

# THE IMPERIAL EDICT OF EMPEROR YONG ZHENG

ITS RELEVANCE TO  
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION



CHIN KUNG



**THE IMPERIAL EDICT OF  
EMPEROR YONG ZHENG**

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

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**The Corporation Republic of Hwa Dzan Society**  
2F, No.333-1, Sec 4, Hsin Yi Road, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.  
Tel: 886-2-2754-7178 Fax: 886-2-2754-7262  
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Printed in Taiwan  
1000 Copies; 2010 November  
HZ50-13-01

# THE IMPERIAL EDICT OF EMPEROR YONG ZHENG

I (Emperor Yong Zheng) think all the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) have the capacity to help people be enlightened in China because all Three Teachings derive from the same original source. Their teachings run parallel to each other, thus they do not contradict each other. It is only when people do not have thorough understanding that their minds become unclear and they have differences of opinion. The Taoists think Taoism is better and Buddhism is less esteemed. The Buddhists say Taoism is not as great as Buddhism. The Confucians exclude them both and claim they are not correct. Each of them has only self-interest in mind. Thus they contradict and compete with each other, each aiming to dominate over the other two. But they only find themselves in a tight contest.

Through practising the discourse of the Three Teachings, I come to realize they are equally good, even though on the surface they appear to be different, the nature of their principles is the same. They all have the same purpose in mind teaching and encouraging people to be good. The Buddha's teachings of the 'Five Precepts' and the 'Ten Virtuous Conducts' lead people to goodness. The Confucian teachings of the 'Five Moral Conducts and One Hundred Ways' also induce, give incentive, and persuade people to be good. Is there any sacred teaching that does not lead people to do the same?

Emperor Liu-Song Wendi once made a comment to his personal staff member Shang Zhih He that the Six Books of Chinese Classics are to educate the mass population. However, if one hopes to elevate one's spiritual realm, one must use the Buddhist scriptures as the guide. If all my people

can adhere to the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism and become honest, down-to-earth, and good-natured, the country will be at peace and I will have nothing more to worry about.

Shang Zhih He replied that if ten people in a village of one hundred families abide by the Five Precepts, we will have ten people who are friendly, kind, honest, cautious, and respectful. In a region of one thousand families, if one hundred people abide by the Ten Good Conducts, we will have one hundred people live in harmony. If we apply this same principle to the whole nation where we may have a hundred million of households, we will have millions of virtuous people living in harmony. If we can practise one good conduct, one less evil will be committed. One less evil conduct means the elimination of one punishment. If each family reduces the crime rate by one, we can eliminate thousands and thousands of punishments. Yes, indeed, the country will then be in peace and your

Highness can sit on your throne without any worry.

This is also the goal of Buddhism – to eradicate greed and miserliness and to induce virtues and kindness in people. If we believe in the words of Emperor Liu-Song Wendi and Shang Zhih He, and are able to practise good conduct accordingly, we can set a good example for others to follow and teach and guide the people in establishing good customs. Thus they can assist the Emperor in governing the country and in helping the people.

If we wantonly defame the Three Teachings and compare them to the absurd and heretic teachings of Yang Zi and Mo Zi, we have misunderstood and are being unfair to the Three Teachings. Before I became the Emperor, I paid close attention to Buddhism, especially the Xing Buddhism, of which I have gained an in-depth understanding. After I became the Emperor, I have devoted much of my time to the Royal Imperial Court.



Also I did not want people to think that I was partial to Buddhism. Thus I did not discuss this with anyone. I wanted to wait until the country was on track before broaching the issue. I wanted to draw attention to the doctrine of the Three Teachings that it is wrong to praise oneself and slander others. Now I have been Emperor for ten years. In my spare time, I was able to compile a list of my viewpoints and note the thoughts of the ancient scholars for those who are currently following the Three Teachings.

1. The ancient people said Zhou Gong and Confucius used the Six Books of Chinese Classics to educate the people. The heart of the purpose of this education was loyalty and filial piety. The topics of the two volumes by Lao-tzu are the 'way' and the 'virtues'. The basis of the three divisions of the Buddhist Canon is loving-kindness. Their achievements may be different, their principles are the same. All of them are noble teachings and deserve to be admired.

2. They also said that Confucianism had established itself as the right teaching. Taoism had established itself as the most esteemed. Buddhism had established itself as the greatest. However, the message of all three is to preserve lives and abstain from killing. They work from the same principle of loving-kindness. They all advocate treating others as one would treat oneself. Again, they all advocate impartiality. They all want people to stop being angry, to eliminate improper desires, to restrict themselves from doing wrong things and improper behaviours. They all promote the cultivation of virtuous conduct.

3. They also said that the teachings of Buddhism can cure our minds, the teachings of Taoism can cure our bodies, and the teachings of Confucianism can cure the world.

4. They also said that the term 'nature' used by

Buddha has the same meaning as when defined by all the other books and all the recorded teachings of the saints and sages. Broadly speaking, Buddha-nature encompasses all the virtues. If people's hearts are sincere, if they all live pure and disciplined lives, if they all give precedence to courtesy to other people, not only they but their relatives will be benefited. They can help the emperor stabilise the country.

5. They also said that the Buddha Way and the Sovereign Way are one and the same. The Sovereign Way is extremely broad. It is the same as the Middle Way. The Buddha Way is also the Middle Way which is unbiased and virtuous. Their purposes are identical.

6. They also said that Buddhism was established to help people stop from being superficial and be practical. It also helps people to refrain from all their deviant ways and be good. People may

have to try very hard at the beginning but, once they accustom themselves to virtuous conduct, they will act accordingly. If they so practise, they will first be benefited. Then they will be able to help others to do the same. Thus people need rely on nothing more than just Buddhism.

7. They also said that Buddhism is not of this world because its teachings do not apply to people living in the secular world. That comment was made without reference to Buddha's Six Paramitas. For example, from the stage of mastering deep concentration to reach the other shore (attaining wisdom), is this not the learning of this world before moving on to the next?

8. They also said that there are no two ways and the saints do not have two minds. The 'Way' (course of nature) has been in existence before the world is formed. The saints first cure themselves with the truth they have gained from practising the

'Way'. Then they can apply the same truth to help govern the country and bring peace to the nation. Is this not a great deed!

Thus those saints may be born in China, in the West, or else where. Even though they are born in different places, if they have truly attained the 'Way', their minds should be the same. Since the eight items listed above are based on the teachings of the saints, there should be no difference of opinion.

Even though each of the Three Teachings specialises in its own respective area of curing the mind, the body or the world, apparently they also have their shortcomings. Thus they complement each other and become equally important. We cannot do without any one of them.

