but religious knowledge is also very important. Knowledge established on the basis of science, philosophy, or inferential reasoning is partial. Sense perception is fragmentary, and inferences are not facts. Therefore they do not provide thorough and certain knowledge. . . . What about attaining complete and certain knowledge? I think that only spiritually perfected persons are able to attain it. The kind of knowledge that is gained through spiritual perfection is complete, whole, unequivocal, and verified through personal experience. Those who have this knowledge can thoroughly understand the truth about human life and the cosmos. . . .

The old morality of the past has now lost its basis, so we need to establish new moral standards. . . . Yet providing humankind with new standards for moral behavior cannot be done with one-sided knowledge. If standards for moral behavior are established on the basis of one-sided knowledge, innumerable immoral practices will arise. How, then, can we not rely on one-sided knowledge? Through an enlightenment which takes the entire universe as its object. In other words, the standards for morality must be established on the basis of great natural principles which can apply to the entire universe and all human life. What is in harmony with these great natural principles is good and moral behavior, and what is not in harmony with them is not good and moral behavior. Only thus we can establish moral standards on an unshakable basis.[44]

Taixu then proceeded to specify his own convictions about the most comprehensive and profound knowledge and how insights into it could provide practical guidance for moral decision-making. He concluded:

According to the Buddhist scriptures, the perfect, great natural principle is the doctrine of cause and effect, the doctrine of the causally produced nature of all things. To explain the truth about human life, we should use the law of causality according to which bitter fruits result from evil actions and pleasing fruits result from good actions. This is profoundly grounded in the nature of the cosmos, as I have explained. All events and things in the universe arise because of the interrelationship between individual and corporate karmic factors and not because

of a single factor or a sovereign creator god. Therefore, one-sided theories cannot serve as standards for human moral behavior. This is my conclusion after studying the great principle of causality. Whether as big as the sun and moon or as small as a caterpillar, nothing comes into being except through causality. From this we can see that all things in the world are completely interrelated and nothing exists independently. This is [the meaning of] the universal principle of cause and effect. . . . So with regard to human behavior, there are two conclusions. First, if a person harms another, both persons are harmed. Second, if a person benefits another, both persons benefit. Thus when we consider doing something within society, and we take benefiting others as our primary concern, then this is good and moral. If we take harming others as our primary concern, then this is evil and immoral. The standard for human moral action should be whether it benefits others or not.[45]

Taixu's basic position may be interpreted as a form of ethical naturalism. That is, although he does not maintain that specific rules about "what ought to be done" can be simplistically deduced from descriptive statements about the nature of "what is," he does agree with other ethical naturalists that "normative principles contain descriptive terms."[46] In addition, his argument parallels in some respects Paul Tillich's call for a "theonomous," as opposed to a "heteronomous" or "autonomous," basis for ethical judgments. Like Tillich, Taixu rejects as an adequate ground for moral action both divine commands imposed externally from above (heteronomy) and common human reasoning from mere sense experience (autonomy). Rather, he opts for an ethic based on a profoundly spiritual and transformative insight into the very nature of the universe. In this sense, as in Tillich's position, the ground for ethical judgments is to be glimpsed in the very nature of the cosmos, although at the same time it is to be found within one's own mind. Tillich refers to this as a divine order (theonomy) that transcends a subject-object dichotomy, which requires that individuals either impose their own autonomous will or have one imposed heteronomously upon them. In a parallel way, for Taixu, moral judgments are grounded in a process of codependent becoming that transcends all inadequate subject-object distinctions.[47]

The ideals of right thought and action are two. The first ideal is that of "improving human life" *(rensheng gaishan)* or "improving the world" *(renjian gaishan)*. The reformer constantly spoke of the fundamental precepts of the bodhisattva's path, which provided a basis for beginning to talk imaginatively about the creation of "a pure land in this world" *(renjian jingtu)*. The second ideal is that of "becoming a buddha" *(cheng fo)*. Taixu frequently declared that despite the weight of one's karmic past, "every person has the possibility of becoming a Buddha."[48] Everyone can turn and follow in the footsteps of Śākyamuni. Every person can realize his or her buddha-nature by engagement with the Enlightened One's four most important tasks: defeating the "demons" that distract us from the right path *(jiang mo)*, attaining the perfect knowledge of a buddha *(chengdeng zhengjue)*, turning the wheel of Dharma by teaching others the truth *(zhuan falun)*, and saving others by ferrying them over from the state of suffering to the state of enlightenment *(du zhongsheng)*.[49] In a 1939 address, Taixu explicitly linked the ideal of becoming a buddha to China's republican revolution and the ongoing war of resistance against Japan:

> Śākyamuni's conquering Māra and all the fundamental illusions and passions was the beginning of his becoming a Buddha, and thus of the world having the precious jewel of a Buddha. By preaching he turned the wheel of the Law, which was the beginning of the world having the precious jewel of the Dharma. His efforts to save others led persons to become bhikṣus, arhats, and bodhisattvas, and thus was the beginning of the world having the precious jewel that is the sangha. Through the establishment of these three jewels, there began to be Buddhism in the world. Having Buddhism, the world then could enjoy the light that illumined the whole cosmos. Therefore his conquering the illusions and passions was the most important stage in becoming a Buddha and saving the world. . . .
>
> The so-called conquering of illusions and passions destroys all the dark things that disturb and obstruct, just like a revolution must first destroy the evil power of all bad systems and customs. From this we can see that the meaning of becoming a Buddha to save the world very much corresponds to that of a revolution to save a country. The original goal of a revolution is to establish something new. But first it must start by destroying things. Because formerly China's political power was held either [by emperors] according to the traditional autocratic system or by competing warlords who segmented the country, the government was not able to respond to needs and concentrate its strength to achieve the aims of defending the country and protecting the people. . . . In recent years imperialistic acts of unfair restraint and oppression against our country have reached a most serious stage, a most critical point, just like when the Buddha Śākyamuni vowed under the Bo tree, "If I do not become a Buddha, may I not arise from this seat," because the vow caused Māra to become afraid and jealous. So Māra manifested all kinds of demonic powers in order to disturb and harm the Buddha. Māra took all things dark, unenlightened, and disturbing to be his life. So if the Buddha did not conquer these demons then he could not become a Buddha, but on the contrary would forever remain under Māra's control. Now China is faced with this kind of situation. So if we are not able to engage in a war of resistance [against Japan] in order finally to prevail, then we will not be able to establish the country, but to the contrary become those vanquished by our enemies.[50]

As Taixu had suggested earlier, in his lengthy essay entitled "Ziyou shiguan" (A Historical Perspective on Freedom), the path toward becoming a buddha, toward becoming truly free from all the "demons" that bind and afflict humankind, involves tearing down and rebuilding the faulty mental structures and harmful social structures that frame human experience. These two kinds of structures are interrelated. Liberation requires becoming enlightened to the transformative implications of the doctrine of no-self and, on that basis, becoming engaged in the practical struggle for just and compassionate social, educational, economic, and political structures in society.[51] According to Taixu, Buddhists cannot effectively pursue spiritual wisdom without engaging in the daily quest to establish a pure land in this world. Hence he sought to inspire his followers with an expansive new idealism and utopianism, while simultaneously calling for a new Buddhist realism *(xianshi zhuyi)* and pragmatism in solving the world's problems.

POLITICAL REALISM

As Welch has appropriately commented, "probably the closest thing to a 'political monk' during the Republican era was Taixu."[52] The reformer acknowledged in his autobiography that as a young man his basic sympathies were with the Chinese anarchists. He maintained that anarchism and Buddhism were very close in political perspective, although he came to believe that the country could best make progress toward anarchism through a form of "democratic socialism."[53] He claimed that socialism and Buddhism similarly advocated human equality and social welfare, and he was impressed with the principle that people ought to contribute to society according to their abilities and receive according to their needs.

Early in his career, Taixu embraced the hope that socialists could eliminate monopolies controlled by wealthy capitalists, whose insensitive power and greed continued to cause such hardship for the peasants and urban working class. Yet by the mid-1920s, Taixu began to express a more moderate socio-economic perspective. He moved more toward the political center, distancing himself from those in the Communist Party and developing relationships with important Guomindang officials. As Welch observes:

> Perhaps because he had his fingers burned by encouraging radicalism among his students, or perhaps because he felt that the prestige for Buddhism could best be won by supporting the central government, or perhaps simply because he was getting older, Taixu became politically more conservative. In 1924 he wrote an article entitled "A Warning about the Communist Party," in which he said that the latter ought to be called "the party of killing and destruction, not the party of common property" (which is what its name means in Chinese).[54]

Taixu's moderating political views appear to be related to his evolving judgments about proper strategies for change. It might be said that the monk finally chose to situate himself somewhat right of center on the political spectrum, between the Guomindang on the right and the Communists on the left. The fundamental issues that he had to weigh carefully were the role of social conflict and whether, within the context of his "Buddhism for human life," the most effective strategies for ultimate transformation ought to be designed narrowly, for the individual citizen, or more broadly, to include the socio-political structures in which all persons found themselves.

As Arif Dirlik maintains, the Guomindang's perspective on change was quintessentially expressed in Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong). Initiated in 1934, the movement was based on the view that the salvation of the country could be attained most directly through hygienic and behavioral reform of the individual. Chiang's two most important goals for the Chinese populace were personal "cleanliness" *(qingjie)* and "discipline" *(guiju)*, both of which were intended to connote a certain measure of militarization of the citizenry. In response to widespread criticism that the New Life Movement was too conservative and narrowly conceived, leaders of the Guomindang claimed that the program aimed to alter the very basis of social behavior. Chiang himself asserted, for example:

> In order to become a healthy modern *(xiandai)* citizen, it is necessary first to have a strong and robust body; having a strong body, [one] then has a strong spirit; having a strong spirit, [one] can then acquire all the abilities to strengthen the nation; having all kinds of abilities to strengthen the nation, [one] can naturally defend the state and glorify the nation, help our state and nation to forever accord with the world and not again suffer from the aggression and oppression of foreign countries or receive disdain and insults.[55]

According to Dirlik, this conservative political philosophy developed primarily out of an abhorrence of social conflict. Because such conflict was traditionally judged to be the result of moral decline, the Guomindang denied it any important role in social change.

In contrast to this conservative position, the Communist Party took a much broader view. As Dirlik remarks,

> Communist policies were based on the premise that class struggle—or, in a more generalized sense, social conflict—was the motive force of social change, and social transformation the foundation of political change. . . . The dominant Communist view embodied in Mao Zedong's thought has conceived the relationship between individual improvement and social change as a dialectical one, with changes in one depen-

> dent upon—and, in their turn, determinative of—changes in the other, a conception consistent with the Marxist view of man as "the ensemble of social relations." . . . Whatever the conditions of rural mobilization and the occasional changes in Communist tactics, it is evident that it was their sustained ability to improve the people's livelihood, as well as their involvement of the people in social change, that was to a great extent responsible for the hold they came to have over the population. The people, mobilized in the revolutionary transformation of their own lives, were much more responsive to Communist guidance, even in the cause of "cleanliness" and "discipline," than they ever were to the Guomindang.[56]

Taixu's early associations with anarchists and revolutionaries who wanted to overthrow the Manchu dynasty led him, as a young man, to see the importance of institutional and structural change. He spoke freely about the need for racial, governmental, economic, and religious forms of "revolution" *(geming)*. He once remarked, "Even the idea of revolution growing out of love for the people . . . is in harmony with Buddhism. . . . In the process of a revolution there is always a phase of destruction preceding reconstruction."[57] Both his active support of the 1911 anti-Qing revolution and his involvement with the so-called invasion of Jin Shan reveal his implicit understanding that a certain amount of conflict and suffering would be necessary in the transformation of society and sangha.

Yet as he matured and confronted the actual consequences of division and violence, Taixu could not ultimately justify systematic class conflict as a means to an end. As a Buddhist, his understanding of moral intentionality was integrally linked to certain normative modes of action within his tradition that would not comfortably permit him to adopt Mao's communism. In the final analysis, then, without abandoning his basic affirmation that individual development and social progress were dialectically related, as the socialists and communists maintained, he adopted a position much more in consonance with the Guomindang than with the Communist Party.

As a result, Taixu spoke expansively about the harmony between Buddhism and Sun Yat-sen's "three principles of the people" *(sanmin zhuyi)*, even stating in one article that "Buddhism is the ultimate goal of Sanminism and Sanminism is Buddhism put into practice."[58] He wrote favorably about the concern of Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement for propriety *(li)*, justice *(yi)*, honesty *(lian)*, and sense of shame *(chi)*.[59] He occasionally quoted Sun and Chiang, stood proudly at the side of the generalissimo for a photograph in 1928, traveled abroad twice as a goodwill ambassador of the Nationalist government, and accepted state subsidies for the operation of his seminary near Chongqing.[60] Some people even came to think that he was secretly a member of the Guomindang, although the suggestion was always denied by those closest to him.

Taixu wanted all his followers, monastic and lay, to be knowledgeable about current political issues and events and active in addressing social problems, despite the fact that most monks during the Republican period remained totally uninvolved in such "worldly" affairs. In fact, as Prip-Møller's research in Republican China has documented, a number of Buddhist monasteries at the time even prohibited monks from discussing politics, posting signs that read, "Whoever delights in talking politics and whose heart is bent on secular matters will not be allowed to live in the monastery."[61] Nevertheless, Taixu urged his followers to adopt a realistic perspective on politics, aware that one of the most critical general concerns of humankind was finding "the most reasonable and perfect form of politics."[62]

Taixu maintained that the traditional Buddhist ideal of an enlightened ruler *(cakravartin)* provided a parallel both to the ancient western concept of a philosopher-king, as recommended by Plato, and the ancient Chinese concept of a sage-king. Thus those rulers who gained insight into the absolute emptiness and interdependence of all things would doubtless exceed all others in governing with wisdom and compassion. Accordingly, they could advance human rights and freedoms like those enjoyed in Europe and America while preventing what had resulted from such freedoms within the western context—namely, an unceasing competition between individuals that appeared to promote equality but that actually encouraged inequality, economic classism, and imperialistic colonialism. Explaining the origins of

socialism, Taixu argued that it had developed in reaction to the excesses of western individualism:

> Socialism opposed democracies because, although democracies claimed that all persons were free and equal, all were by no means free and equal. Only a minority of persons was free; the majority was not free. It reacted against the fact that [in democracies] all economic resources were enjoyed by and controlled by only a few people, as it also reacted against the politics of traditional nationalism. Thus socialism was formed. This kind of socialism is something that many individuals organize as a group, so that in such groups all kinds of benefits can be shared and help the majority of the people.[63]

Although Taixu was greatly influenced by socialist perspectives in formulating his judgments about forms of western democratic capitalism, and believed that socialist analyses of the reasons for conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat were largely correct, he was not a naive promoter of socialism but was alert to different expressions of socialism and to the contrasts between collectivism *(jichan zhuyi)* and communism *(gongchan zhuyi)*. Thus he recognized the positive religio-philosophical impulses that contributed to the rise of socialism while rejecting both Marx's economic determinism and its reductionistic views of religion. He also acknowledged the lively debate between those who believed in the activist role of the central government and those anarchists who wanted to get rid of it. Above all, Taixu wanted to distinguish between socialists who were advocates of gradual, peaceful reform and those who were proponents of rapid change through violent revolution. Although he appreciated the socialists' aims and thought them to have much in common with those of Buddhist modernists, eventually he judged them to be seriously flawed. He wrote in 1935:

> With regard to the errors of socialist means, we can enumerate four: (1) socialists consider the external environment and forget about individual persons. What they emphasize is entirely the reconstruction of the environment, the restructuring of society, but not the reforming of the mind and body through personal moral cultivation. There is an ancient saying, "From the Son of Heaven to the commoner, all must take the cultivation of the self as the essential task." If the self is not cultivated, then the family will not be orderly, the country will not be [properly] governed, and the society will not be just. (2) They focus strictly on property and neglect morality. They think that bad environments result from property inequities, so they only try to alter the property system without realizing that economic classes also result from changes and developments in psychological states and desires. (3) They seek to correct the present consequences of previous actions while ignoring the root causes. The various classes that humans have created are also all the consequences of previous deeds. Because the original actions were different, the karmic consequences are different. So if they think that they can merely remove the consequences, such as despots and capitalists, without realizing the need to improve the root causes, then while their aim is certainly a good one, they can only get rid of evil results but they cannot sow good seeds. Thus in the twinkling of an eye the warlords become dictators and the criminals, tyrants. This is tantamount to changing merely the form but not the substance. This doesn't help anything! (4) They try to eliminate individual property but allow a person's grasping for such to continue. They eliminate all classes and nationalize all property, so that people forget the boundaries that delineate the things that belong to the self. The intention of communism is for everyone to attain what they each privately desire, but their grasping desires only become more intense. Since individual property comes from grasping for things, how can the possessing of things be forgotten if the self's grasping is not eliminated? And as a result, people become lazy and do not like to work hard. They only want to obtain things without making an effort. Many kinds of industries, therefore, will not be productive, and the whole situation will ultimately return to its previous state.[64]

In the 1920s, Taixu had expressed the fear that the most pressing danger in the twentieth century was the possible conflagration of societies in class warfare. The danger was not so much that the rich and powerful would continue to dominate and oppress the poor, but that the poor would rise up violently to overthrow the rich. Hence he urged the poor not to follow the incitement of revolutionaries who could possibly destroy evil but who could not establish the good, who could kill but not thereby give life to a more perfect way. In a

parallel manner, he sharply warned the privileged classes in China and around the globe:

> From now on, the world's most dangerous issue will not be the tyranny and struggle for hegemony by those who constitute the powerful class internationally. It will be the fact that those who are weak will unite to seek revenge on those who are powerful. The danger will not lie in the monopolies and competitions of the capitalist class, but in the united struggle of resistance by the poor against the capitalist class. In fact, this kind of situation is already happening! Throughout the world the weak and the poor already are becoming out of control like a raging fire or blaze on the prairie, or like a tiger or rhinoceros breaking free from its cage. The powerful class and the capitalist class are already facing their total collapse, being surrounded on all four sides [by the weak and the poor]. So as I have said before, only Buddhism can save us in this dangerous crisis.[65]

The reformer argued that if Buddhists were to help heal the wounds of a divided global society and prevent the uncontrolled violence that was certain to erupt, then even members of the sangha had to become active in political affairs. After World War II, some of his monastic and lay supporters hoped that Taixu would go even farther and endorse the formation of a Buddhist political party to increase the religion's influence on public policy. The monk acknowledged that he had seriously considered the possibility and was "slow to decide."[66] He knew that in Burma many monks had participated in political activities and had even joined in the military resistance against the invading Japanese. He recognized that in Sri Lanka the sangha was split over the decision by some of its members to form a Buddhist political party, while in Tibet certain lamas even served as local government officials.

