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阿弥陀心要	Essential Teachings on Amitābha
壬冬月讲演	Lectures Given in the Winter Month of a Ren Year
佛说法四十九年，种种方便，无非使众生摄心归一。做到一不要唯利是图，方是度尽苦厄。随机应化，非有定法。念佛法门，亦是方便法门之一种。不可专执持名为念佛，凡内观自性外参经论，一切皆念佛也。	For forty-nine years, the Buddha taught the Dharma, employing various skillful means, all for the sake of gathering sentient beings' minds into oneness. One must first cease pursuing profit alone; only then can one cross beyond all suffering and adversity. He responds and manifests according to circumstances; there is no fixed Dharma. The Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation is also one kind of expedient Dharma gate. One must not insist exclusively that holding the Buddha's name is Buddha-recitation. Whether one contemplates one's own nature inwardly or studies sūtras and treatises outwardly, all of it is Buddha-recitation.
千百年来，念佛者多，成就者少，其原因为：（一）贪得便宜，不耐吃苦。（二）不明心要；力量不足。（三）分宗立派，秽净之见横生。（四）不得持名法门之诀窍。	For thousands of years, many have practiced Buddha-recitation, but few have attained accomplishment. The reasons are: (1) they want the benefits without bearing the hardship of practice; (2) they do not understand the essential point of mind, and their strength is inadequate; (3) they divide into schools and factions, giving rise to views of purity and impurity; and (4) they do not obtain the key to the method of holding the name.
我今先要诸君明白此念佛之物为何物？终日受苦颠倒、流浪生死之物，又为何物？然后再去念佛。心地明白，方可我不离佛，佛不离我，佛我同光，体用如如，在在净土，处处西方。请以余所得心要，一知半解，与诸君参究。大众要明白生死事大，加意痛切，努力精进，则生西并非难事，阿　跋致此生定可证到也。	I shall first have you all understand: What is this thing that recites the Buddha? And what is this thing that suffers inversion all day long and wanders through birth and death? Only then should you recite the Buddha. Once the mind-ground is clear, I do not depart from the Buddha, and the Buddha does not depart from me; Buddha and I share the same light, essence and function are thusness, every place is the Pure Land, and everywhere is the West. I ask you to investigate together with me the essential point of mind that I have gained, though my understanding is only partial. Everyone must understand that the matter of birth and death is grave. If you earnestly exert

	yourselves and diligently advance, rebirth in the Western Pure Land will not be difficult, and avaivartika can certainly be realized in this very life.
修净土是要双修，不要单修。云何单修？单信西方之弥陀，自己发愿往生，专赖佛来接引。自己却不用功，改除习气。是谓单修。云何双修？明自己之本心地，其光明无量、寿命无量，与弥陀不二，感应道交。	In cultivating the Pure Land, one must cultivate both aspects, not merely one. What is single cultivation? It is to believe only in Amitābha of the Western Pure Land, make vows for rebirth there oneself, and rely exclusively on the Buddha to come and guide one, while making no effort oneself to change and eliminate habitual tendencies. This is called single cultivation. What is dual cultivation? It is to understand one's own original mind-ground: its light is immeasurable and its life is immeasurable; it is nondual with Amitābha, and they commune in response.
在在处处若有此心，佛即不来而来，我亦不往而往。朝于斯、夕于斯，无能念、无所念，当下即是往生。是谓双修。但口说而心不行，执持名号，心不发信愿是为单修。心口相应，是为双修。其实双修易，单修难。双修得自在，单修反吃力。双修决定往生，单修断断无用。要如是修，主为正修正行。但念佛之前，必应具几个先决条件：	Wherever one may be, if this mind is present, the Buddha comes without coming, and I go without going. Abide in this morning and evening. When neither the one who recites nor what is recited can be found, that very moment is rebirth. This is called dual cultivation. But if one speaks of it while the mind does not put it into practice, clings to holding the name, and does not give rise to faith and vows in the mind, this is single cultivation. When mind and speech accord, this is dual cultivation. In truth, dual cultivation is easy, while single cultivation is difficult. Dual cultivation brings freedom; single cultivation is instead laborious. Dual cultivation certainly brings rebirth; single cultivation is absolutely of no use. One must cultivate in this way, taking it as proper cultivation and proper practice. This practice of Buddha-remembrance has several prerequisites:
（一）须先认识何为“净土”？	(1) One must first recognize what the “Pure Land” is.
（二）须先明白“阿弥陀”三字作何解，而往生净土者是我何物？	(2) One must first understand the meaning of the three characters “Amitābha,” and what it is of mine that is reborn in the Pure Land.
（三）明了修持法门之次第。若此三项未曾明了，则虽持名万遍，只如鹦鹉学舌，全不中用。所谓为经所转，并非转经。	(3) One must understand the stages of the Dharma gate of cultivation. If these three matters have not been understood, then even if one holds the name ten thousand times, one is merely like a parrot learning human speech, and it is of no use