Even those who claim to be studying Buddhism and Taoism are sometimes biased and not

exactly correct; and not every one of those who study Confucianism is a true practitioner. For instance, some Buddhist practitioners deceive the public by their eccentric interpretations of the word 'emptiness'. Some Taoist practitioners fool people with their heretic skills. They are all guilty of violating their respective teachings. Many who have read extensively of the *Book of Poetry* talk about loving-kindness and personal loyalty and yet behave otherwise. They are just as guilty of cheating the public.

If we ignore other people's strong points but denounce their shortcomings, if we purposely disguise our shortcomings, instead over-exaggerating our good points, and if we wilfully try to blacken other people's good names, these are signs of our being selfish and treacherous. This is not what a person of noble character and integrity ought to do. These people have over-estimated their strength and abilities.

During the past few years, I was asked to ban people from ordaining themselves, and to turn Buddhist and Taoist temples into academies of classical learning so they would then belong to the Confucians. There were county magistrates who threw the monks and nuns out of their temples for no reason. There were even people who asked me to match the monks and nuns into couples for the purpose of propagation so population could be increased. Those kinds of propositions are absurd and cause unrest to the country. Their proponents have not given a thought to the fact that it is their country's responsibility to help those who are widowed and those who are alone. Since it is their choice to be monks and nuns, it is their intent to cultivate themselves and to accumulate good fortune for the country and its people. A noble emperor or ruler would not ask them to resume a secular life and to get married for such a trivial reason. Since people who make those propositions

are extremely ignorant and still very young, I am not going to punish them for their absurdities.

As for those left-home persons (Buddhist monks, nuns, and Taoist priests) who have violated the law, they will be punished accordingly. But to those ascetics who have adhered strictly to the teachings we must give our full protection and support. Those who preach heretical teachings must be severely punished. For example, the recorded writings of Dao Min and Xing Feng are preposterous. The teachings of Fa Cang and Hong Ren are the savage teachings of the devil. I will have them punished. We must not let their theories blend with and tarnish the right teachings. Otherwise it will become impossible for the people to tell the difference.

I have thoroughly explored the original source of the Three Teachings and I know they need to be treated fairly. I want those people – Buddhists and



Taoists who have only their personal interests in mind, those who are opinionated and partial to their own beliefs, thus losing their sense of fairness – to wake up and be aware of these sobering facts. I am making this announcement to enlighten those who are ignorant.

This is the imperial edict to all the civil, military, and court officials to give special attention to the protection and support of the left-home persons. This is to be governed by selfless actions and good intentions.



The Edict of Emperor Yong Zheng

**THE IMPERIAL EDICT OF  
EMPEROR YONG ZHENG  
ITS RELEVANCE TO MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

The content of this article is an abridged version of a series of eight lectures given by Venerable Master Chin Kung in Toowoomba, Australia in 2004. The lectures were based on an imperial edict written by Emperor Yong Zheng during his reign (1723-1735) in the Qing Dynasty. This edict, which is contained in the Collection of Taoist Scriptures, is used in reference to the modern-day multicultural education.

The first paragraph of the edict is as follows: **“I (Emperor Yong Zheng) think all the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) have the capacity to help people be enlightened in China because all Three Teachings derive from the same original source. Their teachings run parallel**

**to each other, thus they do not contradict each other. It is only when people do not have thorough understanding that their minds become unclear and they have differences of opinion. The Taoists think Taoism is better and Buddhism is less esteemed. The Buddhists say Taoism is not as great as Buddhism. The Confucians exclude them both and claim they are not correct. Each of them has only self-interest in mind. Thus they contradict and compete with each other, each aiming to dominate over the other two. But they only find themselves in a tight contest.”**

In this paragraph, Emperor Yong Zheng pointed out how the Three Teachings in China contradict each other, only to find themselves more-or-less equal in strength. In the time since the edict was issued, the situation has not improved but has worsened. It is no longer just the Three Teachings disagreeing among themselves. The different denominations within each of the Three Teachings

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now also find themselves in opposition to each other. For example, when Buddhism first came to China in the Sui and Tang Dynasties about 1500 years ago, ten schools of Buddhism were founded based on the various teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. The followers of all ten were all students of Shakyamuni Buddha. It is similar to a modern university that has ten schools. Within each school there are various departments. Each department is then divided into many major areas of study.

The fact that Buddhism has ten schools does not alter the fact that the teachings of each of the schools, though different, are still the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. All their students are students of the Buddha. Among all the different practising methods taught by Shakyamuni Buddha, the students may choose only one method to practise.

Since we have the same teacher, how can we not keep an open dialogue with all the other de-

partments and schools? It is like giving birth to ten children. If all ten children oppose one another, only praise themselves and slander the others, how terribly hurt the parents must feel. If we do not remain in contact with each other, if we only praise ourselves and slander the others, we are not being filial children to our parents, nor are we being respectful to our teachers. This deficiency deserves our close attention.

Buddha Shakyamuni taught us that no matter which school or denomination we belong to, all Buddhist teachings are based on the principle of being filial to our parents, and being of service to our teachers and elders. This is the foundation of Buddha's teachings. On the other hand, the Confucians put emphasis on moral conduct, primarily the five moral conducts called "Wu Chang": kind-heartedness, responsibilities and duties, proper etiquette, wisdom, and trustworthiness. The Buddhists abide by the Five Precepts: to not kill,

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steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie or take intoxicants. The precept of no killing can be equated to kind-heartedness, which means one must not harm any living being. If we cause conflicts among others we are wrong. We have wronged these living beings. We have fallen short of our teachers' as well as our parents' expectations.

Religious teachings are the teachings of saints and sages. Emperor Yong Zheng said it well. He said the purpose of all the Three Teachings in China was to help people break through their delusions and be enlightened, to help them leave their miseries and to reach for happiness. Thus the goal of the teachings is exactly the same. It is also the goal of education in China. The Three Teachings may be deep in their meanings but they are not in conflict with each other. The fact is that not only the Three Teachings that have their goals set on helping people to break through delusions and be enlightened, to leave their miseries and to reach for happiness –

all the religious founders and leaders in the world, figures like Jesus Christ and Moses in the Christian faith and Muhammed in the Islamic faith, have this same goal in mind. They all want their followers to be enlightened and to lead happy and fulfilled lives.

If Emperor Yong Zheng were not an enlightened person, he would not be able to make these statements. Thus being enlightened, Emperor Yong Zheng was able to pay equal respect to all Three Teachings, to learn from and benefit from them. However, most people today do not have enough understanding of the Three Teachings, whether Taoism, Confucianism or Buddhism. If we take a tree as an example, it is like a tree with different branches. Branches may be different but they are all grown from the same tree. Thus there should be no conflict and contradictions among religions. If we are in conflict, it is because we have not delved deeply enough into our studies.



