

## **Zhang Zai, The “Western Inscription”**

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.

Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.

The great ruler is the eldest son of my parents, and the great ministers are his stewards. Respect the aged -- this is the way to treat them as elders should be treated. The sage identifies his character with that of Heaven and Earth, and the worthy is the most outstanding man. Even those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to.

When the time comes, to keep himself from harm -- this is the care of son. To rejoice in Heaven and to have no anxiety -- this is filial piety at its purest.

He who disobeys [the Principle of Heaven] violates virtue. He who destroys humanity is a robber. He who promotes evil lacks [moral] capacity. But he who puts his moral nature into practice and brings his physical existence into complete fulfillment can match [Heaven and Earth].

One who knows the principle of transformation will skillfully carry forward the undertaking [of Heaven and Earth], and one who penetrates spirit to the highest degree will skillfully carry out their will.

Do nothing shameful in the recesses of your own house and thus bring no dishonor to them. Preserve the mind and nourish the nature, and thus serve them with untiring effort.

The great Yu hated pleasant wine but attended to the protection and support of his parents. Border Warden Ying brought up and educated the young and thus extended his love to his own kind.

Shun's merit lay in delighting his parents with unceasing effort, and Shensheng's reverence was demonstrated when he waited for punishment without making an attempt to escape.

Zeng Shen received his body from his parents and reverently kept it intact throughout life, while Boqi vigorously obeyed his father's command.

Wealth, honor, blessing, and benefits are meant for the enrichment of my life, while poverty, humble station, worries and sorrow are meant to help me to fulfillment.

In life I follow and serve [Heaven and Earth]. In death I will be at peace.