

## INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER IN ASIAN SOCIETIES

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### Chinese Buddhist and Christian Charities: A Comparative History

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#### I. A DIALOGUE NOT OF FAITH BUT OF WORK

There is no Buddhist-Christian dialogue in modern China. But it is not, as I once thought, because of a lack of ideas (Lai 1986b, 1989). It is rather that the real issue, at least since the late nineteenth century, is works. To wit, not faith but works. That is, social work, social service, or charity. This is an area where the new Protestant missions may be said to differ from the Jesuit missions of old (Ôchô 1979, 208).

Social service was not the new missionaries' first priority. And perhaps it never should be. Evangelism should come first. But Timothy Richard came to seeing the pressing need for it (Bohr 1972). He was the first; he would not be the last. The Buddhists had not thought much about social service either. The leader of the so-called Buddhist Revival (Welch 1968), the monk T'ai-hsü, was contented with the old way. He also became a convert and a social activist late, only after reading the works of the 1898 reformers, K'ang Yu-wei and T'an Ssu-t'ung (Jan 1990), whom Richard just happened to have tutored.

Yet Christian social work might well be the modern missions' greatest triumph. The number of Chinese converts to the new faith would remain low, but the lives touched by the likes of the YMCA, the Christian colleges, and the church hospitals were many (Garrett 1972; Lutz 1971; West 1976). These modern expressions of Christian charity impressed the Chinese. They impressed all Buddhists—so much so that all modern Buddhist leaders, from Dharmapāla in Sri Lanka, through Buddhadasa and Silvaraksa in Thailand, to the movers of the New Religions in Japan, all copied the Christians and set up Buddhist counterparts of the YMCA (called the YMBA, in fact), the Christian colleges, and the church hospitals. Of all the Buddhist revivals, those within the New Religions of Japan are the success stories. They succeeded not because of great ideas (some of them are plainly shamanic) but because they could provide their members the kind of care and service, quite literally from cradle to grave, that the new urban population of Japan wanted but that even the Japanese state could not yet provide.

The difference between Christianity and much of Buddhism lies here. The former had the institutions of charity; the latter seemed not to. Wang Chih-hsin listed those Christian achievements in the last chapter of his history of Christianity in China. He counted first preaching, then publishing, education, hospitals, and, under social services, the YMCA. In conclusion, he wrote,

"Although it is true that Christianity is concerned with the reform of an individual's life, yet definitely it is not a religion 'that seeks solely the benefit of the self' in the manner of Hinayana. . . . From this point on, if the Christian faith is unable diligently to promote a social gospel in response to the new tides of society, I am afraid that it too will become simply a diseased boil on the new society just like Buddhism" (Wang 1940, 361). Besides speaking up for the Social Gospel, Wang also put his finger on the problem with Chinese Buddhism. In name Mahayana, Chinese Buddhism had in fact become socially irrelevant.<sup>1</sup>

After the Second World War, Chinese Christians joined in the social reconstruction of China, especially those in the native church movement (Ng 1981). But, in the end, the New China would oust the missions, disband the YMCA, and take over the Christian colleges and hospitals—not necessarily because China was Marxist since all major Buddhist countries in the postcolonial Orient, monarchic, socialist, or democratic, have taken similar measures. Rather, missions were restricted in the name of national unity and as part of the attempt to set up a public, state-run welfare system. And that happens to be a familiar story in the history of these two religions. What befalls Christianity in China now has happened to Buddhism there before. Buddhists were once active; they sponsored many charities, which also flourished before the state took them over and native ideologues raised similar "antiforeign" campaigns against the barbarian faith. We need to understand that history before we can understand the more recent one.

## II. THE CHARACTER OF MEDIEVAL CHARITY

In medieval times, Buddhists in China and Christians in Europe observed an almost identical set of "corporal works of mercy": feeding, clothing, hospitality, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead. There is no way that one group can be said to be necessarily better or more loving than the other. They were alike in their caring.

Their activities were also alike in being departures from the classical norm. In ancient Greece and Rome, the burial of the dead was the duty of the family, and the feeding and clothing of the poor was the obligation of the state (the city or the king). It was improper to bury the dead of another; it was an affront to the ruler should anyone else presume to care for the poor. The early Christian church, however, ran charities to feed and clothe the poor. Because of this, it ran afoul of the Roman authorities and was banned.

In 717 C.E. in China, Sung Ching, a minister, also reminded Emperor Hsüan-tsung that Buddhists had no business running charities at their temples (from the *T'ang hui yao*, cited by Michibata 1957, 391). He cited the judgment of Confucius on this. Confucius' student, Tzu-lu, an official at Wei, had used his own money to provide porridge for the poor in his district. Confucius found that improper, and Tzu-lu desisted. (This incident is related in the *Kung-tzu chia-yu*.)

The reason for this was not that the Master lacked compassion. Rather, it was that feeding and clothing the poor were the prerogatives of the ruler, who had the obligation of providing a minimal livelihood for his subjects—who might otherwise justly revolt. The rule of reciprocity (we will see more of this later) holds that the poor are obliged to whoever feeds them. At a time when only the ruler should claim that obligation, any private party presuming to feed the poor would be stealing loyalty from the sovereign and could be perceived as challenging his right to rule (to be a father to his people). For Tzu-lu, an official, to usurp that prerogative amounted to his being disloyal to his lord. Tzu-

lu desisted, and, By Roman law, the early Christian church should have too. If it did not, it was because it was holding to a higher law than Caesar's.

It was the same with the burial of the dead. In classical times, by law the church and the sangha had no business picking up the unclaimed dead and providing them with proper funerals. The burial and the mourning of the dead were the duties of the family. The unclaimed dead (those with no surviving family members, strangers, slaves, etc.) would be picked up by city officials and dumped, unmourned, in "beggars' graves." At the time, it was unthinkable that anyone should care—or even have a right to care. When Confucius said, "None but the emperor should sacrifice to Heaven [*t'i*], and a person should mourn only his ancestor, never another's," he was restating the rule of reciprocity, or what L. S. Yang has isolated as the ethics of *pao*. This is because to sacrifice to Heaven was to presume a charge from Heaven (i.e., to rule as the Son of Heaven); the sacrifice, if received, would oblige Heaven to the worshiper, as a father would be obliged to protect his son. To sacrifice to the dead as an ancestor was to revere him as one's ancestor, but it was also to lay claim to him. The dead man too was being obliged to protect one who had ritually served him as a son would. To claim Heaven as one's ancestor was to commit treason against the Son of Heaven; to claim the ancestor of another man as one's ancestor—besides being laughable—was to plot a similar usurpation.

