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Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Modern China: Taixu's Perspective on Christianity

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1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhist-Christian encounter and dialogue, as part of religious pluralism, have opened new dimensions in the history of religion. Research on this encounter, which was one of the greatest events in the history of religion in the 20th century, has changed the nature of religious studies in general, and more scholars have attempted to put aside normative approach and suspended value judgment in considering the two religions through comparison. From the viewpoint of both inter- and intra-religious dialogues, they are devoted to examining the two religions in certain dimensional and doctrinal levels, and understanding them as common heritage of humankind. From the different perspectives of philosophy or theology, phenomenology, sociology, and history of religion, some scholars have reexamined the Buddhist-Christian encounter in the past, articulated needs for constructive dialogue at present, and provided guidance for religious unity and mutual respect in the future. As part of the result of such efforts, many sinologists and religious scholars have concluded that although the Buddhist-Christian encounter in modern China did not pro-

duce desirable reciprocal exchange and education largely because the two religions did not pay much attention to what the other actually taught—instead, Buddhists and Christians criticized each other on the basis of their own subjective understanding of the other's religion—it left behind a rich legacy which enables later generations to improve the dialogue and produce fruitful outcome. Within this legacy, Taixu's 太虛 attitudes toward Christianity and its missionaries in China are especially worthy of reexamination.

Although no single article in the Chinese language has been devoted exclusively to investigating how Taixu, as a leading Buddhist reformer at his time, responded to the spread of Christianity in China, a few articles in English have appear which analyse how he criticized Christian theology and how he called for collaboration between the followers of the two religions.¹ To some extent, these articles, however, have failed to take into consideration that Taixu's attitude toward Christianity changed over times according to social, political, and religious developments in contemporary China. It appears instead that Taixu's criticism against Christianity and advocacy for collaboration with Christians occurred simultaneously throughout his lifetime. This paper provides a detailed examination of Taixu's involvement in the Buddhist-Christian encounter within a framework of contemporary sociopolitical and religious developments in China. It explores how his attitude toward Christianity changed in three periods: criticism (1913–21), quest for reconciliation (1921–37), and collaboration (1937–47).² Such changes can be highlighted and understood as the manifestation of how Chinese Buddhists, especially monks, viewed Christianity in general as well as its missionary activities in China during the first half of the 20th century. In order to have a full picture of Buddhist-Christian encounter in China, let us first review its history.

¹ Whalen Lai, "Why Is There Not a Buddho-Christian Dialogue in China," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 6 (1986): 81–96; Don Pittman, "The Modern Buddhist Reformer T'ai-hsü on Christianity," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 71–86; Darui Long, "An Interfaith Dialogue between the Chinese Buddhist Leader Taixu and Christians," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 20 (2000): 167–89.

² By no means is the division of three periods definite. It only indicates Taixu's attitude toward Christianity which became dominant in each period. As it will be clear in the following discussion, although it is obvious that Taixu's attitude toward Christianity changed over times, it is difficult to know exactly when it changed.

2. EARLY HISTORY OF BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER IN CHINA

The encounter between Buddhism and Christianity in the Chinese history can be classified into three periods: the first during the Tang dynasty (618–907), the second spanning the Yuan, Ming, and the pre–Opium War Qing dynasties (1271–1840), and the third consisting of the post–Opium War Qing dynasty and the Republican era (1841–1949).³ The first encounter occurred when a branch of Christianity, known as Nestorianism, was introduced into China in 635 C.E. Just as Buddhism adopted many Daoist and Confucian terms when it was first introduced into China during the Eastern Han dynasty, Nestorianism made use of Buddhist terminology to transmit Christian ideas. Buddhist influence on Nestorianism can be clearly witnessed in the Nestorian Stele, i.e., the *Daqin jingjiao liuxing Zhongguo bei* 大秦景教流行中國碑, in which a number of Buddhist terms are used. For instance, God (Ala) is identified with Arhat (Aloke 阿羅訶), Jesus Christ is called the World-Honoured One (Shizun 世尊) while Christian priests are equated with Buddhist monks (*seng* 僧) or the great virtuous ones (*dade* 大德). By examining the Nestorian scriptures that remain in Dunhuang, one may find that Nestorianism endeavoured to sinicize Christianity by following the model of Buddhism, which by then had already successfully integrated into Chinese culture and society. The influence, however, was mutual as Nestorianism also exercised an impact on Buddhism. It is said that the Christian priest Jing-jing 景淨 assisted Prajña, one of the four great Buddhist translators, in translating *Liu polomi jing* 六波羅密經 (The Six Perfections Sūtra) and inserted some Christian ideas into the text.⁴ It was also claimed by some Christian missionaries later on that the formation of the Pure Land School in the Tang dynasty was the result of Christian influence.⁵ The encounter between Buddhism and Christianity was, however, interrupted by the state persecution during the 840s when these two foreign religions were almost entirely uprooted in China. Although Buddhism revived

³ This classification does not mean that there is no encounter or dialogue between the two religions in China today, but that such encounter or dialogue may need a separate article to deal with.

⁴ Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之, *Zhongguo Jingjiao* 中國景教 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1993), 160–63.

⁵ Sverre Holth, “The Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhism during the Nestorian Period,” *Ching Feng* 11, no. 3 (1968): 27–28.

shortly afterwards, Nestorianism seemed to have disappeared from the Chinese soil.

During the first part of the second period of Buddhist-Christian encounter, a number of Franciscan missionaries were sent to China by Pope Nicholas IV during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Nevertheless, they could not exert much influence on the Yuan court because the members of the imperial family and nobles had already had faith in Lamaism. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), Jesuit missionaries arrived in China and brought with them western science and philosophy in addition to the Christian gospel. Perhaps the most important missionary during this time was Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who was active in spreading Christianity and converting Chinese people. For the first nine years after his arrival in 1582, Ricci wore the garb of a Buddhist monk and often stayed in temples in order to show his intimacy with Buddhism, which by then had become an integral part of Chinese culture.⁶ Later on, when he realized that Buddhist monks were not highly respected by Chinese people, Ricci began to wear a Confucian gown.

During the time when Ricci was in China, polemical competition rather than communication dominated the encounter of Buddhism and Christianity. A number of Christian articles were written to demonstrate the incompatibility between Christianity and Buddhism, and to show the former's superiority, while Buddhists, such as Zhuhong 株宏 (1535–1615), who was one of the four eminent monks of the Ming dynasty, critically responded to the Christian challenges.⁷ Ricci's book, *Tianzhu shi yi* 天主實義 (Treatise on the true meaning of the Heavenly Lord), which expounds on Christian theology, resulted in attacks from Buddhists. In his article, "Tianshuo" 天說 (On heaven), Zhuhong first appreciatively endorsed the Christian concept of God by suggesting that there is goodness in the concept because it may urge Chinese people to respect *tian* 天 (heaven) in the Chinese tradition. Nevertheless, he then discredited the significance of the Christian God by putting it into a Buddhist context. According to Zhuhong, the Christian God is the ruler of *Trāyastriṃśa* (Daoli Tianwang 忉利天王), who was in charge of the world of the Four Heavenly Kings and the Thirty-Third Heaven within a Brahma world, which is ruled by *Mahābrahma*. There are billions of such worlds as expressed in the Buddhist term "trichilocosm" (*sanqian*

⁶ Xie He'nai 謝和耐 [Jacques Gernet], *Zhongguo he jidujiao: Zhongguo he Ouzhou wenhua zhi bijiao* 中國和基督教：中國和歐洲文化之比較, trans. Geng Sheng (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1991), 22–27.

⁷ Holth, "The Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhism," 36–37.

daqian shijie 三千大千世界 [Three thousand great thousand worlds]). In comparison to *Mahābrahma* who could be considered as the King of Zhou (*Zhou tianzi* 周天子), the Christian God is the equivalent to a state lord (*zhuhou* 諸侯). Furthermore, this God is also situated within the world of craving and knows nothing about the world of form and the formless.⁸ Being aware that many well-educated Chinese gentry had been converted to Christianity, Zhuhong felt that they were misled and admonished them to rethink their conversion.

At the beginning of the Qing dynasty, some Jesuit missionaries were able to impress the imperial court with their knowledge of science and converted about 150,000 Chinese to Christian faith by the middle of the 17th century. The Christian missionary activity in China during this period of the encounter, however, ended with the breaking of the relationship between the pope and the Chinese court. The former condemned any practice of Christian sinicization while Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1723–35) terminated Christian missionary activity in China and confiscated church properties. The third period started after the First Opium War (1840–42), when both Protestants and Catholics reorganized Christian missions in China, and confiscated church properties began to be returned to the missionaries. Unlike those in the first two periods, Christian missionaries in the third were supported by the political power of the West, and thus they were more forceful in their campaign of proselytization and more aggressive in their attacks of Chinese Buddhism and the practice of Chinese monks. The missionaries showed their sharp contempt for Chinese monks and believed that Buddhism was dead in China. They felt that all dialogue with Buddhists was unnecessary, except criticism such as to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian tradition.⁹ Ernst Johann Eitel,¹⁰ one of those Christian missionaries who studied Buddhism, remarked that he could find nothing in Buddhism that Christianity did not offer in a better way and with superior validity. He held that “Buddhism is, after all, neither better nor worse than any other religion built up by man, it is a science without an inspiration, a religion without God, a body

⁸ Zhuhong 株宏, *Lianchi dashi quanji* 蓮池大師全集, vol. 4 (Taipei: Heyu chubanshe, 1999), 4051–53.

⁹ Winfried Glüer, “The Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhism during the Nineteenth Century and the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Ching Feng* 11, no. 3 (1968): 41–42.

¹⁰ He is the author of the *Handbook for the Student of Chinese Buddhism* (London: Trübner and Co., 1870).

without a spirit, unable to regenerate, cheerless, cold, dead and deplorably barren of results.”¹¹

However, this is not to say that all Christian missionaries rejected the value of Buddhism altogether. Joseph Edkins recognized some usefulness of Buddhism in the missionary effort of spreading the gospel. He suggested that Christianity was in need of Buddhist expressions to transmit Christian ideas so that Chinese people could easily understand and accept Christian teachings. He regarded Buddhism as *praeparatio evangelica*, an introductory stage to Christianity, although he was still aware of the evils of Buddhism. The first meaningful encounter between Buddhism and Christianity occurred perhaps when Timothy Richard translated the *Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening to Mahāyāna faith) with the help of Yang Wenhui 楊文會. Having closely studied Buddhism, Richard regarded Buddhism as an Asiatic form of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which formed a junction where interests of science, philosophy and religion all meet.¹² In his translation of the *Dacheng qixin lun*, which he considered to have contained the Gospel of God, he interpreted Buddha as God, and *Tathāgata* as the archetype. Richard’s positive approach of regarding Buddhism as one part of Christianity and his pioneering efforts in engaging Buddhism and Christianity in dialogue set an example for his successors. Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877–1952) attempted to develop this dialogue, and even adopted the Nestorian Cross (a cross as the symbol of Christianity rising out of a lotus as the symbol of Buddhism) to indicate the unity of the two religions.¹³ He founded the Christian Mission to Buddhists in Nanjing to provide a place for the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism and to convert Chinese Buddhists—especially monks—to Christianity. Based on his theological understanding of both Buddhism and Christianity, Reichelt proposed a theory of “points of contact” by identifying *Dao*, *Tian*, *Tathāgata*, and God in order to find a common language in different religions.¹⁴ It can be said with little doubt that the aim of the Christian approach to Buddhism during this period was to discredit Buddhism and make it useful for spreading the gospel among Chinese. It can also be said that Buddhism, corrupted and disorganized, failed to launch positive responses to Christian criticism.

¹¹ E. J. Eitel, *Buddhism, Its Historical, Theoretical and Popular Aspects*, 3rd rev. ed. (Hong Kong: Lane, Crawford, 1884), 144.

¹² Timothy Richard, “The Influence of Buddhism in China,” *The Chinese Recorder* 21 (1890): 64.