	whatever. This is what is called being turned by the sūtra, rather than turning the sūtra.
兹分述如下：	I will explain each in turn.
（一）“净土”，本有理净土、事净土。事净土者，西方极乐世界，确有依正庄严佛土是也。理净土者，我之心地自性清净佛土，在在处处皆是西方，十方与西方不异是也。	(1) The “Pure Land” has both the Pure Land of principle and the Pure Land of phenomena. The Pure Land of phenomena is the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, where there truly is a Buddha land adorned with dependent and principal recompenses. The Pure Land of principle is the Buddha land of the pure intrinsic nature of my own mind-ground: everywhere is the West, and the ten directions are no different from the West.
再将“净土”二字分别解之：则“净”乃扫除一切习气，使无污染之义；“土”乃指本心地而言。我之本觉妙体，原来亦是光明无量，照十方国，无所障碍，寿命亦无量无边，与佛同体不二。我与弥陀本无来去，本无隔绝。迷则西方变阿鼻，悟则阿鼻即西方。故经云：“欲净其土，先净其心。随其心净，即佛土净。”	Let us further explain the two characters “Pure Land” separately. “Pure” means sweeping away all habitual tendencies so that there is no defilement; “land” refers to the original mind-ground. The wondrous substance of my fundamental awakening is originally also of immeasurable light, illuminating lands in the ten directions without obstruction. Its life too is immeasurable and boundless; it is of one essence and nondual with the Buddha. Amitābha and I have fundamentally neither coming nor going, and fundamentally no separation. When deluded, the Western Pure Land becomes Avīci; when awakened, Avīci itself is the Western Pure Land. Therefore, the sūtra says: “If one wishes to purify one’s land, one must first purify one’s mind. As one’s mind is purified, so the Buddha land is purified.”
（二）复次，“阿弥陀”者，其义即如如不动，不生不灭，大自在之毗卢藏性是也。盖“阿”为无生义，“弥”为大自在义，“陀”为如如不动义。我之本体，圆觉妙心，既同弥陀。则“往生”云者，乃不得已而为方便说耳。	(2) Furthermore, “Amitābha” means thusness, immovability, neither arising nor ceasing, and the great freedom of Vairocana’s treasury-nature. “A” means non-arising, “mi” means great freedom, and “tuo” means thusness and immovability. Since the wondrous mind of perfect enlightenment, my fundamental essence, is identical with Amitābha, the expression “rebirth” is only an expedient way of speaking, adopted out of necessity.
既无来去，何复言“往”；既无生灭，何复云“生”。故往生之物，非我有相之躯体，乃我本无生灭来去、恒常不变之如来藏性耳。	Since there is neither coming nor going, why speak further of “going”? Since there is neither arising nor ceasing, why speak further of “birth”? Here, “rebirth” refers to my tathāgatagarbha nature, beyond the comings and goings of the physical

	body. This nature neither arises nor ceases, neither comes nor goes, and remains ever unchanged.
（三）言修持法门。	(3) On the Dharma gate of cultivation.
先述信、愿、行、证四项：	First, let us discuss the four aspects of faith, vows, practice, and realization:
第一“信”者，非单信西方之庄严佛土，即算发信心也。必同时深信自性即是弥陀，本可一样成佛。人皆可以为尧舜，一切众生皆可成佛，只是迷悟之别。此信，是为甚难。	First, “faith” does not mean that one has generated faith merely by believing in the adorned Buddha land of the West. One must at the same time deeply believe that one’s own intrinsic nature is Amitābha and that one can originally become a Buddha in the same way. Everyone can become a Yao or a Shun; all sentient beings can become Buddhas. The only difference is between delusion and awakening. This faith is extremely difficult.
若能信心不逆，一念净信，即已于无量千万佛所种种诸善根，即非凡夫境界。故非信得真实、信得坚切，则愿力不强。古德云：信果佛易（如信释迦弥陀等佛是也），信因佛难（信一切众生，及我自己因地皆可成佛是也），故曰“难信之法”。经云：初发心时，既成正觉。是以信为诸行之母。	If one’s faith does not turn back, then with a single thought of pure faith one has already planted various good roots before immeasurable millions of Buddhas and has gone beyond the state of an ordinary being. Therefore, unless faith is genuine and steadfast, the power of one’s vows will not be strong. The ancient worthies said: It is easy to believe in the Buddha as fruition, such as believing that Śākyamuni and Amitābha are Buddhas; it is difficult to believe in the Buddha as cause, that is, to believe that all sentient beings and oneself, at the causal stage, can become Buddhas. Thus it is called “a Dharma difficult to believe.” The sūtra says: “At the time of first arousing the mind, one has already accomplished perfect awakening.” Therefore, faith is the mother of all practices.
第二“愿”者，发愿也。愿，即志也。士何事，曰尚志。发愿即是立志。发愿成佛，是立无上之志。但若专心发愿生西，慕彼有相功德庄严，尚不离贪著，非真发愿也。	Second, “vows” means making vows. A vow is an aspiration. What is the work of a scholar? It is said: to esteem aspiration. To make vows is to establish one’s aspiration. To vow to become a Buddha is to establish the unsurpassed aspiration. But if one concentrates solely on vowing for rebirth in the West, longing for its meritorious adornments of form, one still has not departed from attachment and craving; this is not genuine vow-making.
经云：“若乐小法者，即著我见人见众生见寿者见，即于此经不能听受读诵”。故愿非大不可，愿大成就大，愿小成就小。欲成就如是功德庄严者，必发大愿。谓：	The sūtra says: “Those who delight in lesser dharmas are attached to the views of self, person, sentient being, and life span; therefore, they cannot