No classical philosopher would violate that rule of specific reciprocity. Only Christianity in the West and Buddhism in the East dared to presume to feed the poor of other families and bury their dead in the name of a higher law, a superior Dharma. Having converted a culture to Christianity, Catholic priests won the right to tend to the prisoners that Caesar had condemned. (No priest from Athens ever comforted Socrates; no priest would since the law had been given to Athens by Athena herself—or her father, Zeus, to be exact.) Likewise, Buddhist monks would pick up the war dead, even the enemy dead, and offer them a Buddhist mass so that they would end up in a better life beyond rather than becoming vengeful or hungry—*asura* or *preta*.

In this way, the "corporal works of mercy"—of feeding, clothing, hospitality, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead—were born.

However, medieval charity departed from the classical norm in a still more fundamental way in one specific area: the treatment of the poor. The perception of poverty had been changed by the cult of asceticism that was epitomized by the "holy poor," that is, the new mendicant orders. Classical cultures never considered poverty a virtue in and of itself. More often than not, they associated prosperity with sure blessings from above. The new world-denying religions had reversed that. "Blessed are the poor," they would teach. Those who took a voluntary vow of poverty were taking a step toward freedom from bondage to this material world. To them, reverence was due.

With the clergy and the monks taking a vow of poverty, it fell to the laity to provide for their upkeep. Donation to the church became a primary good. Feeding and clothing of mendicants became the first and foremost duty of the Buddhist laity. Although charity "could perfectly well be carried out without any money changing hands" (Bossy 1985, 144), generosity in giving (*dana*) would become the cornerstone of the medieval religious economy.

A new reciprocity was seen in medieval times in the relationship between donor and mendicant. The monk did not simply take. By his poverty, he afforded the layman a chance to accrue merit. By his example, he afforded the layman a chance to emulate his freedom from material concerns. The layman did not lose his possessions; he gained much more important things in return. That reciprocity between monks and the laity was reproduced in the encounter between benefactor and (any) beggar. In Europe, it was once the custom that,

in giving to the beggar, one thanked him because he would pray for your soul (Bossy 1985, 146). "Bless ye, sire" is a survival of that transaction between matter (donation) and spirit (prayer). In Chinese Buddhism, the beggar was perceived as a "reminder" (a caller) that, by giving, one accumulates merit that will "transform the conditions of life" (*hua-yuan*). One also thanked the beggar for his prayer, which, in this case, took the form of a *Na-mo O-mi-to fo* chant. The merit due the chant to the Buddha of Compassion done on behalf of the donor was being freely transferred by the beggar to the donor.

Thus it is that in both East and West, in so giving and receiving, the two parties bowed in gratitude to each other. In order not to assume a superior position, both parties avoided eye contact. Both looked down or to one side, partly to preserve anonymity, for although it was always good to give in person—instead of writing a check like we might do today—yet in so giving "to the beggar in the street, the poor at the kitchen door, the recipient of the funeral dole" (Bossy 1985, 144), it was better still to do so with a degree of ritualized anonymity. A person got more merit that way.

The medieval psychology detailing the proper way to give and to receive was alien to the classical mind. Tied to the ethos of ascetics, this was also the first thing to go during the transition from medieval to modern charity.

Given the similarities between Buddhist and Christian mendicancy, what are some of the differences between Buddhist and Christian charity? One basic difference is that, in Christianity, everything is ultimately dependent on God. In nontheistic Buddhism, everything is interdependent (*pratītya-samutpāda*). The reciprocity of giving in Buddhism is accordingly more lateral (than hierarchical) and sometimes so extensive as to appear, even to Catholics, who light more candles for another soul than Protestants would, just plain unreasonable. That is what Ricci (1985) could not understand or just could not accept about *samsara*.

The social principle is, however, very simple. Buddhism enjoins all donors to share their merits and to rejoice in that sharing. In Christianity, this would correspond to avoiding the deadly sin of envy. One should never envy the good fortune of another. The Buddhist rite of communion is effected, not over a common meal, but in the yearly bearing of gifts to the monks after the monsoon retreat. A survival of the primitive "wealth redistribution" rite, it is a rite in which everyone tries to touch all the gifts so as to share in the merit of them all, rather than just in that of his own. This custom would later grow into the Mahayana theory and practice of merit transference.

This sharing went with another principle in Buddhism known as the "equal division" of all goods. The rule says that any gift to the sangha should be shared equally among all members. Young, adult, and old alike should be given an equal part. At one point, that meant sharing even with other (non-Buddhist) holy men in the vicinity and with the lay members of the ("four-member") sangha. With the declaration of the sangha as the third Refuge later, *sangha* came to mean, especially in Theravada, "the monk sangha."<sup>2</sup>

This and other developments changed the rule of equity in the distribution of goods; not only would the monk sangha attract more donations than poor beggars who had greater need, but the Buddha, being purer than the monks, would attract still more—at the expense of both the monks and the beggars. Because the Buddha was counted as a separate and discrete Refuge, one-third of any gift going to the Three Jewels would have to go to him. This could result in a disproportionate, not to mention wasteful, division since, like God in Heaven, the Buddha in *nirvana* has no physical needs as such. Yet, more than the canon law of the church, the Buddhist *vinaya* made it nearly impossible to use gifts to the Buddha for more charitable ends among men. This, of course,

could handicap efforts to help the poor. How the Chinese took creative measures to circumvent that rule is where we will begin our story.

### III. STARTING THE BUDDHIST HOSPITALS

Of the medieval Buddhist counterparts to the YMCA and the Christian colleges and hospitals, I shall focus on the Buddhist hospital because this is perhaps the most well-known of Buddhist charities. I leave Buddhist schools to a note<sup>4</sup> and deal with the issue of Buddhist lay associations in section V below.

Buddhist temple hospitals were known as the "wards for nursing the sick (of the merit field of compassion" or "compassion field wards" for short. According to Sung Ching's memorial of 717, these were officially established by the Chou Empress Wu in 701-704. The empress did not create them; she inherited a preexisting practice in the temples, although her use of the network of imperial temples did create the first nationwide network of its kind. (The kings and princes of Ch'i and Liang in the Southern Dynasties had already started such wards two centuries earlier, but apparently only in their privately funded temples at the southern capital [Michibata 1957, 388-397].)

There is a reason why kings and not temples were the original sponsors and why such wards were first developed around 500 C.E. in China. Up to that time, the Hinayana *vinaya* had prevented the monk, gifted with some knowledge of medicine, from plying that as a trade. The monk could carry medicine on him for his own use, but he was not allowed to play doctor (Demieville 1985). Mahayana changed that. It had Buddhas dedicated to curing (Medicine King, Medicine Master), and it produced sutras giving instructions on how to cure. Out of his compassion, a monk bodhisattva should help the sick.

