不仁，狠戾自用

*To act with iron malice; to proceed capriciously and be obstinate to good advice.*

7.) 是非不當，向背乖宜

*To consider evil to be just and good to be evil; to foolishly align oneself with evil people and avoid good people.*

8.) 虐下取功，諂上希旨

*To (while holding power and office) sacrifice the lives, interests and welfare of the people or subordinates for the attainment of personal honors and career success. For instance, a judge increasing penalties or a prosecutor over charging to appear tough on crime.*

*To cajole favor from one's superiors by schemes and flattery or by abetting their machinations and misconduct.*

**9.) 受恩不感，念怨不休**

*To show no gratitude for kindness and favors received ; to harbor grievances without cease.*

**10.) 輕蔑天民，擾亂國政**

*To treat the common people with disdain and haughty arrogance ; to destabilize the country or pass whimsical and burdensome regulations and laws.*

**11.) 賞及非義，刑及無辜**

*To reward injustice and punish the innocent.*

**12.) 殺人取財，傾人取位**

*Killing to seize property ; using plots and schemes to seize another's position and public office.*

**13.) 誅降戮服，貶正排賢**

*To kill or abuse surrendering troops and prisoners of war; to purge and remove Sages and abandon their wise teachings.*

**14.) 凌孤逼寡，棄法受賂**

*To abuse and exploit widows and orphans; accepting (as a judge, law enforcer or prosecutor) bribes for the purpose of perverting the course of justice or misuse and misapplication of the law.*

**15.) 以直為曲，以曲為直**

*To issue judgments or legal arguments that twists lawful conduct into a crime or to criminalize actions that are moral, neutral or trivial; to issue judgments, laws or legal decisions that twist what is unlawful to lawful and or decriminalizes severe crimes.*



**16.) 入輕為重，見殺加怒**

*To punish excessively, to inflict criminal punishment on light offenses or to issue disproportionate judgments. To express anger and condemnation towards those sentenced to capital and corporal punishment.*

**17.) 知過不改，知善不為**

*Failing to make reasonable efforts to correct one's faults; to know good deeds but refuse to do them.*

**18.) 自罪引他，壅塞方術**

*To blame one's own misconduct and crimes on others ; to keep potent medical cures and healthcare techniques secret from the public.*

**19.) 訕謗聖賢，侵凌道德**

*To ridicule and slander Buddhist and Sagely teachings; to hurt and abuse persons of morality and cultivation.*

**20.) 射飛逐走，發蟄驚棲**

*To engage in hunting and bird shooting ; to disturb hibernating animals and insects.*

**21.) 填穴覆巢，傷胎破卵**

*To damage or destroy burrows, natural habitats and bird nests; to hurt pregnant animals and insects or to break their eggs.*

**22.) 願人有失，毀人成功**

*Desiring others to fail or be at fault ; preventing others from carrying out good deeds or projects for the public benefit.*

**23.) 危人自安，減人自益**

*To cause dangerous conditions and or to neglect other's personal safety despite having a duty to ensure it ; to reduce another's benefits or fair share in order to bolster one's own wealth and profit.*

**24.) 以惡易好，以私廢公**

*To fraudulently exchange what is worthless for what is valuable; to sacrifice public benefit in order to reap personal profit or to forward private agendas.*

**25.) 竊人之能，蔽人之善**

*To steal credit for another's work or to steal another's copyrights, patents and or trade secrets to claim them as your own ; to conceal or cover up the virtues of other persons.*

**26.) 形人之醜，訐人之私**

*To spread news of another's faults or to publish scandal ; to spread salacious gossip or to work in tabloid journalism or as a paparazzi.*

**27.) 耗人貨財，離人骨肉**

*To waste and recklessly spend money and resources belonging to others (e.g. abusing expense accounts or wasting tax revenue). To cause infighting and disharmony among another's family members.*

**28.) 侵人所愛，助人為非**

*To seize or confiscate what is dear to others ; to aid and abet the outrageous conduct of other people.*

**29.) 逞志作威，辱人求勝**

*The abusive use of one's power, authority and wealth ; to insult and bully*

*others in the hope of personal victory and gain.*

**30.) 敗人苗稼，破人婚姻**

*To cause another's crops and orchards to fail ; failure to reasonably aid agricultural production when able. Note: Farming is the source of everyone's food, there will be famine if nothing grows. Thus, one must never do anything to hurt or squeeze agriculture production but should instead support it when possible, such as lending to farmers at low interests and on mild terms.*

