

Chen Tao/The Right Way

By Jason Barker

Founder: Hon-ming Chen.

Founding Date: 1993.

Official Publications: Practical Evidence and Study of the World of God and Buddha, God's Descending in Clouds (Flying Saucers) on Earth to Save People.

Unique Terms: Transmigration, the Right Way, the "One," the great tribulation, the magnetic field of Void, King Satans, outside souls, Noah's Arc.

Other Names: God's Salvation Church, God Saves the Earth Flying Saucer Foundation.

HISTORY

Chen Tao ("The Right Way") was founded in 1993 in Pei-pu, Hsin-chu County, Taiwan,¹ by Hon-ming Chen, a former professor of sociology.² Pei-pu was selected as the initial site for the group because, according to Chen, the city will become the only place on earth where the spiritual energy of God ("the inexhaustible light of the Grand Way") flows from heaven.³

Chen and 140 of his followers immigrated to San Dimas, CA, in 1995 in order to board God's flying saucers when they land in the United States in 1999.⁴ Complaints from Taiwan followed the group to America. According to a report in The China Times Express, Chen may have manipulated his Taiwanese followers to pay \$60,000 as a fee for joining Chen Tao, and an additional \$30,000 to \$60,000 passage fare to board the spaceships.⁵ Police deputies returned a sixteen year-old member to her mother in Taiwan after her mother expressed fears that the girl would never return.⁶ Other family members expressed fears that the group will kill themselves, as did the members of the Heaven's Gate cult in nearby Rancho Santa Fe, CA, prompting an investigation by Taiwanese police into videotapes and documents that allegedly support accusations against Chen of group manipulation and potential violence.⁷

Members of Chen Tao began moving to Garland, TX, in June or July of 1997 to prepare "the headquarters for God's Kingdom in Texas."⁸ In September members rode in bicycle convoys through Garland distributing flyers expressing the group's appreciation "of your tolerating our activity in the neighborhood as well as your magnanimous acceptance."⁹ According to a report in the St. Paul Pioneer Press, the majority of the group moved from San Dimas to Garland in December after seeing the number "007" in the sky-an advertisement for a James Bond movie.¹⁰ Garland was allegedly chosen because it sounds like "Godland."

Chen Tao came to national attention in December after announcing that photographs of clouds are proof that God will assume a physical body identical to Chen's and will materialize in Garland at 10:00 am on March 31, 1998.¹¹ God will also personally greet each of his followers in Garland by engaging in "duplication" (splitting into hundreds of physical bodies), and practicing xenoglossia (speaking in all the languages of his devotees).¹² This event will be preceded on March 25, 1998, by the appearance of God on channel eighteen of every television set in North America.¹³

DOCTRINE

Chen Tao is a complex blending of elements from Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, science fiction, and Taiwanese folk religion.

Souls and Transmigration: All life originates from the energy of God, who is one with the "magnetic field of Void" and can thus can divide his spiritual light energy into separate beings.¹⁴

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Through the process of transmigration (reincarnation), each being can evolve into a higher life form: from animal, to human, to the divine status of Bodhisattva or enlightened one.¹⁵ Evolution depends upon the being developing purity in the “main soul light,” the primary of three souls including the temporal conscious and physical souls.¹⁶ The main soul light is the eternal record of every moment in a being’s lives; Chen compares its memory to that of a computer.¹⁷ The main soul light develops the conscious soul so that the conscious soul is capable of “conscious awareness, judgment, and expression of feelings.”¹⁸ The physical soul enables the being to engage in physical activity.¹⁹

The purity of the main soul light can be measured through its “spiritual light energy.”²⁰ The spiritual light energy of heaven (or Void) is twelve million degrees.²¹ A small animal, which is spiritually impure, has less than 1,800,000 degrees of spiritual light energy, whereas a large animal has between 1,800,000 and three million degrees. Humans have between three and nine million degrees of energy.²² Divine beings, such as Bodhisattvas and angels, have nine million degrees of spiritual light energy; a few divine beings, such as Jesus Christ and the Ju-lai Buddha, have twelve million degrees of energy.²³

Purity is attained through the evolutionary process of transmigration. Through each life beings attempt to erase the karma of previous lives. Poor behavior and attitudes result in an accrual of “causal karma” in the main soul light, lowering the spiritual light energy; this negative record is maintained in both the magnetic field of the Void (heaven) and the magnetic field of the underworld (hell).²⁴ The three souls separate upon death: if the main soul light is pure (above nine million degrees), this soul will be united with the Void and escape further purification.²⁵ If the main soul light is not pure, however, the old conscious and physical souls will reattach themselves to the transmigrated being until the being has atoned for the sins of lives in which the attached souls were involved; this process of “causal retribution” continues until the karma is erased.²⁶

