

thou candidate for woe throughout the cycles.

[179] The Path is one, disciple, yet in the end, twofold. Marked are its stages by four and seven Portals. At one end — bliss immediate, and at the other — bliss deferred. Both are of merit the reward: the choice is thine.

[180] The one becomes the two, the Open and the Secret. The first one leadeth to the goal, the second, to Self-immolation.

[181] When to the Permanent is sacrificed the mutable, the prize is thine: the drop returneth whence it came. The Open Path leads to the changeless change — Nirvana, the glorious state of Absoluteness, the Bliss past human thought.

#### **B. COMMENT.**

Verse 173 tells us that treading the Path is a long and arduous journey, not an easy shortcut. Just wanting to reach the end of our quest does not bring us to it. Yet, as the Tao Te Ching says, the longest journey begins with the first step. So we must begin if we are ever to arrive. This verse also, however, promises that no one who wants to undertake the quest is ever refused.

Verses 174-176 tell us that no effort made on this journey is ever in vain. Every effort to advance on that Path will produce its effect. Verse 174 points out the obvious fact that we will either win or fall in this task. If we win, we will have our due reward; if we fall, the experience has not been a failure, for whatever we have achieved, however little or great it may be, will carry over to our next life and become the foundation for a renewed effort then. These verses are reminiscent of the ending of H.P.B.'s memorable statement "There Is a Road": "For those who win onward, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and save humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come."

These verses also use and explain the metaphor of a battle, which is a very frequent alternative to the metaphor of a journey. The battle is, of course, an interior one, a conflict between aspects of ourselves. So gloss 32 explains that the "living" and the "dead," between whom the battle is fought, are both ourselves: Gloss 32. The "living" is the immortal higher Ego, and the "dead" — the lower personal ego.