*To cause the destruction or breakup of another's marriage or engagement.*

**31.) 苟富而驕，苟免無恥**

*To amass wealth with money that one has no right to but instead of changing to become modest and charitable, becomes arrogant and decadent instead. To avoid just prosecution and punishment by luck or mercy but yet refuse to change one's shameless or criminal ways.*

**32.) 認恩推過，嫁禍賣惡**

*To take credit for kindness shown by others while shirking responsibility for one's own misconduct ; to scapegoat another or have others bear one's deserved punishment.*

**33.) 沽買虛譽，包貯險心**

*To buy or sell false titles and honors or to attain fame and win praise by fraud. To secretly harbor and entertain sadistic thoughts*

**34.) 挫人所長，護己所短**

*To belittle another's talents or prevent them from realizing their full potential ; to cover up one's faults and refuse to admit wrongdoing.*

**35.) 乘威迫脅，縱暴殺傷**

*To use authority and strength to coerce another into submission ; to (as a superior or commanding officer) tolerate war crimes, violence and wanton behavior among one's subordinates.*

**36.) 無故剪裁，非禮烹宰**

*To waste fabric ; to slaughter animals solely to satisfy one's greedy desire to eat meat.*

**37.) 散棄五穀，勞擾眾生**

*To waste and destroy rice, barley, grain and staple foods ; to conscript or impose corvée labor.*

**38.) 破人之家，取其財寶**

*To bankrupt another in order to seize their wealth ; to (as a judges or official) unreasonably freeze or confiscate assets.*

**39.) 決水放火，以害民居**

*To cause floods and commit arson ; to endanger the safety of people's life and property.*

**40.) 紊亂規模，以敗人功**

*To sabotage institutions and overturn existing standards, customs and procedures, thereby causing uncertainty and disorder.*

**41.) 損人器物，以窮人用**

*To damage or render unusable the tools of trade and means of production of other people.*

**42.) 見他榮貴，願他流貶；見他富有，願他破散**

*To envy the rich and honorable ; wishing for them poverty and disgrace.*

43.) 見他色美，起心私之

*To entertain adulterous and perverted thoughts in one's heart.* Note: Lust is considered by the Sages to be the foremost offense. Furthermore, it is clearly stated in the Shurangama Sutra that eliminating lust is very important for spiritual and meditative progress. Hence, Lao Tzu's true intention here is to exhort everyone to diligently reduce one's sexual desire as much as possible.

44.) 負他貨財，願他身死

*To wish your creditors dead, so as to not pay them back.*

45.) 干求不遂，便生咒恨

*To hate, vilify and curse those who do not acquiesce to one's shameless demands.*

46.) 見他失便，便說他過

*To see another's misfortune or suffering and yet dismiss it without sympathy as the deserved result of their sins. To engage in Schadenfreude.*

47.) 見他體相不具而笑之

*To mock and ridicule the disabled and or deformed.*

48.) 見他材能可稱而抑之

*To see another's commendable capabilities but yet withholds praise and recognition ; opting instead to slander them.*

49.) 埋蠱厭人，用藥殺樹

*To secretly employ black magic and occult practices against another ; to kill trees and harm plants with poison.*

50.) 恚怒師傅，抵觸父兄

*To become irate while being taught ; failure to be filial towards one's parents and elder brothers.*

**51.) 強取強求，好侵好奪**

*To be avaricious and forceful without compassion and reason ; to secretly infringe on the rights of others. To seize, rob, confiscate, extort and loot.*

**52.) 擄掠致富，巧詐求遷**

*To amass wealth by foul, distasteful and illegal means ; to attempt to win promotion via stratagems and fraud.*

**53.) 賞罰不平，逸樂過節**

*To punish and reward unfairly (e.g. selective prosecution) ; to indulge in excess revelry and luxury.*

**54.) 苛虐其下，恐嚇於他**

*To treat servants and subordinates with abuse and disdain ; to instill fear by threats and coercion.*

**55.) 怨天尤人，呵風罵雨**

*Instead of reflecting on one's conduct or amassing merits to earn blessings ; wantonly assigns blame for misfortunes on nature, other people and fate.*

**56.) 鬥合爭訟，妄逐朋黨**

*To cause and facilitate lawsuits and contention in order to obtain gain ; to join unlawful gangs and organizations.*