Taixu realized that there were real advantages as well as disadvantages to political participation and organization in China, especially for the monastic community. One the one hand, if monks and nuns considered their life and work to be completely beyond politics, they could easily find themselves ignored or, even worse, persecuted, and their institutional properties appropriated by unfriendly governments.

On the other hand, if they became too directly involved in politics, they could quickly find their independence compromised by such associations and, as a result, public respect for their religious leadership diminished.

The best course, Taixu judged, was to encourage participation in political activities for both lay and monastic followers while simultaneously discouraging monks and nuns from serving in any elective office or in the formation of any specifically Buddhist political party. He thus affirmed not only the constitutional right but the responsibility of every Buddhist, including members of the sangha, to listen to the concerns of the people, study public policy issues, and seek practical solutions for the benefit of all sentient beings. Yet he also dissuaded monks and nuns from pursuing political careers in which they could be called upon to exercise power over others, be feared or envied because of the authority of their office, and lose time and opportunity for important religious duties. By rejecting the idea of a specifically Buddhist political party, he also avoided making party affiliation a divisive religious issue. As he wrote,

> Lay Buddhists can participate as much as they wish in various political parties and associations, or they can organize political parties using other names, but they must not use the name of Buddhism in order to organize a political party.
>
> Again, some Buddhists are members of the Guomindang, the Youth Party, the Democratic Socialist Party, the Democratic League, or even of the Communist Party. Even more Buddhists are not members of any political party or association. Since they have already decided to join certain parties or associations, or not to join one, were we to organize a Buddhist Party we could not ask them to change their affiliation and join the Buddhist Party. And if the Buddhist Party were to become yet another independent party, then we would alienate ourselves from them. My friends who study Buddhism and lay Buddhists are members of different parties and associations, or they have chosen not to join such groups. Through philosophical, literary, cultural, educational, charitable, and other activities, I have friendly relations with members of every religion, and with nonreligious people as well. If I were to lead a

> Buddhist political party, then on the contrary all these ties would be reduced. Therefore Buddhism does not want to organize a political party.[67]

ENVISIONING A LASTING PEACE

Although Taixu had always been known within the Buddhist community for his modernist perspectives on social activism, after the 1937 Japanese invasion that initiated the long Chinese nightmare of World War II, he was increasingly outspoken on specific social and political issues. From the vantage point of the Dharma, he sought both to critique the destructive forces that he saw at work in the world and to envision a more equitable and peaceful world. In a significant 1943 essay entitled "Lianheguo zhansheng hou zhi pinghe shijie" (A Peaceful World After the Allied Victory), the Buddhist master outlined a number of his assessments of the world's situation and concrete proposals for the post-war era. It was his position that no expedient compromises could be forged with the Axis powers in order to end the war. All people should realize, he asserted, that the Axis countries' aggression was based on three wholly unacceptable principles: "first, militarism; second, racism; and third, a cruelly autocratic and superstitious form of heroism."[68] Therefore, anything less than total surrender on their part would be nothing but a temporary armistice that would be followed by further fighting as the struggle for true freedom from their tyranny continued. Confident in the ultimate victory of the Allied forces, he thought it important to describe the conditions necessary for a lasting peace marked by the "absolute equality" of all nations and the universal will of all peoples to live in harmony.

The key to that future, he asserted, will always reside within human minds—that is, within peaceful minds that generate peaceful lives. According to Taixu, the human mind can, in fact, be linked to four basic kinds of ambition *(xinzhi)* that determine moral behavior. The first and most prevalent kind of ambition is to benefit oneself and one's family; the second most prevalent is to serve one's national or ethnic group; the third is to benefit all humankind; and the fourth

is to save all sentient beings in the universe. Given the complexity of human personality, most people's thoughts and actions at any given moment are expressive of more than a single ambition. However, the far-reaching fourth ambition, Taixu asserted, is distinctly that of the bodhisattva of Mahāyāna scripture and tradition. As a spiritual ideal, it motivates far too few in this world and should be considered the supreme ambition that remains for virtually all human beings a future goal.

More immediately or pragmatically, however, the first three kinds of ambition must be reprioritized in reverse order. The benefits of all humankind must come before nation, family, and self. Only when individuals, families, and nations are willing to sacrifice their own interests for those of the whole human community will the cornerstones for a lasting peace be put into place. Thus the new mandate for every Buddhist must become, in a real sense, "to break his relations with not only his family but also with his country . . . [in order to] look upon the people of the world in the same brotherly spirit."[69] The reformer remarked:

> Some will ask: Since you de-emphasize the benefits of national and ethnic groups, is not your position close to the internationalism of the Communist Party? This is definitely not the case. We should realize that the Communist Party's proletarian class internationalism is based on division and struggle, but the good of all humankind is based on peace and harmony. The good of all humankind includes the good of all nations and ethnic groups. So certainly we can accommodate the full development of that which benefits national and ethnic groups while not undermining the establishment of a long-lasting peaceful world in which all persons benefit.[70]

Taixu thought that the global society of the post-war era would require appropriate educational, economic, and governmental structures to maintain a lasting peace. With regard to education, the Buddhist master argued that its scope was universally too narrow. In every country the primary aim of educators was merely to prepare individuals for productive work within the economic, political, and military organizations of their state. A new perspective on education had

to be developed to encompass the more expansive goal of preparing people to become global citizens and contribute to a harmonious global culture. For this, a holistic form of education was needed that would lead both children and adults toward a richer, modern vision of the complementarity and interdependence of all peoples.

Though present-day colleges and universities might claim to provide "higher" education, Taixu observed, it is clearly not the "highest" education concerned with moral culture. Hence what is needed at the post-secondary level is a new "international" or "global" university, established jointly by leaders from all nations and with branch campuses throughout the world. "What we need," Taixu remarked, "is an institution where great souls are trained":

> The mission of this university and its branches will be to form a new world culture out of the different cultures, to eliminate all differences and prejudices, to bring about the free flow and assimilation of cultures and to lay a cultural foundation for peace. . . . Universal equality, freedom, justice and love must be taught to the future generations. Furthermore, the field of human activities must be expanded to reach out to the entire universe, to all spheres of nature. Through such broadened education a healthy body and healthy soul will be established in every individual. Man will become a harmonious part of nature. Instead of limiting his sphere of activities to his immediate surroundings his outlook will be the universe and heaven and become truly a part of the trinity of heaven, earth and man.[71]

With regard to economics, Taixu advocated free trade and economic cooperation. "Free trading and equal access to raw materials and markets," he wrote, "must exist in the peaceful world to come."[72] Large countries and small must respect one another as equals and work together for economic progress and improved living standards for all peoples. Unbridled capitalism must be recognized as the destructive force that it is, he asserted, as most world leaders, including the U.S. President Roosevelt, had already come to admit. Large companies that irresponsibly manipulate national and international markets for their own gain must be regulated in order to encourage economic forces that benefit all levels of society. "Capitalism and the profit system must go," Taixu flatly asserted. "All economic activities must be undertaken with national and universal welfare in mind. Production and consumption must be planned and controlled. There should be no deficiency and no waste."[73]

Four additional economic principles were important for the postwar era. First, said the Buddhist reformer, rich countries should help poor countries; developed nations should grant assistance to underdeveloped nations. Taixu realized that there were significant differences in economic status between the industrialized and the nonindustrialized world. Therefore he commended especially the United States for taking the lead in offering financial assistance for developing nations.

Second, after the defeat of Germany and Japan, along with their allies, economic aid should be granted to them for reconstruction and rehabilitation and no war reparations demanded.

Third, immigration policies should be liberalized. To promote economic efficiency and productivity, both immigration within the national borders of large countries like China, as well as international immigration, should be encouraged, especially to undeveloped countries in Africa and South America. Likewise, all forms of discrimination against immigrants should be ended.

Fourth, monetary policies should be strictly monitored. Government restraints should seek to stabilize prices and prevent the chaos often caused by rapid inflation.

With regard to global politics, Taixu was optimistic that the world was moving toward a universal democracy. Nevertheless, he declared, "With regard to each nation's internal political system, of course it remains a principle that the people should decide the issue by themselves. There is no need to force democracy on people, for sooner or later gradual progress can be made in enlightening them."[74] This modernizing process of political "enlightenment," as Taixu described it, involves the awakening of all nations to the desirability of both democratic freedoms and a centralized form of "global government."

With regard to a democratic form of government, the nations who had less experience with democracy, including China and the Soviet Union, would learn from those who had more experience. Thereby rapid progress could be made toward defining universal

rights and obligations. Colonies would necessarily be given their independence, because all forms of colonial oppression and imperialism were obvious impediments to lasting peace. Taixu called on Great Britain in particular to set an example in this.

With respect to an international form of government, the Buddhist master believed that an impetus for political unification in the post-war period would surely emerge from the close cooperation between China, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. The signs of movement toward political unification would be a viable "world court," a respected "world congress," and a unified military force. The Permanent Court of International Justice (also popularly called the "World Court"), which sat at The Hague, had ceased to function, for all intents and purposes, after the German occupation of the Netherlands in 1940. Moreover, the operations of the ineffectual League of Nations in Geneva were virtually dead. Nevertheless, Taixu saw in both institutions foundational steps to the future. He envisioned a new court with real powers to settle disputes and protect the rights of the poor and the weak. And he called for a new international organization with proportional representation to foster cooperation and peace among all peoples. "Within three to six months after the end of the war," he stated, "a 'World Congress' (Shijie daibiao dahui) must be formed. Germany, Italy, and the other Axis powers must join this representative organization within one to three years."[75]

With regard to a military, he called for strict arms controls and the creation of a single international force, stating:

> It [the World Congress] should control the military forces of all the nations and have the power of military sanction against aggressor states and those who should refuse to submit to the justice of the Congress. Its military strength should be formed by taking over arms belonging to the defeated Axis nations and those of the Allies. In addition, no nation should be allowed to manufacture arms for its own use in the future. The Commander-in-Chief of the Congress Armed Forces should be appointed by rotation from China, the United States, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., and five other neutrals to avoid the abusive power by any nation or individual.[76]

Beyond all his specific educational, economic, and political proposals for the creation of new international programs and institutions in the post-war era was Taixu's overarching call for the nurturing of a truly "moral culture" *(daode wenhua)*. To achieve a lasting peace, what the world needed most fundamentally was a sweeping spiritual transformation, a universal change within the human heart that would alter the very fabric of social interaction and political engagement. In the present world, Taixu observed, "parties are formed for the defense of common interests, so that the whole world may be said to be composed of coalitions of all sorts, which are always on the alert, and whose object it is to use every possible means to suppress their rivals."[77]

However, according to Taixu, democracy must finally yield more than the protected right of individuals and coalitions to participate in power struggles for their own benefit. From the Buddhist perspective, such a limited understanding of democratic goals would guarantee only the continuation of a destructive individualism while ignoring "the link that unites our lives with that of every living being."[78] Ultimately, he claimed, each person has to see clearly that "all human egos are bound together by bonds of sympathy, and each of them radiates a subtle influence which reaches all those who can respond to it."[79] Accordingly, as C. Yates McDaniel observed in 1935, Taixu and other Chinese Buddhist modernists argued, in essence, that because all sentient beings manifest buddha-nature, "democracy is government based upon compassion and love, and the recognition that one is the servant of all."[80] For Taixu, the acceptance of servanthood was the defining task of the bodhisattva's way.

CHAPTER 5

A CREATIVE RECOVERY OF TRADITION

The central spiritual paradigms of any religious tradition can be understood to address the existential situation of the majority of individual people who are perceived to form its holy community. The Confucian scholars of classical China, for example, understood their community, in the midst of disorder, to be on the way—via the rectification of names and the extension of virtue—to an all-embracing experience of the unity of heaven, earth, and humankind. This was the attainment of the rare yet paradigmatic *junzi*—the "superior man" (James Legge), the "gentleman" (Arthur Waley), or the "profound person" (Tu Wei-ming).[1] According to the metaphysics of the early Confucians, the universe was a thoroughly moral one. Each person possessed both an "evaluating mind" capable of discovering the inherent order of the cosmos and an ability to emulate exemplary behavioral models.[2] Indeed, argues Hu Shi, the basic logic of Confucianism began with the attempt to discover, through the study of names, what things ought to be and do.[3] Discovery was the key to the regulation of the social and political order by means of an elaborate system of relational ideals *(li)* attributed to an absolute and a priori origin.[4]

Mahāyāna Buddhism, in contrast, presented the Chinese with a spiritual path toward a wordless wisdom that was beyond all names and forms and the suffering associated with them. Such was the

attainment of the paradigmatic bodhisattva. In view of Buddhism's radically different understanding of reality and philosophy of language, early Chinese masters such as Daoan (312–385) and Sengzhao (374–414) saw the necessity of directly attacking the Confucian claim that "names correspond to things." Accordingly, moral development was presented not as progressive discrimination but as progressive forgetting *(jian wang)*. Bodhisattvas were worthy of praise precisely because, having "forgotten" all names and forms as sources of binding attachment, they were freed to act compassionately within the world. Having defeated the temptations of the great deceiver, Māra, to grasp for names and forms, and having been shaken by the transformative truth that "form is emptiness and emptiness form," bodhisattvas were freed to become friends of all sentient beings, refuges for all those who suffer.[5]

The Confucian *junzi*, therefore, was one who practiced a comprehensive discrimination based on a linguistic coding of cosmic order. A classical emphasis within the tradition was on ethico-religious cartography via lexicography. To employ Jonathan Smith's terminology, the typical Confucianist was engaged in a "locative" project, locating and attuning all aspects of the human microcosm in relation to the heavenly macrocosm—a project that the *junzi* had successfully completed.[6] The career of a bodhisattva presented the Chinese with a sharply contrasting spiritual trajectory, for in Buddhism it was the evil Māra who enticingly offered the linguistic code as an actual map of reality. Therefore, the Buddhist masters sought to recontextualize human existence by reference to a nondual realm, or dimension of experience, that was beyond language and ordinary categories of understanding but that, once discovered by the bodhisattva, provided both release from and meaning for life within this world of time and space.

Moreover, because Chinese Buddhists generally believed that all beings were endowed with "intrinsic enlightenment" or an original "buddha-nature," the arousal of the thought of enlightenment *(bodhicitta)*—the decisive conversion experience that was held to initiate the bodhisattva's spiritual journey—was understood to be, potentially, only a breath away. Most Buddhists in China assumed that in the

karmic past of any new bodhisattva, there was a point at which some enlightened figure had planted a seed of truth that took root in a virtuous disposition *(gotra)*. Subsequently, "after many lifetimes, thanks to the infused grace of the various teacher-saviors and the merit earned by responding to them, a person becomes able to put forth the *bodhicitta*."[7] Surprisingly "graced" in this manner, new bodhisattvas proceed to consolidate their *bodhicitta,* take their public vows of compassionate service, and advance along the path of enlightenment while working for the welfare of all living beings.

