

TAI CHI CHIH ("Tie Chee Cha") Adapted  
for Religious Meditation

Introduction

Tai Chi Chih is a simplified and modified version of Taoist Tai Chi Chuan. It is based on the Taoist belief that cosmic energy exists all around people and that it can be attained by the exercise of appropriate movements and postures carried out in a meditative manner.

The following adaptation of Tai Chi Chih for Christian or other theistic meditation assumes that God as Spirit is present everywhere and that the meditating person can relate to the Spirit in a prayerful way while doing the movements as a kind of liturgical "dance" or physical expression of various aspects of prayer: adoration, thanksgiving, petition, intercession and benediction, etc.

In the course of history, Christians have often adapted religious customs or practices from other religions. This adaptation of Tai Chi Chih is attempted with utmost respect for Taoist tradition and much appreciation for the benefits it brings to theistic meditation.

In this adaptation of Tai Chi Chih the physical movements will be described in turn followed by the suggestions for accompanying prayer. First it is necessary to describe the Resting Pose and the primary leg movement.

The Resting Pose

Stand with heels close together, forming a "V" shape with your feet. Palms face the ground at the belt line, about 1 foot apart, and the knees are slightly flexed. Spine and head are vertically aligned as usual. While assuming the Resting Pose be as relaxed as possible - open yourself completely to the reception of the Spirit as you stand at ease.

The Resting Pose is employed after each TCC movement is completed, as a complement to motion. This still posture is held for a duration corresponding to the number or repetitions enacted. (This timing is something you will learn to gage by feeling). In general, if only a few repetitions of a TCC movement are performed, the Resting Pose will be used for a few seconds, and a greater number of repetitions will need to be complemented with a longer period of stillness.

Flow into the Resting Pose following each movement, so that continuity is intact, right up to the instant you assume stillness. Then flow out of the Resting Pose in grace and continuity, smoothly.

## Primary Leg Movement

The basic T'ai Chi Chih leg movement is performed front-to-back, while remaining in a low stance, much like a fencer's pose. Prior to the description of movements requiring this leg movement, you will notice the abbreviation: (LEGS F-B).

### Technique:

Centre your weight over your right foot, placed at a 45° angle (facing out), and extend your left foot forward from the outside of your right heel (in a straight line), so that your left heel rests on the ground with your toes raised. In this starting position your right knee is bent while your left leg is straight (and relaxed). Your spine and head are in line (as always in TCC), and your stance is low (perhaps 4" to 8" lower than your normal walking stance). Begin to shift your weight forward, onto your left foot, while lowering your toes and bending your left knee. As you shift your weight, be sure to keep your torso at a consistent height (moving front-to-back on an even, horizontal plane), without rising, sinking or bobbing. When your weight is centered over your left foot (forward foot), your right heel (back foot) lifts off slightly as your right leg straightens. Continue moving in this way, evenly flowing from front-to-back-to-front-etc., bending the front leg while straightening the back leg. After you have performed the desired number or repetitions with your left leg forward, assume the "Resting Pose" for an appropriate period (proportionate to the number of repetitions performed), then extend your right leg forward to perform the same number of repetitions in the same manner, for balance. Then return to the Resting Pose before engaging in the next TCC movement.

## Movements for Meditation

### Invocation

- (a) Movement: Feet are shoulder width apart with arm relaxed at the sides. Rock slowly forward, lifting the heels slightly as the arms swing forward, palms up, until they are parallel to the ground (shoulder high). Then palms face down and the arms swing down and back as the toes lift slightly. Continue this back and forth motion, in evenness and continuity, with a slight flex in the knees, throughout. Perform for 3 minutes or more, then conclude with the Resting Pose.
- (b) Meditation: Say to oneself or aloud if a group is doing the prayers together: The wind blows where it wills: You hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born from the Spirit. (John 3:8)

### Ascription:

- (a) Movement: Hands describe a horizontal circle, palms facing down at the upper chest level. Begin by moving the hands out over the forward leg, going half way around the circle as the weight is placed on the forward foot. Continue around to complete the hand circle as the weight shifts back to the rear foot. Keep hands and wrists relaxed, imagining that your hands are being carried around the circle while resting on an automatic turntable, effortlessly moving. Perform 5 or more repetitions on each side (begin with your left leg forward with this and all other front-to-back TCC movements). Conclude with the Resting Pose.
- (b) Meditation: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwells in it." (Psalm 24:1) "We are not alone; we live in God's world" (The New Creed). Remember the faithfulness and love of God's covenant with the whole creation.

### Dedication

- (a) Movement: Hands describe a vertical circle, with palms facing about 1 foot apart. As the weight shifts forward, move the hands down from the lower chest and around, as if tracing the rims of a big bass drum with your fingertips, until half the circle is completed. Continue around the circle (up and over) as the weight shifts to the rear foot. Perform 5 or more repetitions on each side and conclude with the Resting Pose.
- (b) Meditation: "The first and greatest commandment is: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and the second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:30). All that we are belongs to God; we dedicate it to God in the covenant God has made.