Although as early as the Western Chin a sutra had listed the dispensing of medicine as the third of seven merit fields the sangha should cultivate (Michibata 1957, 384), it is the *Brahma Net Sutra* that made "tending to the sick" the first of eight merit fields (Michibata 1957, 385). This work appeared in the South around 500 C.E., when the *Aśoka Sutra*, noting how Aśoka had built the first hospitals, was also catching the eyes of kings. This coincidence of several inspirations could explain the appearance of hospitals in the South at the time.

But why not the North? Before 500, northern monks had been practicing medicine. Fo-tu-teng in the early fourth century was the first. (Much of Buddhist medicine as practiced by him or given in the "miscellaneous tantric" sutras was shamanic or mantric, although no less important or therapeutic for that.) Dharmakṣema was another. He also introduced in the early fifth century the first set of Mahayana precept texts, from which the *Brahma Net Sutra* was later compiled. In the mid-fifth century, T'an-yao continued that tradition. But we do not hear of temple hospitals founded by any of these. Monks who sponsored such wards came later, in the Sui and the T'ang (see Michibata 1957, 403-414).

To build a permanent hospital; there had to be a "trust fund," that is, some rent-producing land. But since the North had the personnel, the space, and the land, why did the wards not appear there? Temples in the North already had sick beds for monks and places to take care of pilgrims. (Hospitality shown to sick pilgrims was how church hospitals began.) Hospitals did not develop probably for the same reason that temples in Saigon even now do not feed the wretched poor outside their gates. Callous indifference aside, the hands of even compassionate abbots are tied when it comes to using temple funds.

The wealth of a monastery housing men who have taken vows of poverty must come ultimately from lay donors. Monks might be poor, but the sangha need not be. And laymen are taught (by monks naturally) that it is most meri-

torious to give to the sangha—indeed, better than giving to beggars because a (pure) monk can do more good than a beggar can. Thus, even now temple visitors usually give only a pittance to the poor beggar outside the temple, saving the best part of their gift for the monks.

Donors also usually designate a recipient and a use for their gifts. Once so earmarked, say, for a maigre feast for the monks on the next full moon, the gift cannot be used freely for any other purpose. It is true that the sangha can use its common property (that portion with no end specified) to feed the beggars, but only with the consensus of the whole sangha. That consensus is often difficult, if not impossible, to get. So the easier and standard way out is for monks to solicit new funds from laymen on behalf of the beggars. But, since most donors give to a sangha because a relative happens to have retired therein (it is considered “bad form” to give only to a relative without making a general gift to the community), the long and short of it is that the beggars always come up short.

It was likewise difficult to raise funds to maintain hospital wards. It was easier for kings and princes to endow them privately in one large lump sum, without even going through the sangha. The best temples in Loyang in the early sixth century had such private sponsorship (Lai 1991). The charity wards in the southern capital around 500 were also aristocratic creations. Kings loved to publicize their Aśokan beneficence by sharing the wards; they just hated sharing the honor that came with being the sole sponsor. And the wards did win them immortality in the records.

There was, however, the prefix “field of compassion” was not attached to these institutions. That is not surprising. The expression came from the *Hsiang-fa chüeh-i ching* (HFCIC), a native scripture compiled in Loyang between 517 and 520 (Lai 1986a).

The HFCIC had renamed the “field of wealth” and the “field of poverty” (from the *Upāsakaśīla Sūtra*) the “field of reverence” and the “field of compassion.” The field of reverence is dedicated to revering the Three Jewels; the field of compassion is dedicated to helping the poor. These two new terms passed into the Buddhist vocabulary soon afterward (see the examples given in Michibata [1957, 389]). Empress Wu immortalized only the latter, so that in East Asia “compassionate field ward” has meant “hospital wards” ever since. Prince Shōtoku of Japan is even said to have sponsored such a ward within one of the four cloisters of the Temple of the Four Heavenly Kings at Nara.

Known also as the sutra seeking *Aid to the Widowed and the Orphaned*, the HFCIC changed the practice of Buddhist charity. Without going into the whole history behind this text, I can summarize briefly. This work was a defense of the sangha-household experiment of T’an-yao, who had created such monastic manors as “fields of poverty” in 462. Clerical corruption in the handling of the sangha grain in 511 spurred the HFCIC’s protest. The protest was also directed against the proliferation of Buddha images since about 450 and of Buddha temples, especially at Loyang since 495. The conspicuous consumption of the latter was draining monasteries’ funds for helping not just the rural but even more the urban poor. Thus, the same concern that moved post-Aśokan sectarians in India and moves Buddhadasa now in Thailand motivated this text in 517–520: how best to redistribute donations so that those in greater need would receive a more just share.

In struggling with this age-old problem, the HFCIC hit on a simple but effective solution that might be unprecedented (Michibata 1957, 384):

I have repeatedly taught in the various sutras that in donating, so that both the monk and the householder may cultivate the mind of compassion, give [first] to the poor, the singled, the old, even unto the hungry

dog. But my disciples, not understanding my intention, donate only to the "field of reverence" and not to the "field of compassion." By "the field of reverence" is meant the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. By "the field of compassion" is meant the poor, the singled, the aged, unto an ant. Of these two fields, the field of compassion is far superior.

Noting in effect how it is better to feed a hungry dog than to build another wasteful *stūpa*, the text urged the founding of a new and separate merit field, the proceeds of which would be earmarked to aid the poor. It also asked people to donate to a common treasure unceasingly so that its wealth would be inexhaustible. This call was apparently heeded, most notably by Hsin-hsing of the Three Periods sect; the result was the advent of monks dedicated to such care and of hospital wards being set up at the various temples.

#### IV. THE DECLINE OF TEMPLE CHARITIES SINCE THE T'ANG

In 845, Buddhist temples were disestablished in a statewide persecution, and responsibility for maintaining the temple hospitals devolved on the civil authorities. These state-run wards continued into the Sung. The Sung was the most Confucian rule to date. It "slighted the military and prized the literati" and proved weak in protecting itself from the neighboring, alien states. Still, the cultural achievement of the scholar-official was something to behold (Wang 1971, 1-2).

Without necessarily intending it, the state charities competed with and undercut the Buddhist charities. The state also went after temple land. Aligned with the state was the rising gentry class, which was supporting a Confucian revival that campaigned against this "barbaric" faith. In the end, the sangha lost out to the state, on the one hand, and suffered the loss of patronage by the propertied class, on the other.