Taixu's own portraits of the bodhisattva path were not strikingly original or controversial. Nevertheless, they may be said to constitute a creative recovery of tradition that reveals his particular form of piety, for in defining the bodhisattva's path of action, the reformer sought to recover and underscore the elements of his tradition that were especially relevant for a socially engaged "Buddhism for human life"—elements that were often neglected in contemporary China. He aimed thereby to inspire self-confidence in common bodhisattvas, urging them to dream great dreams about what they could accomplish in the world. He wanted to remind them of the precepts and perfections, and to encourage them to think creatively about establishing a pure land on earth. He hoped to reshape the community of monastic bodhisattvas to teach and model the Dharma more effectively. And he sought to offer a compelling apologetic for his understanding of a modern form of Buddhism, in light of sharp criticism from both inside and outside of the Chinese sangha.

ILLUMINATING THE TRUE WAY

Jan Yün-hua has observed not only that the idea of the bodhisattva was one of the most important and popular themes in Chinese Buddhist literature, but also that these great beings were presented through a threefold typology that "introduced a new image of the religious founder through past lives of the Buddha; it provided a spiritual map to man, and indicated that the religious goal was attainable through cultivation; [and] it brought to the Chinese masses a warm, compassionate and powerful personal deity."[8] Thus, (1) through the Jātaka tales of Gautama's previous lives, Buddhism presented an image of religious and moral leadership far more expansive and imaginative than that of the ancient sage-kings of China; (2) it introduced the striking idea of the achievability of the religious goal through individual cultivation; and (3) it offered the hope of salvation through the skill and power of compassionate deities—namely, the celestial or "phantasma bodhisattvas," as Lancaster has referred to them.[9]

Two controversial issues about this threefold typology are significant for understanding Taixu's presentation of the bodhisattva path. First, although all Buddhists acknowledged that the bodhisattva's career is a long one of practicing the perfections *(pāramitā)* through numerous stages *(bhūmi)* of prescribed spiritual development, questions arose about how applicable this path was to normal human beings.[10] The historic debate concerned the extent to which a typical follower should interpret the *inspirational* bodhisattva career of the Enlightened One as an *aspirational* model. On the one hand, there is little in the Jātaka tales to suggest that Gautama's unique path of spiritual virtuosity constitutes a practical ideal to be embraced by the entire community, little encouragement to imagine that everyone should aspire to such an illustrious and noble religious career. Accordingly, most teachers of the Theravāda tradition have continued to interpret the Jātaka tales as inspirational reading—that is, as literature that reminds adherents of the extraordinary wisdom and compassion displayed through many lifetimes by the solitary buddha of this age.

In the Mahāyāna tradition, on the other hand, the bodhisattva path that Gautama trod so tirelessly is portrayed as a universal ideal. Members of the Mahāyāna community are meant not only to be inspired by the Buddha's glorious career, but to aspire to become like him in the realization of their own buddha-nature as well. This is directly related, of course, to the community's self-definition; the "Great Vehicle" (Skt. Mahāyāna) is synonymous with the careers of bodhisattvas. As Peter Gregory has noted, Chinese Buddhists generally followed the presentation in *The Lotus Sūtra* that defines śrāvakas as those disciples who attained liberation through contemplation of the Four Noble Truths, and pratyekabuddhas as those who achieved

release by penetrating the truth of conditioned origination (Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda;* Ch. *yuanqi*). Yet these two vehicles lead to an arhatship that is markedly inferior to the goal of the bodhisattva path. That goal, which the *Lotus* assures disciples that they will ultimately attain, is nothing less than supreme buddhahood.[11]

The presentation of the religious community's central paradigm, therefore, primarily addresses those new bodhisattvas struggling to remain faithful to the enlightened life that they have only recently understood to be a real possibility for them personally. Thus the bodhisattva ideal appeals to those persons who, inspired by the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, aspire to attain the selfless, transcendental path on which those great beings course.

In affirming the applicability of the bodhisattva path for all people, Taixu distinguished sharply between the perspective of the Nikāya schools and that of Mahāyāna tradition. The Chinese reformer observed that the paths of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are full of pitfalls and not fully in consonance with the absolute selflessness that Śākyamuni realized. Their limited goal of self-enlightenment is not the highest goal to which all Buddhists should aspire. He remarked:

> Mahāyāna followers seek self-enlightenment in order to awaken others, so that all might together realize eternal truth. Nikāya Buddhism is like a single wheeled cart; Mahāyāna is like a train or a steamship in which everyone can sit together. Nikāya Buddhism lacks vows of compassion, whereas Mahāyāna's compassionate vows are profound. In other words, the difference between Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism is essentially that between manifesting the bodhi-mind and an unwillingness to manifest it.[12]

Second, in addition to this basic distinction between Nikāya and Mahāyāna Buddhism, Taixu emphasized one particular response to the bodhisattva ideal within the Mahāyāna community itself. As Luis Gómez has remarked, in Mahāyāna there is a natural tension "between the notion of Bodhisattvas as supernatural beings on the one hand, and on the other hand Bodhisattvas as human ideals: 'Bodhisattva' as a state of perfection attainable by real human beings, and 'Bodhisattvas' as a name for immanent or potential enlightenment inherent to

conscious life. This tension is part of the dynamics of the myth, and does not imply that only one of the alternatives must be the orthodox or 'true' definition of 'Bodhisattva.'"[13] Accordingly, Sangharakshita has stated, Mahāyāna masters have historically differentiated two basic religious responses of the heart:

> The first, which may be termed the active or masculine response, consists in determining to become a Bodhisattva oneself and to take part in the great work of universal emancipation. The second, the passive or feminine response, consists in resolving to have complete faith in the power of the Bodhisattva's vow and to allow oneself to be saved by him. These two responses or reactions of the devotee when confronted by the Bodhisattva Ideal form the psychological basis of what Nāgārjuna terms the "difficult path" and the "easy path."... In the Mahāyāna the distinction is between the Bodhisattva (or Bodhisattvas: the Ideal is singular only in the abstract) who out of compassion vows to establish a Pure Land and liberate all beings, and those who by virtue of their faith in him are reborn into that Pure Land.[14]

The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikās* (Fundamentals of the Middle Way) and other important works of the renowned Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250) were rooted in the analytic concerns of the Abhidharma literature and the wisdom perspectives of the Prajñāpāramitā texts. However, through a dialectic of oppositions intended to highlight the absolute emptiness of all things *(śūnyatā),* they provided legitimacy for both these religious responses: the "difficult" path of self-reliance, and the "easy" path of dependence. In the late Qing and Republican periods in China, most monks and nuns became familiar with both paths and examined their own personalities and capabilities in relation to these two forms, or expressions, of piety. Moreover, most masters were supportive of the dual practice of Chan and Pure Land and judged the two to be complementary.[15] According to Chün-fang Yü, this was even true of the Pure Land master Yinguang, who was largely responsible for the revival of Buddhist devotionalism in the period.[16]

Despite the fact that Taixu occasionally sanctioned such dual practice to attract the masses, as has been noted, the growing popularity

of Pure Land devotionalism concerned him. Kenneth Ch'en has stated that "of the four million or so lay devotees of Buddhism in China during the 1930's, it is estimated that sixty to seventy percent considered themselves to be followers of the Pure Land School."[17] No source for the estimate is cited, and the figure may be merely Ch'en's own guess, but by all accounts of Buddhism in the early twentieth century, Pure Land piety was dominant within the lay community and growing within the sangha. The monk Zhenhua confesses that he was often moved to tears when reading some of Yinguang's *gāthās,* which proclaimed in sum: "With Chan there's no one but yourself, while Pure Land borrows Buddha's strength; when these are on a balance weighed, Pure Land seems best suited to our need. . . . For men in times of Law's decay, this way alone can meet the test."[18] Taixu emphatically disagreed with such teaching and asserted that too many lay devotees and too many monks were satisfied with the passive way of dependence without understanding its profound doctrinal basis or the value of the active way.

In accord with his emphasis on a "Buddhism for human life," Taixu attempted to redress what he considered to be an unfortunate imbalance within the Chinese Buddhist community between these two possible forms of Mahāyāna piety. This effort was grounded in his belief that the active way, the way of self-reliance, was the most appropriate and responsible form of Buddhist practice in the modern world, and that the dominance of the passive way, the way of dependence, had led to deleterious misunderstandings of the religion both inside and outside of the Sangha. In other words, as an ethical pietist for whom religion primarily meant doing things—above all, engaging in compassionate forms of social interaction—the visionary and otherworldly emphasis of Pure Land devotionalism was counterproductive.

Thus Taixu was convinced that, rather than encouraging members of the Mahāyāna community to proceed energetically in their own practice of selfless service in the world, such devotionalism had led them to postpone action in favor of reliance on visualization of the pure lands, the worship of images, and the recitation of the name of

Amitābha Buddha *(nian fo)* in hopes of rebirth in another cosmic realm. In fact, as Taixu emphasized in his last series of lectures, many people were confused about the true nature of a bodhisattva:

> Everyone knows the name "bodhisattva," but most people really do not understand its true meaning. Usually people take images to represent bodhisattvas. If they see an image made of mud or carved of wood, or sculptured in relief, or made of metal, or painted, or made of paper, then they all call these images "bodhisattvas." They even refer to imported toy dolls as "foreign bodhisattvas." This is mistaken. This latter habit has especially become a most serious error. We ought to realize that among such images are images of bodhisattvas. However, there are also images of buddhas that have a higher status than bodhisattvas, and there are images of ancient sages and worthies that have a lower status, and even images of demons with the head of an ox and other evil spiritual beings. So we cannot ignorantly call all of them "bodhisattvas." At the same time, we certainly cannot refer to bodhisattvas and images of bodhisattvas as if they were one and the same. If one of us who is living has the heart of a bodhisattva and does the good deeds of a bodhisattva, then that person is a bodhisattva.
>
> *"Pusa"* [bodhisattva] is a rough transliteration of the original term, which in the Indian language sounds like *"puti saduo."* The meaning of *"puti"* [bodhi] is awareness or wisdom; *"saduo"* refers to sentient beings. So together they mean "beings whose essence is wisdom."
>
> The original meaning of "bodhisattva" is one who can manifest a bodhi-mind, who with great wisdom seeks for enlightenment and with a great compassionate heart helps all those who suffer. This is a bodhisattva. Therefore we can take this bodhi-mind as our starting point in order to seek this [enlightenment] and to transform things. If we not only entertain the ideal but are actually able to practice it, we may be called true bodhisattvas. So bodhisattvas are those who are awakened to the truth. They are able to become enlightened themselves and then to awaken others so that all make progress in cultivating supreme enlightenment. These are enlightenment beings. Therefore bodhisattvas are obviously not lifeless images but those who have a bodhi-mind.[19]

According to Taixu, the most efficacious path for those pursuing bodhisattvahood is not through some celestial realm or distant pure land. Rather, it takes our common, ordinary human experience on this plane as its starting point and "proceeds step by step toward sacrality and creates a pure land, progressing from shallow to deep, changing the inferior to the superior."[20] Yet Taixu was not oblivious to the "dynamic" of the bodhisattva myth and its "extraordinary" dimension. In fact, his student Yinshun was later to criticize him for not sufficiently attacking the worship of celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It might be said that Taixu was trying to recover this very dynamic in his tradition by highlighting the "ordinary" and looking for the miraculous not so much in the heavens as in the human heart. As he put it elsewhere, "In Buddhism, the bodhisattva is certainly not an idol shaped from clay or carved from wood, but is a kind of person who has great thoughts about transforming the cosmos and improving human life."[21] For Taixu, because all human beings are capable of manifesting this great bodhi-mind, all are by nature bodhisattvas, even if they do not recognize it; they need only awaken to this fact and take up the path toward a full and complete enlightenment. "Buddhism puts the emphasis on actual conduct in life, on living the truth," he wrote. "It does not end in talk."[22]

A PRELUDE TO THE PATH

The traditional prescriptions for learning the path step by step are detailed in the Mahāyāna tradition for the typical bodhisattva (that is, for the bodhisattva who still has far to go in his study). Accordingly, Taixu commented, "The study course that I am advocating is especially for encouraging bodhisattvas who have only just begun to aspire to a bodhi-mind. The intent is to help people to become great-hearted common bodhisattvas, not those bodhisattvas who are instantly able to transcend the two vehicles [of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas]."[23]

The course of study involves progression through a series of ten stages *(shi di)* involving both visionary and ethical attainment. The course, Taixu said, is much like one's progression from kindergarten

to advanced doctoral studies. It proceeds through three basic movements: (1) preliminary expressions of "right faith" *(zheng xin)* and taking refuge in the Three Jewels *(san bao);* (2) conversion experiences, which constitute the production of the thought of enlightenment that issues forth in great vows of compassion *(bei yuan);* and (3) practice of the Six Perfections *(liu du).*

For Taixu, preparation for the long course begins by a simple opening of the heart that is more profound than mere intellectual assent. "According to the *Huayan jing,*" observed the Chinese master, "'faith is the origin of the way and the mother of merit that nurtures the roots of all goodness.'. . . Therefore even if practitioners perform every kind of good deed, if they do not have faith, their deeds are polluted and unclean and insufficient to attain the highest path."[24] As he commented elsewhere, "It is difficult to discover the truth of Buddhism in the theories and innumerable works that have been written on the subject. To grasp it we must first of all open our hearts after the manner of the Buddha; it is enough if we have glimpsed the truth for an instant, and although we cannot expect to attain to perfect enlightenment immediately, nevertheless, we shall have the consolation of never again falling into an inferno of darkness."[25]

People give witness to the opening of their hearts in faith, he explained, most importantly by taking refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism. In a spirit of self-sacrifice, they should joyfully declare in the presence of others, "I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha." With excited anticipation but a calm mind, they should prostrate themselves and dedicate their lives to making this statement actually meaningful day by day. According to Taixu, the feelings commonly associated with taking refuge in the Three Jewels are much like those of a person who, after having encountered terrible difficulties in the world, returns home to the security and understanding of compassionate parents.

As one way of distancing himself from those who emphasized dependence on celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas, Taixu maintained that, among the three refuges, taking refuge in the Dharma always has precedence. "The Three Jewels are the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha," he stated, "but in the order of their importance for awakening faith,

it begins with the Dharma."[26] According to Taixu, the Dharma in which Buddhists take refuge has two meanings. The narrow or more common meaning of "Dharma" refers to those things specifically taught by Gautama. Yet the term refers more broadly to truth in its all-encompassing sense. This universal truth is discerned through a wisdom that lays bare the nature of reality as it really is. Therefore, Taixu maintained, those who wish to enter the bodhisattva path fundamentally take refuge in this holistic Dharma and not in any particular buddha or celestial bodhisattva.

Nevertheless, while those who wish to become bodhisattvas ought to consider the Dharma as their principal refuge, their secondary refuge is, of course, Śākyamuni. He is not only their master and model, according to Taixu, but their "good friend"as well. "The Buddha is not a creator of the cosmos and human life," he remarked, "nor is he a lord of the universe who causes misfortunes and grants blessings. He is one who has completely awakened to the truth about the cosmos and human life and at the same time has expounded numerous enlightened principles to instruct people. . . . Before he awoke to the truth, he was the same as all other sentient beings. However, through his teachings about enlightenment, he has become a good friend of all beings."[27]

Taixu believed that all those taking up the bodhisattva path should recognize that taking refuge in Śākyamuni means taking refuge in all the buddhas of the ten directions and three realms "because the wisdom and virtue of the buddhas is perfectly complete and all buddhas are absolutely equal. So while we only take refuge in our root teacher Śākyamuni, in principle we also take refuge in all of the buddhas."[28] The ultimate goal is to realize what these great beings have already realized—that is, to achieve buddhahood *(cheng fo)*. Taixu wrote:

> The doctrines of Buddhism concern transforming this world of physical and mental phenomena from one in which there are a myriad of living beings into one in which there are buddhas. This world and a buddha-realm are not separate because all living beings are in fact already buddhas. If this is so, what is the distinction between buddhas and all living beings? Although both reside in this world of physical and mental phenomena, the myriad of living beings are confused and deluded. For this reason their activities in the world, which stem from their physical and mental states, are disorderly and harmful. As a result, the world has become one of hardship and suffering. . . . Yet if their minds become like mirrors, then what is reflected in the clear brightness of the mirrors will also become clear and bright. Then a buddha-realm will consist of all living beings. We need only an opportunity for cultivation and we can straighten out and transform the world of physical and mental phenomena. Then every person will have the possibility of becoming a buddha. It is for this reason that the Buddhist scriptures say that every living being can become a buddha.[29]

Finally, those hopeful of realizing their buddhahood must take refuge in the Sangha, the community of people who both believe the Dharma and seek to abide in it while supporting one another. "The meaning of 'Sangha,'" explained Taixu, "is 'a unified community.'"[30] In India, he remarked, the term originally applied to any group of at least four monks who lived together according to Buddhist monastic disciplines. Subsequently, it came to be used more broadly for the entire community of monastic and lay followers. Accordingly, Mahāyāna broadened its understanding of the third refuge. In Mahāyāna, as Sangharakshita has observed, refuge in the Sangha means "not refuge in the Stream-Entrant, the Once-Returner, the Non-Returner, and the Arhant, who for the Mahāyāna typify spiritual individualism, but in the Assembly of the Bodhisattvas."[31]

Scholars have differed in their interpretations of a fundamental ambiguity about the monastic sangha that is reflected in Taixu's writings. For example, acknowledging the difficulties in characterizing the reformer's position, Gotelind Müller emphasized the aspects of his work that highlight the significance and unique efficacy of the monastic career.[32] Holmes Welch, however, accenting Taixu's negativism toward the monastic system of his day, argued that the Chinese master "had grave doubts about monkhood" and "seriously contemplated returning to lay life himself several times."[33] These two interpretations are finally grounded in Taixu's functional evaluation of both the monastic and the lay career. According to Taixu, if persons can best

deepen their bodhisattvahood and advance the Buddhist mission as monks or nuns, they should adhere to the monastic life, whereas if they can best make progress toward these ends as members of the laity, then they need not view the lay life as a fundamentally less worthy career.