我今愿生彼国，为自己成佛故，为辛苦一切有情故，非为贪得故。斯是真正发愿。故经内有应当发愿者三。	hear, receive, read, or recite this sūtra.” Hence, one’s vows must be great. Great vows bring great accomplishment; small vows bring small accomplishment. To accomplish such meritorious adornments, one must make great vows: “I now vow to be reborn in that land, for the sake of becoming a Buddha myself and for the sake of all suffering sentient beings, not out of craving to obtain something.” This is genuine vow-making. Therefore, the sūtras contain three instances of “one should make vows.”
第三“行”者，修行也。非谨持名号之谓修。当时时厌离生死，念念不忘弥陀，口持心行。绵绵密密，即得三密瑜珈境界。所谓净法有力，则染法无力。其能不恋贪、不念嗔、不住痴者，以念佛、念法、念僧有力也。	Third, “practice” means cultivation. Cultivation does not simply mean carefully holding the name. One must at all times grow weary of and renounce birth and death, never forget Amitābha from thought to thought, recite the name aloud and live by it inwardly. With continuous and seamless contemplation, one enters the state of the yoga of the three mysteries. As it is said, when pure dharmas have strength, defiled dharmas have no strength. One is able not to cling or crave, not to think in anger, and not to abide in ignorance because recollection of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha has gained strength.
不念此，即念彼。不念西方，即念地狱。当下即是，毋庸犹豫。似此专一诚修，一至七日，心不颠倒，并颠倒心亦不可得，自然一心不乱。一心即是无心，心不可得，为正修行。	If one is not mindful of this, one is mindful of that. If one is not mindful of the West, one is mindful of hell. This is so at the very moment; there is no need for hesitation. If one cultivates with such singleness and sincerity for one to seven days, the mind will not be inverted; even an inverted mind cannot be found. Naturally, one attains one-pointedness of mind without distraction. One mind is no mind; the mind cannot be found. This is proper cultivation.
又修行者，破见浊也。若有净见，对面即立秽见，不得名为修行。经云：是法平等，无有高下。佛为众生方便说一切法，皆属净土。文殊以有佛见，尚贬向铁围。故见不净，心不净，即土不净。是以信坚愿大，合之为正行。非仅口持即谓行也。	Furthermore, cultivation means breaking through the turbidity of views. If one holds a view of purity, then a view of impurity immediately stands opposite it; this cannot be called cultivation. The sūtra says: “This Dharma is equal, without high or low.” The Buddha expounded all dharmas as skillful means for sentient beings; all belong to the Pure Land. Because Mañjuśrī held a view of Buddha, he was even demoted to the Iron Ring Mountains. Therefore, if one’s view is impure, one’s mind is impure, and the land is impure. Thus, steadfast

	faith and great vows, combined, constitute proper practice. Practice does not consist merely in holding the name with the mouth.
一句弥陀，顿超八十亿劫生死重罪。前际后际皆断，心行灭处，本是无生法，更是无上密乘。玄奘法师所译经，本于正念思维。而鸠什法师所译经，重在执持名号。其实不二。以思维时，不离口念；口念时，不离心行。	One phrase of Amitābha suddenly transcends the grave offenses of birth and death accumulated over eighty billion kalpas. The prior limit and the later limit are both cut off. Where mind and activity cease, there is originally the unborn Dharma; this is moreover the unsurpassed Secret Vehicle. The sūtras translated by Dharma Master Xuanzang are based on right mindfulness and contemplation, while those translated by Dharma Master Kumārajīva emphasize holding the name. In truth, they are nondual. For when one contemplates, one does not depart from recitation by mouth; and when one recites by mouth, one does not depart from practice in the mind.
古人观念并重，非若今之偏执不化也。密宗释弥陀有四：曰浅略、深秘、秘中秘、秘中深秘。亦无非念西方弥陀，与自性弥陀同体不二之意。故一句弥陀，即是密宗，非可割裂分家者也。	People of old gave equal weight to contemplation and recitation; they were not like people today, who are rigidly attached to one side. Esoteric Buddhism explains Amitābha in four ways: the superficial and abbreviated, the profound and secret, the secret within the secret, and the profound secret within the secret. Yet these are all simply the meaning that Amitābha of the Western Pure Land and Amitābha of one's intrinsic nature are of one essence and nondual. Therefore, one phrase of Amitābha is Esoteric Buddhism; they cannot be split apart into separate houses.
第四“证”者，实证也。以心与境界，体会通达之谓“证”。经云：惟佛与佛，乃能证知。是言以心印心，只自己知，非他人可测。又“证”者，随信愿行三者而转。信愿行修得如何，则所证得亦如何。若澈了诸法空相，约理言，自是无修无得无证。但理事圆融，又何当废修，修则证在其中矣。	Fourth, “realization” means actual realization. To comprehend and penetrate through mind and states is called “realization.” The sūtra says: “Only a Buddha together with a Buddha can fully realize and know.” This means using mind to seal mind: only one knows for oneself; others cannot fathom it. Moreover, realization changes in accordance with the three of faith, vows, and practice. As one cultivates faith, vows, and practice, so is what one realizes. If one thoroughly understands the empty characteristics of all dharmas, then in terms of principle there is naturally no cultivation, no attainment, and no realization. But when principle and phenomena are perfectly integrated, how