On paper, the state-run system of welfare under the Sung was impressive, especially during the Southern Sung, although we do not know how well it was implemented. It offered various types of relief from natural disasters (Wang 1971, 11-22) and provided, during normal times, winter relief, free wet-nursing, free schools, and free burials, funded with rents collected from state land or granaries (Wang 1971, 86-124). Of hospital wards under the care of state doctors (*t'ai-i*), there were two in the capital; then, during a severe winter, the number grew to four.

Such services were provided nationwide, although the focus was on the cities more than on the villages. They were run out of the central and the provincial offices, with state funding as well as private donations from the officials. What Bossy says of the Poor Law of 1530 and, concurrently, the spontaneous benevolence of Protestant Englishmen (Bossy 1985, 146) may be applicable here. A dichotomy between public and private charity would not have occurred to anyone at the time. Such a thought would have damaged the substantial unity of charity that characterized the Sung efforts. That dichotomy came later.

The temples were a part of that concerted effort. But there was no longer a network of state temples like that which existed from the Sui through the T'ang. The Sung state felt no need for Buddhist legitimacy. Buddhist temples could still receive imperial placards, but these, not unlike the monk certificates, were available usually "for a price" (Masaaki 1982, 83-110). The state hospital wards were not run from the temples, although the government might borrow space from Buddhist and Taoist temples. The name "field of compassion" had also been changed to "field of merit"—possibly as early as 845 under the

T'ang. This new, generic name diluted the meaning and the design of the original. The name underwent further sinicization when the wards housing the sick were called "wards to comfort and to aid," while those housing the singled and widowed were called "wards to house and to feed" (Wang 1971, 124). They could well be Confucian or Taoist wards; the uniquely Buddhist stamp was gone.

At the same time, the aura that once surrounded mendicant monks and beggars was fading fast. Already in 734, when T'ang Emperor Hsüan-tsung decreed that beggars be housed in state wards alongside the sick and the poor, the able bodied were expected to be earning their keep. One man cleaned clogged city ditches during the day and, returning to the ward at night, was paid a small wage for his effort (Michibata 1957, 400). That may not yet have been mixing almshouses with workhouses, but there was a growing disenchantment with the mendicant and the beggar. For example, a model ward that housed a hundred charges at rather generous stipends stipulated that it would "seek, gather, and house the widowed, the old, the handicapped, the sick, and those who did not go begging in public" (cited by Wang 1971, 130).

So, although Foucault's critique of the modern European policy of segregating the poor, the handicapped, the sick, and the mad cannot be applied directly to China—China never banned beggars or giving to beggars, and there was no witch-hunt charging poor women with placing a curse on those who refused to pay for a prayer (Bossy 1985, 147)—we should still not forget that it was the Sung Neo-Confucians who lumped the nun and the female shaman together on the blacklist of *san-ku liu-p'o* as people decent citizens should avoid.

If the beggar suffered, the very young and the very old did not. The old were venerated and given additional stipends: "To those above eighty, a gift of quality rice and money for firewood; to those above ninety, a daily stipend of twenty *wen* for pickled vegetables, cloth dress in the summer, and warm clothes and blankets in the winter" (Wang 1971, 93). This was a form of Confucian discrimination. Buddhist equity preferred giving equally to the old, the adult, and the young monks and letting those who need less share with the others voluntarily, for the good of the brotherhood.

The very young also benefited. Some of the Sung wards were so comfortable that the women there brought in maids and nurses (Wang 1971, 93). Normally, however, orphans were provided with wet nurses and youngsters maids, and those under seven could draw half the adult stipend (Wang 1971, 101). Private philanthropy under the Ming several centuries later extended that generosity further. Wet nurses were regularly contracted out for three-year periods (*Te-i-lu*, fasc. 3, on nursing the orphaned).

During the T'ang, even after Empress Wu had appointed state officials to be in charge of the temple hospitals, the monks who had run those wards before were still in charge. Otherwise, Sung Ching in 717 would not have considered the wards a Buddhist creation, nor would the T'ang have required new staff when it defrocked the monks after 845 (Michibata 1957, 397–402). During the Sung, the state subsidized the efforts of the temples, but then a monk became just another paid servant of the state. In only one area were the monks actively sought out by the state, namely, in helping with the adoption of orphans.

With famine, pestilence, and general dislocation, the Sung seems to have been confronted with a large number of abandoned children. The state instituted a number of measures to take care of them (Wang 1971, 103–120). Of these measures, the taking in of orphans by monasteries was not highly favored, but it did work. So an edict was issued permitting the temples to bring up orphans as novices. It was a pragmatic decision. Unlike the aged, who could



always rely on relatives and whom the state did not have to take care of forever, children without families needed permanent homes. In the long run, this hurt the sangha. Bred within the temple, these novices grew up familiar with the rituals, but they seldom chose their vocation freely. They might end up officiating at funerals or, failing that, work as temple hands.

Such private and public charities working together might have helped pull China through the trauma of the sociopolitical transition of the Sung. But that transition worked against the interests of the sangha. The problem was land. While the 845 persecution weakened the large Buddhist establishments in the capital and the administrative cities, it left monasteries in the countryside and in peripheral regions fairly untouched. The strength of Ch'an in the Five Dynasties is usually traced to their monasteries' self-sufficiency and the protection they received from the military (*chih-tu-shih*).

The Sung was the time when the gentry class was rising. The result was a situation in which the ruling class was turning against Buddhism but the people at large remained emotionally supportive of the faith. Pure Land devotional societies flowered during this period; Ch'an was at its creative peak. We find the evangelical preachers, the famous meditative masters, and the active laymen working side by side. In terms of popular fervor and consciousness of the bodhisattvic vocation, Buddhism under the Sung might even have excelled over Buddhism under the T'ang.

The Sung temples also held extensive farmland. Being a corporation and a tax haven, the temple survived war and other misfortunes better than other estates. So, at a time when the grand estates were disappearing, the temple estates remained the last holdout of the old manors. (A true, feudal manorial system might have existed only during the Six Dynasties.) Feudal estates were natural institutions of social welfare. The old host-guest interdependence guaranteed some security for the dependents; thus, in the villages the temple still functioned as a haven for the poor and the unfortunate. Cumulative endowments had allowed it to take them in. To this day, rural monasteries in Thailand recruit from the poorer peasant families and provide their sons an alternate, ecclesiastical route to success.

Under the Sung, there were estimated to be about 200,000–400,000 ordained monks and as many or more novitiates. (There were two types of novitiates: those who had entered the order but had not yet been made novices and those who served as trainees in various quarters.) Add to those the temple hands, and the religious population would have totaled perhaps 1 million (Masaaki 1982, 64). The monk Chih-p'an could in that way argue that the sangha was taking care of a lot of people. A proverb in the Sung said as much: "No way out? Be a monk" (Masaaki 1982, 49). Even as late as the Ch'ing, it was said, matter-of-factly, that one could starve as a farmer but not as a monk.