On the one hand, Taixu specifically recommended the stricter regimens of the monastic life, especially for those bodhisattvas who had only recently taken up the path. He never abandoned the monastic order himself and recruited other gifted lay followers to join it.[34] Despite his own sharp criticism of most of the Chinese monasteries of his day, and of the practices of the majority of the monks and nuns who lived in them, Taixu resented the sweeping denigration of the monastic order by lay critics, such as Ouyang Jingwu, and by former Buddhists who had renounced the religion, such as Liang Shuming. On the other hand, by asserting that monasticism was not necessarily the right choice for everyone, and by readily accepting the practice of moving back and forth between monastic and lay careers, he confused and dismayed many Buddhist leaders.[35]

In sum, Taixu held that the deeply personal decision about the two careers was essentially a vocational one—and one that, in accord with the implications of Mahāyāna doctrine, was of no ultimate consequence vis-à-vis a person's potential for attaining full enlightenment. Historically, Śākyamuni's monastic way of life had been shown to be more advantageous for realizing selflessness for most people.[36] For Taixu personally, it remained the more highly regarded choice, and one without which the transmission of the Dharma would be immediately jeopardized. Yet the monastery could not be regarded as an absolute religious end. Ultimately, he averred, if a person was not willing to manifest a bodhi-mind, it did not matter whether he or she practiced the religion as a monastic or as a householder. "In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the bodhisattva's course of study considers the manifestation of bodhi-mind as its greatest aim," he emphasized, ". . . the bodhisattva's preparation lies most importantly in spiritual and practical actions; it has never been restricted to a fixed form."[37]

Indeed, Buddhism was established on the interdependence of the monastic and householder forms. To validate only one form would

not only contradict Śākyamuni's intentions but result in "a dead rather than living Buddhism."[38] Accordingly, as Reichelt observed in 1934, Taixu remained intimately related to the educated Buddhist literati and granted them an influential role in both administration and worship, "a concession formerly quite unthinkable in Buddhist circles." Reichelt stated:

> In former days it was recognized that a "jushi" could never take the place of an ordained monk. In the taking of all the great vows, an ordained monk was supposed to have been initiated in a special way through the *biqiu* ordination, so that he could influence all the different spheres in the wheel of Karma. A fierce controversy arose some years ago in connection with the question of whether a highly devoted and learned lay Buddhist who greatly overshadows the average monk, both in regard to a pious life and a deep understanding, might officiate during worship. The conservative monks most energetically opposed their right to do this. Not so with Taixu. Without compromising himself he found a *modus vivendi,* whereby the leading lay devotees could officiate *together* with a group of monks. Some of these prominent lay devotees and higher type monks will, from time to time, follow their esteemed leader Taixu on his journeys, when he conducts lecture series and modern "revival meetings" in different centres of China.[39]

One of Taixu's most significant contributions in this area, according to his student Dongchu, was the understanding counsel that he consistently offered to young monks who chose to return to lay life.[40] Taixu observed that, although during the early Republican years there seemed to be a slight increase in people joining the order, the total number of monks and nuns remained essentially unchanged because of the many monastics who chose to leave the monastery for secular life. He recognized that in most cases these people subsequently suffered from a tremendous sense of failure, shame, and guilt. Most of them, in fact, hid their monastic past from others and cut themselves off from the Buddhist community altogether.

Taixu wanted to encourage such persons to remain active as laypeople within the Sangha rather than become thoroughly secularized citizens without any commitment to advancing the Buddhist mission.

He even recommended that they organize, with a real sense of pride, an "Association of Former Buddhist Monastics Who Returned to the Lay Life" (Sengqie huansu fotu hui) to promote and defend the religion and serve the public.[41]

Nevertheless, Taixu thought that some regulations were necessary to protect the integrity of the cloistered community. First, he suggested, while it ought to be fairly easy for believers to go back and forth between the two forms of Buddhist communal life, after someone had left the order to return to lay life a third time, that person should not be permitted to return to the sangha. Second, to avoid any possibility of misrepresentation, former monks and nuns living as lay Buddhists should always wear secular clothes and use their secular names. Third, until such time as they returned to the monastery, they should keep the minimal Dharmic requirements for a householder bodhisattva and not live as ordinary non-Buddhists. Fourth, when returning to the monastic life, they must completely start over with the tonsure rite and the taking of monastic precepts.[42] His concern was with the purity of the monastic sangha. As he once wrote,

> The laws of Buddhism permit individuals to renounce their precepts and return to lay life. This return is not necessarily because they are unable to keep the precepts. It may be because they want to engage in activities related to saving the country and protecting the religion. But those who cannot keep the basic four precepts of the monastic path—against sexual misconduct, stealing, killing, and lying (especially against illicit sexual relations)—must return to the laity. . . . Thus the monastic community will be able to remain pure. If the monastic community remains pure, then the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha all will continue to receive the people's respect and reverence. To renounce the monastic precepts is not the same as abandoning one's faith in the Buddhist Dharma. One should still keep the three refuges and five precepts—at least the three refuges—and advocate and sing the praises of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, support the Three Jewels, and become an example for lay householders. By such actions a person is still able to help Buddhism flourish.[43]

THE TURN TOWARD ENLIGHTENMENT

Taking the three refuges as a way of being in the world, those of right faith who would become bodhisattvas commit themselves to the study and practice of the Dharma in the hope that the thought of enlightenment might actually arise within them. In this regard, Taixu reminded his students that life on this earthly human plane is extremely significant and precious. This is so, he stated, precisely because, in the Buddhist scheme of salvation, the human plane is the most crucial stage within the three great realms of desire, form, and formlessness.

From a Buddhist perspective, the definition of those who are subject to instruction is a somewhat complicated issue, Taixu remarked: "There are beings whose intelligence and knowledge is lower than humans, and there are beings whose knowledge is higher. Despite this fact, all consider the human plane to be the pivotal point for the rise or fall of all sentient beings [in levels of spiritual awareness and levels of existence]."[44]

Those human beings who are not diligent in good actions, he continued, will fall in subsequent rebirths in the direction of levels characterized by increased suffering, while those who make concerted efforts to cultivate themselves according to Dharmic principles will rise in the direction of levels of increased equanimity. Thus the human plane is the turning point—the fundamental pivot, or axis—in the process of spiritual transformation on which the future of all depends.

Moreover, wishing to counter overly deterministic interpretations of karma, Taixu frequently asserted that human beings have sufficient freedom for such decisive turning. As Hong Jinlian has observed, while acknowledging that every person's freedom is limited by biological and social factors, the Chinese master claimed not only that humans were those sentient beings most able to rise above their given circumstances, but also that "by relying on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, they could truly make evolutionary progress to attain in the end complete and perfect freedom."[45]

Karmic histories may serve to predispose people toward certain thoughts and behavior, but they never fully determine human choice. Indeed, Taixu stated,

> Although human beings are only one form of sentient life, their wisdom and compassion are greater than those of other beings. Therefore, they are able to use their intelligence to investigate the myriad things in existence. Furthermore, with accumulated human knowledge, they are able to engage in different kinds of interchange and assistance, and through this activity to perfect a creative advance.[46]

In consonance with the impatient yet optimistic spirit of modernity, Taixu chose to emphasize that right faith in the Three Jewels and the production of a bodhi-mind were not of necessity the product of arduously accumulating karmic merit over the course of many lifetimes. Although for many bodhisattvas this might indeed be the case, the Chinese master wanted his students to hear his message about a "creative advance" as one of immediacy and hope. Thus Taixu maintained that if practitioners have a reasonably good karmic background, have received a fair amount of education, are devoted to further study, and can believe joyfully in the bodhisattva's way, they can directly receive the right faith that leads to enlightenment.[47] Bodhisattvas can in this very lifetime become awakened to their bodhisattvahood. Moreover, this is true for women as well as for men.[48]

With regard to producing the thought of enlightenment in Mahāyāna, D. T. Suzuki once asserted that *bodhicitta,* or the "intelligence-heart," is awakened in us "either when love for suffering creatures (which is innate in us) is called forth, or when our intellect aspires after the highest enlightenment, or when these two psychical activities are set astir under some favorable circumstances."[49] Although the fortuitous convergence of favorable karmic background, emotions, and aspirations can never be predicted for any given person, the transforming religious experiences that mark the real turning point in the bodhisattva career are, according to Taixu, both life-shattering and life-renewing. They are like the crumbling of a huge mountain that has obstructed one's view, thus creating new vistas of the distant

horizon. In fact, Taixu asserted, all religions are grounded in functionally similar types of decentering and reorienting spiritual experiences. As he commented in 1933,

> What today is called "religion" *(zongjiao)* in ancient times was called "education" *(jiaohua)*. If you examine the structural elements of religion, there are reasons for it to be called education. It certainly results from one special characteristic. The founders of all religions and all new religious sects or denominations must have had at the very heart of their spiritual life experiences that surpass conventional understanding. These kinds of experiences are extraordinary spiritual experiences. What we ordinarily know, for example, through hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting all comes from sense contact. These kinds of sensations can form knowledge through intellectual activities and inferences of thought. However, religions are established not merely on this kind of knowledge, but even more on extraordinary experiences. . . . Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism all have this element. In China, Confucianism, Daoism, and other religions without exception also have it.[50]

In a 1940 article entitled "Wo de zongjiao jingyan" (My Religious Experiences), Taixu acknowledged three separate religious experiences that were pivotally important in his early life, each drawing him ever more profoundly into the Buddhist world.[51] As noted earlier, the first and most significant event took place in 1907 at the Xifang si, where the young novice had just begun his first studies of Mahāyāna scripture. It was, he remarked, the real beginning of his "new life" in Buddhism. As he later recalled in his autobiography,

> One day when reading scripture, suddenly I lost a sense of the world of physical and mental phenomena. In a state of emptiness, I experienced a spiritual brightness. The innumerable worldly defilements became completely luminous, like pure images floating in the air. Although I sat there with the scriptures for several hours, it seemed to be only an instant. Several days later, my body and mind were still light-hearted and contented. Within the next several days, I read the rest of the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, as well as the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* and immediately I had insight into the nature of all things. . . . This was for me the slough-

ing off of all the defilements of the world and achieving the beginning of my new life in Buddhism.[52]

Subsequent memorable religious experiences occurred in 1914 and 1916, deepening Taixu's commitment to the bodhisattva path. "Through each of these three meditative experiences," he remarked, "my psychological as well as physiological conditions were changed."[53] The "new life" that the path represented, according to the monk, involved an unchangeable and unshakable faith in Mahāyāna. Attaining that kind of enlightened faith, he said, "is like eating a small diamond that can never be digested."[54] Yet meditative trance can quickly become a dangerous attachment if it is unrelated to compassionate activity. Thus while testifying to the significance of his own three religious experiences, Taixu concluded, "Because a compassionate vow of the heart is so important, I did not continue deeper into meditative trance *(chanding)*. Therefore I had no further experiences [of this kind]."[55]

Taixu emphasized that in Mahāyāna the production of a bodhi-mind and the four great universal vows of a bodhisattva *(si hong shiyuan)* are integrally interrelated. While the thought of enlightenment is a private experience inaccessible to others, the vows are public declarations. For the true bodhisattva, however, they are inseparable. As Har Dayal has explained, "*praṇidhāna* [a bodhisattva's vow of compassion] is both the cause and the result of the Thought of Enlightenment."[56]

Similarly, according to Taixu, the four universal vows are completely interrelated. Yet in contrast to their traditional order, the fourth resolve is the most fundamental: "I vow to become perfect in the supreme Buddhist law." The effort to attain the highest level of understanding—the wisdom of a buddha—he argued, must always remain the bodhisattva's greatest hope and desire. This is achieved, however, only through the complementary and simultaneous fulfillment of the other three universal vows. Becoming a buddha, therefore, means manifesting the unsurpassable Dharma for the sake of all other beings. "To become a buddha," asserted Taixu, "means taking as one's goal the preaching of the Dharma in order to save all living beings. If one

does not act to save them, then there is absolutely no way to attain Buddhahood. Therefore one makes the first resolve, 'I vow to save all sentient beings.'"[57]

This entails, he noted, the elimination not only of one's own passions and delusions but of other people's as well. The two are not sequential in Taixu's mind; rather, they are fully coordinated and interdependent activities. "True bodhisattvas," he remarked, "take the heart of all beings as their own hearts, so that only when the passions and delusions of all other beings are destroyed are their own passions and delusions finally silenced."[58] Therefore true bodhisattvas take the second universal resolve, "I vow to put an end to all passions and delusions."

Of course, the cultivation of wisdom is required in order to understand fully the hearts of others, comprehend Buddhism's ways of healing, and hence be equipped to save all beings from error. To become a bodhisattva thus means to become a student. As Taixu put it, "How is this wisdom to be engendered? It comes from study. For this reason, the Buddha said, 'Within the three worlds, all the buddhas have arisen from a foundation of learning.' So if people are not willing to study, they will always be situated among the foolish. How, then, can they take part in becoming a buddha?"[59]

For the bodhisattva, study involves reflection both on internal and external realities and on the multiple doors to enlightenment *(fa men)* within the Mahāyāna tradition. According to the reformer, "The illnesses of sentient beings are innumerable and limitless. Yet the Buddha said that the medicines of the Dharma which cure illnesses are also innumerable and limitless. Therefore those who want to become buddhas and save beings must study all doors to enlightenment and make the third resolve, 'I vow to study and learn all methods and means.'"[60]

These are the four universal resolves of all bodhisattvas, and to contradict them in thought and action is a great sin. In fact, Taixu explained, within the traditions of the monastic community there are four great *pārājika dharmas (ta sheng chu fa)*, or serious offenses, that result in permanent expulsion from the order (namely, sexual intercourse, theft, killing, and false proclamation of superhuman faculties). These four monastic sins have parallels that are more broadly applic-

able to all bodhisattvas. The first unpardonable sin for a bodhisattva, Taixu says, is "to lose one's beneficent heart" *(shi lirenxin)*, so that one is unwilling to sacrifice anything for the sake of another. The second is "to lose one's great compassionate heart" *(shi beixin)*, so that when asked for material assistance by poor and suffering people, the bodhisattva gives no aid, or when asked for instruction in accord with the Dharma, the bodhisattva offers no guidance.

The third sin is "to lose one's great heart of sympathy" *(shi cixin)*, so that when people come to the bodhisattva to confess their transgressions against the Dharma, the bodhisattva rejects them and is unwilling to accept their confessions. The fourth unpardonable sin is "to lose one's great wisdom heart" *(shi zhihuixin)*, so that "one slanders the teachings of Mahāyāna and with perverse views establishes a false Dharma to entice and deceive others."[61] Committing any one of these four sins results from a failure to protect and promote the bodhi-mind and is clear evidence that the person has lost the qualifications necessary for the true bodhisattva path.

PRECEPTS AND PERFECTIONS

The essence of the true path is the practice of the precepts and perfections. The initial practice of both monastic and householder bodhisattvas actually consists of the five precepts *(wu jie)* and their fuller elaboration in the ten meritorious actions *(shi shan)*. Asserting that the active doing of good fulfills and completes the passive avoidance of evil, Taixu typically listed the traditional five precepts in a way that included both a negative and positive component. Thus he enumerated the five basic precepts as: (1) not to kill, but to express love; (2) not to steal, but to benefit others; (3) not to act in a lewd or lustful way, but to act with decorum; (4) not to lie, but to speak with sincerity; and (5) not to drink intoxicating beverages that affect the body and cloud the mind, but rather, with wisdom, to regulate the body and mind. The first four of these, Taixu stated, are called the "precepts of natural law" *(xing jie)* because they prohibit acts that harm other beings. The fifth is referred to as a "precautionary precept" *(zhe jie)* because it is intended to prevent careless and intoxication-related moral lapses of the first four kinds.[62]

The Chinese monk acknowledged that, by citing the precepts in this way, he was linking the five negatively formulated Buddhist precepts with the five positively stated constant virtues of the Confucian tradition—benevolence *(ren)*, righteousness *(yi)*, propriety *(li)*, sincerity *(xin)*, and knowledge *(zhi)*—as others had done before him. Elaboration of the precepts yields the ten meritorious actions: abstention from taking life, stealing, and sexual misconduct; from false, malicious, harsh, and senseless language; and from covetousness, ill will, and wrong views. While the five precepts and ten meritorious actions are required of all bodhisattvas, monks, and nuns must keep an additional five precepts: abstention from (a) adorning one's body with flowers or perfumes, (b) engaging in or being entertained by singing and dancing, (c) sleeping on a high or broad bed, (d) eating at prohibited times, and (e) accumulating money or material goods. Although these additional five precepts are not required of householder bodhisattvas, Taixu encouraged his lay followers to practice the first four of them occasionally for specific periods of time, as beneficial religious disciplines.