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Once we have delved deeply enough into our studies, we will come to realize that they are the same. Their truths derive from the same original source. This original source is the truth. There is only one truth. Sometimes we refer to this truth as God. There is only one God in this universe. In Buddhism we refer to Dharma Nature. The source, the origin, the Dharma Nature – they mean the same. All conflicts and misunderstandings are caused by not having delved deeply enough into the teachings. That is why Emperor Yong Zheng said the Three Teachings run parallel to each other – because they are very similar.

It is indeed unfortunate that due to the lack of thorough understanding of the Three Teachings, people cannot be enlightened. They cannot comprehend the truth of their origin. In Buddhism we refer to it as the state of being fully enlightened. The Confucian teachings say that people's original

self-nature was pure goodness. The two concepts mean the same. Then why do we need Three Teachings? Why do we have so many religions in this world? It is because people are different, thus they must be taught accordingly. Some people choose to adopt Taoism. Some people follow Buddha. Some follow Jesus Christ. All good teachers, whether in the East or West, know that each student is different and unique. For the students to be benefited, they must be taught by methods that are most suitable for them.

Even though the method of teaching and the course study may differ, all the sacred teachings should lead us to the same truth. In Buddhism we will reach enlightenment. Confucianism helps us to achieve pure goodness of conduct. This pure goodness is not the same goodness as the one found in the binary relationship of good and evil; rather, it is the original goodness of one's self-nature. Therefore, the state of pure goodness is

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the enlightened self-nature. Since the goal of all the teachings of the saints and sages is to reach that original pure goodness, it is very important that we have thorough understanding of all the sacred teachings or we will find ourselves in conflict with others. This applies to all worldly concepts as well. It is only when our minds are deluded that we start to differentiate, attach to our own beliefs, and thus create our own conflicts.

Since all people have a mind of their own, their minds wander, differentiate and attach to different things. Thus they will have differences of opinion. As a result, the Taoists say that Taoism is number one. The other two teachings are not as esteemed. The Buddhist practitioners declare that Buddha is the greatest because his mind encompasses the whole universe; therefore, Buddhism is greater than the other two. The Confucians exclude both Buddhism and Taoism as not being accurate. All Three Teachings strive for their fame, popularity

and for self-gain. Consequently they find themselves in a tight contest with each other.

Therefore, we must thoroughly understand the teachings before they can help us resolve our problems. Only through understanding will we find the origin of all knowledge. There we will not find opposition or conflict. The universe is in harmony. In Buddhism we speak of when “suddenly we see our self-nature in a clear light”. So how thoroughly do we need to understand the teachings before we can “suddenly see our self-nature in a clear light”? It is when we no longer differentiate between or attach to things – when we see all things being equal. We no longer have differences of opinion or see things differently.

Before we reach this stage of thorough understanding, our minds work differently, we think differently, and we act differently. This is how our karmas are created. This process causes our trans-

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migration in the six realms. Then it becomes obvious how the Three Teachings are in conflict with each other. This is what has been happening since ancient times.

When Emperor Yong Zheng spoke about how he “suddenly sees his self-nature in a clear light”, he was not just referring to the thorough understanding of our own selected teachings, but to the thorough understanding of all the world’s religions and teachings. It is with sincerity and reverence that we learn from all the sacred teachings. Everyone can be our teacher. We should emulate the goodness in others and reflect ourselves on their evils. Thus all people, no matter if they are good or evil, are our teachers. It is not important whether our circumstances are favourable or adverse, they are the chances given to us to sharpen our learning and practising skills. This is how people should learn and practise so eventually they will also be able to “suddenly see their self-nature in a clear light”.

This is the value of thoroughly understanding all the teachings. Selfish motives are always taboo to our learning process. All evils and oppositions come from hearts that harbour only self-interests. If this is the standard upon which people base their actions, they will always dispute those who stand in their way. What are people's self interests? They are nothing more than fame, popularity, and perceived benefits such as satisfying the five desires (wealth, sex, fame, food/drink, and sleep) and the six gunas or dusts (sensual qualities i.e. sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea).

Not realizing that fame, popularity and wealth are inconstant, people do not adhere to moral principles. If we do not understand the Law of Cause and Effect (what goes around comes around), out of our ignorance we will create many evils. Emperor Yong Zheng recognized that this was happening and felt regretful. After we read his edict,

we feel the same way. We need to correct our ways of thinking. The purpose of our existence here in this world is to elevate our spiritual realm. In other words, we should break through our delusions and be enlightened. Only then will we be able to leave our misery and to attain happiness. It is a natural process, one we can all attain in time.

**“Through practising the discourse of the Three Teachings, I come to realize they are equally good, even though on the surface they appear to be different, the nature of their principles is the same. They all have the same purpose in mind. They all teach and encourage people to be good. The Buddha’s teachings of the ‘Five Precepts’ and the ‘Ten Virtuous Conducts’ lead people to goodness. The Confucian teachings of the ‘Five Moral Conducts and One Hundred Ways’ also induce, give incentive, and persuade people to be good. Is there any sacred teaching that does not lead people to do the same?”**

Here Emperor Yong Zheng made his evaluation of the Three Teachings. He concluded that the Three Teachings are about equality. Equality is the 'Way', the principle of nature. Nature in motion is unbiased. In Buddhism, "all things derive from the mind". In Mahayana Buddhism, Buddha comes from the heart or the mind that is unbiased. Thus this unbiased mind is the true mind, the Bodhi Mind (the enlightened mind). Bodhisattvas are born out of minds of the six paramitas (six elements that carry one beyond the sea of mortality to nirvana – such as be charitable, abide by the precepts, be tolerant, be diligent, master deep concentration, and attain wisdom). Pratyeka-buddhas are born from the mind that has attained individual enlightenment, in contrast to the altruism of the Bodhisattva principle. Sound-hearers and Arhats are born from the mind that has attained the Four Noble Truths (the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism that will lead to the end of one's transmigration through



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the recognition of one's suffering, its cause, its ending and the 'Way'). The lower six realms include the heaven realm of 'Ten Virtuous Conducts', the human realm of the 'Five Precepts', the animal realm of ignorance, the hungry ghost realm of greed, and the hell realm of anger. The karmic reasons that cause these ten Dharma Realms are very profound.

Emperor Yong Zheng then continued with how he viewed these differences with an unbiased mind, **“even though on the surface they (the Three Teachings) appear to be different, the nature of their principles is the same”**. When differences seem to exist, we should try to find their similarities. We should first enhance and glorify these similarities and then leave the differences in temporary suspension. For the time being, we need not even discuss them. This is the right attitude we use in studying and cultivating ourselves. The reason we see differences is probably due to our lack of understanding. After all, the differences between the

various religious teachings are merely in their formalities, rules and regulations. Once we have in-depth understanding of these teachings, we will no longer see contradictions or conflicts. The principle behind this theory and practice is indeed very profound.