	could one discard cultivation? When one cultivates, realization is contained within it.
以上释四项竟。	This concludes the explanation of the four aspects.
再申念佛法门：	Let us now further explain the Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation:
念佛法门，系借佛力。但感应力弱，应力亦弱。余念佛十年，始终不敢自信有把鼻。十八年修心中心后，回头再行念佛，方知念佛法门之微妙，并悟得阿　跋致之意境。盖一心不乱，定要平时做到，断非临时措办。	The Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation relies on the Buddha's power. But if one's power of response is weak, the Buddha's responsive power is also weak. I recited the Buddha for ten years, yet from beginning to end I did not dare trust that I had a firm grasp. After eighteen years of practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, I returned to Buddha-recitation and only then understood the subtle wonder of this Dharma gate and awakened to the meaning and state of avaivartika. One-pointedness of mind without distraction must certainly be accomplished in ordinary times; it cannot be arranged at the last moment.
故于念佛法门之外，当参究密法以为正助。其境界实不可思议。自承前此种种罪过，净密分家，罪同谤佛。佛在世时，本无禅密之分，后人为方便计，暂分以求专一。非故立门户也。所谓归元不二，方便多门。	Therefore, in addition to the Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation, one should investigate Esoteric Buddhism as the principal aid. Its state is truly inconceivable. I acknowledge that my former errors in separating Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism were as sinful as slandering the Buddha. When the Buddha was alive, there was originally no division between Chan and Esoteric Buddhism. Later people made a provisional distinction as an expedient in order to seek concentration; they did not deliberately establish sectarian boundaries. As it is said, the ultimate return is not two, while skillful means have many gates.
若固执己见，严立门户，仍为执着，从何解脱？试问证至无生法忍时，心且不有，谁为立者？谁为证者？莲池大师发愿意文云，“愿于禅观之中，梦寐之际，得见阿弥陀佛”云云，是岂摒绝禅宗者？近人执定非净不修，反对密宗，自己却又持往生咒。	If one stubbornly clings to one's own views and rigidly establishes sectarian boundaries, one remains attached; how can liberation arise? Consider this: when one realizes the forbearance of the unborn dharmas, even mind does not exist. Who then establishes such boundaries? Who realizes? In Master Lianchi's text on making vows, he says, “May I, in Chan contemplation and in dreams, behold Amitābha Buddha,” and so forth. How could he have excluded the Chan school? People today insist that they will practice nothing

	but Pure Land and oppose Esoteric Buddhism, yet they themselves recite the Rebirth Mantra.
故知执名号，为修净方便法门之一。一切法，皆是佛法。以无我、无人、无众生、无寿者修一切善法，即得无上菩提。岂有修持他法，而弥陀不许往生之理！今借一句弥陀，念至万法归一，再念至一不可得，方为成就。	Therefore, we know that holding the name is one expedient Dharma gate for cultivating the Pure Land. All dharmas are Buddha-Dharma. By cultivating all wholesome dharmas without clinging to the marks of self, person, sentient being, or life span, one attains unsurpassed bodhi. How could it be that, if one cultivates other dharmas, Amitābha would not permit one's rebirth? Now, taking up the single invocation of Amitābha, recite until the myriad dharmas return to the One; then recite until even the One cannot be found. Only then is there accomplishment.
即持他法，亦可同样成就。惟向西愿力，不得有二。念到一念无念，斯名正念。一相无相，斯名实相。至见实相时，自然心无系念。无系念，即是解脱。经云：解脱即是如来，即是涅　。行者断不可自安劣小，以为此生决难办到。尤不可视他人亦是劣小，作此见者，是增上慢，即是不明净土，决定不得往生。	Even by holding other dharmas, one may attain accomplishment in the same way. Yet the power of one's vow toward the West must not be divided. When recitation reaches a single thought free of thought, this is called right mindfulness. When a single characteristic is without characteristics, this is called the true characteristic. Upon seeing the true characteristic, the mind naturally has no thoughts to which it is bound. Freedom from bound thoughts is liberation. The sūtra says: "Liberation is the Tathāgata; it is nirvāṇa." Practitioners must never content themselves with the inferior and lesser, thinking that this cannot possibly be accomplished in this lifetime. Still less may they regard others as inferior and lesser. To hold such a view is arrogance; it is not understanding the Pure Land, and one will certainly not attain rebirth.
念佛之法。初念，宜随众合念，音调应与众合。不必字字出声，应用息气法以调伏之，时时换气。休息时，心念仍属不断。第一，要与大众和合同声。	The method of Buddha-recitation: at the beginning, one should recite together with the assembly, and one's pitch should accord with theirs. There is no need to voice every character; use the method of breath to regulate and subdue the mind, changing the breath from time to time. During pauses, mental recitation should nevertheless remain uninterrupted. First, one must harmonize with the assembly and recite in one voice.
次则，与众念不如与少数人念，少数人念不如独念；念六字，不如念四字，念四字不如念一字。本来南无阿弥	Next, reciting with the assembly is not as good as reciting with a few people; reciting with a few