By attending to the substance and spirit of all the precepts, monastic and householder bodhisattvas guard their *bodhicitta* and lay the foundation for the most difficult phase of the path, the practice of the Six Perfections *(pāramitās)*: giving, morality, patience, zeal, concentration, and insight. According to Taixu, the practice of the perfections has a profoundly transformative effect on new bodhisattvas. Making the four universal vows, he remarked, is like creating a great sea basin so large that filling it would require immense mountains of soil. In effect, the perfections fill the basin of the sea with the mountains—the promise with the practice. "If this does not occur," wrote the Chinese master, "then the vows amount to nothing and one is a false bodhisattva and not a true bodhisattva, for the way *(dao)* of a bodhisattva consists in practicing the Six Perfections."[63]

Unfortunately, bodhisattvas new to the path never fully grasp the practical scope of the perfections' true meaning. For example, the first perfection, giving *(bushi)*, is often misinterpreted as charity or the simple sharing of surplus financial resources. Yet in Mahāyāna, Taixu

claimed, its meaning is far more profound. To begin with, he said, a bodhisattva can distinguish between "internal gifts" and "external gifts." The former involve sharing one's physical body, or parts thereof, even to the point of giving one's life for sentient beings in need. Buddhist literature about bodhisattva activity is replete with stories of blood, eyes, arms, and the like being selflessly offered. External gifts, in contrast, refer to personal property or other material goods that are freely directed to those who require them or can benefit from them. In fact, giving may include a variety of actions, from offering instruction in the Dharma to acts of heroic rescue when the lives or liberties of others are threatened. Yet each act of giving, according to Taixu, is perfected by bodhisattvas as they identify with other persons and willingly sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others, knowing that, ultimately, no "others" exist apart from "self."

The second perfection, morality *(chijie)*, is often thought to mean the simple observance of specified behavioral prohibitions. On the contrary, the Chinese monk remarked, perfect morality is far more encompassing. The negative or passive *(xiaoji)* dimension requires cessation of evil acts, while the positive or active *(jiji)* dimension involves performance of morally meritorious acts. For monastic and householder bodhisattvas, morality means "not lip service but real practice."[64] Moreover, morality is not merely preparation for the path: it is path activity. As it is gradually perfected, it transcends mundane moral observance by moving beyond the perception of distorting dualities involved with separate moral actors, although the practice remains. Responding to critics who judged Buddhism to be a strictly otherworldly religion, removed from the concerns of daily life, Taixu asserted:

> In China, many scholars as well as common people, because they have not understood Buddhism, have made all kinds of mistaken criticisms of the Dharma. They have often thought that Buddhism is not concerned with social morality or human life. Especially with respect to those scholars who have discussed Chinese philosophy or philosophies of human life, this kind of misunderstanding is increasingly problematic. Actually, with regard to the reason for Śākyamuni preaching the Dharma, although his motive was broadly [to aid] all sentient beings, his central concern in preaching the Dharma was human beings. Therefore, Buddhism is truly a religion concerning humans, and all the theories and principles of morality set forth by the Buddha are not unrelated to the human realm. Therefore, when it is said that Buddhism is not concerned with social morality and human life, those who have studied the Dharma even just a little bit know instantly that such a statement is wrong.[65]

The scope of patience *(renru)*, the third perfection, has also been insufficiently understood. Although for some it may mean simply not being hasty or impetuous, for Taixu it represents, far more profoundly, the perfection of forbearance and forgiveness in the face of insult and persecution. As conscientious bodhisattvas strive to live up to their great vows of compassion, he observed, many people in this wicked age will try to obstruct and willfully destroy whatever good bodhisattvas are able to accomplish, seeking to discredit those on the path and sway them from their resolve. Yet despite these attacks, according to Taixu, true bodhisattvas "not only endure the insults but, repaying hatred with kindness, refuse to abandon such people."[66]

The fourth perfection, zeal or vigor *(jingjin)*, is often understood to mean mere diligence in accomplishing a task. Yet one can be diligent, noted the reformer, in pursuing unworthy goals as well as worthy ones. Thus, for bodhisattvas, "zeal" specifically means an unflagging spiritual and physical energy for the requirements of their self-sacrificing career. The Chinese character *"jing"* in the compound denotes both purity *(jing chun)* and simplicity *(wu za)* of spirit, while the character *"jin"* means "to advance." Thus, with an uncomplicated spirit of service, bodhisattvas course in an enlightened path, never allowing their individual concerns to determine the most appropriate action, resisting laziness, and taking upon themselves the most important responsibility on earth: awakening all sentient beings to the truth.

Concentration *(chanding)*, the fifth perfection, is widely misunderstood both inside and outside of the Buddhist community, according to Taixu. It is a great mistake, he argued, to assume that meditative concentration requires achieving, through physical austerities and

mental disengagement, a state in which one becomes like wood or stone. Such a state might be said to characterize the negative or passive dimension of sitting in meditation to control a scattered and confused mind. However, such a popularly held view is incomplete. "The comprehensive view of concentration," stated Taixu, "means in every circumstance holding on to one's vitality *(huo li)* so as to be able to accomplish everything. Thus concentration certainly does not refer merely to the negative or passive dimension in which one cannot do anything, but rather more correctly to the source of the vitality for undertaking all things."[67]

In essence, concentration is related far more significantly to action than to non-action. As Callahan once commented, "Taixu seems to regard meditation primarily as a means for improving conduct, not as an end in itself. These beliefs afford a religious basis for Taixu's emphasis upon social service and philanthropy."[68] Some Buddhists, declared Taixu, "feel that their own existence is extremely painful. Therefore they hold to the empty side of Buddhist emptiness *(kong)* in order merely to seek an escape from the realm of birth and death and attain absolute spiritual equanimity and non-action. . . . Because they lie around in a drunken stupor in a state of samādhi focusing on emptiness *(kongsanmei)*, naturally they are never able to reach the complete and perfect spirit of Buddhism."[69]

The sixth perfection, insight or wisdom *(zhihui)*, means, in the simplest terms, learned knowledge. Yet contrary to the opinions of some, this wisdom is neither fully continuous nor discontinuous with knowledge derived from the senses, according to Taixu. On the one hand, Dharmic wisdom and worldly knowledge are closely related because both are finally concerned with investigating the true nature of things. Therefore bodhisattvas need to pursue learning through the normal disciplines of the arts and sciences, becoming adept at thinking carefully and clearly and at understanding all aspects of the world around them.

On the other hand, the experiential insight that is at the heart of the enlightened life, that was realized by Śākyamuni, and that is reflected in Buddhist scripture and tradition transcends and completes all worldly knowledge, Taixu maintained. Thus bodhisattvas must seek, beyond all conventional bits of knowledge, that superior and comprehensive wisdom which is available only through an awakened bodhi-mind. In essence, true bodhisattvas integrate insights from both sources. Indeed, as Taixu pointed out, "*The Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says, 'There are no places that are not places for bodhisattvas to teach.' Now I say that with regard to places for bodhisattvas to learn, it is the same."[70]

ESTABLISHING A PURE LAND ON EARTH

Bodhisattvas course in the unified practice of the Six Perfections, with the practice of one perfection simultaneously entailing practice of the other five. Moreover, especially in their teaching of all other beings *(huadao dazhong)*, as they seek to draw all sentient beings to Buddhism, bodhisattvas manifest "the four all-embracing virtues" *(si shefa)*—namely, generosity in giving to any being in need *(bushi)*, affability in speaking with people *(aiyu)*, altruism in relating to others *(lixing)*, and cooperation in pursuing worthy common aims *(tongshi)*. In the Mahāyāna tradition, the object of the four all-embracing virtues is the conversion of all sentient beings. Taixu asserted that bodhisattvas convert others most readily when they embody with integrity the truths that they proclaim verbally, when they identify and associate with common people in all walks of life and in all circumstances, and when they devote themselves to compassionate service, whatever the cost. Wrote the monk,

> If those on the bodhisattva path, in accord with the depth of their own intelligence and ability, adopt the practice of the Six Perfections and the four all-embracing virtues, then they will complete their bodhisattva personality. In whatever walk of life, whether their service is in the cultural sphere, education, benevolent work, the government, the military, or as a student, a merchant, or a farmer, . . . they will establish a practical Buddhism for human life and build a paradisaical pure land of peace and happiness.[71]

According to Mahāyāna doctrine, a pure land *(jingtu)* is one of two kinds of world systems, or buddha-fields *(focha, fotu,* or *foguo),* over which a buddha has special spiritual authority. An impure buddha-field, like the one suffering under "the five dreaded calamities of degeneracy" *(wu zhuo)* into which Śākyamuni chose to be born, is far different from a pure buddha-field, the most famous of which is Sukhāvatī, the abode of Amitābha. In an impure land, sentient beings of all kinds (superhuman, human, and subhuman) suffer miserably under the influence of the three defilements (greed, hatred, and delusion) and face near impossible odds in producing the thought of enlightenment.

In a pure land, in contrast, the gods and human beings who dwell therein enjoy extremely favorable conditions for cultivating a bodhi-mind. Indeed, that is why such realms exist: certain great bodhisattvas once vowed that, after they had attained final enlightenment, they would establish such advantageous settings in which others could practice the path. When, by virtue of whatever spiritual discipline, Buddhist practitioners are reborn in these pure lands, they can rest assured that they will never regress and be born again in an impure land. Thus they can rejoice in the knowledge that they, too, will eventually attain supreme enlightenment, regardless of how long must be spent in its cultivation.

Like most Chinese Buddhists of his day, Taixu was captivated by the compelling ideal of pursuing enlightenment in the wonderfully conducive surroundings of a paradisaical pure land. Yet his views on the realization of that ideal were far from those of the mainstream of the contemporary Sangha. Rather than focusing on the glories of distant pure lands, which were accessible through reliance on the spiritual merit and power of other great bodhisattvas and buddhas, Taixu visualized this earthly world transformed into a pure land by the dedication and sacrificial hard work of thousands of average bodhisattvas who were mindful of what their concerted witness could mean. Most Chinese Buddhists were content to prayerfully await their rebirth in a celestial pure land; Taixu was impatient about establishing a pure land on earth.

The reformer acknowledged the universal appeal of utopian dreams in an important 1930 lecture entitled "Jianshe renjian jingtu lun" (On Establishing a Pure Land on Earth). From the community's earliest days, he noted, Buddhists have talked enthusiastically of Uttarakuru (Yudanyue zhou), the northern of the four continents that surround Mount Meru in all Indic world systems; Uttarakuru is believed to be a beautiful and superior land in which food is produced without effort and humans live for a thousand years. Similarly, Daoists described ideal states in which the guiding principles of government would be spontaneity *(ziran)* and nonpurposeful activity *(wu wei),* while Confucians trumpeted the ideal world of a "great community" *(datong zhi shi).* In the West, Socrates, Plato, and other philosophers envisioned forms of utopias *(wutuobang),* and the earliest Christians actually embraced (for a period under Peter's leadership) an idealistic form of communism, with the church accepting goods from each believer according to his or her means and distributing them according to people's needs.

Despite the ubiquity of utopian ideals in different times and places, they have usually been rejected out of hand by most "reasonable" people. Indeed, according to Taixu, before enlightened bodhisattvas can make progress toward the goal of establishing a pure land on earth, two unhealthy attitudes must be corrected. The first is the attitude of self-centered optimists who believe that the world is already a marvelous, "pure" land, at least for them. Infatuated with the world, such people have no interest in detaching themselves from it or making any fundamental changes in it. In modern China, Taixu argued, the thoughtlessness and aggressiveness of such people have polarized and impoverished the country.

The second is the attitude of self-centered pessimists who are convinced that no significant changes are truly possible in this impure and sorrowful world of time and space. Lost in dejection and self-pity, a few such people end their lives through suicide; in one way or another, the others also waste their lives, devoid of a sense of meaning and purpose. In China, some seek to escape the social, economic, and political chaos by emigrating to the United States, mistakenly

believing that its relative prosperity and stability make it a "pure land." Most seek, through devotional practice, to escape to Sukhāvatī. In either case, according to Taixu, by aiming merely to escape their unhappy situations and by thinking only of themselves, they fail to fulfill what it really means to be a Chinese patriot or a Chinese Buddhist.

Both these self-absorbed attitudes, Taixu asserted, result from a failure to comprehend the true basis of pure lands and from a profound weakness of will. Yet if people could be led to understand how such utopias actually come into existence, perhaps they could be encouraged to participate in the actual creation of a pure land themselves. "The building of pure lands," he remarked, "is not accomplished by Nature; neither are these lands created by gods. Pure lands have come into being from minds of goodness which have arisen in human and other sentient beings."[72] From such minds of goodness come both the search for certain knowledge and appropriate moral behavior. Such knowledge and behavior yield good societies and wonderfully auspicious worlds. The root cause of pure lands, and in fact of all things, may be so explained. Everything from a small blade of grass to a great celestial body has come into being because of the interaction of innumerable causal elements, all of which originate in the minds of sentient beings. Therefore, Taixu wondered,

> If today, based on good knowledge of our minds, we can produce pure thoughts and work hard to accomplish good deeds, how hard can it be to transform an impure China into a Chinese pure land? . . . All persons have this force of mind, and since they already have the faculty *(benneng)* to create a pure land, they can all make the glorious vow to make this world into a pure land and work hard to achieve it.[73]

Minds that are not tranquil and pure, minds that are confused about the true nature of things, cannot create pure lands. Therefore one must understand through mindful activity the process of becoming that lies at the heart of the Buddhist message. Significantly, in Taixu's view, this ancient insight of the supremely enlightened buddhas now finds confirmation in the modern science of the twentieth century:

> The most recent discoveries of modern science are constantly able to prove the truths of Buddhism. Formerly, according to nineteenth-century science, all the myriad things of the world resulted from the coming together of material atoms. So material atoms were recognized as the building blocks of all things. However, when we come to twentieth-century science, the fact is recognized that there are ultimately no simple building blocks for all the myriad things of the world. Rather, absolutely every single thing comes into being as the result of the convergence of many different conditions of causal relations. This theory is rather close to the Buddhist concept of the constituent nature of all things. Thus because the truth in Buddhism about creating a pure land on earth has already gradually come to be accepted, we can directly lift it up for discussion. In sum, the present world in which humans live is certainly not perfect. However, if humans and other sentient beings vow to make it into a pure land, then there is absolutely no way that it cannot happen. We only have to dispense with our preconceptions and use a reasonable amount of labor to create it![74]

According to Taixu, average bodhisattvas new to the path need to be reminded of the powerful and far-reaching consequences of their vows. Due to causal interactions, a bodhisattva's vows—and the wise and compassionate activities that fulfill those vows—change everything. The very fabric of reality is thus altered. Therefore, although no one can deny the enormity of the task of saving all sentient beings, there is no legitimate reason to despair about what will be required—or about the time required to accomplish it. Bodhisattvas need only begin to practice the precepts and perfections, while seeking practical ways to work toward the ultimate goal of buddhahood.

Practicality was not an unimportant concern in China. Taixu realized that even if bodhisattvas understood the theoretical basis for creating a utopia on earth, there would still be considerable debate about the most practical and realistic methods for accomplishing that mission. For this, the reformer argued, two powerful forces would have to be coordinated: an enlightened government, and a community of bodhisattvas inspired by Mahāyāna Buddhism's true spirit. A stable government would be needed to protect the political rights of the

people, enact and enforce just laws through punishments and rewards, and systematize the reconstructive work. Indeed, the government would have to supervise a fourfold division of labor. Business and industry would have to be developed to address problems related to the four essential needs of the people: food, clothing, housing, and transportation. Education would have to be promoted to reform ways of thinking and to develop people's abilities. The arts would have to flourish to bring enjoyment to the people, elevating their minds and strengthening their bodies. And morality, which was at the heart of education, would have to be advanced so that the new society would be grounded in values such as integrity, tolerance, and sincerity.

A Chinese Sangha inspired by the true spirit of Mahāyāna, the second reshaping force for an earthly utopia, would necessarily illuminate the healing and transforming way of bodhisattvas while locating all worldly activity within a cosmic framework. Such a Sangha would raise the pursuit of truth and goodness beyond the limited parameters of governmental insight and authority to the most profoundly spiritual bases for an enlightened existence. According to Taixu, bodhisattvas on the true path would propagate a "worldly Buddhism" or a "humanistic Buddhism" *(renjian fojiao)*, a form of the religion that was neither monastically nor devotionally centered but energetically concerned with perfecting human life and advancing the social order.[75] In their socially engaged practice of Mahāyāna, such bodhisattvas would compassionately attend to all three dimensions of human need—spiritual, physical, and social—while, as missionaries of an unsurpassable wisdom, they would recontextualize all family, community, national, and international issues by explicit reference to the Three Jewels of Buddhism.[76] Bodhisattvas would not only develop methods for "curing symptoms" *(zhi biao)* but, more radically than mere governmental representatives ever could, they would cure the root causes *(zhi ben)* of human suffering.