When we take a closer look at the world's religions, we observe that their history, culture, their followers' lifestyles and habits are all different. This gives us more reason to respect the differences in others. We are all human. We all have our own preferences. We should not criticise one as being inferior to the others. We also need to respect each other's habits. This is how we live together in harmony. Thus we need to respect our different outer appearances in formalities, rules and regulations. We must help to preserve all these differences and we must not change people's ways of doing things. This is their tradition.

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Thus culture is diversified. Just look at our own bodies – they are multicultural as well. The eyes can see. The ears can hear. The function of the eyes cannot be substituted by that of the ears or the other way around. Our planet Earth needs all its living beings being here. None should be destroyed. The different nationalities, religions, and cultures are like different organs of our bodies. They are equally important. We need them all.

Similarly with regard to health considerations, each of our organs is number one. Our eyes are number one, as are our ears, our nose, our tongue etc. They are all number one. For the same reason, all living beings on this planet are number one. If our planet subscribes to having number two, three etc, it will become ill. Thus all countries, regardless of big or small, rich or poor, esteemed or lowly, are all equal. All nationalities, religions, and cultures are number one. The reason there are similarities and differences is that people are still in different

phases of development. Once we attain perfect understanding, there is no more similarity or difference. Our minds become one – pure, unbiased, and enlightened.

Similarities and differences are binary. Only when our minds have no more conflicts are we in touch with our true self-nature. Then we become fully awakened. Our conduct turns into pure goodness. This point of view is based on the principle of their teachings. Now let us take a look at their practices.

Emperor Yong Zheng continued, **“They all have the same purpose in mind. They all teach and encourage people to be good”**. From the recorded scriptures of various religions, we can trace the point of origin of all the teachings to “love”. In Buddhism, we speak of loving-kindness. Loving-kindness is the foundation of Buddhism. The teaching method we use may differ depending on

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what is most suitable for the practitioner. In Christianity and its branches, such as Catholicism, it is said that “God loves all people”. This word “love” has the same connotation as the term “loving-kindness” used in Buddhism.

This kind of love is rational. It is unbiased, pure and sincere. The Koran says “Allah is indeed merciful”. Thus, in the recorded scriptures of various religions, we can find their common objective. Kindness and indiscriminating love are the common objective of all the world religions. They all have the same goal – to help people leave their pain and suffering behind and to strive for happiness and to be perfectly good.

Emperor Yong Zheng then gave us a few examples. For instance, he said that Buddhism teaches people to practise the ‘Five Precepts’ and the ‘Ten Virtuous Conducts’, which are the fundamental requirements for being a good person, and

that we must practise them accordingly. The 'Five Precepts' taught by Shakyamuni Buddha are equivalent to the 'Five Moral Conducts' taught by Confucius. All Three Teachings abide by the same conducts. They persuade people and give people incentives to stop doing evil and be good. All the world religions – without exception – try to do the same. If not, these religions could not be spread throughout the world. All religions have to transcend the international, the national, and the cultural before they can be propagated throughout the world. Their purpose is to persuade people to be good. Only with a concerted effort and being of one mind can they have a foothold in this world to continue enhance and glorify their ultimate aim.

In the next paragraph, Emperor Yong Zheng outlined the conversation between Emperor Liu-Song Wendi (407 – 453) and a member of his personal staff named Shang Zhih He who later became Emperor Liu-Song Wen-di's prime minister.

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**“Emperor Liu-Song Wendi once made a comment to his personal staff member Shang Zhih He that the Six Books of Chinese Classics are to educate the mass population. However, if one hopes to elevate one’s spiritual realm, one must use the Buddhist scriptures as the guide. If all my people can adhere to the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism and become honest, down-to-earth, and good-natured, the country will be at peace and I will have nothing more to worry about.”**

Emperor Liu-Song Wendi was one of the emperors of the second half of the Liu-Song Dynasty, called the Southern Song. He was the third son of Emperor Liu-Song Wudi. The Six Books of Chinese Classics mentioned here are: the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Rites*, the *Book of Music*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. These books were used to help

educate people to be virtuous.

Emperor Liu-Song Wendi said that if we want to practise self-cultivation, we should use the Buddhist teachings as our guide. Most people who have religious faith believe they have lived or will live more than once. If we know we have a past life and a next life, it becomes clear to us that we need to elevate our spiritual realm and that we should understand the Law of Cause and Effect. Once we understand the Law of Cause and Effect, we naturally will not harm others.

Emperor Liu-Song Wendi then continued: if people in his country were to accept Confucian and Buddhist teachings, his country would become prosperous and his people would be able to live in peace.

**“Shang Zhih He replied that if ten people in a village of one hundred families abide by the Five**



**Precepts, we will have ten people who are friendly, kind, honest, cautious, and respectful. In a region of one thousand families, if one hundred people abide by the Ten Good Conducts, we will have one hundred people live in harmony. If we apply this same principle to the whole nation where we may have a hundred million of households, we will have millions of virtuous people living in harmony. If we can practise one good conduct, one less evil will be committed. One less evil conduct means the elimination of one punishment. If each family reduces the crime rate by one, we can eliminate thousands and thousands of punishments. Yes, indeed, the country will then be in peace and your Highness can sit on your throne without any worry.”**

Shang Zhih He replied well. His reply is in accord with the sentiments expressed by Emperor Liu-Song Wendi. Apparently the two think and see things alike and do things the same way. Shang

Zhih He approved of both Confucianism and Buddhism. He said that if ten people out of one hundred families practised the Five Precepts, those ten people must be very well respected by others. Thus they would be able to teach and exert good influence in the village. For a region of more than ten thousand people, if one hundred people abided by the 'Ten Virtuous Conducts', those hundred people would know how to treat others as equals and live in harmony with them. Thus they would make a positive presence in their community.

Shang Zhih He then proposed that the teaching of virtues should be encouraged and propagated. This is what we today call multicultural education. As a result, countless people would be practising the 'Ten Virtuous Conducts' and abiding by the 'Five Precepts'. With the consequent reduced crime rate, the country would be prosperous and its people able to live in peace and harmony.

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Emperor Liu-Song Wendi concluded that he would then be able to sit on the throne in peace and untroubled. Shang Zhih He concurred. It follows that, for us to have peace and harmony in the modern world, it is very important that we propagate multicultural education – the teaching of the saints and sages. Commenting on their conversation, Emperor Yong Zheng described it as words well said. This, he said, is the way the country should be governed. As long as the number of good people in the nation is increasing, honesty and simplicity will become the norm, in turn, bring peace, stability, and prosperity to the country.