¹³ Whalen Lai, “Why Is There Not a Buddho-Christian Dialogue in China,” 91–92.

¹⁴ A detailed discussion on the points of contact can be referred to in Glüer, “The Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhism,” 50–56.

However, after the founding of the Republic of China in 1912, the encounter between the two religions became more reciprocal as Buddhists, while endeavouring to revive Buddhism, began to study Christianity and to actively respond to its challenge. Buddhist intellectuals, many of whom were monks, wrote a number of articles and books in defending Buddhist doctrine and practice and criticizing those of Christianity. Some of the most important texts include: Zhang Chunyi's 張純一 *Zhongguo xin jiduxue* 中國新基督學 (New Christian studies in China)¹⁵ and *Fohua jidujiao* 佛化基督教 (Buddhist transformation of Christianity);¹⁶ and Chen Hailiang's 陳海量 *Zhiji-zhibi* 知己知彼 (Knowing oneself and others).¹⁷ Meanwhile, many articles that dealt with Christian challenges also appeared in Buddhist journals such as *Haichao yin* 海潮音, *Fohua xin-yingnian* 佛化新青年, and *Xiandai fojiao* 現代佛教.

3. TAI XU'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY

Taixu (1890–1947) was one of the most eminent yet controversial monks in modern Chinese history. One cannot comprehend Chinese Buddhism in the 20th century without first understanding the life and teachings of Taixu, who was regarded as “the Martin Luther of modern Chinese Buddhism.”¹⁸ Early in 1923 when Taixu was thirty-three years old, Frank R. Millican, a Christian missionary in China, remarked, “T'ai Hsü and modern Buddhism are inseparable. You can no more write intelligently about modern Buddhism and ignore T'ai Hsü than you could about the Reformation and leave Luther out.”¹⁹

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Taixu became a Buddhist novice

¹⁵ This was first published in 1924 in Shanghai. It is interesting to note that Reichelt did the proofreading of the texts.

¹⁶ The book was first put in circulation in 1924 in Shanghai and reprinted in 1933.

¹⁷ The book was first published in Shanghai in October 1946 with thirty thousand copies, reprinted in December 1946 with twenty thousand copies, five thousand copies in 1947, and three thousand copies in 1948.

¹⁸ Xinde 心德, “Wo wei fojiao qiantu ku Xu dashi” 我為佛教前途哭虛大師 [I lament for Taixu for the future of Buddhism], cited in Ma Tianxiang 麻天祥, *Wanqing foxue yu jindai shehui sichao* 晚清佛學與近代社會思潮 [Buddhist studies and the trend of social thoughts in the late Qing] (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1992), 2:244 n. 3.

¹⁹ Frank R. Millican, “T'ai Hsü and Modern Buddhism,” *The Chinese Recorder* 54, no. 6 (1923): 327.

mainly because he was interested in seeking supernatural power (*shen-tong* 神通) and did not distinguish between “Buddha and god” (*xianfo* 仙佛).²⁰ Even after he was fully ordained as a monk, Taixu continued to read popular tales and studied the doctrines of other religions and philosophies. Yet his understanding of other religions largely derived from his Buddhist conviction. In defining religion (*zongjiao* 宗教), Taixu explained that *zong* means inner spiritual experience realized by an enlightened saint and *jiao* is the elucidation or teaching of such experience to others.²¹ According to Taixu, both Buddhism and Christianity can be categorized as religions, although the former is a form of atheism while the latter is a theistic religion that explains the relationship between God and man.²² In his further analysis of the meaning of religion, Taixu listed four reasons for the emergence of religion: (1) mysterious experience enables one to think of the existence of another wonderful and better world; (2) the complexity of the world forces people to conceive of a creator God who can create everything and solves all problems; (3) unsatisfied with the limitation of the world and life, one seeks immortality; and (4) people seek eternal peace and freedom and realization of the ultimate truth.

Having thus examined Taixu’s understanding of religion, let us now turn to explore his attitude toward Christianity that changed over three periods.

First Stage: Critiques of Christian Theology

It is unknown when Taixu first encountered Christianity and became critical of Christian doctrines, but it is quite certain that he had learned of Christianity or at least had read the Bible before 1913 when he wrote an article entitled “Wushenlun” 無神論 (On atheism).²³ In the article, Taixu makes use of Buddhist doctrines of non-self, self-effort for salvation, karma-rebirth, and impermanence to form the basis of his disapproval of the Christian ideas of a creator God, the eternal soul, and redemption

²⁰ Taixu, “Wo de zongjiao jingyan” 我的宗教經驗 [My religious experience], in *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書 [Complete works of Taixu] (Taipei: Shandao Si, 1979), 21:346.

²¹ Taixu, “Wo zhi zongjiao guan” 我之宗教觀 [My views on religion], in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:244.

²² Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 23:5–6.

²³ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:284–95.

through Jesus Christ. In his arguments, Taixu recapitulates the atheistic views articulated by Zhang Taiyan 章太炎,²⁴ and further demonstrates the irrationality of believing in God as the creator and “loving father.” He suggests that the relationship between God and man in Christianity only discourages people from seeking freedom, democracy, and equality, which are human rights endowed within each and every individual. The idea that man should unconditionally obey God, and the belief that God favours only those who have faith in him and intimidates or even punishes those who dare defy him, were theological foundation of feudal society, in which kings or emperors had absolute power over the lives of their subjects. Taixu then asks why evil and suffering prevail among human lives if God creates all and loves his creation. He reiterates that no one can prove the existence of God, but one who is endowed with a little knowledge may disprove it. Subsequently, Taixu comes to the conclusion that “there cannot be, must not be, and should not be the existence of an absolute God,” and that theism is only a temporary way while atheism is the eternal truth.²⁵

Taixu restates that the world was not created by God, but by human beings. The world, which is the collective manifestation of the karmas of all living beings, is consistently undergoing transformation in accordance with the law of cause and effect. This is because the collective karma (*gongye* 共業), which creates the world, and the individual karma (*geye* 個業), which constitutes each living being, are changing from moment to moment. The view that everything is impermanent eliminates the concepts of a creator God and an eternal soul. Therefore, Taixu predicts that a theistic religion is destined to become extinct in face of the development of social and natural sciences while Buddhism, which denies the existence of a creator God, will be the religion of the future. He comes to this conclusion by comparing the evolution of religion with the development of political system and states: “The political system evolves from a tribe to a kingdom, to a republic, and to non-government; religion evolves from pantheism, to monotheism, to a system of idolizing a saint, and to non-existence of religion [theism].”²⁶ Taixu maintains, therefore, that all religions, including Buddhism, are not absolute but merely a tool and a way to the absolute, and Buddhism will disappear too once its mission of creating a world with harmony (*datong* 大同), politics without

²⁴ The English translation of Zhang's article “On Atheism” can be referred to in Whalen Lai, “Why Is There Not a Buddho-Christian Dialogue in China,” 87–91.

²⁵ A discussion of the article may be referred to in Don Pittman, “The Modern Buddhist Reformer T'ai-Hsü on Christianity.”

²⁶ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:294.

ruling (*wuzhi* 無治), and religion without dogma (*wujiao* 無教) is achieved.

One year later in 1914, while Taixu was practising sealed confinement (*biguan* 閉關) in Putou Mountain, a Christian missionary in Hong Kong wrote an article for a newspaper, responding critically to Taixu's article on atheism. Some of Taixu's friends in Hong Kong sent the newspaper to him and urged him to write another article in response. After reading the article, Taixu composed "Po shenzhi lun" 破神執論 (Refuting theistic attachment)²⁷ so as to reiterate and further develop his critiques and arguments presented in his previous article. In this article, Taixu does not exclusively target Christianity but all religions and philosophies that advocate theism, including Brahmanism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Platonism. However, he specifically rebuts the concept of God in Christianity and Islam, because, as he asserts, it is much more difficult to accept God in these religions than that in Brahmanism, in which Brahma is said to possess two bodies, the body of essence and the body of transformation. According to Taixu, in order to establish a theistic theory of God, the relationship between man and God needs to be clarified first. It must be determined whether God possesses a human body, or whether his livelihood, profession, thought and will, and his system of ruling differ from those of human beings. Taixu asserts that if God and man are similar in all these regards, God is not perfect because human world is full of conflict, suffering, deformation, and evil. Yet if they are different, how can man conceive of the idea of a God or live with a God who cannot be grasped by any means?

Taixu then goes on to analyse the unique heavenly virtue of God (*tiande* 天德) generally conceived by theists, who believe that God is the creator, self-existent, free and eternal, permanent without beginning or ending, and all-penetrating. He points out that the exclusiveness of these characteristics of God in different theistic religions permits no existence of any other God. Based on these characteristics, Taixu examines four functions that theists attribute to God. First, God created everything, including the universe itself; he is not only the father of all beings but is also the producer of all spiritual and physical phenomena. Second, God is in charge of everything he has created. Third, God controls everything and passes judgment on all men and women. Finally, the omniscience of God enables him to supervise the activities of all people. In an attempt to invalidate the existence of such a God, Taixu questions whether God is

²⁷ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 22:296–326.

materiality (*wu* 物) or non-materiality (*feiwu* 非物):²⁸

If it [God] is non-material, then there cannot be any essence and function. Non-materiality is spoken of only in contrast to materiality. It does not mean that non-materiality exists independent of the matter. For instance, [the ideas of] space or void indicates a place where no matter exists, and it does not mean that there is something [besides matter] which can be called non-materiality. Again, nonexistence is spoken of only in contrast with existence. It implies the nonexistence of all existence—not that there is a nonexistence apart from existence. Therefore, the God of yours is only the result of mental speculation, a legendary tale transmitted from the past. It is same as “turtle’s hair” or “rabbit’s horn,” which lack any substantiality. One should not relate oneself to him as the creator and father of all. If God can control and produce everything, then he must possess essence, form, and function. If so, the God of yours is but one among many universal phenomena. It is unbelievable that one world phenomenon can control and produce all others.²⁹

Taixu's denial of the existence of God is mainly based on his Buddhist view of dependent origination that all phenomena are interrelated. Even the idea of nonexistence itself is established in relation to the concept of existence; non-materiality cannot exist independent of materiality. He further discusses the pre-existence of God:

If this God of yours is eternal and self-reliant without pre-existence, and all others are created by him without depending on anything else, the time when all others are created is the time when this God comes into being. Therefore, it cannot be said that something had existed before the creation. It is also unreasonable to claim that there is a God who had existed before the creation. If this God of yours had existed before the creation, it would be a new birth and beginning for him after the creation and inevitably there will be an end and extinction [for him] too.³⁰

Taixu repeats the charges articulated in his previous article that if God created everything, his creation must include all evils and sufferings that are inflicted on human beings. If God is the father of all living beings, he

²⁸ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 22:307–18.

²⁹ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:307–8.

³⁰ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:309.

must be also the father of animals and insects. If all living beings have the same father, then why should people be allowed to kill animals when they are told to refrain from killing their own parents and their human fellows? If God is in control of everything, then all human efforts become unnecessary. Therefore, Taixu comes to the conclusion that the idea of a creator God cannot be proved and that it is only the speculation of theistic believers.

“Po shenzhi lun” was one of Taixu’s major works criticizing Christian theology and was widely circulated among Buddhists, especially his followers. The views expressed in this article became an accepted argument used by Buddhists in their debate with Christians. In 1926, Bian Runhuan 邊潤寰, one of Taixu’s lay disciples, made 200 copies of the article and offered them as gifts to Chinese Christians. According to Bian’s letter to Taixu, the article had successfully converted five Christians to Buddhism.³¹ Inspired by the article, Bian also became engaged in the debate with Christians and questioned how they knew that God was almighty and omniscient. According to Bian, if one says he knew the existence of God through his own mind, then God would be the production of one’s mind. Confirming Bian’s assertion, Taixu explained that the idea of God was conceived of by people’s isolated consciousness (*dutou yishi* 獨頭意識), which arises independently without any basis just like the illusion of “turtle’s hair” or “hare’s horn”; it was the result of the attachment of the seventh consciousness (*mano*) to the eighth consciousness (*ālāya*), which is mistakenly perceived as self or entity.³²

Taixu’s criticism of Christianity was also largely based on his religious devotion and commitment to Buddhism and conformed with his status as a Buddhist monk in defending Buddhism at a time when the encounter of the two religions was full of contention rather than dialogue. The motivation behind his criticism, as he admitted in the article, was to illustrate the truth of Buddhism through exposure of the untruth of Christianity. Taixu explained why Christianity should not be accepted by Chinese people and the ideas of absolute power and authority of God must not be propagated in China. Chinese people had suffered a great deal in the feudal society in which the absolute power of rulers was sanctioned as “the mandate of heaven” (*tianming* 天命). The Chinese nation had just recently won liberation from feudalism and gained freedom and democracy. Taixu maintained that the Christian religion was established on an unequal basis between man and God, and his criticism of Christianity

³¹ *Haichao yin wenku* 海潮音文庫 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1985), 2:43–44.

³² Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 26:425–28.

was aimed at eliminating the possibility of depriving freedom from Chinese. If they were forced to accept Christianity, Taixu worried, China might regress into a feudal society the legitimate existence of which was sanctioned by a theistic religion.³³ Why then, he questioned, should a new system of slavery be imposed upon the Chinese people?

He argued that theistic views were the root of all kinds of inequality and discrimination, such as the inequality between the noble and the ignoble, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak. According to Taixu, the concept of a creator God could be manipulated by individual dictators as a divine source for secular abuse. Tyrants might wage war against enemies and kill his own people under the name of this God. Thus theism became the source of violence, terror, and destruction in the world. According to his understanding of Christian theology, the authority of God could not be challenged but obeyed, his words must not be doubted but believed, and his teaching should not be examined but followed, hence creating fertile soil for social and political system of dictatorship and foundations of inequality. Taixu illustrated his views by explaining briefly the history of the conflict between Christianity and Islam that the followers of the two religions—each inspired by their own God—fought against each other for centuries, and hundreds and thousands of people lost their lives under the name of God. Millions of people were killed just because they were seen as pagans by Christians, who often waged holy war against unbelievers. Taixu therefore suggested that the phenomena of discrimination and inequality would disappear and violence would be eliminated once the idea of a creator God was discarded.

Taixu, however, admitted that his understanding of Christianity might not be true; yet his criticism was certainly not derived from any hatred for Christian missionaries. Rather, he expressed his intention of inviting theistic believers on a joint spiritual journey to explore religion and hopefully to understand why Christians had taken great pains to elaborate theism. On this journey, Taixu suggested, no one should disparage the other's ideas, and one should be permitted to foster some doubt about the other's religion because the more one doubts, the more likely one could gain true understanding.

From the above-mentioned articles written in 1913 and 1914 respectively, it is evident that Taixu's criticism of Christianity was focused on

³³ Frank Millican also reported that "T'ai Hsü's idea of God was of an exaggerated man-God who rules over men in an absolute and despotic way"; *The Chinese Recorder* 54, no. 6 (1923): 331.

Christian theology, especially the doctrines of creation and the absoluteness of God. By using Buddhist relativism, he attempted to disapprove of the concepts of the self-existence of God and the eternal soul. His criticism of Christianity at this time should also be reviewed in the contemporary social and political context in which China was struggling for equality, freedom and democracy. Taixu was deeply worried that the spread of Christianity in China might impose another spiritual dictatorship on the Chinese people and bring the Chinese nation back to feudal society.

Nevertheless, during this period, Taixu also made some neutral comparison between Buddhist and Christian organizations. In his well-known article, “Zhengli sengjie zhidu lun” 整理僧伽制度論 (On reorganizing the sangha system) written in 1915, Taixu compares the Buddhist community of clergy (those who sustain Buddhism) and lay-people (those who believe and support Buddhism) with the Christian “inner circle” (Catholic fathers) and “outer circle” (Protestant priests and lay Christians). He argued that, unlike Christianity, Buddhism must retain a twofold system of monastic community and lay society. In discussing how Buddhists should regard Christianity, Taixu suggested that “In terms of doctrine, Nestorianism [Christianity] may not be worth of mentioning, yet it possesses disciplinary demeanour and is good at charitable work, and Buddhists must extend cooperation with Christians without disturbing them if they do not impose harm on Buddhism.”³⁴ Therefore, it can be said that even during this first stage, Taixu had a high opinion of Christian social practice even though he downplayed Christian theology.

Second Stage: Quest for Reconciliation

After his self-confinement finished in 1917, Taixu visited Taiwan and Japan, and the trip convinced him that Chinese Buddhism should be reformed so that it could catch up with the social and religious development in the rest of the world.³⁵ He was deeply impressed by the Japanese Buddhist educational system and its missionary work. When he visited the Buddhist University in Kyoto, Taixu was presented with a Buddhist

³⁴ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 17:11.

³⁵ Taixu, “Taixu dashi zichuan” 太虛大師自傳 [Autobiography of Taixu], in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 29:224. Taixu was greatly inspired by his visit to Japan, and his dairy of the visit was called *Caizhen lu* 採真錄 [The record of collecting essence]; see Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 29:313–57.

curriculum which became a point of reference for his Buddhist educational reform in China. In 1921, Taixu and other social and political elite, including Liang Qichao 梁啟超, co-founded the Wuchang Buddhist College (Wuchang foxueyuan 武昌佛學院). The visit and the founding of the College may have marked the turning point in Taixu's attitude toward Christianity as he began to show tolerance and goodwill to Christianity, further recognizing its social and practical value.³⁶ The atmosphere in the Wuchang Buddhist College was liberal and open, not only in the area of politics, but also in religion. The College's library was one of its kind in China, where several magazines and books on Christianity and other religions were available.³⁷ Christian missionaries were invited to give lectures on Christianity to the College's students, most of whom were young Buddhist monks who called themselves "new monks" (*xinseng* 新僧). The change in Taixu's attitude toward Christianity was enhanced by his frequent contacts with Christian missionaries. This was evident in a record of the Christian missionary Frank Millican, who thus recalled in 1923:

T'ai Hsü would have us believe that, besides the Buddhas, which men may become, there is a Buddha Being or Essence (*zhenru* 真如), which is the sum total of all the Buddhas; that is, of all enlightenment. This Buddha is a Becoming One, the summation of all the Buddhas and the consummation of all things. To be absorbed back into this Universal Buddha is our goal and our salvation. God differs from Buddha that he is conceived of as being perfect and complete before creation while Buddha is a future consummation.³⁸

Taixu admitted that God is also perfect and complete in comparison with the Buddha, who attained enlightenment through self-efforts. Nevertheless, he continued to express his doubt about the notion that God was a creator and an omnipresent spirit of love as revealed by Jesus Christ. He once asked Millican, "Can you, then, see [God's] face, his expression

³⁶ Darui Long suggested that the founding of the Wuchang Buddhist College was influenced by his visit to Europe and America in 1928. This may not be true, because the college was inaugurated in 1922. See Darui Long, "An Interfaith Dialogue between the Chinese Buddhist Leader Taixu and Christians." Frank Millican also asserted that the trip to Japan changed a great deal of Taixu: "But we may be sure that it was in Japan that he received much of his knowledge of the outside world, and particularly of its religions and philosophies," *The Chinese Recorder* 54, no. 6 (1923): 327.

³⁷ Karl Ludvig Reichelt, *The Transformed Abbot*, trans. G. M. Reichelt and A. P. Rose (London: Lutterworth, 1954), 80.

³⁸ Millican, "T'ai Hsü and Modern Buddhism," 330–31.

of pleasure or wrath? If not, then how do you know he exists at all?”³⁹ Taixu could not understand why God revealed his true nature only through Jesus Christ without allowing people to know him directly. He thus concluded that the Christian God was not God at all; it was rather Jesus the Jew who actually preached the truth under the name of God. As every living being can become Buddha, according to Buddhism, Taixu was curious whether everyone could become Christ just as Jesus. He rationalized his curiosity in the following way: “It is surely correct to say that Tao (Divine Wisdom) was incarnate in Jesus Christ in a special way, but now the main thing is that Tao should be incarnate in us too.”⁴⁰ It is quite apparent that Taixu had thus become more serious and empathic in his attempt to know—rather than just to criticize—Christianity, and his quest to know more about Christianity prompted Millican to make the following remark:

These questions reveal an effort to understand Christianity through a mind permeated with Buddhist thought. He [Taixu] seemed very near, in his statement of the nature of Buddha, to a pantheistic idea of God, but he could not conceive of God as separate and distinct from nature or existing things.⁴¹

At this time, Taixu tried to discover a way of communication between Buddhism and Christianity in the Mahāyāna doctrine and practice of a Bodhisattva. In Christianity, the practice of helping sinful and weak men and women is emphatically encouraged. It is aimed at offering people a strong saving arm and bringing them back to the side of God so that they can share in holy living. Taixu compared this kind of practice to the Bodhisattva’s ideas of saving other living beings from suffering (*duta* 度他) whence the Bodhisattva would do everything possible to benefit others. Taixu’s assertion was later on appreciated by Karl Ludvig Reichelt, who met Taixu in 1924. When they discussed the influence of Christianity in the East, Taixu said, “It is felt everywhere, religiously, socially and morally. It is impossible to get away from the remarkable power that has radiated from Christ, that remarkable *bodhisattva*.”⁴²

Taixu’s quest for harmonizing or rather reconciling Buddhism and Christianity by equating Jesus Christ as the Bodhisattva, however, sur-

³⁹ Millican, *ibid.*, 331.

⁴⁰ Reichelt, *The Transformed Abbot*, 156–57.

⁴¹ Millican, “T’ai Hsü and Modern Buddhism,” 331.

⁴² Reichelt, *The Transformed Abbot*, 156.

prised some Christian missionaries who had been fully aware of his severe criticism in the past on Christianity. Millican suggested that Taixu seemed to be not very strong on this point, because it was clear that his assertion did not fit into his real philosophy he had articulated earlier. Recalling Taixu's article entitled "No Need to Destroy or Reform the Christian Church," Millican remarked:

In this article he [Taixu] assumes that Christianity has run its course and is dead. He contends that the hospitals, schools, reforms, etc., of which Christianity boasts are not due to Christianity but are common to all religions and all times. He affirms that Christianity is based on three suppositions, a God who created and rules over all, the soul which God creates and gives to men, and the Son of God given as a Savior.⁴³

All these refutations can be seen in Taixu's articles such as "On Atheism" and "Refuting Theistic Attachment" written in the middle of the 1910s; his change of opinion was so dramatic that even Christian missionaries were surprised by it and hesitated to believe it. Yet, the Christian reports in the 1920s leave little doubt that Taixu did extend his open-minded contact with Christian missionaries, although he continued to show confidence in Buddhist philosophy as he and his Christian friends often did not see eye to eye on most religious issues. In 1923, Taixu organized a Buddhist Summer Seminary in Lushan and invited Reichelt to lecture on "The Relation between Christianity and Buddhism." Reichelt thus described the situation under which the invitation was extended:

He (Taixu) 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 Christian to know what Buddhism really means.⁴⁴

On this occasion, Reichelt tried his best to make his lecture to appeal to his Chinese audience, by synthesizing the Christian concept of God with the Chinese view of *Dao* in the light of St. John's Gospel (1:1–18). He elaborated on how *Dao* had been working throughout time, giving

⁴³ Millican, "Tai Hsü and Modern Buddhism," 333.