Beyond merely offering an abstract religious rationale for creating a pure land, Taixu was eager to detail plans for concretely establishing a modern pure land in China. Chinese Buddhists, he argued, would need to begin by setting up a special administrative area in which the two forces of enlightened government and true religion could cooperate in an ideal fashion, not unlike the systems that had

traditionally existed in Thailand and Tibet. Of all the possible locations within China, he judged that the holy grounds of Putuo Shan in Zhejiang province would be the most suitable location. If that were not feasible, he said, the selected site should at least have similarly ample natural resources: luxuriant forests of bamboo and trees, fertile soil, abundant spring water, and a mountain with a circumference of at least several tens of *li*. Appropriate plots of land within the chosen area should be sown with rice, hemp, and other crops so that basic food and clothing could be provided for ten to twenty thousand people. Because of its special use by the Sangha, all of the designated pure land should be declared tax-exempt by the government.

On a high mountain plateau within the pure land, a great central monastery should be built. According to Taixu's plan, at the very heart of the monastery should stand a large shrine hall dedicated to the Buddha Śākyamuni. This central hall for general use should be flanked on the left by lecture and assembly halls for those studying the special texts of the Prajñāpāramitā (Wisdom Literature) school, on the right by those concentrating on *The Lotus Sūtra*, and to the rear by a Buddhist library. Surrounding these core structures would be adjoining facilities for the study of other significant Buddhist scriptures and practices (including those of well-known schools such as Huayan, Chan, and Zhenyan, as well as less popular schools like those dedicated to Vairocana or Maitreya).[77] Altogether, the great monastery should accommodate between five hundred and a thousand monks. These devotees would study, pray, and work together daily, while expressing the unique aspects of their own schools' special heritages and each year undertaking at least one major project jointly.

Near the great monastery, according to the master's plan, would be a hall for male novices *(shami)*, of whom there ought to be about a hundred, where they would take their first vows and be tonsured during an initial period of Buddhist studies. There should be similar halls for ordained nuns *(biqiuni)* and for female novices *(shamini)*, who would number between four and eight hundred. Altogether, the facilities for the monastic order should occupy at least 4 square *li*.[78]

The lay Buddhist community should be comprised of about eight thousand people in a thousand different families. These should reside in three grades of villages called, in order of rank, "Ten Meritorious

Actions" villages, "Five Precepts" villages, and "Three Refuges" villages. There should be about ten villages of each grade, and each village should have more than thirty families, or about 270 members. Families in the "Ten Meritorious Actions" villages, nearest the monastic compound, would each be given approximately 120 *mu* of mountainous and agricultural land.[79] Families in the "Five Precepts" villages would each receive 100 *mu,* and those in the "Three Refuges" villages, 75 *mu*.

Village mayors would ensure that their communities had at least two elementary schools for children, a preaching hall, a hall for reading scriptures, and a general gathering or Lotus Society *(lianshe)* hall. Each of the three grades of village would elect a village head, operating under the highest civic leader, the mayor of the holy mountain *(shanzhang)*. These persons would make certain that a high school was established for each grade, along with further specialized educational opportunities for farming and forestry.

Within the designated pure land, individuals would not be permitted to marry or join the monastic community until age twenty. Men who wished to enter the order would be required to study as novices for one to three years prior to ordination, while women would serve as novices for two to five years. All would begin by studying the texts and disciplines of one particular school for at least four years, and then, if successful, proceed to the study of other schools. Those who were successful would be eligible to serve as teachers and various officers within the monastic community. After five years of such service, they would be permitted to travel outside the pure land on mission work. After twenty years on the mountain (or fifteen years on the mountain plus five in service outside it), individuals would be eligible to be selected to serve in the important position of rector *(shouzuo)* of one of the Buddhist schools.

According to Taixu, those who live within the precincts of the pure land ought to pray for the welfare of people in all countries who suffer from calamities and natural disasters. Furthermore, they should send out teams of lay Buddhists under the guidance of senior monastic bodhisattvas to accomplish good works. To explain the purposes of the pure land, they should welcome interested individuals and representatives of all countries and governments who wanted to visit. In an ecumenical spirit, they should periodically welcome Buddhists from all over the world for conferences on the Sangha's global mission. And they should encourage all peoples to set aside some of their money for the establishment of similar pure lands on earth.

RESHAPING THE SANGHA

From early in his career, Taixu was given to this type of utopian planning. By bringing forth quite detailed organizational configurations, he hoped to draw people into a collective dream for a restructured and reconstituted reality of the future. Many Buddhists appreciated his attempts to think through difficult and complex problems and to present concrete solutions. Yet the specificity of his idealistic plans for reform also provided fuel for incendiary negative reactions, particularly to his frequently revised plans for reorganizing the monastic establishment.

Taixu believed that a radical reorganization of the Chinese sangha was an urgent necessity because the poor quality of Buddhist monks in the Republican period was not merely a challenge to the sangha's respected place within society but a grave threat to the very future of the religion in China. Although his harsh critical refrains about his fellow monks won him few friends in the monastic community, the renewal and reorganization of the sangha remained a key element of his message throughout his career. On the majority of the Chinese sangha, Taixu stated sharply:

> First, they are seldom interested in social service or the work of educating the society. The priests or rather monks are generally ignorant, and their services to society are confined to singing of masses or prayers in the funeral services. Secondly, although the monks divide themselves into sects or schools, each pursuing a special object, yet they always fail to accomplish that object. Thirdly, the monks are always religious recluses, taking no interest in the affairs of the community or the country and they are in turn slighted by the Government or the ruling classes.

> Fourthly, most of the Chinese Buddhist monks lack the necessary modern scientific knowledge and are also ignorant of the current thoughts and ideas of the world. In view of such disabilities, they are unable to preach the doctrines of the Buddha in such a way as to appeal to the minds of the modern people.[80]

Taixu's controversial plan for addressing this deplorable situation, the *Zhengli sengqie zhidu lun* (Reorganization of the Sangha System), was composed in 1915, during his period of sealed confinement at Putuo Shan, and published in part in 1920, in the first issue of *Haichao yin*. As already noted, Taixu's plan included recommendations for markedly increasing the educational requirements for ordination, for requiring most monks to engage in physical labor to ensure the economic self-sufficiency of the monasteries, for terminating the vulgar commercialization of ritual practice, and for establishing various social-service and educational ventures. In 1921, Yu-yue Tsu observed that the reformer's proposal included a number of ambitious ideas:

> He proposes to have a national system embracing preaching chapels and parishes in every city, a certain number of monasteries and charitable institutions in each province, and a national monastery and university in the capital city of the country. As a part of the national institution he would have a library containing an extensive collection of Buddhist literature and a museum for Buddhist art. Into the museum he would have all images moved, so that other buildings could be free of them. Belonging as he does to the Dhyāna or Meditation School, founded by Bodhidharma in the sixth century, Taixu is opposed to all idolatry, and tolerates it only as an accommodation to the weakness of the masses. As to the monks, he would encourage manual labor as an antidote to laziness and would encourage more time being spent for meditation and study for spiritual development. In his account of his travels in Japan and Taiwan he had a brief reference to his daily life to the effect that it has been his practice to spend at least three or four hours every day in meditation, and he has never allowed a day to pass without it, even the busiest day, during the past ten years. How far he will be able to carry out the reforms he has conceived in his mind only time will show. Meanwhile he has been influential in winning many serious-minded men and women to the pursuit of the religious (monastic) life.[81]

In his original proposal of 1915, Taixu estimated that the Buddhist monastic community in Republican China consisted of approximately eight hundred thousand men and women. Though in later writings Taixu was to recommend significant reductions, in his first plan he specifically stated that the number of monks and nuns was about right in relation to China's total population.[82] His main interest lay in developing a thorough scheme for systematizing and regulating monastic practice. Therefore he considered a wide range of relevant topics. For example, although he was later to abandon the idea, he initially recommended that the monastic community be tightly restructured around eight central Buddhist "schools" *(zong)*. Four were named after mountains: the Qingliang (Huayan or Xianshou), the Tiantai (Fahua), the Lushan (Jingtu or Lian), and the Nanshan (Lü). Three schools were named after particular monasteries: the Jiaxiang (Sanlun or Faxing), the Cien (Weishi or Faxiang), and the Shaoshi (Chan). One school was named after a period in the Tang dynasty: the Kaiyuan (Zhenyan or Mi) sect.[83]

In addition, as Tsu indicated, Taixu carefully charted the Buddhist institutions that would be required at the county *(xian)*, district *(dao)*, provincial *(sheng)*, and national *(guo)* levels. For example, he felt that every county ought to have one Vinaya hall *(xingjiao yuan)* for teaching Buddhist discipline, one Dharma center *(fa yuan)* for the study of scripture, one Lotus Society *(lianshe)* hall for recitation and meditation, four preaching halls *(xuanjiao yuan)* for the propagation of the faith, and one nunnery. Every district should have ten additional institutions: eight monasteries, each representing one of the eight schools, plus one Buddhist hospital and an orphanage for infants. Every province should also have an "Institute for Religious Adherence" *(chijiao yuan)* to coordinate mission work, plus an orphanage for children. In the country's capital, there should be a central Buddhist Vihāra *(fofa sengyuan)* for research and sangha representation. Moreover, there should be a central Buddhist Bank *(fojiao yinhang)* that would manage all monastic financial concerns, preventing private property claims

within the sangha and providing a fair and democratic appropriation of funding for the multifaceted Buddhist mission in China.[84]

Taixu especially liked to create charts, application forms, and certificates, all of which he thought could help regularize monastic procedures and clarify responsibilities. He designed registration forms for infants and children being received by Buddhist orphanages, application forms for men and women wishing to enter the sangha, monastic certificates for bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs officially entering the religious life, and so forth. He also summarized in chart form the rules governing a person's decision to enter or leave the monastic order, as well as those for returning to the order after renouncing it for life as a layperson. He set age limits on entering the order (not under fifteen and not over forty) and on various monastic positions.[85]

Finally, Taixu offered guidelines for the education and the professional responsibilities of monastic leaders at every level and in every type of Buddhist organization. Broad educational requirements could be charted, and standardized monastic ranks for teachers delineated, from Venerable Master *(dashi)* to Tantric Master *(yuqieshi)*, Dharma Master *(fashi)*, Meditation Master *(chanshi)*, and Vinaya Master *(lüshi)*.[86] The reformer even offered suggestions for regulating monastic vestments and designed his own system of modern garb, which ranged from a simple, unadorned robe to robes with a secular cut and multiple stripes (five, seven, nine, etc., up to a maximum of twenty-five stripes).[87] Taixu obviously took some delight in attending to such details in his schemes for the future. His big picture of a modern form of Buddhism required applying to the religious canvas innumerable small yet bold strokes of pigment.

By 1927, Taixu had sharply reduced his original estimate of the number of monks and nuns in China. He acknowledged that in 1915, optimistic about the number of novices entering the order, he had used the figure of eight hundred thousand. Yet he had come to think that the overall numerical decline that had begun with the Taiping attacks on Buddhist monasteries in the nineteenth century was continuing, especially as a result of recent anti-Buddhist actions of the Republican government. Thus he concluded that the total number of people active in the sangha could no longer be more than two hundred thousand, not counting those associated with Lamaism in Mongolia and Tibet. Most of this number, Taixu claimed, should be engaged in some form of productive labor to ensure the self-sufficiency of the monasteries.[88]

By 1930, Taixu had given up his idea of using the eight Buddhist schools to reorganize the sangha because, he said, unlike Buddhism in Japan, the schools had no distinct bases within the contemporary Chinese monastic community. By this time he was also prepared to estimate that the sangha had been reduced to about 160,000 monks and nuns.[89] More significantly, he charged that most of that number were not truly qualified to be members of the sangha and should not be called monastics. Rather, they should work at farming or some other type of productive labor to support the much smaller number who actually had the abilities to study scripture and spread the Dharma. As Taixu wrote unabashedly,

> Most monks *(seng)* who do not have the qualifications to be monastics should be working monks, farming and performing labor, so that the elite minority may conduct research and study scripture. . . . Through the productive work of the great majority of monastics, the minority may be provided for so that they can focus all of their attention on advanced studies. Thus will monastic living be made independent rather than dependent on the people. This is a way to relieve many concerns of our day. Strictly speaking, these individuals who serve as farmers and laborers should not really be called "monks." Because they farm and perform labor and are neither able to cultivate the above mentioned qualifications for monastics nor perform the responsibilities of monastics, they cannot really be called "monks."[90]

The "elite minority" who were truly qualified to be called monastics numbered a mere twenty to forty thousand, according to different texts that Taixu wrote on the subject. These he divided into three classifications: student monastics *(xue seng)*; "normal duty" monastics *(zhi seng)*, also called bodhisattva monastics *(pusa seng)*; and emeritus monastics *(de seng)*, or elders *(zhanglao seng)*, who had retired from normal duties. In 1930, Taixu specified that there should be approximately ten thousand monastics engaged in studies in four

grades, from basic education to advanced Buddhist research. In addition, twenty-five thousand monastics should engage in teaching and social-service careers, along with a smaller but unspecified number of elders supervising sixty centers for religious cultivation *(xiu lin)* in practices especially related to the Pure Land and Esoteric traditions. The sangha would therefore total thirty-five to forty thousand individuals.[91]

Later in 1930, Taixu again revised these numbers downward, to include only twenty thousand monastics: five thousand students, twelve thousand bodhisattva monastics, and three thousand elders.[92] Of the twelve thousand bodhisattva monastics, five thousand should be spreading the Dharma through public preaching and teaching, three thousand serving as administrators in Buddhist educational institutions, fifteen hundred engaging in Buddhist charitable and relief work, fifteen hundred serving as instructors in the monastic educational system, and one thousand participating in various cultural affairs.[93]

Although Taixu devoted far more attention to addressing the quality of monastics than their quantity, he did think that the two questions were interrelated.[94] Still, it was his fluctuations in actual and ideal numbers that made it difficult for many Buddhists to take his various schemes seriously. Five years later, in 1935, surely in response to criticism, Taixu raised the ideal number of monastics back to forty thousand.[95] As Welch has asserted, it was in large measure "as if he were a child deploying regiments of toy soldiers."[96]

Taixu's ideas about educational reforms were more widely accepted, though in some cases only slowly and grudgingly. To begin with, he was highly critical of secular education in China, believing that the public educational system had utterly failed to prepare a literate and informed citizenry to respond appropriately to the problems and opportunities of the contemporary world. Modernization in public education had come to mean eclectically imitating certain Japanese or western practices without adopting any comprehensive model of educational aims or learning processes. Therefore Taixu proposed that the sangha operate its own nationwide system of Buddhist parochial schools in four grades. Ideally, every county should have a primary school; every few counties, an elementary school; every ten counties,

a middle school; and every province, a Buddhist high school. In addition to offering an excellent secular program of education, these schools would provide Buddhist studies—two hours a week for primary students, three hours for elementary students, four hours for middle school students, and six hours for high school students.[97]

Taixu felt that monastic education had improved only slightly during the early Republican period, with the impetus for reform in most cases coming only from the need to resist government confiscation of monastic property. The traditional system of monastic education in China enabled most monks to become familiar with just a few basic scriptures. A limited number of monks had the opportunity to study monastic rules in a Vinaya school or Buddhist doctrine under the tutelage of a Dharma master, who typically specialized in certain sacred texts. This latter system of apprenticeship to an instructor, as Welch notes, "produced a very small number of monks who knew the traditional interpretation of a few texts very well indeed, but it did not encourage originality or adaptation to changing times."[98] Taixu commented,

> In the past, the way of studying the religion has been exclusively to listen to scripture. If persons listened for ten years, then they could also become preaching Dharma masters. This is not a complete monastic education! My idea is that the monastic education which is needed today must include, as sequential elements of a complete system, the study of rules and ceremonies, the study of religious doctrine, and the cultivation of experiential knowledge.[99]

According to Taixu, the beginning curriculum for the study of rules and ceremonies *(lü yi)* should assume that the student is a high school graduate and consist of a two-year course of study for members of the monastic community only. The first six months should be devoted to rules and rites for novices, while the final year and a half should focus on those appropriate for ordained monks. In every province, one special sangha school should offer this basic program of studies.

Taixu divided the second phase of monastic education, the study of religious doctrine, into two levels. The first should correspond to a

university level of education and emphasize general doctrinal studies *(putong jiaoli)*. Its four-year curriculum, which should also be open to laypeople as auditors, should lead to a baccalaureate degree. There should be one institution for every three provinces that would offer this university level of Buddhist education. At the second level of doctrinal studies, several hundred especially gifted monks ought to be engaged in a three-year program of advanced doctrinal studies *(gaodeng jiaoli)* leading to the Ph.D. degree *(boshi xuewei)*. A national institute for Buddhist research would need to be established for this purpose.