陀佛之本音，乃“南无阿米达菩大耶”(论理亦应传后再念，与持密不二)。所谓念一字者，即四字中重一字。	people is not as good as reciting alone. Reciting six characters is not as good as reciting four, and reciting four is not as good as reciting one. The original sound of Namo Amitābha Buddha is “Namo Amitābha Buddhāya” (in principle, it should be recited only after transmission; in this it is no different from holding an esoteric practice). To recite one character means to emphasize one character among the four.
如重一“陀”字，而得抽空以作观想，最为得力。又，念佛时间，切不可太长。以念念不断为上。最好念一刻钟，禅定一刻钟，轮流观念。今人以多数为胜，以声宏为高，终不辨功德为何物。	For example, emphasize the character tuo ( ), while leaving space for visualization; this is most effective. Moreover, the time spent in Buddha-recitation must not be too long. The highest approach is for each recitation to continue without interruption. It is best to recite for fifteen minutes and meditate for fifteen minutes, alternating visualization and recitation. People today consider large numbers superior and loud voices lofty, yet in the end do not understand what merit and virtue is.
妄将念佛功德，当作锡箔寄库存放，其诚愚不可及。今姑妄立一功德格曰：念佛至一分纯熟，即一分功德；十分受用，即十分功德；改去一分习气，即一分功德；改去十分习气，即十分功德。熟在自心，自心即是宝库。若云念至明心见性以为功德者，彼必惊怖不信。	They mistakenly treat the merit and virtue of Buddha-recitation as though it were tinfoil money deposited in a bank for storage; their foolishness is beyond compare. Let us provisionally establish a scale of merit and virtue: when Buddha-recitation has become familiar to the extent of one part, that is one part merit and virtue; when one receives the benefit to the extent of ten parts, that is ten parts merit and virtue; when one removes one part of habitual tendencies, that is one part merit and virtue; when one removes ten parts of habitual tendencies, that is ten parts merit and virtue. Familiarity lies within one’s own mind, and one’s own mind is precisely the treasury. If one were to say that reciting until realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature constitutes merit and virtue, people would surely be alarmed and refuse to believe it.
前云读经亦是念佛，故经书不可不参究。兹守定一《弥陀经》而参之。当将心地与文字合参，方得利益。姑举经中主要字眼，一一点出如下，与诸君一谈，或能悟及西方意境之微妙耳：	As stated earlier, reading sūtras is also a form of Buddha-remembrance; therefore, one cannot fail to study and investigate the scriptures. Let us now take the Amitābha Sūtra as our fixed text for inquiry. Only by examining the words in light of one’s own mind-ground can one gain benefit. I shall

	provisionally identify, one by one, the principal expressions in the sūtra and discuss them with you, that you may perhaps awaken to the subtle wonder of the realm of the Western Pure Land:
“从”——从者，指此世界而言。极乐国土，实在此土之西，以娑婆为本位。若娑婆更在极乐之西，则知极乐为东方矣。故不可执着极乐国土定在西方。	“From”—“from” refers to this world. The Land of Ultimate Bliss is indeed west of this land, taking Sahā as its point of reference. If Sahā lay further west of Ultimate Bliss, then Ultimate Bliss would be to the east. Therefore, one must not cling to the idea that the Land of Ultimate Bliss is fixed in the west.
“极乐”——极乐言无有众苦。此“苦”字，包括世间乐在内。以世间乐，终非究竟，仍归于苦。必苦乐皆尽，方名极乐。	“Ultimate Bliss”—Ultimate Bliss means that there is no suffering. This word “suffering” includes worldly pleasures, for worldly pleasures are ultimately not final and still return to suffering. Only when both suffering and pleasure are exhausted can it be called Ultimate Bliss.
“成就”——成就言圆满也。此指西方成就门，成就功德庄严也。	“Accomplished”—accomplished means complete. This refers to the gate of accomplishment in the West: the accomplishment of meritorious adornments.
“变化”——变化所作，非定指法音宣流，乃指彼土众生、心境亦各各随时变化，双方感应之不同耳。	“Transformations”—what is produced by transformation does not refer exclusively to the proclamation of Dharma sounds. It refers to how the sentient beings and mental environments of that land each change in accordance with the times; it is simply the difference in the mutual responses of the two sides.
“五根五力”等——三十七助道品，本当一一具足。乃此经只从五根起，可见前数种，修净土者，已无所用矣。	“The five faculties and five powers,” and so forth—one would ordinarily cultivate all thirty-seven aids to the Way. Yet this sūtra begins only with the five faculties, showing that the preceding categories are no longer needed by those who cultivate the Pure Land.
“自然”——言熏习之成就。其极乐意境，油然而生。	“Naturally”—this means the accomplishment of habituation. The disposition of Ultimate Bliss arises spontaneously.
“光明无量……”一段——表阿弥陀佛与十方法界众生，同此法体，故同一光明，同无障碍。弥陀不来而来，从生不去而去。如帝珠网，光光圆融，只是有迷觉明暗之别。故不得单指弥陀一面而言也。	The passage beginning “immeasurable light…” indicates that Amitābha Buddha and sentient beings throughout the Dharma realm in the ten directions share this same Dharma essence; therefore, they share the same light and are