**57.) 用妻妾語，違父母訓**

*To rely on gossip or to consider wicked proposals from one's spouse ; to turn one's back to the teachings of mother and father.*

**58.) 得新忘故，口是心非**

*To favor the new and forget the old (e.g. forsaking old friends and wasting money on needless new items) ; to deceitfully speak what contradicts one's heart in order to manipulate others.*

**59.) 貪冒於財，欺罔其上**

*To be corrupt and greedy for bribes ; to deceive one's superiors.*

**60.) 造作惡語，讒毀平人**

*To slander and utter abuse ; to spread malicious rumors and ruin innocent reputations.*

**61.) 毀人稱直，罵神稱正**

*To ruin other's reputations and claim doing so is righteous ; to commit blasphemy and claim doing so is just. Note: This is a particularly common offense nowadays, for instance, media often recklessly ruin people's reputations but yet claim free speech as a shield.*

**62.) 棄順效逆，背親向疏**

*To abandon the proper teachings (e.g. Buddhism) and declare loyalty to evil ideologies. To turn one's back towards one's own flesh and blood but becomes close to outsiders and people of no relation*

**63.) 指天地以證鄙懷，引神明而鑿狠事**

*To be guilty of evil but be so impious as to then demand the spirits and or God to bear witness to one's innocence.*

**64.) 施與後悔，假借不還**

*To regret after having given to charity ; to borrow without intention to return or repay.*

**65.) 分外營求，力上施設**

*To be agitated in seeking the realization of one's ambitions but fail to cultivate the merits necessary to attain them ; to push one's subordinates to the breaking point.*

**66.) 淫慾過度，心毒貌慈**

*To (even if within marriage) engage in excess and unrestrained amorous desire ; to hide cruelty and malice under a facade of kindness.*

**67.) 穢食餒人，左道惑眾**

*To serve food unfit for consumption ; to lead the public astray with evil ideas and occult practices.*

**68.) 短尺狹度，輕秤小升；以偽雜真，採取姦利**

*Dishonesty in commerce and business transactions ; the use of false scales and weights. To defraud by adulterating merchandise.*

**67.) 壓良為賤，謾慕愚人**

*To use power to reduce good persons to servile and or low status. For instance, arresting innocent people or engaging in human trafficking. To trick and deceive simpletons.*

**68.) 貪婪無厭，咒詛求直**

*To be greedy without measure ; to recklessly swear oaths and demand the gods and spirits to curse one's opponent and affirm one's arguments.*

**69.) 嗜酒悖亂，骨肉忿爭**

*To act lewdly and disorderly while drunk or under influence ; to quarrel and fight with one's own family members.*



70.) 男不忠良，女不柔順

*As man, being neither loyal nor kind ; as a women, being neither pliant nor gentle.* Note: This is also one of the main problems of our time. It is the natural order of yin and yang that men should display nobility while women should display kindness and patience. If men should become treacherous and women mean, bold and vulgar; social order will break down and evil karma will accumulate.

71.) 不和其室，不敬其夫

*To disrespect, neglect and or abuse one's spouse*

72.) 每好矜誇，常行妒忌

*To regularly exaggerate one's achievements and skill ; to harbor thoughts of envy without cease.*

74.) 無行於妻子，失禮於舅姑

*To treat one's children and spouse without benevolence, care or attention ; to (as a women) treat one's parents in law without respect or decorum.*

75.) 輕慢先靈，違逆上命

*To neglect the memory of one's ancestors or the upkeep of their graves ; to disobey orders from one's superiors without just cause.*

76.) 作為無益，懷挾外心

*To spend time on useless things while neglecting to cultivate stock of merit ; to secretly feel loyalty and affinity towards outsiders at the expense of your own.*

77.) 自咒咒他，偏憎偏愛

*To seek to bring others down with you. To cherish unreasonable hatreds and undue partialities ; to be biased and bigoted.*

**78.) 越井越灶，跳食跳人**

*To step over wells and stoves instead of walking round them out of respect for the presiding deities and Spirit of the Hearth; to jump over any foodstuff or persons, thereby showing disrespect towards other people's body and consumables.*

**79.) 損子墮胎，行多隱僻**

*To engage in abortion or child abuse ; to commit offenses under the cover of darkness and or secrecy.*