The evolutionary cycle of transmigration is extremely long, because the number of lives experienced by a being renders increasingly less likely the possibility that the causal karma will be erased.²⁷ Because of this residual karma in each current being’s main soul light, each being has transmigrated at least ten times,²⁸ and ninety percent of the current world population was at one time born as an animal.²⁹ In fact, some of the eighty percent of the world’s population whose low spiritual light energy leads to their death in the great tribulation of 1999 will later be transmigrated as animals on Mars in order to continue their purification.³⁰

Outside Souls and Devils: Two major obstacles in the evolution of beings are the hindrances presented by outside souls and devils. These malevolent entities feed on the spiritual light energy of transmigrated beings, reducing the beings’ ability to erase their karmic records. Outside souls are those conscious and physical souls who did not report to the underworld upon death. These souls become lost after suffering a violent or unexpected death.³¹ Rodney Perkins and Forrest Jackson note that these “lonely ghosts and wild spirits” are a common theme in Taiwanese folklore.³² Outside souls exist by draining human beings of their spiritual light energy, as well as consuming the spiritual air in mountains and rivers.³³ According to Chen, the Buddhist temples in Taiwan are controlled by a “head outside soul” who rules over lesser souls.³⁴

Devils present a more active threat in Chen Tao theology. Devils are “devoted to bewildering the world,” and seek to possess transmigrated beings in order to increase the level of evil and violence in the world.³⁵ Devils frequently are the previous souls of a being who combine with the being’s current souls until the sins of past lives are atoned.³⁶ They are also frequently “debt claimants,” enemies from past lives who combine with a being’s current souls until the wrongs committed against the claimant in past lives are rectified.³⁷

Particularly dangerous are the “King Satans,” or “heavenly devil kings,” who are responsible for all the great tribulations that have occurred. These devils are the biblical “fallen angels” whose greed has irreparably corrupted them.³⁸ Fifteen percent of the world’s population has had some of their souls become King Satans since the beginning of life on earth; seventy percent of the population in central and east Asia possessed corrupted souls which became these heavenly devil kings.³⁹ King Satans are particularly prominent in Asia and Africa, where an average of forty-seven percent of the population are possessed in some way by heavenly devil kings.⁴⁰ As the King Satans feed on the spiritual light energy of these people, the light energy of the magnetic field around the world (except in America) declines by 100,000 every month; in May, 1997, the energy level in four of the world’s five continents dropped below the human level of three million.⁴¹ The great tribulation in 1999 will begin when the King Satans attempt to cannibalize each other in an attempt to find spiritual energy from which to feed.⁴²

Eschatology: According to Chen, great tribulations (usually climaxing in a nuclear holocaust) are a regular occurrence in history. There have been five great tribulations on this planet (not including the nuclear war almost 4.5 trillion years ago that resulted in the creation of our solar system.⁴³ and over 888,800 million tribulations since the beginning of time.⁴⁴ The first great tribulation on this planet was waged by dinosaurs “at a place called Armageddon in the Hebrew tongue” nearly ten million years ago;⁴⁵ the remaining tribulations also ended in a final climatic battle in modern Israel.⁴⁶ Each tribulation was survived by beings living in modern America, who were rescued by God in a flying saucer.⁴⁷

The opening of the seals described in Revelation chapter six began, according to Chen, in 1911 with the Western imperialism that resulted in World War I.⁴⁸ Chen is unclear about the date of China’s attack on Taiwan: he predicts both February of 1999,⁴⁹ and shortly after April 22, 1999.⁵⁰ The prediction of the Chinese attack in February includes the prediction for a simultaneous “war of unification” between North and South Korea.⁵¹ On April 22, 1999, a “thousand millions [sic] of human-devils” will initiate a mass slaughter in Chen Tao’s “holy land” of Pei-pu, Taiwan.⁵² Chen warns that, unless she repents, an anonymous female who betrayed Chen Tao will be the first to be crucified.⁵³ Chen predicts “Noah’s Arc” flood of forty days will devastate Eastern Asia in June and July of 1999.⁵⁴ The rainfall will be heaviest in Taiwan, with gradually lesser damage away from the storm’s center over the island.⁵⁵ The food shortages resulting from the flooding will ultimately lead Asians to commit cannibalism.⁵⁶

The massive death caused by both war and flooding will greatly reduce the spiritual energy upon which the King Satan’s can feed, driving the devils into an insane rage. From August first through the twelfth, the devils will then convince the Taiwanese whom they control to explode their three nuclear power plants.⁵⁷ The fallout will cause widespread destruction throughout east Asia.⁵⁸ China and Japan will then ally to invade Australia and New Zealand, and will then conquer southeast Asia.⁵⁹ European and African nations will join the war through territorial alliances, and all the nations will finally destroy each other at Armageddon.⁶⁰ God will command America to remain uninvolved during the warfare to come; the United States will instead welcome refugees into this safe haven of high spiritual light energy.⁶¹ Nonetheless, only twenty percent of the world’s population will survive the great tribulation. These survivors will once again board God’s spaceship.