	equally unobstructed. Amitābha neither comes and yet comes; sentient beings do not go and yet go. Like Indra's net of jewels, lights interpenetrate perfectly with lights; there is only the distinction between delusion and awakening, brightness and darkness. Therefore, this must not be spoken of as referring only to Amitābha on one side.
“寿命无量……”一段——与上同一意义。以不生不灭之如来藏性，无圣凡，无东西，无来去也。	The passage beginning “immeasurable life…” has the same meaning as above. In the Tathāgata-garbha nature, which neither arises nor ceases, there are no sages or ordinary beings, no east or west, no coming or going.
“应当发愿”——“应当”二字，何等郑重。今特劝告者三。	“One should make vows”—how solemn are these two words, “should make.” There are three particular exhortations here.
“不可以少善根福德因缘”——善根福德因缘，必具足而多，少则不成就也。	“Not with few good roots, blessings, virtues, causes, and conditions”—good roots, blessings, virtues, causes, and conditions must be abundant and complete; if they are few, accomplishment cannot be attained.
“若一日”至“七日”——有三义：（一）一日不成，至七日必成。（二）一日至七日中，不定于何日证入一心不乱。（三）一日至七日，日日皆如是。均指一心不乱而言。	“From one day” to “seven days”—this has three meanings: (1) if it is not accomplished in one day, it will certainly be accomplished by seven days; (2) sometime from the first through the seventh day, though one cannot know on which day, one realizes one-pointedness of mind without distraction; and (3) from one day through seven days, every day is thus. All refer to one-pointedness of mind without distraction.
“一心”——一心者，无心也。证至无生，已无可乱之物，自然一心不乱。若定执一心，以为心，此一心仍可执以颠倒。故曰：一念无念，斯名正念。	“One mind”—one mind means no mind. Upon realizing the unborn, there is no longer anything that can be disturbed; naturally there is one-pointedness of mind without distraction. If one rigidly grasps at one mind as mind, this one mind can still be clung to and turned upside down. Therefore it is said: “When one thought is no thought, this is called right mindfulness.”
“所护念经”——应注意此经，是否指《弥陀经》。若专指此文字《弥陀经》，则佛未说此经以前，十方诸佛所护念者为何经乎?	“The sūtra protected and kept in mind”—we should consider whether this sūtra refers to the Amitābha Sūtra. If it refers exclusively to the written Amitābha Sūtra, then before the Buddha had spoken this

	sūtra, what sūtra did the Buddhas of the ten directions protect and keep in mind?
“已发愿，今发愿，当发愿。若已生，若今生，若当生”——此言发愿时，即与往生不异。因此心量，绝无障碍。	“Those who have already made vows, now make vows, or will make vows; those who have already been born, are now born, or will be born”—this means that at the time vows are made, one is no different from one who has attained rebirth. This is because the capacity of mind has absolutely no obstruction.
“见浊”——五浊中以此浊为最难除。因众生一切颠倒，皆从我见起，是诸病之根，百魔之首。但众生偏不信此见为浊见也。	“The turbidity of views”—among the five turbidities, this turbidity is the hardest to remove. For all the inversions of sentient beings arise from the view of self; it is the root of all illnesses and the chief of a hundred demons. Yet sentient beings are particularly unwilling to believe that this view is a turbid view.
“难信之法”——难信者，（一）疑西方有如是功德庄严而惊怖，故难信。（二）疑临终时弥陀化身接引无望，故难信。（三）疑自己小根劣慧不能成佛，故难信。（四）刚强众生，难调难伏，故难信。（五）不知自己同是毗卢佛性，虽痛切告之而不信，故难信。	“A Dharma difficult to believe”—it is difficult to believe for five reasons: (1) people doubt that the Western Pure Land possesses such meritorious adornments and are alarmed by this, so they find it difficult to believe; (2) they fear that Amitābha’s manifestation body will not come to receive them at death, so they find it difficult to believe; (3) they doubt that, given what they see as their limited capacities and wisdom, they can become Buddhas, so they find it difficult to believe; (4) obstinate sentient beings are difficult to tame and subdue, so they find it difficult to believe; and (5) they do not know that they themselves share the nature of Vairocana Buddha, and though this is urgently explained to them, they do not believe it, so they find it difficult to believe.
“作礼而去”——他经末句，多言“信受奉行”，此则言“作礼而去”。此“去”字，乃指心向往之之意。此表当时听者，皆已发愿。若已生，若今生，若当生也。	“They paid homage and departed”—the final sentence of other sūtras usually says, “They faithfully accepted and put it into practice,” whereas this one says, “They paid homage and departed.” The word “departed” means that their minds aspired toward it. This shows that all the listeners at that time had already made vows: those already born, now being born, or yet to be born.
以上释经文中之应参究者竟。	This concludes the explanation of those points in the sūtra text that should be investigated.

