

**YIN & YANG**  
FOR THE  
**CHRISTIAN MARTIAL ARTIST**  
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## **Yin and Yang: A Principle and a Truth for the Christian Martial Artist**

Most Americans who have studied the Oriental martial arts to any appreciable degree are familiar with the symbol that is called *Yin* and *Yang*. This symbol is a circle with two fish-like shapes within the circle and two dots that could appear to be the eyes of the fish. It has various connotations for various people. In denotation, it is the symbol of the Tao, the Chinese religious philosophy that dominated old China prior to the Communist revolution under Mao Tse Tung. The Tao did not cease to exist with the Mao takeover, but it was suppressed and supplanted by the Philosophy of Marx. The Tao is very much alive in China today and in much of the rest of the world, including, of course, the United States. The word Tao (pronounced “dow”) literally translates “way.” So then, to the Chinese, the Tao is the way. That term provokes an interesting thought in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 14:6, He says, “... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Jesus is indeed the Way. It is the same terminology as the Tao, but it is not the same way. Jesus is the only Way Who is, at the same time, the Truth and the Life. The Tao is a way, but it is the wrong way. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov. 16:25)

In view of the above, I am not advocating that we who are called by the name of Christ study the Tao; nor am I saying that we should adapt the *yin/yang* symbol for our usage. In and of itself, the *yin/yang* symbol is not evil, but to some it has evil connotations. Some see it as a symbol for the martial arts, some see it as a symbol for the occult, some actually see it as a symbol for sex, and for reasons I am not aware of, it is often used as a symbol by surfers. Therefore, in order to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:22) and to “... take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak” (I Cor. 8:9), I do not advocate that we look to the *Tao* for truth or to the *yin/yang* for our symbolism.

However, the *yin/yang* is more than a symbol, it represents a principle. That principle is one that is found throughout the Holy Scriptures. Now I want to make clear the fact that the Bible did not take this principle from the *Tao*. Neither is it likely that the Taoists gleaned this principle directly from the Bible. How, then, did a Biblical truth get into the *Tao*? I suggest two ways:

1. Both Biblical and secular historians agree that civilization began in what we call the Middle East and spread from there to the rest of the world.

There was a time when all men knew about the one true God whether they actually knew Him or not. They were exposed to His truth. Therefore, certain truths have remained in the teachings of men as they migrated and as generations passed. In some cases these truths have been perverted. In other cases, the individual elements of truth have remained, but the body of truth, the revelation of God, has not been retained. By example, most civilizations have a “flood” legend similar to the Biblical story of Noah. The names and particular facts vary, but the basic story is the same.

2. Certain truths are universally held because they are demonstrable in all civilizations. Again, by way of example, the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping is universally accepted by reasonable, thinking people, although it is not always acknowledged as a Biblical principle. The colloquial adage, “What goes around comes around” expresses the same principle as “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Therefore, the principle of *Yin* and *Yang* is a Biblical one even though the symbol itself may have no Biblical basis. Let me explain that principle: Sibok Lonnie Sutherland was my teacher in the arts for seven years. The last time we spoke, he still considered me as one of his students, although I have not trained under him for several years. He explained the *yin/yang* to us in this fashion: the *yin* represents the soft, while the *yang* represents the hard. In the *yin/yang* symbol, the *yin* flows over into the *yang*, and the *yang* flows over into the *yin*. The two dots teach us that not only is the line of separation between the hard and the soft curved, there is actually an element of *yin* inside the *yang* and an element of the *yang* inside the *yin*. Therefore, “nothing is entirely hard, and nothing is entirely soft.” The idea, in a word, is balance. When we come to our martial arts, we need to remember this balance. That is the principle that is found in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus put it this way: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (Matt. 10:16) In this case, the serpent would be represented by the *yang* and the dove by the *yin*. The Lord is teaching us that, in His service, we need the wisdom of a serpent that is cunning and even feared in combat, but we also need the harmlessness of the dove that is respected for her gentleness and feared by no one. As Paul states in Romans 12: 18, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

The true martial artist, then, must demonstrate in his life the principle represented by the *yin* and *yang*. He must be both hard and soft. He must find within himself the hardness of a warrior and the gentleness of an ambassador. Aubrey P. Andelin, in his classic book Man of Steel and Velvet, expounds upon this principle. I recommend the book to every Christian martial artist. In the first chapter entitled “The Ideal Man,” he says: “The ideal man as I see him is a man of ‘Steel and velvet.’ This term I have borrowed from Carl Sandberg who used it to describe Abraham Lincoln. I know of no other expression which so adequately portrays the perfection of manhood.” Andelin goes on to say: “The ideal man has the strength, endurance, and temperance of fine steel. He is a composite of many sterling qualities. The velvet qualities include a man's gentleness, his tenderness, kindness, generosity, and patience. He is devoted to the care and protection of women and children. He understands and respects their gentle nature and recognizes it as a complement to his masculinity. He is chivalrous, attentive, and respectful to the gentler sex and has an ability to love with tenderness.” Joshua, one of the greatest warriors of all time, said, “Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them.” (Joshua 1: 14) This is the *yin/yang* principle.