⁴⁴ Karl Ludvig Reichelt, "A Conference of Chinese Buddhist Leaders," *The Chinese Recorder* 54 (1923): 667–68 (italics original).

life and light, form and glory to all people. Beams of this loving light meet people in all places where “an unknown God” could always be found. God, in his abundant love and mercy, also made it possible for the *Dao* to be manifested and appear in the “sons of man” (*renzi* 人子). Christ Jesus was the embodiment of an ocean of life and light, a boundless fountain of peace and strength. Reichelt then explained the grace of God and the Christian faith by comparing them to sea-waves that one could watch at seaside. All people should see the everlasting waves of grace (as the forgiveness of sin), waves of light (deeper understandings of life), and waves of peace (the filling of the innermost soul with confidence and joy). In order to bring the gospel of God to the Chinese people, Reichelt believed that rich Buddhist expressions ought to be “baptized” and incorporated into the somewhat poor religious terminology of the Christian Church. It was unknown how the Buddhist audience reacted to Reichelt’s lecture, but Taixu gave a positive response to it as Reichelt recalled:

The remarks Tai-hsü made when thanking me for the lectures were very significant. He first acknowledged that the place where we could meet was in our ideas about *Tao*. Then, he gave a deep and spiritual explanation of what *Tao* means to the Buddhists. His closing remark was: “Jesus Christ is the incarnated *Tao*. This I now understand. But for us the chief thing is *that the Tao can also be incarnated in us*.”⁴⁵

During a private talk with Reichelt after the lecture, Taixu expressed his desire to stir up deeper interest in religious thinking and to promote a deeper spiritual life among people of different religions. He expressed urgency for religious contact between different religious followers in hope that they could discuss religious problems and help each other. Taixu also specifically pointed out that Christian missionaries had misunderstood Chinese Buddhist monks, because many of them only came in contact with monks who were ignorant and immoral, and who were strolling around in the streets without any sense of self-respect. Consequently, the missionaries formed a biased attitude toward Buddhism, believing that all Chinese monks knew nothing about religious cultivation and were given over to dark superstitions and immorality. He urged Christians to have a better understanding of Buddhism and Buddhist monks in China. Reichelt was deeply moved by Taixu’s sincerity as he thus described, “When speaking about the ignorance and unsympathetic

⁴⁵ Ibid., 668 (italics original).

attitude which characterize so many foreigners in their relation to Buddhists, the voice and burning eyes of T'ai-hsü were witness to a very real inner pain and grief." Meanwhile, Taixu frankly told his guest that his association with Christian missionaries was also aimed at introducing Buddhism to the West, where Christianity was the dominant religion. Before Reichelt returned to Nanjing, Taixu promised that he would come to visit him sometime in the autumn, and expressed his special desire to know more about the Christian Mission to Buddhists, which was described as "a place where religious people can meet and talk out their hearts without fear."

However, as mentioned earlier, Taixu continued to maintain his critical and sceptical attitudes toward Christianity and to uphold Buddhist completeness and superiority while engaged in an open and liberal dialogue with Christians. His dialogue and friendliness with Christian missionaries were largely on an intellectual level and with practical purposes, not on a religious level or based on any ideological consensus. Reichelt recalled: "Matters developed so that T'ai-hsü and I could meet as friends; not that we became more agreed in our views—on the contrary our divergence in religious outlook became more pronounced."⁴⁶ In fact, Taixu openly told his Christian friends that he considered Christianity to be inferior to Buddhism because he believed that the notion of the creator God was completely unacceptable. To Christians, Taixu remained an honest sceptic and a fair opponent. Just as Christian missionaries disregarded Buddhist teaching in their efforts to spread the gospel and to convert Chinese, Taixu disapproved of Christian theology by expounding the Buddhist concept of dependent origination in hope of expanding Buddhist influence. His opposition to Christianity can be demonstrated in an incident that occurred during the Summer Seminary in Lushan in July 1923.

Lushan was one of the most sacred sites of Buddhism and used to be surrounded by more than three hundred temples. In the early Republican Era, all of them were in dilapidated condition and the mountain was designated as a tourist resort for summer holidays. Meanwhile, a large number of churches were established one after another in the area and the monks were driven deep into the mountain. In 1922, Taixu visited the mountain and decided to build a centre for a Buddhist Summer Seminary. His idea was supported by Liang Qichao, Zhang Taiyan, Zhang Chunyi, and many others. Subsequently, money was raised from Wuhan to renovate the ruined Great Forest Temple (Dalin si 大林寺). In July 1923, a Buddhist summer seminary was conducted there; Taixu, Shi Yiru 史一如,

⁴⁶ Reichelt, *The Transformed Abbot*, 157.

Wang Senpu 王森甫, and Zhang Chunyi gave lectures on Buddhism while Karl Ludvig Reichelt was invited to represent Christian views. The seminary also attracted the attention of many missionaries from nearby churches and a number of Western tourists often stopped by to listen to the lectures. One day, when a small Buddha image was put on the table in front of lecture hall, a missionary abruptly commented that Buddhists always worshiped a dead idol instead of the true living God. Thus provoked, Taixu promptly replied, “The true God of yours created you in accordance with his own image. Therefore, your body is the idol of your true God. The idol cannot be eliminated if you do not first destroy your own body.”⁴⁷ According to Taixu’s own record, such confrontations often occurred during his stay in Lushan and Wuhan.

The Great Forest Temple was surrounded by a number of churches, and the activities of the seminary were sometimes considered to be a challenge to Christian missions. One day when Zhang Chunyi remarked in his lecture that Christianity, as a theistic religion, was not as profound as Buddhist philosophy, more than a dozen Christian youths immediately stood up and criticized Zhang’s statement. Conflicts between Buddhists and Christians increased when the scale and influence of the seminary expanded; sometimes they even developed into direct confrontations. When the World Buddhist Union (Shijie fojiao lianhehui 世界佛教聯合會) held its first meeting in the Great Forest Temple in 1924, a missionary, accompanied by several followers, approached the temple and began to quarrel with the students from the Wuhan Buddhist College. The missionary exclaimed that Buddhism had been dead in China, and suggested that no one should believe in Buddhism any more, but instead should put their faith in Christianity, which was the only living religion in China. Thus disturbed, Taixu came out and questioned:

“How could you know [Buddhism] was dead in China?”

“I have lived in China for twenty-eight years so that I have witnessed that all [Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism] are dead.”

“How could you know [they are dead] when you have stayed in China for only twenty-eight years even though I, who have lived in China for thirty thousand years, do not know it?” Taixu asked.

“What? How could you have lived in China for thirty thousand years?” The missionary was astonished.

“Yes. I was in China before your God created the universe. I was still in China when Jesus Christ was crucified. You should know now who is

⁴⁷ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 29:274.

dead and who is alive.”

“You are unreasonable (*bu jiangli* 不講理!)” the missionary accused.

“Yes. Please rethink who has first become unreasonable.”⁴⁸

Taixu often made use of humour to effectively dissolve the conflict with Christian missionaries, and frequent confrontation with Christian missionaries may have also urged him to know more about Christianity, finding solutions for the dialogue between the two religions. From his extant lecture notes and articles he wrote during this period, it is clear that Taixu became more seriously engaged in Christian studies and attempted to find positive messages in Christian teachings. Based on Buddhist cosmology, he partially empathized with the Christian claim of the existence of God—although he continued to deny that God was the creator.

Taixu speculated that all founders of theistic religions must have been inspired by their inner spiritual and mystic experiences, and established their religions to inculcate such experiences; both Jesus Christ and Mohammad entered into mountain to fast and meditate, gaining supernatural power and prophecy.⁴⁹ In his article “Tianshenjiao zhi renjie yishang genju” 天神教之人界以上根據 (The evidence of the world above the human world as claimed by the theistic religion),⁵⁰ Taixu opened a discussion by questioning why different religions, such as Christianity, Confucianism, and Brahmanism claimed similar beliefs about the existence of a supreme God, and why the prayers of these religions’ followers were sometimes mysteriously answered. He suggested that the concept of God could not be the pure invention of total imagination, but rather there must be an explanation for the existence of God. Taixu provided a Buddhist interpretation of the existence of God by claiming that God or *Mahābrahma* is the God of one minor world,⁵¹ who is above other beings such as humans, animals, and spirits. This God considers himself to be a ruler because other living beings are under his rulership; human beings regard this God as the heavenly ruler (*tianzhu* 天主) or creator because they live below the world of this God, who unifies the heaven and the human world.

According to the Buddhist theory of evolution, the world of God comes into being first and hell is created last during one cycle of evolu-

⁴⁸ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 29:275.

⁴⁹ Taixu, “Renshengguan de kexue” 人生觀的科學 [Science of living attitude], in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 23:8–9.

⁵⁰ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:327–30.

⁵¹ According to Taixu, one minor world is equivalent to a solar system.

tion; at the end of this cycle, hell is the first to be destroyed while the world of God is the last. At the very beginning, God was alone, and the rest of the world and living beings came into existence only when he wished to have company. Therefore, God is called the father of all living beings because he mentally created everything. Nevertheless, this God still exists within the cycle of birth and death (*samsāra*) and his power and status are the result of his karma. He neither has authority over the world above his realm nor can he control the destiny of living beings below. God cannot live forever, but will be gone once his karma associated with his position as God is exhausted. He is called the ruler of the world because he comes first and leaves last in a cycle of the world evolution. In addition, such minor world systems are numerous in the universe, which can only be seen by the Buddha, the enlightened one. In light of this Buddhist cosmology, Taixu admitted that God has some authority over the human world, although he is not the creator in the ultimate sense as he is also undergoing karmic transformation. Only the Buddha, who transcended the cycle of rebirth, was able to see the limitations of God. Taixu then concluded that “those who do not know much about theistic religion should not impertinently comment on Christianity while those who are the followers of a theistic religion should not stand still and attach themselves to what they believed without progressing further to understand Buddhism.”⁵²

Taixu appealed to both Buddhists and Christians, asking them to become acquainted with each other's religion, to understand the differences between the two, and to discover a common ground for religious dialogue and for serving society. In 1926, he was invited by Dr. Li Jiabai 李佳白 to give a public lecture to an audience that included Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists at Shangxian Tang 尚賢堂 in Shanghai. After the English translation of his lecture, “Fofa ying ruhe puji jinshi” 佛法應如何普及今世 (How should Buddhism spread in the world)⁵³ was published in the *North-China Daily News*, Taixu received a letter from an anonymous Western reader who found an apparent contradiction with his explanation of the inevitable relation of cause and effect while rejecting the concept of the Great Original Cause (*dabenyin* 大本因), which could be the source of all human joy and happiness. In reply, Taixu said that the Creator as the Original Cause, whether it be personal or impersonal, or the God of the world of desire (*yujie* 欲界), the God of the world of form

⁵² Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:330.

⁵³ Shi Yinshun 釋印順, ed., *Taixu fashi nianpu* 太虛法師年譜 [Chronological biography of Taixu] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 1995), 123–24.

(*sejie* 色界), or the pure consciousness of the formless world (*wusejie* 無色界), could not be absolute or independent, but a part of the cause and effect. All were equal in this endless process of cause and effect.⁵⁴ Taixu asserted that the first cause was inconceivable and the love of God should not be blindly pursued.

Later on, Taixu gave another lecture, “*Ai zhi chongbai*” 愛之崇拜 (Homage to love) at Shangxian Tang,⁵⁵ and further elaborated on the meaning of Christian love and Buddhist compassion. He expressed his disagreement with Dr. Li's explanation that Christian love could be the solution to all problems of society. Taixu paralleled the Christian concept of love with the Buddhist idea of attachment and desire, and suggested that love is the cause of what is good as well as what is bad. Love can inspire people to perform various kinds of good deeds. Yet it may also move them to commit evils and even to kill each other. Therefore, the idea of love has its limits and should not be blindly followed. Instead, Taixu urged his audience to cultivate Buddhist compassion, which arises from complete altruism based on concepts of non-self and dependent origination; it can thus eliminate all causes of inequality, the views of self, attachment and desire.

To a large extent, the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity advocated by Taixu did not include an in-depth study of the doctrine of the latter, but instead attempted to promote religious service for contemporary society. To Taixu, although Buddhism possessed profounder doctrines and loftier ideals, Christianity is good at effectively carrying out its social services. Therefore, the cooperation between the two might be useful in uniting all religions and people for the common good of society. In his letter to the Society of World Religions (*Shijie zongjiao hui* 世界宗教會) on the occasion of its founding,⁵⁶ Taixu advocated the unification of all religions in service of humanity, by deliberating the meaning of *zongjiao* or religion. He pointed out that although religious scholars had engaged in the study of different religions, they failed to understand the meaning of the very concept of religion. According to Taixu, *zong* means faith and *jiao* means doctrine and practice. All religions therefore should

⁵⁴ “A Reply from Taixu,” *Haichaoyin wenku*, 2:19–29.