Pressed for funds, Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV in Europe produced a model indulgence in 1476 that, with the help of the friars, sold very well. Also strapped for money, Sung Emperor Shen-tung came up with blank monk certificates and, by their sale, got the funds he needed. Opportunists seeking ways to shelter their wealth or to avoid the draft might have bought some of these certificates. But, just as the sale of the indulgences exploited popular piety, the sale of the monk certificates presumed the same—although the data here are not as clear. At any rate, the sale worked, for it was not improper for the pious to want to buy the certificates, sometimes as a gift to the sangha, sometimes in order "officially" to become a monk before one's death.

(Many a layman in the Sung had adopted vegetarianism, the only difference between him and a monk then often being the latter's observance of celibacy. Shortly before death, a layman could formally renounce all sexual relations and

die a true "son of Śākya." Buying a certificate had replaced the need of passing the state-certified examination for monks. But who is to say that a single-minded devotion to Amitābha was any less qualifying than the ability of a monk to memorize 100 pages of the *Lotus Sūtra* under the Northern Sung or read 500 pages of the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in the Southern Sung?)

The sale was a success for the state but a disaster for the sangha. At first, during the initial phase, 1067/1068–1142, many certificates were issued, and they were priced low (Masaaki 1982, 27–36). This issuance began under the Northern and continued into the Southern Sung. War with the Chin even brought forced purchase. The sale swelled the ranks of monks. With a truce signed, fiscal needs were reduced. As both Confucians and Buddhists clamored against the sale, it was terminated in 1142. The Confucians feared that more monks would mean fewer farmhands. (In the T'ang, Li Ao had once proposed stopping all certification to drive the monks back to work on the land.) The Buddhists worried that the sangha was losing control of its own destiny (Masaaki 1982, 38–42).

But with no new certificates being issued, the sangha soon found itself lacking certified recruits to staff its temples. The lesser temples were abandoned, and in 1151 the state confiscated them for use as schools (Masaaki 1982, 42–48). The sale of certificates began again in 1161, but the asking price was so astronomically high that few people purchased them and temples had to dip into their treasuries to finance their continued operation (Masaaki 1982, 50–65). The result was that the sale did what the persecutions before it could not—destroy the power of the sangha. Fukien, a "Buddha-kingdom" in the early Sung boasting of many temples and holding much land, was decimated by that policy (Masaaki 1982, 145–189).

The temples regained some lost ground under the Mongols. But the Ming and the Ch'ing would erode their position again. The Ming passed laws prohibiting temples from buying new land and devised a just "monk-to-land ratio" to confiscate excess land from the temples and redistribute it to poor farmers. The traditional exemptions granted the sangha were also in effect removed. Temple land became taxable; freedom from corvée and the draft now required the payment of compensation to the state. Many more of the smaller temples in Fukien disappeared that way (Masaaki 1982, 181–187). Buddhist monasteries in China were going the way of Catholic monasteries in Europe. Both lost their lands during their uneasy transition to postmedieval society.

rather

#### V. THE REVOLT OF THE LAITY AND HETERODOX MUTUAL AID

Christian charity did not decline with the destruction of Catholic monasteries; ~~although~~ Protestants found ways to match the new, poorer, urban classes with new benefactors. The Buddhists did not stand still in China either; the Sung had its own religious reformation.

If the sale of indulgences touched off the Protestant Reformation, the sale of monk certificates likewise contributed to the rise of new Buddhist sects. Briefly, what happened during the "on again, off again" sale was that, when the price of certificates was low, a significant number of laymen without genuine aspirations became monks-in-name while, when the price was high, many potential monks, true but poor, had to remain laymen. That latter class of people ended up in limbo, being "neither monk nor lay" by the traditional standard. In certain areas, some of these were called *tao-min*, commoners who practice the Way (Masaaki 1982, 262–292). Within the tradition of the White Lotus, this liminal type would be the "wife-carrying" monks, similar to the married clergy of the European Reformation. We have here the beginning of a potential "priesthood

of all believers" or the monkhood of every layman.

Even before that, the pious laity had already imitated the monks' diet. Buddhist China observed a no-meat diet more strictly than Buddhist India or Tibet. "Eating only vegetables and serving the devil" became a standard way for the state to characterize some of the heterodox groups, whether they be of the White Cloud, the White Lotus, or the Manichaean variety (Masaaki 1982, 199–228). These groups formed their own fellowship outside the temple proper, with or without the leadership of monks, and apparently helped underwrite the new Buddhist as well as the new Taoist sects of the Sung. They were definitely behind the relatively harmless White Cloud sect (Masaaki 1982, 286–288), but a gradual laicization of the leadership of the more infamous White Lotus can also be detected (Lai, in press a).

Not only were the sects "neither monk nor lay," however; they were also, if I may so rephrase Sawada Mizuno's characterization of the makeup of the Taoist Ch'uan-chen sect, "neither peasant nor official." The Ch'uan-chen members often came from a new strata of changing Sung society: men no longer tied to the soil ~~and~~ working in new crafts, in trades, or in the services at the low end of the magistrate's office (Kubo 1967). If that indeed was the case, we are seeing a kind of "protestant" movement that paralleled the rise of the new social groups. Out of that came a new form of Buddhist charity.

The new sects continued offering both solace for the soul and "works of mercy" for the body. But, with few or no celibate clergy or mendicant institution to support them, these new sects became fraternities of "people helping people." That is to say, they developed mutual aid associations. Often able bodied and living by their toil rather than off the land, the members had little love or need for the mendicant monk and even less patience with beggars. Not particularly wealthy, they had to pool their resources to help one another in times of distress or just when away from home. Judging from what we know of later sects, these would, in time, very likely buy up land for a communal hall, set up a hostel to take care of their retired and aged, and put aside a plot for the burial of their dead. Although these sects were not meant to be exclusivist, because of public persecution and sectarian pride the charity that they offered was often "for members only."

There was mutual aid in China before there was Buddhism. Villagers had pooled funds for the spring and autumn rites in ancient times. Actual mutual aid associations with formal charters might, however, have originated with the Buddhists. The charter component came from the lay imitation of the monks' *vinaya*. The *i-i* charitable village fraternities of the Northern Wei were founded on the lay precepts of the *Ti-wei Po-li ching*. At Lung-men and Tun-huang remain Buddha images donated by them. These were the forerunners of various Buddhist *she* societies in the T'ang, members of which preferred copying and chanting sutras. These *she* in turn evolved into the *lien-she* of the Sung devoted to Amitābha. Zealous in evangelizing, some of these broke away from monastic supervision and assumed the task of preaching the Dharma, once the sole prerogative of the monk elders.