God and the “One”: The god of Chen Tao “includes all beings; He has the inexhaustible, endless energy, and His energy is the original source of all existence and permeates everything...He is omnipresent, He is both in form and non-form.”⁶² In other words, God is the perfect energy with whom all transmigrating beings should hope to become one.⁶³

Perkins and Jackson note that, in *The Practical Evidence and Study of the World of God and Buddha*, Chen rejects the biblical version of God as “cruel, narrow-minded, unable to tell good from evil.”⁶⁴ Chen instead proclaims that God is “complete love, generosity, mercy, peace, justice, and forgiving.”⁶⁵

Chen’s depiction of God is heavily influenced by Taoism. God is “void of I,” because the “Tao (Way) begets One; One begets Two; Two Begets Three; Three begets all existence.’ The Way (tao) [sic] that begets One is the embodied God.”⁶⁶ This Taoist phrase indicates the close relation that Chen sees between God and himself. Simply stated, God created Chen (who identifies himself as “the One”)⁶⁷ who in turn came to earth as the Ju-lai Buddha with several Bodhisattvas to populate the earth.⁶⁸ When God returns on March 31, 1998, he will assume a physical body identical to Chen’s.⁶⁹ Chen has also stated that he and his followers wear only white because God will be clothed in white when he appears; the members wear cowboy hats because “they help the group fit in.”⁷⁰

Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is one of the primary divine beings in Chen Tao. He helped settle on Pluto the survivors of the nuclear war that created our solar system.⁷¹ Chen has allegedly claimed that he fathered Christ, and that one of the children in Chen Tao is the reincarnated Christ.⁷²

The Bible: Chen teaches that the Bible “is neither God’s not Jesus Christ’s revelation, but heavenly devil kings’ descriptions.”⁷³ In fact, “many believers of the Bible who read those forged contents will become gradually controlled by devils without knowing it.”⁷⁴ Chen therefore concludes that he needs to “clarify what parts of the Bible are ‘devil’s words.’”⁷⁵

THE FUTURE OF CHEN TAO

Media reports have been filled with speculations that, upon the failure of God to fulfill Chen’s prophecies, the members of Chen Tao will commit mass suicide. These reports have focused on a alleged letter from a former member stating that members “were set to die in a horrible manner if

they believed Chen's teachings,⁷⁶ and on Chen's guaranteeing "on [his] life" that his prophecies will be fulfilled.⁷⁷ Chen has declared that he is willing to receive the death penalty if his prophecies prove false.⁷⁸ Members have vigorously denied that they will commit suicide. Chen claims, "We would not take our lives under any circumstances."⁷⁹ In answer to a question by James Walker of Watchman Fellowship at a press conference on March 12, 1998, Chen declared that he would tell his followers to leave him if God does not return on March 31. Chen Tao spokesman Richard Liu similarly believes that "we will conclude that God has changed his plan" if nothing occurs, and that many followers will then return to Taiwan and eventually abandon the group.⁸⁰

March 25, 1998 Update: Teacher Chen retracted his prophecy that God will appear on March 31st after his prophecy about God appearing on channel 18 on March 25th failed. Chen stated, "Because we did not see God's message on television tonight, my predictions of March 31 can be considered nonsense."⁸¹ Chen plans to continue his study and research in Garland, but has dismissed his followers to return to Taiwan.⁸²

CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The Bible makes it clear that only God knows the date for the end of time (Mark 13:32). It is therefore improper for Christians to speculate on the exact date. In fact, the Bible so strongly stresses the importance of avoiding false prophecy that false prophets were put to death under the Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

The Bible also refutes the idea of reincarnation; we die only once, and then face judgment (Hebrews 9:27). As Christians, we also know that we do not need to earn our salvation through self-purification; we are instead saved through the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

God is not a void with whom creation panentheistically shares a spiritual light structure and in whom we ultimately hope to be absorbed; Revelation shows that we will spend eternity in an intimately personal, yet physically separate, relationship with God (21:3). Nor is He merely a being of disembodied love without a sense of justice, as Chen's alternative revelation asserts. Instead, the Bible shows that God is both loving and just (Psalms 101:1). The Bible also proves that Jesus is not an equal with the Buddha and the son of Hon-ming Chen. Instead, Jesus is God, and assisted the Father in the creation of the world (John 1:1-3).