**“This is also the goal of Buddhism – to eradicate greed and miserliness and to induce virtues and kindness in people. If we believe in the words of Emperor Liu-Song Wendi and Shang Zhih He, and are able to practise good conduct accordingly, we can set a good example for others to follow and teach and guide the people in establishing**

**good customs. Thus they can assist the Emperor in governing the country and in helping the people.”**

Here Emperor Yong Zheng commented on Emperor Liu-Song Wendi’s discussion of Buddhist teachings. Buddhism teaches people to eliminate greed, anger, and ignorance and to diligently abide by the precepts, to cultivate deep concentration, and to attain wisdom. This is called the Three Learnings, which are fundamental to Buddhism. The Three Learnings of Precepts, Concentration and Wisdom are the subjects of Shakyamuni Buddha’s forty-nine years of teaching. Abiding by the precepts and practising meditative concentration are the methods Buddhists use to achieve the goal of reinstating their wisdom.

Thus Shakyamuni Buddha was involved in what we call today the teachings of multiculturalism. He abdicated his throne for a career in education. He gave up what all worldly people want –

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money, power, and fame. As Emperor Yong Zheng stated, the purpose of Buddhism is to eradicate greed and miserliness which are the root causes of all afflictions. The purpose of Buddha's teachings is to induce virtues and kindness in people.

If we believe in the sentiments expressed in the dialogue between Emperor Liu-Song Wendi and Shang Zhi He, and we learn and practise accordingly, we will recognize that virtuous people can be our role models. They can teach and guide us towards goodness and make a positive impact in our community. As a result, they can assist the leaders in governing the country and help to establish peace within the nation. They can help people to break through from their delusions and be enlightened, help them leave their pain and suffering and reach for happiness.

**“If we wantonly defame the Three Teachings and compare them to the absurd and heretic**

teachings of Yang Zi and Mo Zi, we have misunderstood and are being unfair to the Three Teachings. Before I became the Emperor, I paid close attention to Buddhism, especially the Xing Buddhism, of which I have gained an in-depth understanding. After I became the Emperor, I have devoted much of my time to the Royal Imperial Court. Also I did not want people to think that I was partial to Buddhism. Thus I did not discuss this with anyone. I wanted to wait until the country was on track before broaching the issue. I wanted to draw attention to the doctrine of the Three Teachings that it is wrong to praise oneself and slander others. Now I have been Emperor for ten years. In my spare time, I was able to compile a list of my viewpoints and note the thoughts of the ancient scholars for those who are currently following the Three Teachings.”

People who wantonly defame the Three Teachings are usually those who have not yet fully

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understood their meanings. They judge with their wandering minds, differentiations and attachments to their own viewpoints. Thus they criticise Buddhism and Taoism. Emperor Yong Zheng used Yang Zi and Mo Zi (scholars of the Spring and Autumn period of China who held extreme and heretic viewpoints) as examples. The viewpoints of Yang Zi and Mo Zi were also considered by traditional scholars to be extreme, while the Three Teachings choose the Middle Way. Thus when we compare the Three Teachings to the teachings of Yang Zi and Mo Zi, we are not being fair to the Three Teachings.

When Emperor Yong Zheng was still a prince, he already studied teachings of Buddhism. It appealed to him. Due to his position as the prince, he learned from the best of teachers. He studied with a humble attitude and gained a very thorough understanding of all the Three Teachings, and especially of Xing Buddhism, which comprises Zen Buddhism and Fa Xing Buddhism.

After he became emperor, he was very busy with the affairs of the court. He did not have spare time to talk about Buddhism. It is not that he became distanced from Buddhism after he became emperor, but rather that he did not wish to appear biased towards any of the Three Teachings. Being the ruler, he must be very fair in dealing with different racial issues and issues raised by the different teachings. Therefore, even if he thought one was better than the others, he would not let other people know for fear of creating friction among the different interest groups.

Emperor Yong Zheng elected to wait until his government was on track before he announced his proposal to combine the Three Teachings into one. This is what we today call multicultural education. He wanted the Three Teachings to join their forces. This way, they could truly benefit the country, the society, and the welfare of the people. He wanted



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the proponents of the Three Teachings to be aware that it was wrong to praise themselves and denigrate others. He started by pointing out faults in their followers. He stressed that since the purpose and objectives of the Three Teachings were the same, the only difference was that they had different followers. Thus they have no reason not to co-operate with each other.

Now let us look at our current society. Due to the advances in scientific technology, well-developed media information systems, and easy transportation, our whole planet Earth has become one nation. Different religions and cultures are now mingled together, becoming one large Earth family. According to Buddhism, not only humans on this planet are equal, all the living beings on the planet are equal. We should eliminate the conflicts from our inner selves. We need to use true wisdom to resolve all conflicts and contradictions so that first our bodies and minds are in har-

mony before we can hope to have peace in our country, then the whole world.

If other people try to defame me, it is because they do not know me. Thus they have misunderstood me. It must be because I did not present myself accurately. I am the one who gives people the wrong impression. They are not wrong. The fault is mine. We must always reflect upon ourselves before we can make an impact on others.

When we hear other people slandering us, insulting us, if we become angry and take revenge, we are wrong. Reprisals only breed reprisals. We only create more problems for ourselves. If we want to solve our problems, we must start from within. When we have resolved all our inner conflicts, we have also resolved all our problems emanating from the outside world.

When Emperor Yong Zheng made his pro-

nouncements, he had already been emperor for ten years. For those ten years, he had paid very close attention to the problems. He had waited for his government to get on track. Now it seemed to be the right time for him to make his announcement. He addressed the issues of having the Three Teachings combined as one. He assembled his own viewpoints as well as the thoughts of the ancient scholars and compiled them into a list which is as follows:

**"1. The ancient people said Zhou Gong and Confucius used the Six Books of Chinese Classics to educate the people. The heart of the purpose of this education was loyalty and filial piety. The topics of the two volumes by Lao-tzu are the 'way' and the 'virtues'. The basis of the three divisions of the Buddhist Canon is loving-kindness. Their achievements may be different, their principles are the same. All of them are noble teachings and deserve to be admired."**

In the first item, Emperor Yong Zheng talked about Confucianism. The teachings of Zhou Gong and Confucius used the Six Books of Chinese Classics to educate people on loyalty and filial piety. Buddhism is also built on the foundations of loyalty and filial piety. The two teachings have the same foundation, and neither is contrary to the teachings of Taoism.

The two volumes of Lao-tzu are called Tao-Te Ching. The two volumes are not lengthy. Together they only contain five thousand words. They teach the 'way' and 'virtues. If we use loyalty and filial piety as our example, filial piety is the 'way' and loyalty is the 'virtue'. Even though different terminologies are used, their meanings are the same. They have the same content and effect. Their teachings are derived from the same original source. This was what Emperor Yong Zheng concluded – that, while the purposes of the Three Teachings

might seem different, but they were in fact the same. Thus we should learn from all the Three Teachings. They all deserve our admiration.