Beyond these programs, a very small number of monks ought to proceed to an additional three-year curriculum pursuing the cultivation of "experiential knowledge" *(xiu zheng)* at a center for religious cultivation *(xiu lin)*. For their achievements in the specialized skills of reflection and action *(guan xing)* in accord with recognized meditative and devotional practices, such advanced students might receive the Venerable Scholar degree *(dashi xuewei)*. Thus Taixu envisioned a total of twelve years of post-secondary monastic education as the ideal comprehensive program. As the ever-frustrated dreamer concluded in 1938,

> It will be best if we can do things according to this plan! However, if we look at it from the perspective of present facts, the types of religious facilities and funds with which we can accomplish such things do not exist. And even more scarce are the essential persons of talent who can resolve to achieve such a long-term goal, having endured the hardships of the last twenty years. Therefore, everything I have proposed remains merely an unrealized ideal, and that is all.[100]

CRITICISM AND RESPONSE

Taixu projected that unless the country's Buddhists cooperated to reorganize their institutions along these lines, to restate their message in ways responsive to the unique dilemmas of the modern world, and to redirect their energies toward a socially engaged form of Buddhism and the construction of a pure land on earth, the religion

would simply continue its present trajectory of decline, so that they "need not wait until it was destroyed by a nonreligious government or foreign religion."[101] The key to survival, he knew, would be to find effective ways to link the best traditions of the past with new understandings appropriate to the future.[102] However, the monk also recognized that those bodhisattvas committed to such reformist efforts would encounter on virtually every front at least three powerful opposing forces: conservative Buddhists, radical anti-religionists, and evangelical Christians.

With regard to conservative opposition within the Buddhist community, it was clear to all practitioners that the style and content of Taixu's message contrasted significantly with popular forms of Pure Land piety in China. As a result, the Dharma master Yinguang, who was spearheading the growing Pure Land movement in the Republican period, charged that Taixu, although intellectually gifted, was a "misguided and dangerous" influence within the sangha. Summarizing a personal interview with Yinguang in 1928, Millican reported that the Pure Land master "did not hesitate to express his disapproval of the efforts to reform Buddhism along the lines advocated by Taixu."[103] In fact, after Millican's wife pressed Yinguang for a response to Taixu's criticisms of him, the Pure Land master's eyes reportedly "lit with some sort of fire" as he observed that with Taixu's "rushing here and there," he "knows nothing of what Buddhism means."[104] Yu-yue Tsu wrote of Yinguang:

> He has embraced the Buddhist monastic life as a protest against and refuge from the wickedness of the world. He decries the social gospel of the liberals as untrue to the Buddhist religion and Taixu as a danger to their faith, for, according to him, Buddhism is fundamentally otherworldly, interested in saving souls out of this world, which is hopelessly lost. Any attempt to compromise with it as the liberals are trying to do in building for a better world, as they say, leads men away from real religion, which is implicit reliance upon the saving power of the All-Merciful Amitābha for passage into his Pure Land Paradise.[105]

Although Yinguang was himself reasonably well versed in the Buddhist sūtras, he nevertheless taught that advanced scriptural stud-

ies and meditational disciplines were essentially useless for ordinary believers. In an age of great social disorder and spiritual degeneration, reliance on such difficult methods in the hope of enlightenment was simply foolish. As Reichelt observed, Yinguang's position was unambiguous: "There is a much safer and much quicker way, . . . and that is with a believing heart to ponder and call upon the precious name of the all-embracing Buddha, the Amitābha, boundless in life, in light and in mercy."[106] As Yinguang once wrote to a lay follower, "If you rely on the Pure Land way, faithfully and willingly recite the Buddha's name, and seek rebirth in the West[ern Pure Land], then you can be released from life and death. If you do not rely on the way of reciting the Buddha's name, even those who receive the true transmission of Buddhism cannot find release, not to mention those who do not receive it."[107] Commenting on his own discussions with Yinguang, Millican reported:

> He is a true conservative in both his social and religious convictions. In a personal conversation he stated that China must hold on to the age-long Five Human Relationships of Confucian, that is, Chinese society. And he waxed warm in pointing out that Taixu's efforts to modernize and universalize Buddhism were undermining rather than building up true Buddhism. He feels that Taixu and his group, in trying to give Buddhism a social application in the effort to regenerate society, have missed the true spirit of Buddhism which is essentially otherworldly. And furthermore, since Buddhism has the highest truth it is not necessary to try to harmonize or correlate it with other religions or with modern science. The whole effort of Yinguang is to bolster up the present system and practices of Buddhism as found in its temple life, and to propagate the teachings of the Pure Land. . . . He believes that nine out of ten persons would fail in the exacting task of self-enlightenment and self-deliverance by the Difficult Way of Meditation, so he preaches the way of salvation by faith with an evangelical fervor. His writings abound in accounts of those who have been benefited either physically or spiritually as a result of prayer to Amitābha, the Goddess of Mercy, and others. One of the most striking sections is a letter to the aged and famous Ningbo monk Dixian, in which he urges him to call upon the Goddess of Mercy to heal him of his infirmity. He quotes instances of her miraculous healing power, and reminds him that if such an honored Buddhist leader is not healed it will bring great discredit upon the cause of Buddhism. He adds, "Since the Goddess of Mercy has this great saving power why not in your extremity throw yourself unreservedly and with all your will upon her mercy and thus obtain physical as well as spiritual comfort?"[108]

On the one hand, Taixu displayed a certain respect for this form of devotional piety. He recognized both its popular appeal and its doctrinal legitimacy within the comprehensive framework of Mahāyāna. Moreover, as Pratt points out, quite unlike the layman Ouyang Jingwu, whose interest in Buddhism was purely intellectual, Taixu was a unique combination of "scholar, thinker, *and mystic.*" Highlighting the reformer's own religious practice, Pratt reported in 1924 that at the Wuchang Buddhist Institute, "in marked contrast to Mr. Ouyang's college, daily worship at the very attractive little temple is a part of the training, and in this Taixu regularly takes part with all his students."[109] Such cultic participation by the reformer, however limited, contrasted with the more radical position of those modernists who stridently opposed all forms of worship and ritual as not merely unnecessary but counterproductive.[110]

On the other hand, Taixu firmly argued that any method of spiritual cultivation that did not effectively serve to eliminate a devotee's sense of individuality and selfhood could not lead to ultimate enlightenment. In commenting on one of the most important canonical Pure Land texts, Vasubandhu's *Wuliangshou jing youbotishe yuansheng jie* (Rebirth Treatise), Taixu emphasized that if any recognized Buddhist method "does not oppose a mind that distinguishes a self, then it cannot [lead to] the attainment of wisdom *(bodhi).*"[111] True bodhisattvas, he asserted, could never seek their own rebirth without simultaneously seeking the rebirth of all sentient beings.[112]

Taixu thus sought to distance himself from Pure Land devotionalism because he judged that, in actual practice, it was both ineffective in eliminating the deluded sense of "self" and inconsistent in linking the future of any one bodhisattva to the future of all other sentient beings. While Taixu taught that it was not inappropriate to show reverence to Gautama as one's spiritual forerunner and teacher, he

invariably chose to emphasize the way of self-reliance over the way of reliance on others. Because he considered Pure Land techniques to be expedient primarily for uneducated believers, Taixu was sure that the school's influence would wane as the number of such persons steadily declined in China through educational reforms, both secular and religious. Mistaken in such a conclusion about Buddhist spirituality, Taixu was fortunate that the conservative forces within the sangha did not actively organize to oppose him. Of course, as Callahan quite perceptively points out, in part their opposition "was to the idea of organization itself."[113]

Besides widespread criticism of Taixu's work by conservatives within the Buddhist sangha, there was opposition to it by secular humanists in China. Taixu's efforts to propagate a modern form of Buddhism capable of both benefiting China and becoming the dominant global religion were challenged by intellectuals committed to the view that all religious beliefs and practices were worthless relics of the human past. Such anti-religionists urged officials of government and other institutions to limit the influence of religion throughout Chinese society. They condemned religious commitment for encouraging irrational trust in the power of spiritual beings and in the efficacy of superstitious rituals. In sum, they excoriated all who retarded cultural progress by upholding the value of traditional religion. The respected scholar Hu Shi, for example, charged that all forms of religion had utterly failed to create morally better and wiser human beings. Taking special aim at Buddhism as the principal expression of an outmoded "medievalism" in China, he wrote acerbically:

> What spirituality is there, let us say, in the old beggar-woman who dies in the direst destitution, but who dies while still mumbling, "Namu Amita Buddha!" and in the clear conviction that she will surely enter that blissful paradise presided over by the Amita Buddha? Do we earnestly think it moral or spiritual to inculcate in that beggar-woman a false belief which shall so hypnotize her as to make her willingly live and die in such dire conditions where she ought not to have been had she been born in a different civilization?
>
> No! A thousand times No! All those hypnotic religions belong to an age when man had reached senility and felt himself impotent in coping with the forces of nature. Therefore he gave up the fight in despair and, like the disappointed fox in the ancient fable who declared the grapes sour because he could not reach them, began to console himself and teach the world that wealth and comfort are contemptible and that poverty and misery are something to be proud of. From this it was only a step to the idea that life itself was not worth living and that the only desirable thing was the blissful existence in the world beyond. And when wise men calmly taught these ideas, fanatics went further and practiced self-denial, self-torture, and even suicide. In the West, saints prayed, fasted, lived on pillars, and whipped themselves at regular intervals. In medieval China, monks prayed, fasted, and, feeding themselves daily with fragrant oil and tying their bodies with oiled cloth, gladly burned themselves to death as offerings to some deity of Mahāyāna Buddhism.
>
> It was those religions of defeatism that sank the whole civilized world underneath the universal deluge of Medievalism. It took over a thousand years for a portion of mankind to emerge from the civilization which glorifies poverty and sanctifies disease, and slowly build up a new civilization which glorifies life and combats poverty as a crime. . . . The new civilization of the new age has given to men a new religion, the religion of self-reliance as contrasted with the religion of defeatism of the Middle Ages.[114]

In addition to denouncing Mahāyāna Buddhism and other religions for their otherworldliness, secular humanists charged that the vicious competitiveness of exclusivistic religious sects only further demonstrated their harmful influence on societies everywhere. Hu Shi directly attacked Taixu for copying "Christian denominationalism" and for advocating—in a manner uncharacteristic of the Chinese—exclusive loyalty to Buddhism as an institutional religion. Thus he condemned Taixu's attempt to revitalize the Mahāyāna community as a "stubborn effort to outlive historical usefulness."[115] Identifying the essential spirit of all religious practice as "to live for the good of all humanity,"[116] Hu Shi asked, "Why not frankly transfer all our old loyalty to the new instrumentalities of education which are taking the place of the older religions as sources of instruction, inspiration, and consolation?"[117]

Appreciatively recalling his father's strong rationalist opposition to Buddhism and the weathered signpost on his uncle's home that read "No Alms for Buddhist Monks or Daoist Priests,"[118] Hu Shi at least gave Taixu the satisfaction of being explicitly named as an opponent. Most other anti-religious intellectual leaders did not think the Buddhist reformer worthy of mention; from their point of view, Buddhists and their reforms were irrelevant to China's cultural progress.

THE CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE

Besides being sensitive to conservative critics within the Buddhist sangha and to secular-humanist critics within intellectual circles, Taixu was acutely aware of the powerful and growing influence of Christianity, Buddhism's new religious challenger in East Asia. He realized that many of China's young people who were attracted to the cultural ethos and technological achievements of the West were also curious about its dominant religious heritage. Recognizing Christianity and Buddhism as the two most important religious forces in the modern world, Taixu studied Christian doctrine and invited western scholars to give lectures on the subject to his students and followers. Reichelt, in fact, recalled Taixu's graciousness in inviting him to a Buddhist conference on Lu Shan in 1923:

> Taixu sent me a hearty invitation to attend the conference and to lecture on "The Relation between Christianity and Buddhism."
>
> I visited Taixu at the Buddhist Academy in Wuchang where so many of the idealistic and higher type of Buddhist monks gather round the pulpit of their beloved and esteemed Master, "Explainer of the Law" *(fashi)*. He therefore knew my viewpoint fairly well, and that I would preach Jesus Christ as the perfect revealer of God and the great Savior of the world. Nevertheless he gave me unlimited liberty to speak as a Christian missionary, and introduced me to the audience with most friendly words, saying that he felt it was the duty at this time of every Buddhist to know the inner truths of Christianity just as well as it was the duty of the Christians to know what Buddhism really means. . . . I also had opportunity to talk privately with Taixu. The hours spent with this rare Buddhist mystic in holy pondering over deep questions I shall never forget.[119]

Christian missionaries had become especially known in China for their social welfare work on behalf of the masses—through Christian hospitals, orphanages, schools, and the like. As Philip West has pointed out, most of the missionaries in China were advocates of the liberal Christian Social Gospel, which stressed the immanence of God, the humanity of Jesus, and the fundamental goodness of human nature.[120] Indeed, it could be said that the motive behind Taixu's thorough critique of Christianity was his desire to wrest from the Christians their assumed role as the primary advocates of religiously informed social action for the reform of Chinese society.

As Millican has pointed out, Taixu claimed that Christianity was a dying faith tradition that had run its course in human history. His judgment was based on an analysis of what he considered to be the three fundamental and outmoded ideas on which Christianity was grounded: first, that there is a Creator God who is sovereign over all his creation; second, that there is an eternal soul created by God that is the essence of each human spirit; and third, that there is a redeeming savior, Jesus of Nazareth, who is the only Son of God. According to Millican, in opposition to all three ideas, the Chinese master summarily reasoned, "Now, then, if Cause and Effect are understood the idea of God is exploded. If the unity and succession of all things is understood the idea of a soul is done away with. If human life is understood then the need of a savior is done away with."[121]

Taixu outlined his basic difficulties with the three cornerstones of Christian doctrine in his essay "Wushen lun" (On Atheism).[122] In the modern world of science, the monk began, most intellectuals are advocates of atheistic worldviews, although a few, influenced by western religion and philosophy, still cling to old-fashioned theistic ideas. These, he suggested, generally espouse popular-sounding ideals of individual freedom and equality, based on the belief that each human being is an equally loved "child of God." From this perspective, they encourage all people to relate kindly to one another, under the

authority of the one Creator God, and to eliminate any barriers among them. This is a simple and appealing view, remarked Taixu, but unfortunately, in the case of Christianity, one based on a complex of fundamentally erroneous religious conceptions of a sovereign, soul, and savior.

First, Taixu attacked Christian understandings of God by reiterating criticisms articulated earlier by Zhang Taiyan and others.[123] For example, he argued, Christian theism consistently places humankind in an extremely subservient and dependent status vis-à-vis the divine. God is viewed as having unlimited powers, and all persons are forced to submit to God's commands. Furthermore, they must do so happily, noted Taixu, lest their attitudes and actions constitute a rebellion for which they will be cast into a tortuous hell and separated from God for all eternity. Yet despite their disturbingly vulnerable situation, Christians are instructed that they must always address God not only with respect but with affection, as their "Loving Father." Moreover, according to Christian theology, God is supremely wise and good. However, rather than allowing his beloved children to reside with him in his heavenly kingdom and walk with him in his lush garden, God inexplicably causes them to live in a world of injustice, inequality, and terrible suffering.

Further critiquing the Christian affirmation of God's omnipotence and sovereignty, Taixu raised provocative questions about the status of the Devil. Was this "Satan," who supposedly opposes God, created by God? On the one hand, said the reformer, if Christians were to respond that he was not, then obviously there is that which the Creator God did not create, and his creation has its limits. God's creative skills would then be similar to those of any human artisan who creates only what he or she can. Furthermore, if the Devil is not a creation of God, then there must be another who creates devils and whose powers are comparable to, if not greater than, God's. Indeed, how does any Christian know, Taixu asked, that human beings are creations of God and not of the Devil?

On the other hand, Taixu reasoned, if Christians were to respond that the Devil does belong to God's creation, why can't God control him? And since God punishes those who trust and follow the Devil by casting them into hell, why doesn't he also punish Satan by casting him into hell? Moreover, if God, as the creator, was originally able to control the Devil, why would the same good and loving God not continue to do so but let him endanger the lives and well-being of all humankind? Taixu concluded that these questions are insoluble, and that, when pressed, Christians "do not know adequately how to reply and can only laugh dumbly in embarrassment."[124] A supreme self-existent God, he wrote, is like "something caught in the hairs of a ghost or on the horns of a hare—both nonentities."[125]

Second, the Buddhist reformer objected to the Christian idea of an eternal human soul. If one accepts such a mistaken idea, then one is also led to say that all animals and plants have eternal souls, he maintained. This is the perspective of one who fails to recognize the truth of conditioned origination *(yuanqi)*. As an expedient, Taixu acknowledged, the idea of an eternal soul may help some people move beyond the simple identification of the self with the body. Yet such a doctrine permanently separates and alienates all things from one another. It fails to comprehend the true interdependence and interpenetration of all dharmas (phenomena) and, correspondingly, the bonds of sympathy that properly link humans with all forms of life. In so doing, it actually undermines the most profound basis for social responsibility.