⁵⁵ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:331–34.

⁵⁶ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 27:44–46. Xianshang Tan appears to be the headquarters of the society. In English the society was known as the “Shanghai International Institute.” The lectures were often organized on Christianity, Islam, Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, and the believers of different religions came together to listen to the lectures. Taixu, “Taixu zizhuan” 太虛自傳 [Autobiography of Taixu], in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 29:302; *Haichaoyin wenku*, 2:21.

be aimed at serving the needs of human society, and they should work hard to unite all people through common humanity rather than separate them through mutual accusation. At the end of the letter, Taixu states: “I sincerely hope that all religious leaders in the world can humbly learn from each other, adopting each other’s merit and eliminating one’s own demerit. By doing so, the different truths of religion can be unified and people’s faith can be stronger. This will not only be the blessing to religion but also to the whole human world.”⁵⁷

The assertion that Buddhism and Christianity could work together for common human interest, therefore, played a major role in Taixu’s quest for the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity and inspired his collaboration with Christians. It should also be pointed out that this quest was partially encouraged by the enterprise of Japanese Buddhist missionaries and partially aimed at introducing Buddhism to the West as Taixu had openly expressed to Reichelt in 1923. Early in 1917 when he visited Japan, Taixu was deeply impressed by Japanese Buddhist reforms and efforts to send Buddhist missionaries to the West, and one of the motivations behind his cooperation with Japanese Buddhists later on was to jointly spread the Buddhist message to the Western audience. In order to introduce Buddhism to the West, Taixu felt that a sound foundation should be laid for a constructive dialogue with Christianity, the major religion of the West. With the development of science, Taixu observed, the foundation of Christianity collapsed because Christianity was anti-scientific and people would find contradiction between their life and faith. The western civilization based on Christianity could no longer carry out the duty of serving humanity. Taixu asserted that Buddhists in Asia should therefore unite in spreading Buddhism to the West to fill the gap left by the death of Christianity.⁵⁸ In 1925, Taixu led a Buddhist delegation to attend the East Asian Buddhist Conference held in Japan. In his address to the audience at Ōtani University, Taixu formally proposed that China and Japan should make joint efforts to dispatch Buddhist missions to the West.⁵⁹ During his visit, Taixu met the German ambassador to Japan, Wilhelm Solf, who invited him to visit Germany. After returning to China from Japan, Taixu became more interested in touring Europe and America, hoping to observe Christianity more closely. In 1926, he suggested to the Chinese government that a part of the Boxer Indemnity⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 27:45.

⁵⁸ Taixu, “To Asian Buddhists,” in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 18:282–92.

⁵⁹ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 27:159–62.

⁶⁰ In 1900, the troops of eight foreign countries invaded Beijing in revenge of the Chinese court’s support of the boxer movement. In 1901, China and the eight foreign powers

should be allocated for the activities of Buddhist missions to the West.⁶¹ In 1928, Taixu, supported by Chiang Kai-shek, who provided three thousand yuan for his world tour, left China and spent nearly nine months visiting France, England, Germany, Belgium, the United States, and Japan.

During this tour, Taixu met a large number of religious scholars and Christian leaders, and gave dozens of lectures on different occasions. He visited churches, universities, and theological seminaries, spending the Christmas Day of 1928 in a Catholic church in Berlin and observing an Easter service at a Catholic church in San Francisco. He also attended a number of sermons given by Protestant priests and exchanged religious views with them. Meanwhile, Taixu was enthusiastically received by his Western audience, and, although he denied that his tour was to proselytize Western people, several people took the Three Refuges (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) under his guidance.⁶² Throughout the tour, Taixu consciously avoided any critical remarks about Christianity although he did not compromise his Buddhist faith and insisted that Christianity was not as perfect as Buddhism. He consistently made use of the Buddhist philosophy of relativity to impress upon the western people that Buddhism was more scientific than Christianity and was the religion of future, expressing his disagreement with Christians that God is the creator. When he visited the School of Oriental Languages in Paris, Taixu met a French archbishop who asked him whether Buddhism could accommodate the beliefs of Christianity. Taixu replied that the idea of God existed in the teaching of the Buddha although God was not regarded as the highest being and the unique one.⁶³ Taixu reassured the archbishop that the two religions could coexist and develop in China as well as in other parts of the world.

signed the Boxer Protocol, and besides other compensation, China had to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels (about 333 million dollars) for damages to foreigners' lives and property. Later on, this indemnity was used to fund schools and universities in China, and to support Chinese students studying abroad.

⁶¹ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 24:5–8.

⁶² The detail of Taixu's tour can be referred to in *Huanyou ji* 寰游記 [Records of the world tour]; Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 29:358–441. Holmes Welch took the reports quite differently, considering that Taixu had intentionally boasted his tour as propaganda for fame. According to him, the reaction to Taixu's tour was rather cold although Welch did not provide any evidence to support his allegation, excepting an unqualified testimony from one of his interviewers. See Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 558–60. Reichelt also suggested that the reports about Taixu's activities during the world tour were tremendously exaggerated although he also did not give any counter-evidence to show what actually happened. Nevertheless, he attributed this kind of exaggeration to Taixu's enthusiastic followers and suggested that it was not the fault of Taixu. Karl Ludvig Reichelt, "Present-Day Buddhism in China," *The Chinese Recorder* 60 (1929): 649.

⁶³ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 58:371.

Taixu's attitude toward Christianity during this period can be best represented by his article "Zongjiao guan" 宗教觀 (On religion),⁶⁴ written during the tour. In the article, Taixu acknowledges that his religious views have changed after he observed other religious practices. He now considers religion as power, faith, and the thought system of social life, which was called *Dao*, the path, and can be denoted by the suffix "-ism" as in English terminology. Therefore, Christianity can be called the path of Jesus Christ or Jesus-ism and Islam may be called the path of Mohammad or Mohammad-ism. According to Taixu, the emergence, existence, degeneration, and extinction of a religion depend largely on social and political environments. He suggests that most theistic religions were tribal beliefs at the beginning and God was believed to be the ancestor of these tribal peoples. Yahweh was the tribal god of Adam and Eve, whose descendents expanded their political power and imposed their religion on peoples they had conquered. Taixu holds that the political authority of a centralized government needs an absolute God as a theocratic basis for its secular ruling, while a theistic religion needs the social and political support for its development.

Based on social and historical approaches to the study of religion, Taixu redefined the function of religion in three categories. The first category consists of religions which once dominated the world but are dead now, including Christianity, Confucianism, and other theistic religions. He believed that people in the modern world are more self-dependent, and thus are losing their faith in God. The second category consists of minor religions which had a limited influence in the past, but have surfaced to serve politics, and their current practices are different from those that were taught by their founders. Again, Taixu uses Christianity as his example, and suggests that Jesus failed to revolutionize the Jewish religion and to become a political ruler and his disciples had to flee to other kingdoms. Thanks to the tireless struggle of his followers, Christianity eventually became the state religion of the Roman Empire and continued to exist to the present day. Taixu believed that the Christian religion was the religion of powerful landlords who frequently launched religious wars, such as those instigated by the Crusades. The popes were the rulers of Europe for more than a thousand years, and had enormous influence on the military, politics, education, and finance of Catholic nations. Taixu suggested that Christianity in the West, just like Confucianism in China, became moribund because it was opposed to such values as equality, freedom, and democracy, which emerged after

⁶⁴ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:253–68.

the French, British, and American revolutions. The last category consists of religions which have already arisen but are not yet popularly practised. He attributed Mahāyāna Buddhism to this category and believed that Christianity belonged to this category before it became the state religion of the Roman Empire.

The tour to Europe and America expanded Taixu's perspective on world religions and enabled him to observe the Christian social and educational services. It seems that after returning from the tour, Taixu became more tolerant toward the idea of God and talked more about common positive aspects of all religions, rather than criticizing Christian theology directly. In 1931, he delivered a speech, "Zongjiao duiyu xian-dai renlei de gongxian" 宗教對於現代人類的貢獻 (The contributions of religions to the modern humankind), to teachers and students at the Chinese School of Peking Union Medical College Hospital.⁶⁵ In his speech, Taixu paralleled Christianity with Buddhism as two world religions which had rendered great services to social, intellectual, and moral development. He urged his audience, most of whom were Christians, to commit themselves more to human services instead of simply attaching themselves to their own religious identity. In November 1933, when he again gave a speech at Zhejiang University, Taixu listed four common elements for all religions, namely: trans-sensory mystic experience of religious founders, humanistic ideas, transcendent wisdom, and meritorious actions suitable for society. He thus stated:

There is a religion that regards God as the highest. People know God as the supreme God through their mystic experience. Some religions take this God as the "true self" (*zhenwo* 真我). They are the same in the ultimate sense although different in name. Confucianism views it as reason (*lixing* 理性) while Buddhism speaks of it as thus-ness (*zhenru* 真如) or "true form" (*shixiang* 實相), all these are in fact not different. However, the unity of all cannot be achieved unless all speculative discriminations [of religious followers] are eliminated.⁶⁶

Taixu now acknowledged and emphasized the common social grounds for an equal dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity, and identified the Mahāyāna concept of "thus-ness" and "true form" with the idea of God in Christianity. However, this may not be understood as Taixu's conviction, but a rhetoric expression of his willingness to unite the two

⁶⁵ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 13:275–83.

⁶⁶ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 13:273–74.

religions for the common good of society. In May 1935, Taixu received the East China Christian Education delegation at Xuedao Si in Zhejiang, and was asked how Buddhists should look at Christianity. In reply, Taixu indicated that Christianity and Buddhism, as two world religions, should establish relationships based on morality and religious faith. He explained:

With regard to world phenomena, all religions have their own highest conviction, which is the fountain and goal of their own thoughts and actions. They enable people to repent and refrain from evil actions and promote the progress of people's goodness. ... Buddhism and Christianity have common grounds on these aspects. Nevertheless, Buddhism and Christianity are different in their doctrines although in many aspects the two can compliment each other. Mahāyāna Buddhism, based on the Bodhisattva spirit, is aimed at saving and enlightening living beings that one should sacrifice his or her own interest for the sake of others. The spirit of Jesus Christ, who gave up his life for the world, can be a concrete example.⁶⁷

Third Stage: Collaboration, 1937–47

Having found a common arena for Buddhism and Christianity, Taixu became actively involved in collaborations of the two religions. His critical remarks on Christianity gradually became absent during the eight years of the anti-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945, which provided an opportunity for actual religious cooperation. During the war, a united front to win the war became absolutely necessary and nationalism became the supreme religion for all Chinese. Taixu was active in organizing Buddhist rescue works and carried out Buddhist propaganda to support the Nationalist government against Japanese invasion. He realized that Buddhists and Christians should work together for the common benefit of the Chinese nation. In 1943, when the anti-Japanese War was at its height, Taixu cooperated with Catholic Archbishop Paul Yü Pin, Methodist Bishop Chen Wenyan 陳文淵, Muslim general Bai Chongxi 白崇禧, and Christian general Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥, and co-founded the League of Friendship of Chinese Religious Believers (Zhongguo zongjiaotulianyihui 中國宗教徒聯誼會).⁶⁸ He expressed the hope that the league

⁶⁷ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 26:486.