**“2. They also said that Confucianism had established itself as the right teaching. Taoism had established itself as the most esteemed. Buddhism had established itself as the greatest. However, the message of all three is to preserve lives and abstain from killing. They work from the same principle of loving-kindness. They all advocate treating others as one would treat oneself. Again, they all advocate impartiality. They all want people to stop being angry, to eliminate improper desires, to restrict themselves from doing wrong things and improper behaviours. They all promote the cultivation of virtuous conduct.”**

If we pay close attention to their qualities, is there a quality of esteem and greatness in being right? Is there a quality of right and greatness in

esteem? Is there a quality of right and esteem in being great? One quality encompasses all three. Thus we should pay equal respect to all Three Teachings. If students must salute their teachers, I would salute Confucius the same way I salute Shakyamuni Buddha. It makes no difference to me. When I am facing Jesus Christ on the cross, it is the same as if I am looking at Shakyamuni Buddha. The reverence I feel when I open a Buddhist sutra is the same as when I open the Bible. This is how I am able to learn from all the various teachings. When I am in conflict with others, it is against the law of nature. I am wrong.

Once we thoroughly understand these facts, there are no more contradictions. All the Three Teachings advocate preserving lives and abstaining from killing. This is loving-kindness. If we do not want others to treat us badly, we must not treat them badly. No matter how other people *treat us*, we should treat them the way we would like to be

treated – with loving-kindness.

We should not be selfish. We should use all our efforts to elevate our state of mind to help people in society. We should also stop feeling angry. In adversity, our hearts are not angry. In satisfactory circumstances, we harbour no greed. We cultivate ourselves so we can reduce our wrongdoings. We must not do things contrary to what is considered immoral. All the Three Teachings abide by these same principles.

**“3. They also said that the teachings of Buddhism can cure our minds, the teachings of Taoism can cure our bodies, and the teachings of Confucianism can cure the world.”**

As long as we live in this world, we have to be concerned with our bodies, minds, and how we cope with the outside world. The condition of our bodies and minds has to do with the way we prac-

tise our self-cultivation. Emperor Yong Zheng said the way to good health was through practising the Buddha's teachings. What is a Buddha? Buddha means wisdom and enlightenment. This is the way we should treat ourselves and others – with an enlightened mind full of wisdom. How do we do it? We start by treating everyone with sincerity. It is when our minds are sincere, pure, non-discriminative, right thinking, awakened and compassionate.

Taoism puts great emphasis on keeping our bodies fit and in good health so we will have long lives. How can we attain pure minds, be healthy and have a long life? First of all, we need to keep our desires to a minimum. Then we are able to attain purity of mind. When our minds are pure, our bodies become pure. When our bodies are pure, so is our environment. Once we understand the principles behind the practice, we will have no problems in keeping ourselves fit. However, for us



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to receive a perfect result, we must also have a kind heart and act accordingly.

Confucianism uses education on moral principles and ethical aspects of human relationships as its way of teaching people. If all people can abide by the teachings of Confucianism the world will be at peace. There will be no more fighting, no more conflicts. Confucianism talks about ethics. Ethics is the key to human relationships – relationships between husband and wife, parent and child, among siblings, between the ruler and those being ruled (employer and employee) and friends. An ethical relationship is the natural relationship between people. Thus it is the ‘Way’. When our minds and actions respond to the ‘Way’, we have attained virtues.

Confucianism talks about “Wu-Chang”, the ‘Five Moral Conducts’ mentioned earlier. When the ‘Five Moral Conducts’ interact with the ‘Way’, vir-

tue is achieved. If we can practise the 'Way at home', we will have a happy home. If we can practise the 'Way' between husband and wife, we will have a very happy couple. If we practise the 'Way' on ourselves, we will be healthy and enjoy a very long life. If we practise the 'Way' on a country, the country will become prosperous and be at peace. Thus, the Confucian teachings are those that educate people on moral principles and ethical human relationships.

**"4. They also said that the term 'nature' used by Buddha has the same meaning as when defined by all the other books and all the recorded teachings of the saints and sages. Broadly speaking, Buddha-nature encompasses all the virtues. If people's hearts are sincere, if they all live pure and disciplined lives, if they all give precedence to courtesy to other people, not only they but their relatives will be benefited. They can help the emperor stabilise the country."**

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In Buddhism, the terms self-nature, original nature, true nature have the same meaning as defined by all the recorded teachings of the ancient saints and sages. They have the same meaning as defined by Confucius and Lao-tzu. If we examine other religions, we find they have the same definition. The only difference is how broadly or deeply the subject “nature” is dealt with.

If all people know they should treat people, things, and handle situations with sincerity, if they can all maintain pure and disciplined lives, and give precedence to others out of pure politeness, their parents and relatives can also benefit. The result is that they can help the emperor to stabilise society, resolve conflicts and establish peace in the country.

**“5. They also said that the Buddha Way and the Sovereign Way are one and the same. The**

**Sovereign Way is extremely broad. It is the same as the Middle Way. The Buddha Way is also the Middle Way which is unbiased and is not evil. Their purposes are identical.”**

The Buddha Way, the Sovereign Way or the Middle Way – there is no difference. There is nothing greater than the Middle Way. The principals and methods the ruler uses to bring happiness and stability to his country and his people is called the Sovereign Way, also the Middle Way. Both Confucianism and Buddhism exercise the Middle Way. The Middle Way is the impartial and unbiased way. Their purposes are the same.

**“6. They also said that Buddhism was established to help people stop from being superficial and be practical. It also helps people to refrain from their deviant ways and be good. They may have to try very hard at the beginning but, once they accustom themselves to virtuous conduct,**

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**they will act accordingly. If they so practise, they will first be benefited. Then they will be able to help others to do the same. Thus people need rely on nothing more than just Buddhism.”**

Emperor Yong Zheng here encouraged us to live a life that is simple and down-to-earth. He said people should refrain from doing things that are evil and they should do things that are good. It might be hard at the beginning because we have to force ourselves to give up our desires. It is like a fight against our own afflictions. Once we have conquered our own afflictions and bad habits, we have won the war. We will gain peace of mind. People can thus help themselves to help others. The Emperor then praised Buddhism. He said people should learn from Buddhism and rely on Buddha’s teachings.

**“7. They also said that Buddhism is not of this world because its teachings do not apply to people**

**living in the secular world. That comment was made without reference to Buddha's Six Paramitas. For example, from the stage of mastering deep concentration to reach the other shore (attaining wisdom), is this not the learning of this world before moving on to the next?"**

Here Emperor Yong Zheng was attempting to refute the arguments of those who look at Buddhism only from a superficial angle. People often comment that the study of Buddhism is only for monks and nuns; it is not suited to ordinary people who lead a conventional life. Emperor Yong Zheng said it well when he remarked that those people had not thought about the Six Paramitas. He gave a very good example – from the stage of mastering deep concentration to the stage of reaching the other shore – meaning the attainment of wisdom. The Six Paramitas is a progressive stage of cultivation, starting with giving, then abiding by the precepts, then being tolerant of others. This is followed

by being very diligent in practising, mastering deep concentration, and finally attaining the wisdom. Since there is an order and a level of studying in the Six Paramitas, Buddhism is a teaching that can be practised by all people.