### Praise:

- (a) Movement: Hands are positioned at the sides of the shoulders, palms facing forward. As the weight shifts forward, bring the hands out and down in a swooping circular motion until they nearly come together about 1 foot away from the lower abdomen and directly above your knee. As the weight shifts to the rear, lift the hands in a vertical motion, as if tracing a thin pole with the fingertips, to about shoulder level, where they separate and return to the starting position at the sides of the shoulders. Perform 5 or more repetitions on each side.
- (b) Meditation: "Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever." (Matthew 6:13). Think of all the glorious works of God--all for which praise is due.

## Thanksgiving

- (a) Movement: Begin with hands at sides, palms facing forward and fingertips pointing down. As the weight shifts forward, lift the hands out and up, describing vertical half circles, away from the sides of your torso, until they meet (weight fully forward) a few inches from your face with the right hand on the outside of the left hand, fingers pointing up. (The hands nearly clap, inches from your face, yet the right hand passes the left on the outside). As the weight shifts to the rear, the hands are drawn down with the wrists cocked, in a straight vertical descent, fingers pointing up, until the hands separate and palms face down at the sides of the hips. Continue this pattern. The right hand passes to the outside of the left hand during the forward position with the left leg forward and with the right leg forward. Perform 5 or more repetitions on each side.
- (b) Meditation: "The earth is full of the goodness of God" (Psalm 33:5). "Now thank we all our God." Think of all that you are thankful for.

## Intercession

- (a) Movement: Similar to Invocation movement (above) but as the weight begins to shift forward, face your palms as if picking up a small ball, fingertips up, and carry it halfway around the platter, releasing the ball as the weight begins to shift to the rear. At the point of release name to yourself someone for whom you pray, continuing around the circle in the usual way. Repeat this pattern each time, facing your palms as you trace the first half of the circle. Perform 5 or more repetitions on each side and conclude with the Resting Pose.
- (b) Meditation: We pray that God's grace may be sufficient for all who have need of it this day. We "pour" grace on those we wish to pray for.

## Blessing and Being Blessed:

- (a) Movement: Hands are directly in front of the shoulders, palms facing forward in a pushing gesture. As the weight shifts forward the hands push out in an arching motion, describing the bottom of an ellipse, until they reach a maximum forward position (arms not quite fully extended) level to the shoulders. As the weight shifts to the rear, turn the hands around and pull back in an arching motion describing the top of an ellipse. Continue this pattern, practising smooth transitions of the hand positions at the extreme weight shifts. Perform 5 or more repetitions on each side.

- (b) Meditation: We cannot receive without giving and we cannot give without receiving. Love is binary. We think of the relationships of giving and receiving that are important in our lives.

#### Confession and Absolution:

- (a) Movement: The hands describe intersecting vertical circles in front of the torso, while the weight shifts from side-to-side, complemented by a gentle twisting or pivoting motion at the waist. Begin by pushing down from the resting pose, then simultaneously lift your left hand to a position in front of the left shoulder and pick up your right foot. Now extend your right leg to the side, heel first, and as you shift the weight to the right, bring your left hand down and around in a circular fashion, in front of the torso (similar to a golf swing, with the left arm and hand representing the club). As you continue by shifting the weight to the left side, bring your left hand up and over, completing the circle. At this point the right hand comes into play by describing circles opposite to the left hand. The right hand circles up and over from a point near the left elbow. The upper hand faces palm in and the lower palm faces the side of the direction you are moving. Elbows are kept fairly close to the sides so that the motion is basically forearms and hands. Feet stay flat on the ground during this movement, and the waist turns fluidly though moderately as the weight is shifted. Perform 5 or more repetitions to each side.
- (b) Meditation: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10). The Spirit of God blows away our guilt like passing clouds.

#### Commissioning

- (a) Movement: Push down gently from the Resting Pose, by bending at the knees. Turn your palms up, as if to lift (hands are shoulder width apart), and let them rise slowly to the space directly above the crown of your head, and face the palms a few inches apart. Simultaneously lift your heels and separate the palms by bending from the wrists (fingertips about shoulder width apart). Then return your heels and hands slowly and gently, and repeat the action twice more. After a few seconds of stillness, begin as before by simultaneously lifting the heels and separating the palms. On the third repetition continue to separate the hands (as the heels come down) and describe a large circle (arms fully extended) until the hands come close together at the lower abdomen (right hand below the left hand), palms up. To conclude, lift the hands up toward the heart and then back down in a flowing manner, to the Resting Pose.

- (b) Meditation: May the light of God be in us and may it shine through us to others. "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-14)

Benediction:

- (a) Movement: This is the final closing posture. Stand in the Resting Pose and lift your left heel slightly, while keeping the right foot flat on the ground. The weight distribution is equal between the left and right foot. The forearms are positioned horizontally to the front, slightly above the shoulders and a few inches to the front (parallel to the ground). The left palm faces in, with the right palm overlapping it (also facing in) on the outside, with an inch between them. It is the fingers that overlap. Remain standing without movement while you relax into the posture. This is a standing meditation pose. Maintain this pose for a comfortable duration (1 minute or more), then conclude with the Resting Pose.
- (b) Meditation: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength; in returning and rest shall you be saved." (Isaiah 30:15). "By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)