⁶⁸ Yinshun, *Taixu fashi nianpu*, 273.

would play a major role in uniting all Chinese religious believers during the war. The five standing committee members of the organization met once a month, while all committee members gathered four times a year to discuss the current situation of the war and planned religious services for national defence. The organization often invited leaders of different religions to give public lectures on the topic of wartime religious services. In his article written on the occasion of commemorating the second anniversary of the league, Taixu elaborated on the responsibility of world religions in contemporary society and politics.⁶⁹ Referring to the role of religion in the anti-Japanese War, Taixu requested that all religious followers reflect on whether their religions had fulfilled their responsibilities to humanity. He alleged that the deterioration of society and eruption of violence resulted from the degeneration of human spirit, which to a large extent was the fault of the world religions. Taixu urged their adherents to readjust themselves so that they could fit into society, and to work for the amicable reconciliation and mutual understanding between all religions, eliminating conflict. According to Taixu, the cooperation between different religions would not only avoid religious confrontation, which might reciprocally dissipate each other's spirit and energy, but would also enable religions to learn from each other. By learning from others, a religion could redress its own deficiencies and enhance its strengths to serve humankind with skilful means. Only then could the world religions command respect of the general public and restore the spiritual health of humanity. Taixu reiterated the five tasks of the league: (1) supporting the Chinese government's anti-Japanese and national rebuilding policies; (2) respecting religious freedom; (3) promoting religious cultivation; (4) expanding social services; and (5) enhancing world peace. He predicted that the success of the league would be an example for setting up a World League of Friendship of Religious Believers.

Taixu's ideas of the reconciliation and collaboration between different religions—especially between Buddhism and Christianity—are largely drawn from the contemporary social and political needs in China as well as in other parts of the world. Mutual respect and learning was a double blessing both for the benefit of every religion and for the interest of the nation as well as the whole world. Based on his observation of Christian practices in China, Europe, and America, Taixu declared in 1938 that, whereas China needed Christianity, Europe and America needed Bud-

⁶⁹ Taixu, "Eulogy to the League of Friendship of Chinese Religious Believers," in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:342–43.

dhism. He specifically articulated the need for Buddhists to learn from Christians:

Christianity has exerted great influence on modern Chinese culture, social service, and the spiritual life of Chinese people. Although Chinese Buddhism has a long history and has penetrated into people's minds, it has not made a prominent contribution to the nation and society in recent years. Therefore, I feel the need to improve Buddhism by learning from Christianity. The general society in China as a whole also needs Christianity to enhance national spirit.⁷⁰

Taixu praised the Christian organizational skills and the spirit of unity of the Western people, who were of one faith. Christians worshipped one God together within the harmonized atmosphere of the same consciousness, the same music, the same ritual, and the same faith. The exclusiveness of faith in Christianity forged the spirit of unity among Christians. Taixu remarked that Chinese Buddhists, lay and cleric, needed such organizational skills and would benefit from training in unity and harmony. Nevertheless, Taixu also saw this very exclusiveness in faith as a Christian deficiency because it deprived people of rational thought as its faith could not be established by scientific thought. Taixu explained the dichotomy between Christianity and science in the lives and faith of Western people:

The actual lives of Western people are based on science. Yet their religious faith is unscientific. The people in Europe and America need a new religion, because their religion is divorced from and contradict the practical realities of their scientific life. Therefore, their lives are full of fractures and disharmony. In order to practise religion, they must cast aside reason. For the sake of practical life, they must put aside their religious faith. This is the present predicament of Europeans and Americans.⁷¹

Taixu believed that Buddhism, as the religion of science and wisdom, could complement Christianity and solve the problems Western people faced in their daily lives. Buddhism might help them to overcome the disharmony between religion and science, faith and reason, providing

⁷⁰ Taixu, "Zhongguo xu yejiao yu Oumei xu fojiao" 中國需耶教與歐美需佛教 [China needs Christianity and Europe and America need Buddhism], in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 13:335–36.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 338–39.

new spirit and science Christians while Christianity could enable the Buddhist community to become better organized. In 1943, an American reporter visited Taixu at Jinyun Mountain, where Taixu spent most of his time during the war. Taixu told the reporter that the most urgent need of the West was Buddhism,⁷² because only Buddhism could provide a bridge for the communication between religious life and scientific development.

In 1943, Taixu received a letter from John Moses, an honorary director of the Union of World Religions in New York, together with a communiqué from the Organization for World Peace. In reply, Taixu expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Organization for world peace through religion.⁷³ However, as the Organization was almost exclusively based on Christian ideas of peace, Taixu suggested that some Christian phrases used in the communiqué be replaced for the sake of broad unity among all religions. First, he suggested that the sentence “all are the sons of one God” be changed to “all are equal.” Second, the phrase “We believe in God” should be modified as “we believe in truth.” Taixu also considered the expression “it may contribute to unity as one family under God” unsuitable, and put forward an alternative: “It may contribute to the equality of humankind and the unity of all on earth.” Meanwhile, Taixu told his American friends about the League of Friendship of Chinese Religious Believers, reporting its activities and contributions to the mutual understanding and cooperation between different religions in China. At the end, Taixu expressed his hope for further inter-religious contact and collaboration at the international level.

Taixu's collaboration with other religions, especially with Christianity, extended to actual practice. He readily adapted some Christian organizational practices into his ideas for Buddhist reform. For example, after the war ended in 1945, Taixu was authorized by the Nationalist government to reorganize Chinese institutional Buddhism. After returning to Nanjing from Chongqing, Taixu immediately implemented the reform programme by reorganizing the Buddhist Society and establishing a Buddhist network nationwide. He founded a Buddhist Seminary in Jiaoshan to train monk cadres who would become leading members of major temples and leaders of the branches of the Chinese Buddhist Society at the provincial and county levels. In his address to monk students, Taixu emphasized the importance of Buddhist unity and leadership by learning from Christianity:

⁷² Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 28:657.

⁷³ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 26:288–89.

Buddhist sangha used to be well-organized and monks were well-disciplined. However, Buddhism has now degenerated and its organization cannot even be compared with that of the Catholic Church. The Catholic fathers are ones who have renounced the world. Yet the church is well organized with one bishop in one region and archbishop in a country. The Pope is, therefore, the leader of the whole Catholic Church in the world. According to a new discovery, Catholics learned the organizational skills from Buddhism. Therefore, in order to fit into contemporary environment, we must restore the old system, reorganizing institutional Buddhism in different administrative regions based on a county as a small division, a province as a middle division, and the whole country as the largest division. In future, a world organization may also be established accordingly.⁷⁴

4. REEXAMINING TAI XU'S PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIANITY

As a great Buddhist reformer in modern history, Taixu endeavoured to reorganize and revive the sangha, to reintegrate Buddhism into society, and to offer Buddhist service to the society and the nation. In order to safeguard Buddhism and popularize Buddhist teachings, he became engaged in the battle against the challenges posed by Christianity. He expounded the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination in collaboration with modern science to discredit Christian theology and continuously advocated that Christianity was dead, unscientific, and undemocratic. Although Taixu's criticism of Christianity was further developed by some Buddhist monks later on, such as Yinshun 印順⁷⁵ and Shengyan 聖嚴,⁷⁶ his attitude toward Christian theology, together with his Buddhist reforms, is criticized in Western literature. Some scholars, such as Holmes Welch and Wing-tsit Chan, were critical of his use of modern science to

⁷⁴ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 18:162.

⁷⁵ Yinshun 印順, "Shangdi ai shiren?" 上帝愛世人? [God loves humans?], in Zhang Mantao, ed., *Fojiao yu yejiao de bijiao* 佛教與耶教的比較 [Comparing Buddhism and Christianity] (Taipei: Dacheng chubanshe, 1980), 163–95; idem, "'Shangdi ai shiren' de zai taolun" 「上帝愛世人」的再討論 [Reexamining "God loves humans?"]], in *ibid.*, 197–244.

⁷⁶ Shi Shengyan 釋聖嚴, *Jidujiao zhi yanjiu* 基督教之研究 [Studies on Christianity] (Taipei: Dongchu chubanshe, 1993).

verify Buddhism and to censure Christianity.⁷⁷ Whalen Lai made the following comment about Taixu:

T'ai-hsü was less learned and less enlightened than Yang 楊 [Renshan 仁山]. ... He was neither a profound thinker nor a spiritual genius, and the reform he led was not inspired as much by a new religious vision from within as it was by a recognition of necessity without. So in the East-West context, he sought to justify the superiority of Buddhism with second-rate proof that showed it off as scientific and democratic. He invited Reichelt and other missionaries to lecture at his seminars but it was an openness matched by an unexamined confidence that Christianity must be metaphysically naïve when compared with the subtleties of Buddhist thought.⁷⁸

It is true that Taixu's criticism of and call for cooperation with Christianity was established on his firm Buddhist beliefs and commitment, yet it is quite difficult to speculate whether or not "Taixu was a religious genius and a profound thinker" because such a claim is difficult to either prove or disapprove, especially for those holding different religious views. Taixu left behind a Dharma legacy epitomized in the collection of his works totalling seven million words, which has inspired new Buddhist reform movements in Taiwan and mainland China. His material relics, which remained after the cremation of his body, testified that he was one of the most eminent monks in Chinese history if his spiritual life is assessed in accordance with Buddhist tradition.⁷⁹ Although his reform failed to exert any uniting force among Chinese Buddhist communities, Taixu managed to awaken Chinese Buddhists, many of whom had been insensitive to the decline of institutional Buddhism and dangers of external challenges from the state, society and Christianity. More recently, Don Pittman has provided a more comprehensive study on the legacy of Taixu in his book, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*.⁸⁰ Shengyan, one of the most eminent monk-scholars, has made a

⁷⁷ Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 65–71; Wing-tsit Chan, *Religious Trends in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 60.

⁷⁸ Lai, "Why Is There Not a Buddhho-Christian Dialogue in China," 93.

⁷⁹ Taixu's religious experience can be referred to in his article, "My Religious Experience," in *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:346–50. It is recorded that Taixu left behind more than three hundred relics and his heart was unharmed after cremation. According to Buddhist tradition, these are the testimony of an accomplished practitioner; see Yinshun, *Taixu fashi nianpu*, 296.

⁸⁰ Don Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

following complimentary remark on Taixu, whom he calls a “failed winner” (*shibai de chenggongzhe* 失敗的成功者):

The life of Master Taixu was perfect and successful, yet it can be said to be full of failure. In pursuing and generating new ideas, he always ran ahead of his time, yet he never changed his Buddhist stance. What he practised was always in conformity with what he thought. He was fully accomplished in inventing new ideas and in achieving a religious personality (*zongjiao renge* 宗教人格). Nevertheless, to an external enterprise, he was the most unfortunate loser or victim. Standing in the frontline of the age, he provided the driving force for the contemporary Chinese nation, Buddhism, Chinese people, and youths to move forward. Yet, because of people’s shallow wisdom, outmoded thought, and short-sightedness, few if any can follow his path. He attempted to rehabilitate the sangha and reorganize Buddhist society; yet many Buddhists were afraid of him, envied him, and even hated him. He endeavoured to popularize Buddhist education and to train Buddhist monks—yet his disciples under his training refused to accept him or to understand him. They were discontented with him, and even betrayed and rebelled against him.⁸¹

When examining Taixu’s reform, one should always keep in mind the Chinese Buddhist history as a whole, Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine and practice, as well as the contemporary social and political environment in China. In a like manner, so should his attitude toward Christianity be analysed and understood. It is certainly unreasonable to criticize Taixu’s criticism of Christianity without first realizing that he was a leading *Buddhist monk* and such criticism was articulated when Buddhism was severely censured by Christian missionaries. It is quite obvious that Taixu could not transcend his Buddhist beliefs and commitment nor would he have ever been able to understand Christianity as Christians did. Just as Christian missionaries, such as Timothy Richard and Karl Ludvig Reichelt, tried to make use of Buddhism to propagate their own religious ideas,⁸² Taixu’s understanding and criticism of Christianity were rather polemical and developed for the sake of defending Buddhism.

⁸¹ Shengyan, “Taixu dashi pingzhuan” 太虛大師評傳 [A Biography of Taixu with commentary], in *Taixu dashi linian jinianwen quanji* 太虛大師歷年紀念文全集 [Complete collection of articles on the reminiscence of Taixu over the past years] (Taipei: Dacheng jingshe yinjinghui, 1989), 126.

⁸² Examples can be found in Timothy Richard’s translation of *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana Doctrine: The New Buddhism* (Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1907).