By giving priority to the "field of compassion" (meant more for the laity) over the "field of reverence" (meant more for the monks), the HFCIC might have made it possible for lay sects to put social welfare ahead of building temples, copying sutras, and supporting monks. It was not that the Buddha and the Dharma were as a result neglected but only that the Buddha was seen as being in every believer or best honored through singing the saving grace of Amitābha and that Dharma work then meant preaching the good news and passing out, on street corners, inexpensive pamphlets and paper images. As with the low churches in the West, the money saved thereby could go to better

help the poor and the needy within the community itself or in the larger society.

The HFCIC also urged people to donate continuously to the "field of compassion." During the T'ang, Hsin-hsing of the Three Periods sect turned the "universal donation" into an "inexhaustible treasure store." Although few Buddhists in the Sung would remember all that, the operative principle remained the same. All rational charities need universal donation to some common store of wealth or commonwealth. This is because to donate universally is to donate without specifying the end use or the end user. This way, funds could go where the need was greatest. It was true that, unlike the lay sects of the Sung, Hsin-hsing of the T'ang was committed to mendicancy. However, he renounced the privileges of being a full *bhikṣu* and resumed the lowly status of a *śramaṇa* or novice. He came "to serve and not to be served." Hsin-hsing demanded the same of his inner circle of disciples. By keeping to a Mohist-like simplicity, the Three Periods sect did avoid the sin of the clerical officials who in 511 plundered the sangha grain.

What came down in historical memory as the "inexhaustible treasure store" is really "mutual aid" writ large. This and other money-lending institutions L. S. Yang has traced to clear Buddhist inspiration. Actually, the leading activity began when the sangha first took out loans from the Buddha *stūpa* with a promise of repayment and further donation (interest) to the glory of the Buddha. Intra-Jewel lending preceded extra-Jewel loans in China. The "inexhaustible treasure store" lent its wealth out to people in need, although, I suspect, mostly to fellow institutions. The sect employed no loan collectors; its own rules forbade extracting payment from the poor by force. All it could do to defaulters was to wave threats of a special hell at them. (See the *San-chieh fo-fa* document in Yabuki.)

In my assessment, this "goodwill store" never exploited anyone. But it did allow itself to be exploited. One lay manager embezzled unknown amount of funds. The latter incident is often cited as a sign of its folly or its corruption. It was actually a testimony to its openhandedness, which has always both blessed and plagued "mutual savings and loan" (*bui*) associations in China. Philanthropic societies down to the Ch'ing operated, as do such *bui* in Hong Kong today, on goodwill instead of by legal statute. There has been no end of stories of money managers running off with the cash. This is the price one pays for setting up mutual aid societies.

Before such an association became just a secular money-lending institution, it had been inspired by the Buddhist ideal of *pao-en*, repaying the gracious aid that we owe others now and from all our past lives. (One does not repay injury with injury. Ill will brings only evil retribution on oneself.) Lateral charities are expressions of this gratitude. Making such lateral connections is called *chieh-yuan*, "karmic bonding." When Mou Tzu-yuan first began preaching the Dharma within his White Lotus society, he followed the example of the eminent monk Ssu-ming Chih-li. He did what Ippen in Japan would do. He made karmic bonds with new members, registered their names, collected donations (membership dues) from them, and lodged their names at the headquarters temple. For true believers, this meant mutual obligation among brothers of the faith. For secret societies, this became a sworn brotherhood sealed with blood for life.

The preachers would urge the convert to "go and do likewise," that is, spread the good news, recruit more members, collect dues. Each section leader had his quota (usually eighty-four) of souls to save, and every leader would report to the leader above him, in a chain of command. Although prohibited since the Ming, the White Lotus underground still uses this classic method of recruit-

ment and propagation. If it does not seem to sponsor visible charities for all in the spirit of universal *pao-en*, that is because it is sectarian in nature and because it once took drastic action and played a part in toppling the Mongol dynasty.

After Ming Emperor T'ai-tsu came to the throne riding the wave of the White Lotus rebellion, he turned against the sect and took measures to curb similar future occurrences. Temples were discouraged from leading lay groups; monks were prohibited from forming associations. Such policies forced the orthodox wing of the sangha to retreat into the cloisters and the heterodox wing to go underground. With their economic base weakened and patronage diverted by endless Neo-Confucian polemics, the orthodox temples could hardly staff hospitals or run any good schools. They also lost control over the major source of income common to Buddhist monasteries everywhere. From Sri Lanka to Japan, temples have been living off of funeral services. But what used to be merit cloisters entrusted by gentry families to the care of temples in the Sung had by the Ming become private ancestral halls with their own land trusts and run by paid managers of the clans (Masaaki 1982, 111–144). The charitable estate of the Fan clan still had such merit cloisters, but, under the influence of a model set up supposedly by Chu Hsi, the agnatic lineages had by the middle of the sixteenth century assumed that charge for the dead, a service once nearly monopolized by the monks (Brook 1989, 465–466).

Little wonder then that the Protestant missionaries saw only a socially inactive Buddhist sangha in the nineteenth century. When Dharmapāla came to Nanking after the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he had wanted to set up a branch of his Mahabodhi Society in China. The monks of the Lung-hua Temple were, however, so scared of being impeached by the government for "illicit association" that they begged to be relieved of their initial promise to help. Timothy Richard had to take Dharmapāla to see the lay Buddhist leader Yang Wen-hui. The meeting inspired Yang to set up the first modern Buddhist school. Yang, however, had better luck with other gentry Buddhists than with the monks. Privatized in their faith and in their land dealings with the state, Buddhist temples guarded their property as jealously as any worldling. They passed it down only to their own lineages. This prevented the reformer monk T'ai-hsü from rallying and uniting the sangha for a more socially active form of Buddhism that could respond to the challenge of Christianity.

## VI. THE ORTHODOX PHILANTHROPY OF THE MING-CH'ING ERA

For Buddhist-Christian comparisons, perhaps the story should end there. However, in both East and West, private philanthropy outside the church and the sangha would grow in more recent times. In China, such private charities organized by the local notables would predominate from the Late Ming on.

Somehow, the cooperative effort to provide aid to the needy did not last beyond the Sung. The Yuan excelled in medical care partly because of the higher prestige it granted doctors, but "the overall record of the Ming dynasty was one of increasing imperial indifference and neglect" (Leung 1987, 139). Wards caring for the poor still existed, but they suffered from bureaucratization and corruption (Leung 1986, 56-57). Although fulfilling the duty of rulers in giving emergency famine relief (Wong 1982), the Ch'ing was equally lax when it came to everyday relief. It is not clear why this *laissez-faire* attitude arose as it did.