再言经文次第如下：	Let us further discuss the sequence of the sūtra text as follows:
一、弥陀经文体裁，只佛独说，无有问答。足证当时闻者皆已深信不疑，凡在法会，都入成就境界。	1. The Amitābha Sūtra is in the form of the Buddha speaking alone, without questions and answers. This sufficiently proves that all who heard it at that time already had deep and unwavering faith; everyone present at the Dharma assembly had entered the state of accomplishment.
二、此经独发执持名号一法门。为末世众生修净土者，得方便依据。	2. This sūtra uniquely presents the Dharma gate of holding to the Buddha's name. It provides a convenient basis for latter-day sentient beings who cultivate the Pure Land.
三、此经单表西方为成就门。故大日即是弥陀，一门即是普门。	3. This sūtra presents the West alone as the gate of accomplishment. Therefore, Mahāvairocana is Amitābha, and one gate is the universal gate.
四、此经最重“信愿”二字。特表难信之法，而说当发愿者三。	4. This sūtra gives greatest weight to the two words “faith and vows.” It specifically presents this as a Dharma difficult to believe and gives three exhortations that vows should be made.
五、此经由娑婆初发心者，至往生极乐止，层层引导，秩序井然。约之如后：（一）点明西方极乐世界，其土有佛，号阿弥陀。（二）说明彼土有相功德庄严，以为引导。	5. This sūtra guides those who first arouse the resolve in Sahā, stage by stage, until they attain rebirth in Ultimate Bliss; its order is impeccably clear. In brief: (1) it identifies the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss and states that there is a Buddha there named Amitābha. (2) It explains the meritorious adornments of that land's characteristics in order to provide guidance.
（三）由有相庄严，引入无相功德，使其自然发生念佛念法念僧之心。（四）点到光明无量，寿命无量诸要点。（五）表明众生生者，皆当具阿　跋致之资格。且必修至与诸上善人，同一意境，才能俱会一处。	(3) From adorned characteristics, it leads into formless merit and virtue, allowing the mind of Buddha-remembrance, Dharma-remembrance, and Saṅgha-remembrance to arise naturally. (4) It points out such essential matters as immeasurable light and immeasurable life. (5) It shows that all sentient beings who are reborn there must possess the qualification of nonretrogression. Moreover, they must cultivate until they share the same disposition as the many supreme good people before they can assemble together in one place.
此“俱”字，最为重要。（六）指示执持名号法。（七）不独口持，必须心念，至一心不乱。（八）恐众生偏执西方，不解十方圆融之义，故说东方亦有佛等	This word “together” is most important. (6) It indicates the method of holding to the Name. (7) One must not merely hold it with the mouth; one

等。（九）表示十方诸佛，皆同此护念。（十）表示愿力宏大，一发愿，即属往生。（十一）说此经为世间难信之法。特表五“难”字。（十二）最后表欢喜信受者，皆得究竟往生去。	must also remember it in the mind, until one-pointedness of mind without distraction is attained. (8) Fearing that sentient beings might cling exclusively to the West and not understand the meaning of the perfect interpenetration of the ten directions, it says that there are also Buddhas in the East, and so forth. (9) It shows that all the Buddhas of the ten directions share this protection and mindfulness. (10) It shows the greatness of vow-power: once vows are made, one already belongs among those attaining rebirth. (11) It says that this sūtra is a Dharma difficult for the world to believe, specifically emphasizing five instances of the word “difficult.” (12) Finally, it shows that all who joyfully, faithfully accept it will certainly attain ultimate rebirth.
上来略述经义竟。	The foregoing has been a brief account of the meaning of the sūtra.
读经者，欲求文字上之精深解义，则阅圆瑛法师之讲义最为明了畅达。但须将上述之先决条件，认识清楚。愿大众努力精进，共证无上菩提。	Those who read the sūtra and wish to seek profound interpretations of its words should consult Chan Master Yuanying’s lectures, which are most lucid and fluent. Yet they must first clearly understand the prerequisites set forth above. May everyone diligently advance and together realize unsurpassed bodhi.
南无阿弥陀佛。	Namo Amitābha Buddha.
附录：	Appendix:
省元上人往生偈言	A Rebirth Verse by Venerable Xingyuan
我今发愿生西，痛切如丧考妣。	I now make the vow to be born in the West, with grief as piercing as though I had lost my parents.
生西何待商量，早把资粮办起。	Why deliberate over rebirth in the West? Prepare your provisions at once.
成就如是功德，一切全赖心地。	The accomplishment of such merit and virtue depends entirely on the mind-ground.
若求外缘佛引，劣慧妄计便宜。	If one seeks the Buddha’s guidance through external conditions, inferior wisdom vainly calculates convenience.
惟有一心不乱，先明根尘缘起。	Only through one-pointedness of mind without distraction should one first understand the dependent arising of faculties and objects.