**“8. They also said that there are no two ways and the saints do not have two minds. The ‘Way’ (course of nature) has been in existence before the world is formed. The saints first cure themselves with the truth they have gained from practising the ‘Way’. Then they can apply the same truth to help govern the country and bring peace to the nation. Is this not a great deed!”**

There is only one ‘Way’. It is the principle that people should treat each other as equals and live in harmony. Regardless of nationality or religion, this principle applies to all. What is the mind of a saint? The mind of a saint is about loving all beings. Both the Old and the New Testaments say that “God

loves all people". In Buddhism the fundamental principle is that of loving-kindness towards all beings even including the animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. Buddhism teaches people to be truly sincere, pure, and have compassion for all the sentient beings. It teaches people to be fair in their dealings with all others, people who are dear to us as well as those we hate. This is what we call true loving-kindness.

We must pay back the debt of gratitude to those who have been kind to us in the past. We must also resolve our conflicts with others. Buddhism teaches us about change, to change our relationships from being hostile to being friends. This truly is the way to solving all our problems. We should never stand against anyone. We should resolve all our hatreds and replace them with loving-kindness. Thus all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas only have one mind. That is the mind of love, which is true, sincere, equal, pure, and rational.



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This is why we also call it the all-embracing love.

In Buddhism, the 'Way' is also referred to as the "original nature" or the "dharma nature". The formation of the universe is derived from self-nature and all phenomena come forth from the changing of the minds. Where do the six realms come from? They are born out of our minds. If our minds are kind, our circumstances will be kind. When our minds become cruel and heartless, so will our circumstances. Thus, when our minds are kind, they reveal to us the world of heaven. When our minds turn cruel and heartless, the world of hell comes forth. But there is really no heaven or hell. As long as we harbour thoughts of good and evil, of differentiation, of attachments, different worlds will present themselves accordingly.

Thus nature has been in existence before the world was formed. It exists in time that has no beginning. "Nature" exists forever. It was never born

nor will it perish. It is not coming nor will it ever go away. If we want to elevate the state of our minds, we must abide by the teachings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. We must recover our purity of mind, our sense of equality and our awakening. We cure our vices with the truths through self-cultivation. We must correct our many mistakes so we can elevate our state of mind to where our original self-nature of wisdom, virtues and beauty will be recovered. Once we are cured of our vices, we should do whatever we can to stabilise society so our world will be at peace.

**“Thus those saints may be born in China, in the West, or else where. Even though they are born in different places, if they have truly attained the ‘Way’, their minds should be the same. Since the eight items listed above are based on the teachings of the saints, there should be no difference of opinion.”**

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Zhou Gong, Confucius, Emperor Yao, Emperor Shun, Emperor Yu and Emperor Tang are all saints born in China. The West referred to here is India, which is west of China. Thus the saint in the West to whom Emperor Yong Zheng referred was Shakyamuni Buddha. Everywhere in the world, every region of every nation has produced saints. This confirms the education of multiculturalism. Saints and sages appear in this world, regardless of the country of their origin. They may look different but the truth they have attained is the same. They may use different methods but their principles are exactly the same. Their purposes are the same, so are their objectives.

**“Even though each of the Three Teachings specialises in its own respective area of curing either the mind, the body or the world, apparently they also have their shortcomings. Thus they complement each other and become equally important. We cannot do without any one of them.”**

This is well stated by Emperor Yong Zheng. When we come into contact with different nationalities, countries, and cultures, we need to learn all their teachings. I am a student of Buddha, also a student of Confucius and Lao-tzu. This is the only way I can gain perfect wisdom. If we do not learn, we will never understand. Previously I spoke about when “all of a sudden we truly understand”. How will we gain this state of mind if we do not learn! We need to understand the concept of all religions being parts of the same whole.

I believe Emperor Yong Zheng was correct in stating that he could not do without any of the religions. He had learned well. Thus I believe Emperor Yong Zheng is the founder of today's multiculturalism. He emphasised that the Three Teachings are really branches of the same family.

Emperor Yong Zheng then continued: “**Even**

**those who claim to be studying Buddhism and Taoism are sometimes biased and not exactly correct; and not every one of those who study Confucianism is a true practitioner. For instance, some Buddhist practitioners deceive the public by their eccentric interpretations of the word 'emptiness'. Some Taoist practitioners fool people with their heretic skills. They are all guilty of violating their respective teachings. Many who have read extensively of the *Book of Poetry* talk about loving-kindness and personal loyalty and yet behave otherwise. They are just as guilty of cheating the public."**

There is no bias in the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It is the practitioners who are biased. If we really want to learn, what we gain is the truth. However, if we learn for selfish reasons such as for the gaining of wealth and fame, we become biased. If our hearts are at the right place, all teachings are correct. Therefore, the

way to learn is through self-cultivation. When our minds are unbiased, so are the teachings we are trying to learn.

There are not that many true practitioners in Buddhism, Taoism, or Confucianism. Some people use the Three Teachings for the purpose of their own personal gain. This is not the fault of the Three Teachings but rather the fault of the practitioners. Thus we must not judge the Three Teachings based on the wrongful actions of a very few. But we need to know who is real and who is false. Most of all, if we use religion or the Three Teachings to satisfy our own selfish goals, we are guilty of violating the principles of its teachings.

**“If we ignore other people’s strong points but denounce their shortcomings, if we purposely disguise our shortcomings, instead over-exaggerating our good points, and if we wilfully try to blacken other people’s good names,**

**these are signs of our being selfish and treacherous. This is not what a person of noble character and integrity ought to do. These people have over-estimated their strength and abilities.”**

If we do not focus on other people's strong and good points, only on their weaknesses, we are not demonstrating good intentions towards them. The consequence of these actions will have a damaging impact on the social climate. If, however, we try to hide our weak points and over-emphasise on our strong points, we are still not being decent. In addition, if we defame and dispute others, it only means that our tolerance level is very low. People who act in this way are not true practitioners because they are not sincere or genuine in their practices. They profess to be religious followers but in fact they are destroying their own religions.

Emperor Yong Zheng confirmed his position on this. He declared that all those who scheme,

praise themselves and slander others, and those who profit at the expense of others are not people of noble character and integrity. They are not truly moral or accomplished practitioners.

The last original paragraph is very lengthy. We will break it into several sub-paragraphs.