In England, the adoption of a *laissez-faire* policy was conscious. It helped fuel rapid industrialization. It also created massive suffering, which troubled the conscience of the religious, who sought amelioration for the working poor. There was no industrial revolution in China, and the merchants who were enriched by the increase in commercial activities under the Ming often turned out to be the supporters of the new, local charities. It could just be that, as the population rose but the state bureaucracy did not expand with it, the latter was simply too overworked and the state too strapped financially to do much for the poor. From the eighteenth century on, the local elite assumed much of the responsibility for aiding the needy.

There were already in place other institutions designed by certain groups to help their own kind. The charitable clan estate of the Sung, the traders' group, the fellow-villager clubs, and the folk religion sects such as the Lo of the Ming had done that. At the village level, the modern, agnatic lineages holding corporate property had done their share. These had spread in the middle and lower Yangtze area since the late Yuan and the early Ming (Ebrey 1986). By the eighteenth century, this gentry class had grown in both wealth and power. They could manage most of the local affairs with no help from the state. A new kind of organized relief made its debut then in the provincial cities.

Philosophically, the new philanthropy was akin in spirit to the T'ai-chou school of Wang Yang-ming. For modern charity to exist, a generalized and abstract concept of philanthropy seems to be a prerequisite. In Europe, such a concept arose first with the new idea of *caritas as humanitas* in early fifteenth-century Florence. A century later, the Medici set up the first welfare city-state. A mark of this new civility was the antipathy toward the beggar and the monk. The unkindness shown them was not without its good points. Removing the ascetic assumptions behind medieval charity made it possible for modern charity to entertain an "act of charity which did not need a state of charity to take place in" (Bossy 1985, 145-146). Lifting the old, reciprocal obligations made it possible to give now freely, that is, with no strings attached. This is the plus of modern philanthropy.

Although the Chinese situation was quite different, still a comparable notion of a "general good" also appeared in the late Ming. Within the T'ai-chou school, the notion of a *liang-hsin* or "conscience" rose and spread (Cheng). At the same time, the new genre of the "good books" or *shan-shu*, such as the dicta of Yuan Liao-fan, was enjoining people to do good. Buddhist *shan* as *caritas* was being equated also with Confucian *jen* as *humanitas* and being cultivated as an active benevolence, something that flowed naturally from the heart. The *liang-hsin* now closed even the last gap between "know-

ing" and "acting" that was the original premise behind Wang Yang-ming's idea of *liang-chih*. A person does not even have to "know" the good to "do" the good. One simply "does good" (*wei shan*) as if on cue, without having to think about it.

Every man who "does good" is thus potentially a "good man" (*shan-jen*). This term came into usage in the 1600s (Leung 1986, 58) to honor the new philanthropists. In an expanded form, *shan-chang*, *jen-yung* became the generic term for describing philanthropists. Any donor to a charitable cause was "a good elder, a humane superior." In the good books, the good as a universal good was being taught. It was the spirit now associated with the proverb, "One look, same humanity": to regard all as belonging to the family of man. The unity of the Three Teachings had been proposed before, but that was usually justified on some theory of nature or mind (*hsin-hsing*). The new slogan was simpler: "All three teach the doing of good." Virtue had never been justified more simply either. Instead of the mandate of Heaven, karmic reward to come, or unity with the Tao, we have instead the dictum, "To do good is a joy" in itself (*wei-shan shih-lo*). One does not even have to ask why.

With that came the rallying cry that all others should do the same and should do so together (*t'ung-shan*) with the singular goal of helping the poor or simply any man or neighbor (*chi-p'in*, *chu-jen*). In some remote sense, that stress on a general good or *shan* performed with others might be Buddhist. Buddhism taught, "Do good, avoid evil," and, "Rejoice in the joy of another." But, in the spirit of this new philanthropy, one should not even worry about which school—Confucian, Buddhist, or Taoist—deserved the credit. That no longer mattered. What mattered was that all people do good—not the "where from" but the "how." That is not unlike Christian *agape* being now diffused into our general humanism.

The institution that emerged out of that sentiment was the *t'ung-shan hui*, associations to do good together, benevolence associations. Its hallmark was the *shan-t'ang*, the ubiquitous benevolence hall in any major city in China (Fuma 1983; Leung 1986).

Interestingly, although the liberality of spirit is what one would associate with the T'ai-chou school, the actual promotion and organization of these societies came from the likes of Kao Pan-lung and Chen Lung-cheng of the T'ung-lin school (Leung 1986, 58–61). These founders were not on the radical left of Wang Yang-ming's following, where the removal of hierarchical obligations went the farthest. They were members of the Tung-lin academy, eager to restore the classical rites and norms and, during the late Ming, alarmed by what they perceived as the breakdown of the traditional bonds of Chinese society. These were the ones who dug deep into the classics seeking to recover the old norms for a new era (Chow in press). They often charged the radicals of the Wang Yang-ming school with promoting license and with undermining those traditional bonds.

That the benevolence societies should be so guided by both a general principle of benevolence and a specific commitment to the "orthodox socioethics of filial piety and loyalty" (Liu 1990) was not, however, inconsistent. The aforesaid radicals were few and might be too individualistic to organize; the good books and other popular Ming-Ch'ing moral tracts supported the orthodox socioethics. This combination of philanthropy for all and moral revival colored the new charity. The Sung charities were more "task oriented" and, for that reason, somewhat erratic. But, even in their Confucian priorities, they targeted only the widow, the widower, the singled (others with no families), and the orphaned. They never specifically sought out the filial son and the chaste widow. The Ming societies invariably would—despite the fact that greater filial

piety and chastity did not always necessarily correspond to greater need (and often they did not).

Yet Kao and Chen, who set the tone for all others to follow, openly advertised first the filial and the chaste. The man who was not filial and the brothers who quarreled should not expect any aid (Leung 1987, 59). Kao and Chen were mixing need and virtue. Their benevolence associations promoted not just charity for all but also specific rewards for some.

Fearing a popular rebellion of heterodox groups, the Ch'ing ruler banned *chieh-she* activities in 1666. Fearing guilt by association, the early benevolence associations disappeared. Once the Sacred Edict of 1724 permitted and encouraged such types of charities, the associations reappeared, this time under the auspices of local officials and modeling their charities after the expressed concerns of the edict itself (Leung 1988, 87). Run cooperatively by the local elite, the notables, and the new mercantile rich, they organized poor reliefs, orphanages, and hospitals (Leung 1987; Liu 1990; Rankin 1986). In this second flowering, governors and local officials were always invited to give talks or to sit on boards of directors. This lent an official stamp to the societies and prevented any charge of heterodoxy. By the late eighteenth century, however, the power of the state vis-à-vis that of the local elite declined, and, as the societies also spread wide and filtered down to towns and villages, the ritual of involving governors and officials was dropped (Leung 1988). Of the charities the societies hosted, the well-organized hospitals were the most impressive (Leung 1987).