Besides his Buddhist conviction and commitment, the other two elements of his criticism should be examined within contemporary religious and social contexts in China. First, the situation of the increasing influence of Christianity and spiritual impoverishment of Buddhism figured prominently in Chinese religious affairs at the turn of the 20th century. Institutional Buddhism faced the challenges of inner decline, state and public persecution, and Christian attack. At the end of the 19th century, proselytizing activities of Christian missions were reinvigorated and almost all missionary societies in Europe and the United States launched evangelic efforts in China. After the First Opium War, Christian missionaries, enjoying extraterritorial rights and supported by wealthy organizations at home, aggressively spread the gospel among Chinese, and missionary works rapidly expanded from port areas into the inner reaches of China. They vigorously condemned Buddhist practices and showed their contempt for Buddhist monks, describing them as idiots with “a vacant look,” or as “ex-brigands,” who were “the most wretched specimens of humanity.”⁸³ A quotation from George Smith, the later bishop of Hong Kong, may reveal how missionaries viewed Chinese Buddhist monks, and by extension, Chinese Buddhism:

In the evening I proceeded to an out-temple, distant a few hundred yards, where two priests were stationed. They appeared to take pleasure in exhibiting the ugly little idols which were enshrined within the principal hall. As I remonstrated with them, in the presence of many other persons, on the folly of asking me to worship such senseless blocks, I proceeded to point to the idols with my umbrella; whereupon the principal idol soon gave way to the force with which, in my carelessness, I poked its various parts. The whole assemblage burst into a loud laugh, on which I was emboldened to show how little the other idols could help themselves. As I gave them a slight thrust they trembled, tottered, and tumbled from their thrones. The people again laughed heartily, as the priests tried for some time in vain to make one of the idols maintain its sitting posture, the fall having disordered its component parts. Thinking that this liberty might put their good humour to too severe a test, I became more serious in my manner, and spoke of the wrath of God on those who thus dishonour his name.⁸⁴

⁸³ The reference can be found in Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 220–30.

⁸⁴ George Smith, *A Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to Each of the Consular Cities of China, and to the Islands of Hong Kong and Chusan, in Behalf of the Church Missionary Society in the Years 1844, 1845, 1846* (London, 1847), 229–31. The quotation is referred to in Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 224–25.

Fired with Christian passion, Smith went into Buddhist temples to distribute Christian tracts. He passed between rows of monks who were performing religious service, and placed a copy before each of them while they were “beating their heads” on the pavement. He mocked the monks because of their religious practice and cursed them for idol worship. Many such descriptions by missionaries can be found in the missionary literature; such actions are said to demonstrate “how glorious in contrast to such meagre hopes are the substantial realities which the Gospel reveals.”⁸⁵

Although Buddhist temples in the latter half of the 19th century and in the early 20th century were full of corrupt practices and decadent monks, the Christian missionaries may have painted them more darkly than they actually were, claiming that Buddhism was dead in China.⁸⁶ Some missionaries, such as Heinrich Hackmann, Timothy Richard, and Karl Ludvig Reichelt, tried to provide some objective presentations of Chinese Buddhism—yet they had to follow the Christian practice of articulating stereotypical criticism based on their Christian commitment. To them, it seemed inappropriate for Christian missionaries to express any favourable impression of Buddhism and monks. Many Buddhist monks might have indeed been as ignorant as Smith described, and they might have tolerated the insulting remarks and offensive actions of missionaries; yet some Buddhist intellectuals who had received modern Buddhist education gradually stood up and fought back after the founding of the Republic of China in 1912—just as their predecessors in the Ming dynasty had done.

Taixu was certainly disappointed and even disheartened by the contemporary situation of Buddhists, and severely condemned some Buddhist practices, such as confining the performance of religious rituals to funeral service. This was one major reason why he passionately called for immediate and comprehensive Buddhist reform. Nevertheless, as a leading member of the sangha, he was certainly aware of Christian criticism that tended toward generalization, and was worried about active proselytization launched by missionaries among Buddhist monks.⁸⁷ He

⁸⁵ Welch, *ibid.*, 225.

⁸⁶ Joseph Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism: A Volume of Sketches, Historical, Descriptive, and Critical* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1893).

⁸⁷ Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877–1952), a Norwegian Lutheran, dedicated himself to proselytizing Buddhists. He converted young monk Kuandu at the Weishan Buddhist monastery and turned the monastery into a Christian missionary base. It was called Tao Fong Shan, literally the “Mountain of the Wind of the Way.” The details about this Christian sangha can be found in Shi Leguan 釋樂觀, *Zhongguo fojiao jindaishi lunji* 中國佛教近代史論集 [Essays on modern Chinese Buddhist history] (Taipei: Changle si, 1978),

felt it necessary to safeguard institutional Buddhism as a whole through Buddhist reform against outside attacks. During the 1910s and 1920s, many contemporary Chinese intellectuals and politicians lamented the inner corruption of the Chinese nation, yet they still insisted on rebuilding a new China according to the principle of *Zhongti-xiyong* 中體西用, which means the “Chinese essence” coupled with “foreign application.” In this regard it is understandable that Taixu, while criticizing Buddhist malpractice and calling for Buddhist reform, defended Buddhism and was critical of Christianity.

Second, in the 1910s, the Chinese nation had just won freedom from feudalism with the hope of eliminating colonialism, and aspired to a more democratic system. The Chinese people, especially intellectuals who were engaged in the quest for national freedom and democracy, were very critical of religions, especially Christianity, which were regarded as a residual element of feudalism or a tool of imperialism. In 1915, the New Culture Movement, which is also called the “Chinese Renaissance,” marked the beginning of an iconoclastic revolution against religions. Anti-religious movement spread all over China and was aggravated during the May Fourth Movement in 1919. As Pittman observes, “many intellectuals charged not only that Christianity was a foreign spiritual tradition ill-suited to the Chinese people, but that it represented a naive theistic worldview increasingly rejected by scientific minds everywhere.”⁸⁸ Many intellectuals also regarded Christian churches as an agent of western imperialism and as a disruptive force against Chinese national integrity.

Taixu's criticism of Christianity, therefore, was part of a larger movement in which Christianity was considered to be an enemy of science, democracy, and human rights. His comments on Christian theology, especially on the concept of a creator God, should not only be understood as a Buddhist response, but also to be examined in the context of contemporary social, political and religious development in China. Taixu questioned why Chinese people should accept another dictatorship under God when they had just overthrown their emperor. In the autumn of 1927, Taixu delivered a speech, entitled “Dizhu-yu-shen minzhu-yu-fo zhi genju” 帝主於神民主於佛之根據 (Grounds for the notion that autocracy is based on the idea of God and democracy on the idea of Buddha), to students at the Minnan Buddhist College.⁸⁹ In the speech, Taixu al-

146–70. A typical example of how Christian missionaries attempted to convert monks can be found in Reichelt, *The Transformed Abbot*.

⁸⁸ Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism*, 26.

⁸⁹ Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 22:1234–41.

leged that the notion that God created the world and was all-powerful was the very root of the system of inequality and slavery. The absolute power of the emperor in a feudal system and theocratic authority of the pope in Catholicism were both drawn from the theological notion that *Tian* or God was supposed to have given them such power. Taixu believed that, in order to overthrow this theocratic power, people rebelled against God and tyranny in such events as the French Revolution and the American Revolutionary War. Taixu claimed that modern civilization is based on equality, freedom, and human rights, and that people should elect their representatives who are not selected by God and who do not represent God. Although Taixu admitted that Buddhism was a religion and had undergone changes in the feudal society for thousands of years, he attempted to demonstrate that Buddhism was a scientific religion and could serve the modern society through self-reform.

Just as Taixu's attitude toward Christianity was partially based on the need for contemporary social and political development in China, his collaboration with Christians was aimed at improving Buddhist social services and rendering contributions to the nation. Although in one of his speeches discussed earlier,⁹⁰ he compared the idea of God with the concept of "thus-ness," obviously it is not because he was convinced by the concept of a creator God, but because he realized that Buddhism and Christianity could both contribute to the betterment of society—especially to the Chinese nation during the anti-Japanese War.

Buddhist reform in the early 20th century was also inspired by the social activities of Christianity, such as founding schools, charitable works, and hospitals. To Taixu, Buddhism is profounder than Christianity and contains the Christian teaching and practice. The highest teaching of Christianity enables people to be born in heaven while its practice serves humanity. Buddhism teaches five vehicles, namely: Bodhisattva, Pratyeka-buddha, Arhat, heaven and human. One who observes the five precepts will be born in the human world while one who performs the ten wholesome deeds will be born in one of the heavens, and all these teachings and practices are in general called the vehicles of heavens and humans (*rentian cheng* 人天乘).⁹¹ Although these vehicles are not perfect,

⁹⁰ See note 66 above.

⁹¹ Buddhism is generally divided into five vehicles depending on the nature of religious practice and aspiration. Those who observe the five precepts will be born in human world; those who follow the ten wholesome deeds will be born in heaven; those who practise the Four Noble Truths will become Arhats; those who practise the Twelve Links of Causality will become Pratyeka Buddha; and those who practise Bodhisattva's path will attain Buddhahood. A detailed discussion on the five vehicles can be found in

they are the ideal goals for ordinary people who wish to enjoy life in heaven and on earth. Based on these ideas, Taixu carried out his Buddhist reform and advocated *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教 or human Buddhism, aiming at serving and benefiting humanity. Therefore, instead of rejecting Christian values completely, Taixu highly valued the importance of Christian practice for reintegrating Buddhism into society. Taixu became more concerned with human welfare later on as he suggested that the accomplishment of humanity is the attainment of Buddhahood (*rencheng ji focheng* 人成即佛成).⁹²

Taixu's cooperation with Christians as well as the followers of other religions during the war was, therefore, not aimed at undertaking dialogue between religions per se, but at uniting them in service to the nation. Following the examples of Chinese Christians and Muslims who actively took part in charitable activities before and during the anti-Japanese War, Buddhists—especially monks—were organized to form sangha rescue teams (*sengjie jiuhudui* 僧伽救護隊); some of them were even engaged in guerrilla warfare against Japanese. In order to provide Buddhist service to the nation, Taixu was aware that some Christian concepts and practices were of service to Buddhism.⁹³ For example, he believed that the concept of exclusiveness of one God in Christianity could help to cure the symptoms of disunity and disobedience among the Chinese people—particularly among Buddhist monks and nuns.

5. PROSPECT FOR FUTURE DIALOGUE

Taixu's collaboration with Christians was based on pragmatism and humanism, with the aim of serving the common welfare of the society. His attitude toward other religions may help us reconsider the issue of Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Religious dialogue, which is like the conversa-

Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 27:281–327.

⁹² Yinshun, *Taixu fashi nianpu*, 233.

⁹³ Darui Long intentionally or mistakenly distorted in his English translation of Taixu's own words with regard to Christian influence. The translation goes like this: "My great efforts to reform Chinese Buddhism in the past thirty years have been due to the influence of Christianity in China." This is not accurate, and the actual rendering should be like this: "For last twenty or thirty years, all my efforts for Buddhist reform have also been *partially* inspired by the instruction of Christianity in China." Darui Long, "An Interfaith Dialogue between the Chinese Buddhist Leader Taixu and Christians," 8; Taixu, *Taixu dashi quanshu*, 21:335.

tions between two individuals, creates an opportunity for communication and better understanding. Any such dialogue, however, will lose its meaning if one side, preoccupied by its own ideology, attempts to censure the other for its different ideology. This might have happened in the encounter between the two religions in early 19th-century China, where the dialogue was not truly focused on how each side should understand the other “as it is,” and consequently produced no positive result. Neither side readily explored the other’s religion comprehensively; much less did they touch upon the broad cultural patterns and background of the religious concepts and practices of the other. Even though some Buddhists and Christians undertook thorough studies of the other religion, their way of thinking and religious background unfortunately prevented them from seeing the other’s religious ideology soberly.