The notion of an eternal soul is effectively refuted in Buddhism, according to Taixu, by two central teachings. The first is that of conditioned origination, which is summarized in the statement that "all things are constituted (evolve) by the conjunction of inherent and affinitative elements." The second is that of consciousness-only *(wei-shi)*, which is succinctly captured in the assertion that "all things are idealistic phenomenal manifestations." "If we combine these two phrases, . . ." argued Taixu, "we have the dominant thread running through all the Buddha's illuminating teachings regarding the nature of the universe." Explicating the two phrases, the monk argued as follows:

> Of all the things in the universe, whether it be the world as a whole, the smallest particle or even the universe itself, it may be said that there

> is nothing that exists independently of relations and that is not involved in the temporal succession or continuity of events. All have a history and a social nature. Things appear in this continuity of successive events in mutual relationship, playing the alternate role of inherent and then of affinitative elements in the process of bringing into existence the individual organizations. We may go farther and say that present causes themselves arise from previous causes. So when we think of things we must realize that in their basic natures they are only temporary aggregates appearing in the cosmic process and having no independent existence in themselves. This is what Buddhists mean when they say "all things are constituted by inherent and affinitative elements."
>
> Now what is meant by the phrase, "all things are idealistic phenomenal manifestations"? The word "manifestation" *(xian)* has two meanings. First, it means being manifest and second it means manifesting. "Being manifest" refers to the principles or objects which are made manifest and recognized by means of the five senses, by thought, etc. "Manifesting" refers to the active knowing mind which has power to cause change in the things which become objects of knowledge and thus become manifest. In brief, all things in the moment of becoming objects of mind are changed by the power of the mind. This is what is meant by the phrase "all things are idealistic phenomenal manifestations."[126]

These two fundamental ideas of the Buddha effectively defined a religio-philosophical middle position that avoided the two extremes of substantialism and nihilism. According to Taixu, Buddhist idealism provided an extremely helpful framework for interpreting this mediation. In fact, as Wing-tsit Chan has claimed, Taixu contributed to the interest in idealism by trying to "harmonize the philosophy of Weishi, Huayan, and Tiantai, combining their essential features and removing their contradictions."[127] Lai aptly points out that Taixu's interest in Weishi philosophy paralleled that of many other Buddhist modernists who rejected both Pure Land for its faith stance and Chan for its anti-intellectualism.[128] Taixu believed that idealism was not only Mahāyāna's most sophisticated system of thought but the one that would most easily capture the imagination of the growing numbers of educated people in China, both inside and outside of the Sangha.

In addition, as Hamilton confirms, in Taixu's opinion idealism was also "the system most worth the attention of the Western student of philosophy."[129]

Taixu's interpretation of "Dharma-character idealistic philosophy" *(faxiang weishi xue)*, says Chan, should not be identified with a western subjective idealism that denies an "original substance" while reducing reality to individual consciousness, nor with a western objective idealism that recognizes a "Universal Mind." Rather, writes Chan, Taixu "attempts to combine them both by holding that in the transformations of the eight consciousnesses, they transform both individually and collectively."[130] Moreover, in clear opposition to Ouyang Jingwu's interpretation of Thusness *(zhenru)* as being absolutely transcendental and radically separated from phenomena, Taixu's more synthetic intuitions led him to view Thusness as both transcendent and immanent. These abstract philosophical arguments—on which his rejections of both the idea of an eternal soul and that of an eternal Creator were based—were not simply academic metaphysical speculations but were aimed directly at establishing an adequate foundation for morality. As Taixu himself explained,

> The Buddhist teaching regarding the nature of the universe has nothing of the mystical or mysterious in it. . . . It asserts positively that there is in the universe no such thing as an independently existing individual thing. Everything great or small is made up of a union of many units or elements in a successive continuity of moments of time. . . . Now when this cosmic view of Buddhism is applied to morality it means that there is an inescapable mutuality in life. In working good or ill to another, one is bringing good or ill to himself. . . . The whole cannot separate itself from the individual and the individual cannot exist apart from the whole.[131]

Third, on the basis of Buddhism's cosmology *(yuzhou guan)*, Taixu asserted that humans beings need no divine savior. The monk firmly rejected as fantastic the Christian idea of a supernatural being who breaks in on the natural order to effect an irresistible salvation. To begin with, he could not accept the concept of the absolute divine

forgiveness of sin, which he judged to be in conflict with the Buddhist law of cause and effect. On this point Millican once commented:

> Taixu following this philosophical atheistic school puts great emphasis on Buddhist Law or Dharma *(fofa)*. This law of cause and effect runs through all existence. This applied to human life and conduct means that our future is determined according to unchangeable laws by our conduct in this life. According to this law the necessary outcome of a good life is a better future. Thus we may save ourselves, or determine our own destiny. To one of this school, the idea, for instance, that a murderer or other flagrant sinner can escape by any means from suffering the result of his own sins, is repugnant. Since the culprit could escape from punishment by merely repenting and requesting forgiveness from God, would not evil be encouraged? On the other hand, would not the knowledge that a sure retribution is bound to follow deter evil doers?[132]

In addition, Taixu dismissed the traditional Christian view of Jesus Christ as an incarnate Creator God who had descended to earth to offer salvation. In contrast, according to the monk, Gautama can be considered a "savior" only in the highly qualified sense that he is the prime example of one who earnestly pursued the salvific path that leads to perfect enlightenment and buddhahood. As Taixu himself remarked, "Buddha is not a supernatural but a superhuman being who has realized the truth of all existence, and having conformed his life to it, incites us by his compassion to do likewise."[133] Thus, seeking clarification of Christian doctrine, Taixu once asked Millican if every Christian could become a Christ, as Jesus did, and just as any bodhisattva in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition could realize his or her own buddha-nature.[134] Reichelt remembers that, following his lectures on Christianity at the 1923 Buddhist conference at Lu Shan's Dalin si, Taixu graciously responded, "Jesus Christ is the incarnated Dao. This I now understand. But for us the chief thing is that *the Dao can also be incarnated in us.*"[135]

Although Christianity was fatally flawed by these three mistaken notions of God, soul, and savior, according to Taixu, it nevertheless had one special contribution to make to the modern history of religion: aiding Buddhism in its development. In an important 1938 lecture entitled "Zhongguo xu yejiao yu Ou Mei xu fojiao" (China Needs Christianity and Europe and America Need Buddhism), Taixu argued that the Chinese Buddhist community ought to reflect on the unique energy and spirit exhibited within the Christian church. Such a spirit could help revive Buddhism in China, thus benefiting the nation and the world. From his perspective, Buddhist practitioners had to recognize that the great scientific and technological accomplishments of the West were intrinsically related to central elements of the Christian tradition, elements that had developed since the Middle Ages and that unfortunately were not present to the same degree within the Buddhist heritage.

The primary aspect of Christianity that Taixu wished to lift up for emulation was its ability to organize and motivate individual adherents in normative modes of religious belief and practice. Christians, he noted, were led to experience their faith as a universal one, leading to a sense of order, harmony, and community with others. The church, he concluded after visiting Europe and the United States, had been able through ritual acts and opportunities for fellowship to instill in individual believers, despite their differences, a remarkable oneness of mind and spirit that shaped their everyday lives and energized them for mission. Chinese Buddhism had once displayed that spirit, he suggested, but in the modern world there was no common spirit or discipline within the religious community. The Sangha appeared dispirited and disorganized. Therefore, he asserted, "we must now learn a lesson from Christianity in order to improve Buddhism, enliven its spirit, and influence the people."[136]

In accord with this judgment, and lamenting the fact that Buddhist monks in China officiated only at funeral services, the reformer encouraged the design of new Buddhist services for celebrating all the important events in a person's life, such as the birth of an infant, the beginning of a child's education, a wedding, a birthday, the birth anniversary of a deceased family member, and so on.[137] When Taixu conducted a modern Buddhist wedding ceremony in Shanghai in 1927, he drew an immediate outburst of criticism from traditionalists within the sangha. He noted that some monastic leaders even believed that such new rites were Communist-influenced.[138]

From Taixu's perspective, Christianity's most compelling aspect was its ability to engender in diverse adherents a singleness of purpose and unified commitment to mission, while its weakest point was its utter inability to permit rational inquiry into the nature of faith. As a result, he observed, within Christian communities there existed an unfortunate and irreconcilable bifurcation between faith and reason, religious and scientific discourse:

> The life of Europeans and Americans is scientific, but their faith is unscientific. While contemporary Europeans and Americans need religion, their religion is divorced from and contradictory to a practical, scientific life. Theirs has become a type of divided and inconsistent life. Thus in order to practice religion, they must cast aside reason; but in order to pursue a practical life, they must cast aside faith. This is the sad situation now in Europe and the United States.[139]

Christians are forced to compartmentalize religion, Taixu argued, because its logic is wholly incompatible with the practical, scientific logic of everyday discourse and endeavor. And just as Christianity can supply what Chinese Buddhism needs, so Chinese Buddhism can supply what Christianity needs: a religious heritage that is not in direct conflict with scientific reasoning but that has the potential to produce a high degree of trust, commitment, and community.

TOWARD A RELIGIONLESS FUTURE

Taixu was convinced that religious believers of all traditions could learn from one another and benefit from one another's experiences. As he once stated, "It is my belief that Buddhism has enough variety in its many aspects to meet the needs of all temperaments and classes of people. Nevertheless it is possible to think that all religions share in some central core of truth to which each forms in its own way a separate gateway."[140] Thus his active ecumenical work within the global Buddhist community—which inspired the creation in 1950 of the World Fellowship of Buddhists—was complemented by his efforts

toward greater interreligious cooperation and dialogue. As noted in Chapter 3, in 1943 he participated in the founding of the Association of Chinese Religious Believers, the executive committee of which included, in addition to Taixu, leaders in the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic communities. Taixu was also serving, at the time of his death, as an executive director of the Philosophy of Life Institute, founded by the Roman Catholic bishop Paul Yu Bin. In the *China Christian Year Book, 1932–1933,* Reichelt wrote of the monk's open and congenial spirit toward members of the Christian church:

> He is always friendly and noble in his attitude towards Christians. Was it not for the—according to his opinion—limited and meaningless Christian idea of God as a personality and a creator, and the equally meaningless idea of Christ as the only perfect revealer of the divine and the only savior of the world—were it not for these things—Taixu would most willingly proclaim Christianity as a special and in many respects a very strong form of Mahāyāna Buddhism, given and adapted to western races.[141]

Although Taixu was an inclusivist who was open to what might be learned in dialogue with adherents of other religions, he nevertheless remained firmly convinced of the absolute truth of the Buddha's Dharma. Yet he clearly emphasized that institutional religion, including the institutional form of religion known as Mahāyāna Buddhism, should be understood as a conveyance (a "yāna," or *sheng*) to the realization of truth—that is, as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Thus he concluded his essay "On Atheism" with an intriguing description of the historical evolution of religion. His primary tenet was that true religion is always preparing people for a religionless future. His arguments reflect a blend of Marxist ideology, with which he had been familiar since his youth, and the religio-philosophical perspectives of the wisdom schools of Buddhism.

In essence, Taixu asserted that when people venerate sages or buddhas, this is not only their own misfortune but, in a significant sense, the misfortune of the one who is declared to be a sage or a buddha. The true sage, he observed, surely hopes that the people will not designate anyone as a sage. In the same way, "true religion must

daily take as its ultimate hope that the world will not use religion." How is it possible for sages not to be venerated, he asked rhetorically, and how can the world ultimately dispense with religious practice? Taixu's answer was: by all people becoming sages and all becoming buddhas, "yet because all sentient beings have not yet become buddhas, and all people have not yet become sages, humankind has sages and worthies and the world has religions."[142]

Like the ninth-century Chan iconoclast Linji (d. 867), Taixu considered the reverencing of sages and buddhas to be unfortunate precisely because it turns people's minds from their own responsibilities and potentialities. As long as people depend on the powers of other "great beings," he argued, they fail to develop their own hidden powers for self-transformation. As long as they worship other beings as sacred, they fail to perceive their own sacrality. For these reasons, Taixu considered all forms of devotionalism, whether Christian, Buddhist, or any other, to be expedient expressions that would ultimately give way to a more perfect view. "After the world honors the Dharma for a long time," he declared, "the truth will be spoken, the gates of all expediencies open, the true nature of reality manifest, and atheism will still be considered the final teaching."[143]

To illustrate this point, Taixu recommended comparison with the political realm. Again articulating a Mahāyāna Buddhist argument with Marxist overtones, he wrote, "Progress in the realm of government is from the authority of tribal chieftains to a monarchy, and from a monarchy to a republic, and from a republic to [the ideal of] no government at all. In religion, progress is from [the belief in] many gods to one god, from one god to sages and worthies, and from sages and worthies to no religion at all."[144]

According to Taixu, Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is ultimately atheistic and combines morality with scientific principles, is the most advanced and perfect form of institutional religion. The time will come when the Buddhist Dharma will inform the daily lives of all persons, but "Buddhism" as a formally structured religious tradition will be forgotten, much as "when one catches a hare, the snare is forgotten, or when one catches a fish, the fish trap is forgotten."[145] Thus the essence of the Buddhist tradition will remain, Taixu asserted, and

its impact on human life will expand beyond measure. However, it will not be consciously labeled or thought of as "Buddhism." Whatever its merits, Christian theism, because of its place in the evolutionary religious chain and the attachments that it engenders, is obviously not in a similar position to help people move beyond to an ultimate vision of codependent reality.

During this final age of transition toward the religionless future, argued Taixu, the Chinese Buddhist community is called upon to reform and reenergize itself for its mission of teaching and service to all sentient beings. The required reformation of Buddhism, the necessary redefinition of the essential bodhisattva path, is, he recognized, iconoclastic by its very nature because no attachments can be allowed to prevent the attainment of complete enlightenment. Yet the process should not be destructive. Rather, those committed to it should carefully analyze, select, adapt, and utilize within human culture—and within Christianity, as Buddhism's most important competitor and dialogue partner—that which is in consonance with the highest levels of wisdom and compassion as exhibited by the Enlightened One.

As Taixu pointed out in his essay, "Xin jiu wenti de genben jiejue" (The Fundamental Solution to the Issue of the New and the Old), in the twentieth century many are caught up in a bitter clash between extreme conservatism and radical iconoclasm. Their distress, he observed, is largely the result of a failure to follow a middle way and to avoid rigid polarizations within society:

> One perspective considers anything new as comparatively better and anything old as bad. Therefore, one ought to select only that which is new and use it, while merely discarding that which is old. Another perspective considers anything old as comparatively better and anything new as dangerous. Therefore, one ought to rely on the old and stay with it, while blocking the new and shunning its use.[146]

A much wiser perspective, averred Taixu, acknowledges that both the old and the new are complex matters and that neither is wholly good or bad. Therefore Buddhists in the contemporary, pluralistic world should seriously attend to their religious and cultural heritage while learning from others, realizing that their tradition is dynamic,

evolving, and finally to be transcended. In an age marked by utopian dreaming, Taixu was intentionally calling his "new monks" to a uniquely modern form of Buddhism and beyond.

Lai has correctly pointed out that the criticisms of Christian theism articulated by Taixu and most of his contemporaries were inadequate and unsophisticated.[147] Taixu tended to caricature Christianity, failing to recognize its diversities and complexities, even as he represented a rather limited and overly rationalistic view of Buddhism as a living tradition. Much more comprehensive and sensitive reflections by Chinese Buddhists and Christians alike on the foundational truths and the elasticity of these two traditions would be required to advance the dialogue. Yet Taixu's unusual intention to listen, if not his often simplistic rhetoric, should be recognized as a significant contribution to Buddhist-Christian dialogue in his day. Although he did not adequately model the spiritual adventure of "passing over and coming back"[148] that most would now assume to be critical to the continuing maturation of such dialogue, Taixu did provide a far more engaging paradigm for interreligious dialogue as a style of life than did most Chinese Buddhist masters in the Republican period.

CHAPTER 6

TAIXU'S LEGACY

None of Taixu's twenty-four tonsure disciples and grandson-disciples proved capable enough in the continuation of his master's work to be widely recognized. In fact, six of them left the order to return to lay life, and two renounced Buddhism altogether.[1] Yet after the reformer's death in 1947, there were prominent members of the sangha in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan who were appreciative of his legacy and sought to advance his progressive agenda. That was not, however, always an easy or popular endeavor.

REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND HONG KONG

Classic Marxist theories about the origin, value, and end of religion provided the basic rubric for the state's dealing with Buddhism in the People's Republic of China after 1949. Although Mao Zedong promised protection for religious believers—as long as they were not engaged in counterrevolutionary activities—most local cadres were quick to include Buddhist monks and nuns among those undesirable