I. We find this balance is a part of the character and nature of our God.

A. Psalm 96:6 “Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.”

B. Psalm 21: 5 “His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty has thou laid upon him.”

C. Psalm 104:1 “Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.”

D. Honour is the *yin*, majesty is the *yang*. Strength is the *yang*, beauty is the *yin*. Such is the balance of the character and nature of the God of the Bible.

II. In the New Testament, Paul shows us the *yang* of zeal and the *yin* of knowledge. He describes himself as having the *yang* of zeal out of balance with the *yin* of knowledge before he came to know Christ. In Phil. 3:6 he states, “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Earlier, in Romans 10:2 he speaks of his brother Israelites as being in the same condition: “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” Dr. Jack Hyles, in the title chapter of his book Strength and Beauty, says, “How rare it is to find in the same package both zeal and knowledge! Somebody has said, ‘Scholarship and fire seldom walk together.’ How wonderful it is to find some scholar who has the fire of God in his soul. As he secures his education and training and gains his scholarship, he keeps the same zeal and fire of his youth.”

III. Paul further tells us that we need *yang-like* strength to stand against evil and the Evil One, and to stand for the truth:

A. Eph. 6: 10-14 “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”

B. Phil. 1 :27 “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

C. I Cor. 16:13 “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

D. II Cor. 10: 4 “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds ...”

E. II Tim. 2: 1 “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

IV. Having said all of this, Paul comes back and reminds us to balance our *yang-like* strength with *yin-like* beauty:

A. Romans 15: 1 “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

B. II Cor. 12: 10 “Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

C. Romans 14:19 “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

D. Gal. 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith...”

E. Eph. 6: 15 “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ...” (Compare with Eph. 6:10-14 above)

F. Heb. 12:14 “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ...”

G. “Ah,” someone says, “We have a contradiction in the scriptures!” No, my friend, we have balance.

H. Paul's entire life's purpose was to live for Jesus Christ, to better know Jesus Christ, to be like Jesus Christ and to bring others to know Him and be like Him.

V. Jesus is the greatest example of manhood that can be found. He is the greatest example of balance that can be found. He is the greatest example of hardness and softness, strength and beauty, zeal and knowledge, love and firmness, grace and truth that has ever been or will ever be known. John 1: 14: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

A. We see in the words and actions of Jesus the supreme example of strength and truth:

1. John 2:14-17 “And [He] found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

2. Matt. 10:34-39 “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not

worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

3. Matt. 23:33 “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”

B. We see in the words and actions of Jesus the supreme example of grace and beauty. Contradiction? No, balance.

1. He taught grace and peace to His followers:

a. Mark 9:50 “Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”

b. Luke 1:79 He came “... to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace,”

c. Luke 10:5 “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, peace be to this house.”

d. John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

e. John 16:33 “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

2. He is the embodiment of compassion:

a. Matt. 9:36 “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them ...”

b. Matt. 14:14 “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”

c. Matt. 15:32 “Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude ...”

d. Matt. 20:34 “So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”

e. Mark 1:41 “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”

f. Mark 6:34 “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.”

g. Luke 7:13 “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, weep not.”

3. He offers forgiveness to sinners such as you and I:

a. Mark 2:5 “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

b. John 8: 11 “... And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

c. Luke 23:34 “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them~ for they know not what they do ...”

d. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

4. If you have not received His forgiveness, would you not do so now?

John 1: 12 “...as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

Every Christian martial artist must strive for balance. We must exhibit strength and beauty, grace and truth, zeal and knowledge. We must, without appealing to the Tao, be like the Way.

**About the Author:** Michael L. McClure has been the Pastor of the West Park Baptist Church of Delray Beach, FL for ten and one-half years. He has studied the martial arts for over 21 years. He received a Graduate of Theology (Th.G.) degree from Pensacola Christian College in 1981 and 2 degrees, Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Religious Education, from Great Plains Baptist Divinity School in 1993. He has also attended Tennessee Temple University. Mr. McClure currently holds five "black belt" certificates of ranking, two of which have been cross-ranked by the GMAU (a first degree in Pai Lum Kung-Fu and a second degree in Chaun Chen Kung-fu). The other three are a second, third, and fourth degree respectively in Sheng Ling Chuan Pai and Shang Ti Kempo.