In direct contrast to Chen's attack upon the authority of Scripture, the Bible also testifies to its own trustworthiness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Notes

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| ¹ Ho-ming Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 1997, 79. | ²² <i>Ibid.</i> , 19. | ⁴³ <i>Ibid.</i> , 46. | ⁶⁶ <i>Ibid.</i> , 8. |
| ² <i>The Fort Worth-Star Telegram</i> , March 7, 1998. | ²³ <i>Ibid.</i> , 11, 19. | ⁴⁴ <i>Ibid.</i> , 172. | ⁶⁷ <i>Ibid.</i> , 8-9, 175. |
| ³ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , flyer. | ²⁴ <i>Ibid.</i> , 31. | ⁴⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 143. | ⁶⁸ <i>Ibid.</i> , 9. |
| ⁴ <i>The Austin-American Statesman</i> , March 6, 1998; "GSC Cult Leader Urged to Let Followers Return to Taiwan," <i>Central News Agency</i> , December 29, 1997. | ²⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 8, 18, 54. | ⁴⁶ <i>Ibid.</i> , 145. | ⁶⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 175. |
| ⁵ <i>China News</i> , December 23, 1997. | ²⁶ <i>Ibid.</i> , 62-64. | ⁴⁷ <i>Ibid.</i> | ⁷⁰ <i>Austin American-Statesman</i> , 3/6/98, sec. B, 11. |
| ⁶ <i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i> , December 24, 1997. | ²⁷ <i>Ibid.</i> , 155. | ⁴⁸ <i>Ibid.</i> , 130-131. | ⁷¹ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 46-47. |
| ⁷ <i>China News</i> , December 25, 1997. | ²⁸ <i>Ibid.</i> , 30. | ⁴⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 115. | ⁷² <i>Netly News</i> , January 7 1998. |
| ⁸ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 79. | ²⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 132. | ⁵⁰ <i>Ibid.</i> , 87. | ⁷³ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 124. |
| ⁹ <i>Children of God's Kingdom</i> , flyer. | ³⁰ <i>Ibid.</i> , 142. | ⁵¹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 115. | ⁷⁴ <i>Ibid.</i> , 122. |
| ¹⁰ <i>St. Paul Pioneer Press</i> , December 24 1997. | ³¹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 35-38. | ⁵² <i>Ibid.</i> , 80. | ⁷⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 123. |
| ¹¹ <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 23, 1997. | ³² CESNUR's Watch Page on Chen Tao - God's Salvation Church http://web.tin.it/cesnur_org/Chen.htm . | ⁵³ <i>Ibid.</i> , 80-81. | ⁷⁶ <i>China News</i> , December 25 1997. |
| ¹² Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 177. | ³³ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 39. | ⁵⁴ <i>Ibid.</i> , 132-133. | ⁷⁷ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 177-178. |
| ¹³ <i>Austin-American</i> , March 6 1998, sec. B, 11. | ³⁴ <i>Ibid.</i> , | ⁵⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 87. | ⁷⁸ MSNBC Local News, December 23, 1997 http://www.msnbc.com/local/kxas/9238.asp . Note: The article has been removed - URL retained for reference). |
| ¹⁴ Chen, <i>God's Descending</i> , 4. | ³⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 62-64. | ⁵⁶ <i>Ibid.</i> | ⁷⁹ <i>Austin American-Statesman</i> , March 6 1998, sec. B, 11 . |
| ¹⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 11, 19. | ³⁶ <i>Ibid.</i> , 62. | ⁵⁷ <i>Ibid.</i> , 115. | ⁸⁰ Scholar Visits Chen Tao, www.trancenet.org/groups/gsc/news.shtml |
| ¹⁶ <i>Ibid.</i> , 17. | ³⁷ <i>Ibid.</i> , 63-64. | ⁵⁸ <i>Ibid.</i> | ⁸¹ UFO Cult Calm as God Misses Predicted TV Appearance. Note: Page removed - URL kept for reference. |
| ¹⁷ <i>Ibid.</i> | ³⁸ <i>Ibid.</i> , 68. | ⁵⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 118-119. | ⁸² <i>Ibid.</i> |
| ¹⁸ <i>Ibid.</i> | ³⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 70. | ⁶⁰ <i>Ibid.</i> , 119. | |
| ¹⁹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 18. | ⁴⁰ <i>Ibid.</i> | ⁶¹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 115. | |
| ²⁰ <i>Ibid.</i> , 17, 19. | ⁴¹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 75. | ⁶² <i>Ibid.</i> , 3. | |
| ²¹ <i>Ibid.</i> , 27. | ⁴² <i>Ibid.</i> , 76. | ⁶³ <i>Ibid.</i> , 9. | |
| | | ⁶⁴ CESNUR's Watch Page. | |
| | | ⁶⁵ <i>Ibid.</i> , 9. | |



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