**80.) 晦臘歌舞，朔旦號怒**

*To engage in revelry, shouting or anger during days of religious significance.*

**81.) 對北涕唾及溺，對灶吟詠及哭；又以灶火燒香，穢柴作食**

*To urinate, spit and defecate towards the northern skies where the gods reside; to weep and revel in front of the stove, where the Spirit of the Hearth resides. To cut corners while performing religious offerings (e.g. lighting incense using stove fire or candle light instead of using a independent flame). To use unclean fuel to cook food, thereby contaminating the residence of the Spirit of the Hearth (i.e. the stove) with the foul odors.*

**82.) 夜起裸露，八節行刑**

*To practice public nudity at night, thereby offending the ghosts and spirits who roam in the darkness ; to sentence and carry out punishment during auspicious days such as the 1st and middle day of each month, when spirits patrol the mortal world.*

**83.) 唾流星，指虹霓；輒指三光，久視日月；春月燎獵，對北惡罵**

*To gawk, spit or point at rainbows, comets, the stars, the sun and the moon, thereby disrespecting the spirits and demigods that reside there.*

84.) 無故殺龜打蛇

*To wantonly kill and abuse animals without justification of self defense.*

**Commentary:**

The 170 crimes outlined in the aforementioned 84 sub - sections represent all conduct that a virtuous man must avoid or discard. According to the Buddha, the root of all evil are the three kleshas of Greed, Hatred and Delusion. So as we can clearly see, all of the offenses listed herein fall under those three types. Hence, in order to properly implement all these precepts, it will be helpful if one starts to think of others as more important than oneself. That way, one will naturally lose the selfishness that drives people commit karmic offenses.

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**Section Four : The Retributions of Evil:**

如是等罪，司命隨其輕重，奪其紀算。算盡則死；死有餘責，乃殃及子孫。

又諸橫取人財者，乃計其妻子家口以當之，漸至死喪。若不死喪，則有水火盜賊、遺亡器物、疾病口舌諸事，以當妄取之值。

又枉殺人者，是易刀兵而相殺也。取非義之財者，譬如漏脯救饑，鴆酒止渴；非不暫飽，死亦及之。

*For such crimes, depending on the severity of the act, the lifespan of the offender will be shortened accordingly. If when death results the full punishment of the crime has still yet to be accounted for ; the punishment for the unaccounted portion will befall on the offender's descendents.*

*Those who seize wealth unjustly will be punished by having their wives and descendants bear surplus punishments after their death. The wives and children will either meet death or if that does not result; illness, poverty, misfortune, legal troubles, ill repute and the like will shadow them until the balance of justice is restored.*

*Those who take life unjustly will meet retribution in the form of war and*

*massacres. Persons who steal and rob are like those who eat diseased meat and drink poisoned wine to ease thirst and hunger. They may be full for a little while, but death will be the inevitable result.*

**Commentary:**

In this section, Lao Tzu further illustrates the workings of karma. Hence, not only will the offender himself meet karmic retribution, but his family and descendants will as well. However, we should be clear that no one will bear punishment for the offenses done by someone else even if they are related by blood. What is actually happening is that those who do evil will naturally attract a spouse and or descendants that themselves have committed various offenses in their past lives. For this reason, the offender and his or her family are actually undergoing individual retribution for their personal karmic offenses and bad habits. Since no one in their family has good roots, they are often unable to meet the dharma and find ways to cultivate merits to save themselves.

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**Section 5: Conclusion and Practical Advice:**

夫心起於善，善雖未為，而吉神已隨之；或心起於惡，惡雖未為，而凶神已隨之。其有曾行惡事，後自改悔，諸惡莫作，眾善奉行，久久必獲吉慶；所謂轉禍為福也。故吉人語善、視善、行善，一日有三善，三年天必降之福。凶人語惡、視惡、行惡，一日有三惡，三年天必降之禍。胡不勉而行之？

*When one thinks of doing good, even if the act has not yet been done, fortune is already shadowing him. When one thinks of evil, even if the act has not yet been committed, disasters are already standing by.*

*If a man has regularly done evil but decides to change; abstaining henceforth from all evil while diligently amassing good deeds. Great fortune is bound to manifest after a while.*

*A virtuous man speaks only good, does only good and sees only good. Hence, he does at least three good deeds everyday. After 3 years (1000 days), karmic rewards are guaranteed to manifest. The evil man does the opposite and amasses evil deeds daily. Therefore, after three years, disasters and*