Some Buddhists and Christian missionaries tried to approach each other’s religion through ontology by identifying the Christian God with the Buddhist concept of “thus-ness” or “true form.” Yet, the interpretation of such terms remained on the explanative level and no attempt was made to take into consideration the context in which they originated and are meant to be understood. On the one hand, Buddhists did not try to understand the Christian concept of God but continued to refer to it with the Buddhist concepts of *tianshen* 天神 (heavenly god or *deva*) and *dafantian* 大梵天 (*Mahābrahma*), or the familiar Confucian idea of *shangdi* 上帝 (God on high). The common Buddhist question, once put forward by Taixu, about whether everyone could become Jesus Christ or even God, certainly appears absurd to many Christians. On the other hand, when Christian missionaries used Buddhist terms like *fo* 佛 (Buddha), *juezhe* 覺者 (enlightened one), *tian* 天 (heaven), and *linghun* 靈魂 (soul or self) to convey Christian theology, it is quite questionable that their interpretations would be accepted by Buddhists at all. Therefore, if Buddhist concepts, such as *tathāgata*, were interpreted and understood differently by Christians, who remained outside the Buddhist faith, could they see the truth in Buddhism, and vice versa? Even if Buddhists could understand Christianity as Christians did, would they maintain their Buddhist beliefs or would they then become Christians? If both could not see such concepts as they are in their own contexts, would the interpretation result in producing new religious ideas that are neither Buddhist nor Christian?

Timothy Richard, one of the Christian missionaries who pioneered the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism in modern China, considered the two religions as partners, even though they were not equal in their capacity to reveal religious truth. He regarded Buddhism as another form of the Gospel very close to that of the New Testament, and claimed

that concept of the Christian God could be found in the treatise of the *Dacheng qixin lun*. He believed that “Buddha” as defined in the treatise is identical with “God,” and “*Tathāgata*” with “archetype” in the Platonic sense. Richard therefore concluded that “the Mahayana faith is not Buddhism properly so called, but an Asiatic form of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in Buddhist nomenclature differing from the old Buddhism just as the New Testament differs from the Old Testament.”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, his Christianized views of Buddha or Buddhism were not only refuted by his fellow Christians but unsupported by Buddhists. Bishop G. E. Moule questioned him on the theological and historical legitimacy of his identification of God with Buddha.⁹⁵ According to Moule, the Christian God is self-existent but impersonal while the Buddha is neither conceived as unique, self-existent, nor as a creator. Winfried Glüer commented that “the tragedy of Richard’s interpretation of Buddhism was that it proved too benevolent even to the Buddhists themselves who did not feel urged to commit themselves to Christ because of their reliance on the Chinese philosophical tradition with its emphasis on humanism and rationality.”⁹⁶ Holmes Welch considered Richard’s attempt to be doubly handicapped, and commented:

His indifference to Sinological minutiae made him suspect in the eyes of scholars. The warmth of his understanding aroused the resentment of missionaries, who became, in fact, deeply suspicious of his efforts to draw closer to the Buddhists. After his death, many of the decorations embodying Buddhist motifs were removed from his mission at Tao-fung Shan.⁹⁷

Yang Renshan, a leading lay-Buddhist who collaborated with Richard in translating the *Dacheng qixin lun* into English, became very upset when he realized Richard had regarded the treatise as “a Christian book,” and that the translation was “full of Christian terms which were diametrically opposed to the fundamental teaching of the Buddha dharma.” Yang felt that he had been deceived and refused to help any other Europeans with Buddhist translation projects.⁹⁸ Karl Ludvig Reichelt, however,

⁹⁴ G. E. Moule and T. Richard, “The Awakening of Faith as Included in the Catalogue of the Christian Literary Society, Shanghai,” *The Chinese Recorder* 42 (1911): 374.

⁹⁵ Moule and Richard, “The Awakening of Faith,” 347–52.

⁹⁶ Glüer, “The Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhism,” 50.

⁹⁷ Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 241.

⁹⁸ “Yang Renshan jushi shilüe” 楊仁山居士事略 [A short biography of lay Buddhist Yang Renshan], in *Chinese Buddhist* 1.1:4 (Shanghai, April 1930).

continued this tradition of ontological approach in order to reconcile the two religions by emphasizing the “points of contact” through which, as he believed, the Buddhist way (*Dao*) and the Greek *logos* were historically related. Yet his theological testimony was too subjective and uncritical even to convince other missionaries, and his Christian mission to Buddhists was criticized by many intellectual monks as an attempt to proselytise them rather than to engage them in a real dialogue.

By reexamining the Buddhist-Christian encounter in modern China, it seems that the theological approaches used to foster dialogue failed to appeal to Christians and Buddhists alike. Similarly, the use of Buddhology or “Mahāyāna theology” for the sake of helping Buddhists understand the Christian God may face the same fate. Many contemporary western and Japanese religious scholars have become interested in renewing such attempts to bridge the two religions by comparing some of their religious concepts, for example, the Trinity and *Trikāya*, God and Emptiness.⁹⁹ They emphasize the importance of theological consensus and explored the reconcilability and uniformity of the two religions. Studying the similarities between the two religions can be fascinating as many similar concepts may be examined, analysed, or even synthesized to find commonality between the two; they have enriched interdisciplinary studies of religion. Nevertheless, such comparisons have also provoked heated disputes, and it seems that as more debates are undertaken, disagreements multiply. Such studies, although aiming at consensus and reconciliation, are full of pitfalls and risks of misunderstanding and distortion of both religions. The consequences may result in creating new religious concepts that are neither Buddhist nor Christian, as these attempts seem to lose sight of Buddhism or Christianity as a whole. Such studies have focused on discussing individual concepts to represent each religion, regardless of the vast discrepancies between the two or even within each individual religion. Ruben Habito, who has undertaken a study on *Trikāya* in different Buddhist traditions, reminds us that even within Buddhism there is no consensus as to the concept of *Trikāya*. He reminds us that in its long history, Buddhism has had no homogeneous structure, but has rather been “a conglomeration of religious teachings

⁹⁹ The discussion on such comparison can be found in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*. For instance, J. C. Cleary, “*Trikāya* and Trinity: The Mediation of the Absolute,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 6 (1986): 63–80; Lauren Pfister, “Reconsidering the Grounds for Buddhist-Christian Dialogic Communication: A Review of John D’Arcy May’s *Meaning, Consensus and Dialogue in Buddhist-Christian Communication*,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 6 (1986): 121–40.

with multifaceted origins as well as directions of development.” He concluded,

We cannot simply assume that there is a homogeneous teaching on the *trikāya* and arbitrarily take elements from one treatise or another without taking into account their positions or purport in the context of the treatises in which these elements originally find expression, and then try to “compare” this notion or that with notions or teachings of another religious tradition, such as the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁰⁰

A similar assertion may also apply to the structure and development of the concept of Trinity in Christian tradition, and will make the comparison between it and the Buddhist concept of *Trikāya* much more complicated if not virtually impossible.

In such theological comparative studies, one should also keep in mind that there is more diversity between the two religions than similarity, not only because the two religions advocate quite different concepts of reality, but also because the attitudes toward the value of language used to describe such a reality are quite different. The words in the Bible, regarded as the revelation of God, are endowed with divinity and are seen as truth themselves; whereas Buddhism regards the words of Buddha as an instrument for crossing the sea of *saṃsāra*, and recommends that one should not become attached to them but rather discard them once one has reached the other shore. Although Christians see God through the Bible, the ultimate truth in Buddhism cannot be understood through the words of the Buddha if one fails to practise his teaching accordingly. It is generally claimed by Buddhist tradition that any speculation through language can be seen as a blind man's attempt to describe an elephant. Even one who sees the truth will be unable to explain such truth to others through words—just as a turtle cannot describe the land to a fish, which is used to the living environment in water.

Therefore, while the validity of such comparison is in question, the very meaning of these attempts to reconcile the two religions is also at stake. Why should one attempt to find consistencies in the two religions, which originated and developed in entirely different social and cultural backgrounds, while tolerating vast inconsistencies and discrepancies within each tradition? Should not the dialogue permit disagreements? It seems that nuanced differences of doctrines and their practices could

¹⁰⁰ Ruben L. F. Habito, “The *Trikāya* Doctrine in Buddhism,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 6 (1986): 61.

even easily undermine any such attempts of reconciliation. Although, as mentioned before, the comparison and reconciliation in such ways could be fascinating as the subjects of academic studies, it is quite difficult to see their relevance for the believers of the two religions. Therefore, Habito suggests that, instead of “comparison” which is to see “what is inside,” by standing outside, dialogue should be a living encounter of persons committed to different religious traditions and should be carried out in order to appreciate what is common and what is different in these traditions. He believed that “if ‘comparison’ is to have any sense and worth at all it is in the light of the service it can render toward this kind of living dialogue.”¹⁰¹

In this religious dialogue, it is vitally important that the discussion and understanding should be based on the same premises and some common grounds. Buddhists will not understand the concept of the Christian God while remaining within a Buddhist thought world and disregarding any others, and vice versa. The lesson of the Chan (Zen) Buddhism debates between Hu Shi 胡適 and D. T. Suzuki in the 1950s, which has been characterized as “a dialogue of the deaf,” may be taken as a lesson for Buddhist-Christian dialogue in the future.¹⁰² The dialogue is not to reconcile the irreconcilable elements of the two, or to proselytize followers of the other religion, but to provide a means to understand each other by accepting the other’s religion as it is and by tolerating and respecting the differences between them so that the two can live in peace and harmony. The dialogue is not to solve the differences between the two religions, because these differences make each religion unique—but to understand and accept their diversity. It is certainly not true too that it is necessary for both sides to agree upon the identity of God and Buddha before such a dialogue can take place.

Then, how could this interfaith dialogue be carried out in a meaningful manner? The lessons of the Buddhist-Christian encounter in early 20th-century China may shed some light. The focus of the dialogue should be

¹⁰¹ Habito, “The Trikāya Doctrine in Buddhism,” 62.

¹⁰² Hu Shi and D. T. Suzuki once carried out a discussion on Chan (Zen); while Hu based his argument on the historiographical tradition, Suzuki based his on the inside view of Zen; Hu Shih, “Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method: Is Ch’an (Zen) Beyond Understanding?” *Philosophy East and West* 3, no. 1 (1953): 3–24; T. D. Suzuki, “Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih,” *Philosophy East and West* 3, no. 1 (1953): 25–46. Bernard Faure characterized their discussion as “a dialogue of the deaf or even of what Jean-François Lyotard calls a *différend* because the protagonists apparently did not share the same premises”; Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 89.

shifted from debating which religion is the true or truer one, or whether the concept of the Christian God can be found in the Buddhist idea of Buddha, to discovering the common ground that both Buddhists and Christians can agree upon to facilitate their collaboration. Thirty years ago, Glüer proposed that the point of contact should be focused on man instead of God or Buddha, because “man’s nature, ambitions, hopes, suffering and failure are common to all, whether Buddhists or Christians.”¹⁰³ His suggestion may have echoed the call of Taixu, who advocated Buddhist-Christian collaboration for the sake of humanity and service to the nation. Buddhists and Christians may not be able to reach any consensus as to the meaning of God and Buddha, or they may not see the truth in each other’s claim, but they can certainly work together for the common interest of humanity and society. Although the two religions have their own unique way of leading their followers to salvation or enlightenment, neither of them can exist without first serving the needs of humans. The common goal to bring heaven to the human world and to establish a pure land on earth may provide a larger arena for Buddhists and Christians to work together as friends or brothers and sisters. The complementary nature of Buddhism and Christianity as has been recently proposed,¹⁰⁴ which is based on the Buddhist concepts of compassion and expedience of Bodhisattva in cooperation with the Christian practices of social and charitable services, may open a new age of meaningful and productive Buddhist-Christian dialogue and cooperation for the betterment of society and happiness of people here and now.

¹⁰³ Glüer, “The Encounter between Christianity and Chinese Buddhism,” 56.

¹⁰⁴ Lai Pan-chiu, “Buddhist-Christian Complementarity in the Perspective of Quantum Physics,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 22 (2002): 149–62.