心既了无觅处，当下即证菩提。	Once the mind is utterly without a place to seek, one realizes bodhi directly, here and now.
念佛念至无念，定慧自发元机。	Recite the Buddha’s name until it is free of deliberate thought, and the innate workings of samādhi and wisdom will naturally emerge.
西方十方不二，一门普门何异。	The West and the ten directions are nondual; how does one gate differ from the universal gate?
法法皆是净土，乐小法者不知。	All dharmas are Pure Land; those who delight in lesser dharmas do not know this.
愿各精进勿退，当来决定生西。	May each of you diligently advance without retreat; in the future you will certainly be born in the West.
作参谒省元大师于拈花寺，前后十数次，相谈至契。师常以禅理相助。余顿有所发，益加奋勉，皇皇如丧考妣焉。余自十八年随大愚阿阇黎修心中心法，蒙示禅密合参之理，益信净土法门之微妙。	When I paid visits to Master Xingyuan at Nianhua Temple, on more than ten occasions before and after, our conversations were deeply congenial. The Master often assisted me with Chan principles. I suddenly gained insight and became ever more diligent and earnest, anxious as though I had lost my parents. Since the eighteenth year, I have followed Acharya Dayu in cultivating the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, and have received instruction in the principle of jointly investigating Chan and Esoteric Buddhism. I have thereby come to believe even more deeply in the subtle wonder of the Pure Land Dharma gate.
盖约持名言六字本为密咒，约观想言，不乱即属禅定。是离禅密，即无净土。而净土又总摄禅密之妙。若净密双修而印以禅理，成就之大，岂可思议。此理世人信者实少，甚或疑怖，谤为魔说，不忍道也。	In terms of holding the Name, the six characters are fundamentally an esoteric mantra; in terms of visualization, freedom from distraction belongs to meditative stability. Thus, apart from Chan and Esoteric Buddhism, there is no Pure Land; and the Pure Land in turn comprehensively encompasses the wonders of Chan and Esoteric Buddhism. If one cultivates both Pure Land and Esoteric Buddhism and confirms them through Chan principles, the greatness of the accomplishment is beyond conception. Very few people in the world truly believe this principle; some are even suspicious and alarmed, slandering it as the words of demons. It is painful to speak of.
近代诸师，其慈心化导，亦不让古人，惜识机者少。能察机而以禅净双助如省师者，不易得也。省师以一通儒	The masters of recent times have been no less compassionate than the ancients in teaching and guiding others, but regrettably few can recognize

而入佛门，带角之虎，得力自大，三十年前早已桶底脱落，于法语中，得见其平生气力。	people's capacities. Those who can discern capacities and assist with both Chan and Pure Land, like Master Xingyuan, are not easily found. Master Xingyuan entered the Buddhist gate as a learned Confucian; like a tiger with horns, his strength was naturally great. More than thirty years ago, the bottom of his bucket had already dropped out. One can see the power of his whole life in his Dharma words.
今于去时，忽留禅净融通之理，与大众结缘，其不欲世人执一味药以自误焉明矣。壬癸之交，余应南方诸仁之请说法于沪上及宁硖各地，余亦以融通各宗为旨，于说阿弥陀心要之次，得省师寂去之耗，遂集所谈，用以追念省师。曰惟老实念佛，以报省师一言知已而已。	Now, at the time of his departure, he unexpectedly left behind this principle of harmonizing Chan and Pure Land, forming karmic affinities with the assembly. It is clear that he did not wish people of the world to cling to a single medicine and thereby harm themselves. At the juncture of the ren and gui years, at the invitation of various benevolent people in the south, I taught the Dharma in Shanghai, Nanjing, and elsewhere. I too took the integration of the various traditions as my guiding purpose. While expounding the essential meaning of Amitābha, I received news of Master Xingyuan's passing. I therefore gathered together what I had discussed in order to commemorate Master Xingyuan. It is called "Simply Recite the Buddha's Name Honestly," merely to repay Master Xingyuan for a single word of understanding me.
古监官王骧陆志于印心精舍。	Recorded by Wang Xianglu, a former judicial official, at Mind-Seal Vihara.