*misfortune will certainly befall upon him. Thus, what reason is there not to heed this treatise?*

**Commentary:**

In this section, Lao Tzu offers us practical advice on how to earn blessings and reform. Most importantly, if one wants to cultivate good, one should have honest intentions and harbor no vicious thoughts. By doing so, one's mental volition will be pure and spiritual advancement will naturally become possible. Furthermore, the Sage also highlights the importance of the 1000 day period. Basically, if one diligently amasses good deeds and makes good efforts to control one's evil within a 1000 day period, then the good karma created will be so great that fortune is bound to be bestowed. The opposite happens with evil people.

Now some may protest that some evil persons have sinned for more than three years but have not met any significant retribution. However, in the Buddha's Infinite Life Sutra, it is said that blessings from previous lives may temporarily pad or delay the effects of the offenses of a man's present life. Hence, once those blessings end, the full dose of karmic retribution will manifest in the most severe manner. However, if one has truly worked reasonably hard to amass good deeds during the 1000 days period, then it is without doubt that significant good fortune will manifest very quickly.

Therefore, I recommend that everyone should diligently recite Amita Buddha's name and make offerings of light, water, fruits and incense to Buddha statues every day. Furthermore, we should strive to give donations to the poor or needy on a daily, weekly or monthly basis and donate to help print Mahayana Sutras. Moreover, we ought to do our best to avoid transgressing any of the 170 crimes listed. If we cannot avoid offending, then we should at least do our best to limit the severity of the offense. If we can do all this for the 3 year period, we can expect our karmic obstacles to be eradicated and great fortune to manifest.

Also, one should do good deeds without seeking fame. According to the Sages, "hidden virtue is the greatest virtue while secret crimes are the gravest offense". Hence, we should do good deeds with a low profile and if we should

meet fame, act as modest as possible.

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### **Section Six: Historical Case Studies**

The three following accounts were translated in 1884 by Frederic Henry Balfour:

*Fang Shih-k'o, 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'o 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 [p. 115](#) 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; [p. 112](#) 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!*

*When Chou Ju-têng, a gentleman of Tsung-yueh, was young, he was one of the pupils of a certain tutor named Lung Chi. Although he constantly listened to the instructions of his preceptor he derived no benefit whatever; but subsequently he fell in with this book, and from [p. 117](#) that time forward set himself heart and soul to walk according to its doctrines. Besides this, he*

*collected all the best commentaries on the text and verifications of the theories, and published them for the benefit of the world. Many were brought to lead good lives by this means; and the gentleman himself, by virtue of his great merit, found himself one day suddenly endowed with supernatural wisdom, so that he could see, as it were, right through the doctrines of Confucius and Lao Chün. Thus he passed for one of the greatest scholars of the Ming dynasty. At the present day, Confucianists study the Sage, Buddhists study Fo, and Taoists study the Immortals; but to the end of their lives they never arrive at a full comprehension of what they are learning, and some give up when they are only half way. And why is this? It is because their root is inadequate to producing a full measure of fruit, and therefore they do not bring forth any works of merit. Chang Tsze-yang said, "He who does not cultivate himself, and accumulate unostentatious, or hidden, virtue, will be so blinded by evil spirits as to be unable to see clearly into the truth." The Book of Recompenses should be studied by Confucianists, Buddhists, and Taoists alike, for it alone is able to provide a starting-point for journeying to the highest goal.*

**Commentary:**

These historical accounts clearly prove that the power of amassing merits can change ones fate ; just like what Lao Tzu said in the conclusion of the treatise. While many may claim that such occurrences are impossible, the truth is that both the human body and our world are all created by and reflects our karma. Hence, if we have accumulated powerful blessings in this life (something that few do), then why wouldn't our dreams come true?

It is explicitly said that the gift of dharma (e.g. printing sutras) is the highest of all gifts and will result in the most wonderful blessings. For instance, the Buddha has said that those who print sutras can expect health and long life; a upright and handsome appearance; unrivaled wealth and power and great intelligence. If you can dedicate the merit of such works towards Pureland rebirth, you can surely attain Buddhahood.

So as a parting word, I strongly encourage all who read this to make it's teachings known to others. Print copies of this treatise and donate to promote the Mahayana sutras. Your blessings will surely be beyond compare.

**Namo Amita Buddha**