

# The spread of buddhism in china



Buddhism was started in India in the 6th century B. C. E. , eventually came to China in the first century C. E. , and people gradually began to convert to it. Many people in China at that time felt differently about the new religion. Some felt that Buddhism was good for their society, and they encouraged the practice of it. Others felt that it was negative thing, and that it should be stopped. Documents 1, 2, 3, and 5 can be grouped together because they all point out the positive things about Buddhism.

The Buddha, who was the founder of Buddhism, said in his first sermon “ The Four Noble Truths” in the fifth century B. C. E. that all things in life are driven by sorrow and passion. Being the founder of the religion, he of course would say good things about Buddhism. If he didn’t, there would probably be many people that would stop following it. The Chinese scholar, Zhi Dun in document 2, makes the statement that whoever follows and obeys the rules of Buddhism, at the end of their life will enter nirvana (the extinction of desire and individual consciousness). The anonymous Chinese scholar in document 3 defends Buddhism, when it was being compared to Confucianism.

The scholar makes the argument that the two cannot be compared and that they are completely different. They say “ To compare the sages of the Buddha would be like comparing a white deer to a unicorn, or a swallow to a phoenix”. In his essay “ On the Nature of Man”, Zong Mi also says that the religions should not be compared. He says they both have different teachings and approaches. According to him, neither is better than the other and they should both be observed with respect. Zong Mi was a leading

Buddhist scholar and was favored by the Tang imperial household. He followed Buddhism but the Tang imperial court seemed against the religion.

Maybe he is writing this from a neutral point of view for fear of being punished by either side for writing something negative about it. Documents 4 and 6 are grouped together because they both harshly criticize the practice of Buddhism. Document 4 comes from Han Yu. He says that Buddhism is only a “cult of barbarians”, and says that it goes against the ways of Confucianism, which the Tang follow. It is possible that he said this because he the leading Confucian scholar and official at the Tang imperial court. He would most likely lose his important place in the court or be punished otherwise if he went against Confucius’s ways.

According to document 6, by Tang Emperor Wu, Buddhism is quickly poisoning their country. He calls it evil and says that it should be destroyed. He says “Buddhism wears out the people’s strength, pilfers their wealth, causes people to abandon their lords and parents for the company of teachers, and severs man and wife with its monastic decrees”. There are many ways to look at Buddhism. According to some people it was a good thing. To others, it was a terrible thing. Their point of view depends on who the person was and what factors affected their views. Many people in China had very different opinions about the religion.