**“During the past few years, I was asked to ban people from ordaining themselves, and to turn Buddhist and Taoist temples into academies of classical learning so they would then belong to the Confucians. There were county magistrates who threw the monks and nuns out of their temples for no reason. There were even people who asked me to match the monks and nuns into couples for the purpose of propagation so population could be increased. Those kinds of propositions are absurd and cause unrest to the country. Their proponents have not given a thought to the fact that it is their country’s responsibility to help those who are**



widowed and those who are alone. Since it is their choice to be monks and nuns, it is their intent to cultivate themselves and to accumulate good fortune for the country and its people. A noble emperor or ruler would not ask them to resume a secular life and to get married for such a trivial reason. Since people who make those propositions are extremely ignorant and still very young, I am not going to punish them for their absurdities.

As for those left-home persons (Buddhist monks, nuns, and Taoist priests) who have violated the law, they will be punished accordingly. But to those ascetics who have adhered strictly to the teachings we must give our full protection and support. Those who preach heretical teachings must be severely punished. For example, the recorded writings of Dao Min and Xing Feng are preposterous. The teachings of Fa Cang and Hong Ren are the savage teachings of the devil. I will have them punished. We must not let their theo-

ries blend with and tarnish the right teachings. Otherwise it will become impossible for the people to tell the difference.

I have thoroughly explored the original source of the Three Teachings and I know they need to be treated fairly. I want those people – Buddhists and Taoists who have only their personal interests in mind, those who are opinionated and partial to their own beliefs, thus losing their sense of fairness – to wake up and be aware of these sobering facts. I am making this announcement to enlighten those who are ignorant.

This is the imperial edict to all the civil, military, and court officials to give special attention to the protection and support of the left-home persons. This is to be governed by selfless actions and good intentions.”

Here Emperor Yong Zheng gave us a few ex-

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amples of people who were not adhering to the teachings. He explained that for the previous few years there were people who had suggested that he should ban people from ordaining themselves. Critics of the Buddhist and Taoist teachings wanted to turn their temples into Confucian academies of classical learning. There were also incidents of county magistrates unjustifiably throwing monks and nuns out of their temples. Some people even suggested that the monks and nuns should return to secular lives and get married for the purpose of propagation.

Emperor Yong Zheng rejected their proposals, from which we can infer that he was too open-minded, wise and virtuous to allow such events to happen. He accused the critics of not recognising the contributions the Three Teachings had given to society, the nation and to humankind. He said their proposals would not just upset existing policies, they would actually cause national unrest.

He went on to say that it was the duty of the government to take care of the widowed and those who were alone. Since he had thorough understanding of the Three Teachings, he knew that the intentions of all the left-home persons were to cultivate and accumulate good fortune for their country and their people. They routinely did their home work in the morning and at night time for the same reason. They prayed for the welfare of the Emperor, the civil, military, and court officials, and the people. Emperor Yong Zheng was a wise and kind-hearted Emperor. It was against his nature to force the monks and nuns to go back to a secular life. Any reasonable emperor or ruler with a kind heart would have done the same.

Emperor Yong Zheng criticised the people who had made these proposals as being extremely ignorant. He discarded their proposals and did not punish them for making the proposals. On the other

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hand, he said he would punish those who had violated the law. To those who were ascetic, diligent in their studies, and abiding by the law, he said the country must give full protection. He then named four practitioners who had violated their teachings and had cheated people. Since those practitioners had not merely violated the precepts, they had violated the statutes. Naturally they had to be punished. This was how Emperor Yong Zheng protected the Three Teachings. Since there were good and bad practitioners, he gave protection to the good, and forgave those who had not committed any major fault. Those who had broken the law were punished accordingly.

He proceeded to express his opinion on how to protect the left-home persons. He said he had already attained thorough understanding of the Three Teachings. Having looked at the Three Teachings with unbiased mind, he was able to utilise them to help him govern his country and punish

those who had violated the law.

Emperor Yong Zheng then wished his people, including the Buddhist and Taoist followers, to co-operate and be tolerant of each other, to have mutual respect, and to learn from each other. He told them they should not for selfish reasons only praising themselves and attacking others. They should be impartial and stay away from heretical practices. He wanted to wake them up like drunkards being sobered.

Since so many unfortunate incidents had already taken place, Emperor Yong Zheng made the following declaration. To those people who had made absurd propositions, even though he would not punish them for doing so, he gave them warnings to not do this again. He drew the attention of all his civil, military, and court officials to his order to give special attention to the left-home persons for their protection and support.

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Thus a country's leaders can either lead the world towards stability and peace or they can lead the world into unrest and destruction. The key to resolving unrest is education. To save our societies from chaos, we depend on our national leaders to teach and propagate the teachings of the saints and sages by using the most advanced technology to broadcast these teachings to the whole world. This way the sacred teachings will truly be protected.

I hope that national leaders and religious leaders will broadcast their sacred teachings to the whole world for all living beings. This way all the different religions will then be able to learn from each other, encourage each other and co-operate with each other. Together we can resolve conflicts in our societies and help our societies stabilise so our world will be at peace. As long as we have stability and peace, for sure we will all have prosperity.

Chin Kung

## **Dedication of Merit**

May the merit and virtues accrued from this work  
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,  
Repaying the four kinds of kindness above,  
And relieving the sufferings of  
Those in the Three Paths below.

May all who see and hear of this  
Be enlightened by their awakened faith,  
Abide by the teachings for the rest of this life,  
Then be born together in  
The Land of Ultimate Bliss!

**Homage to Amitabha Buddha!**



**VENERABLE MASTER CHIN KUNG**, named at birth as Yae Hong Hsu, was born in 1927 in Lu-Jiang, Anhui Province. He studied Buddhism by following the teachings of Professor Dong Mei Fang, Zhang Jia Hutukutu, and Master Bing Nan Li for thirteen years. He is a learned master of the sutras and the discourses of all schools of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and scriptures of other religions. He has been teaching and giving lectures for 45 years. He teaches with the use of distant education: He propagates Mahayana Buddhism by using the internet and satellite TV.

In recent years, he has been actively involved in such education to develop multiculturalism, religious and racial unity, and world peace. He was awarded the titles of Honorary Doctor of University by Griffith University and University of Southern Queensland as well as Adjunct Professor by University of Queensland and Griffith University.

Many Pure Land associations are founded all over the world on account of Venerable Master Chin Kung. For the purpose of training more qualified lecturers to carry on the important work of propagating Buddhism, in 2001, he established the Pure Land Learning College Association, Inc. in Australia.

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“Wherever the Buddha's teachings are taught and practised, either in countries, cities, countrysides or gatherings, all will be transformed for the better. The world will be in harmony. The sun and moon will shine clear and bright. Wind and rain will appear accordingly. There will be no disaster, only prosperity and stability. There will be no conflicts or wars. All will uphold their virtues and be kindhearted. All will give precedence to others out of courtesy. There will be no theft or injustice. The strong will not dominate nor take advantage of the weak. All will receive their fair share...” (The Infinite Life Sutra)



華藏淨宗學會

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Printed in Taiwan