If we compare these societies with the heterodox ones, we will see that most were not "mutual aid" societies in the strict sense. Although they too collected dues, formed trusts, and bought up land to perpetuate themselves, they were charities run by the better off for the less well off. The donors might be fraternal; the recipients were not a part of that. The donors signed contracts; they did not pledge dying loyalty or swear any binding oath. There were few religious rituals and no initiation or vow at all. Theirs was a *Gesell* of men united by an enlightened public concern, like most action committees of our modern charities. Theirs was not a *Gemein* of sectarian fanatics. They were the orthodox, moral leaders of the community; the sects were heterodox, the religious underground, public enemy number one.

Proponents of orthodoxy, the former meted out morality along with gratuities. Kao and Chen gave public lectures. This practice disappeared during the second phase, but the sermons of Kao and Chen remained the societies' guiding principles. In keeping with the standard of the Ming orthodoxy, Confucian values always got first billing, even if all Three Teachings figured somewhere. The *Te-i lu*, which preserves these early lectures and other materials, shared that spirit when it took its title from a line in the *Chung-yung*: "Whenever he [Yen Hui] got hold of what was good [*te-i*, 'gaining the one good'], he clasped it firmly" (Chap. VIII; Legge's translation).

Whatever Buddhist elements there might be, they did not seem to serve any distinctly (traditional) Buddhist end. Even the karmic theodicy helped only to underwrite values more Confucian than Buddhist. For example, there were four groups of people that the charities would characteristically not serve: (1) runners at the magistrate's office, who deserved to suffer poverty in their old age for their underhanded dealings in their wasted youth; (2) Buddhist monks and Taoist clerics, for being unproductive and because they could well beg for themselves; (3) butchers, for their lack of compassion and humanity; and (4) no-good sons, who debauched away their family fortunes (Leung 1986, 59). The exclusion of the butcher might have been influenced by the traditional Buddhist dislike of that violent life-style, but the slighting of the mendicant monk was certainly not.



But then this was the period when mendicants were losing respect all over. They were being stereotyped as social parasites and, in pornographic novels, as closet lechers. The associations idealized instead the "noble poor," namely, people who, despite their need, would not demean themselves and others by begging in public. These people should be "sought out and honored." How this was to be done is not exactly clear to me—by word of mouth and recommendation, I suppose. The trouble is that, while the poor could avoid begging, the destitute, by definition, seldom had any choice. That underclass might well have been served, but they seldom were.

The good part about mixing the criteria of virtue and need was that, unlike the modern West, China did not know the division between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor (Leung 1986, 68–69). It is not that the Neo-Confucians had no work ethic similar to that of the Puritans. They had. Every Chinese knew, "Diligence produces results; frivolity never pays." But there was not the simple equation that wealth came naturally with hard work and poverty resulted necessarily from being just plain lazy. That equation in the West had turned almshouses into poorhouses and then into workhouses. In England, the poor had to prove that they were deserving by their labor. In China, it was believed, as Dante once did and anyone with common sense should, that there simply was only so much good (fortune) to go around. Therefore, not all who work hard will necessarily be compensated. That being the case, the poor were not necessarily lazy. Their needs had to be served as needs.

The negative side of mixing virtue and need was that, although there was no shame attached to being poor and no concerted effort to make the poor feel ashamed, there was a converse assumption made. Yen Hui was poor and virtuous and diligent, but Heaven did not reward him outright. It was therefore up to a moral society to set the record straight and recompense such a moral man. The righteous deserved charity or, rather, reverence. But that also meant that the "noble poor" should emulate Yen Hui. As Yen Hui was carefree in the midst of poverty, the poor were counseled to be content with their lot, to rest in the cold comfort that Heaven was not condemning them and that society might, in time, make amends. Such a teaching is not without a place in any society; witness the example of Job. But it can—and did—repress legitimate discontent and stifle protests against social injustice.

The moral universe of the Neo-Confucians was not without the "undeserving" ones. Besides the monk, there were the vagrants, able-bodied men who had too much time on their hands and therefore likely to be up to no good. These were not so much the unemployed as the ill employed. Many held part-time jobs as seasonal laborers. They need not have been poor. In fact, a few of them were simply the spoiled brats of well-to-do families. These were the idlers, the *yao-sou hao-hsien* type, the meddlers and troublemakers. The situation and the orthodox attitude in China were, in that sense, more Elizabethan than Victorian. Preindustrialized England was also fearful of idlers and the unrest that they might cause. It was the moralizers of the Victorian, industrializing era who were more worried about the lost productivity of the lazy, undeserving poor.

The mixing of morality with charity did not serve the needy well. A chaste widow who was poor might receive aid, but a prostitute, truly destitute, could not expect sympathy. Much has been written on the sexism of the puritanical Neo-Confucians, who counseled women to "preserve their chastity above their lives." Dying chaste might earn a woman a shrine; prostituting her body would bring only censure. Yet there were benevolence associations that did more than judge and pontificate. Some worked to prevent prostitution; others provided halfway houses for ex-prostitutes.

Nowadays, we tend to find these self-appointed guardians of public morality, these creeds of the Tung-lin founders, somewhat conservative, reactionary, perhaps even a ploy of the state or the gentry to "keep the people down." But that would be reading into the materials a conspiracy that did not exist. The morality might be uncritical, but it had the potential for self-correction. The tension between universal benevolence and particular ritual norms allows for change. The tone of the moral sermon was at times condescending; that was perhaps inevitable. We liberals find it hard to stomach the Bible reading that came with the warm soup at the urban missions. But, in the end, no charity can be extended without some minimal psychic strings attached.

Overall, however, there was, in these Ming-Ch'ing materials, comparatively little self-righteousness and much that was genuinely good-hearted. The ethics might appear more Benthamite than Kantian. For example, the twelve benefits listed for doing good (in *Te-i lu* 1: 12ab) are the type usually styled by scholars as "this-worldly benefits." The returns are supposed to be immediate, with no talk of karmic reward in the next life or some delayed joy in Heaven. Yet, when I looked closely, except for the last, which had to do with the benefit of material relief, all the so-called benefits were psychic and social, in other words, peace of mind and goodwill among men. They were the kinds of things you tell someone who hates to part with his money for the United Way—how, contrary to what he thinks and without promising him any material return, there are indeed all these intangible but real benefits to doing good. Although this good might not be the good that men would die for, we can hardly ask for more.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the benevolence societies, like the local notables who funded them, were no longer subjected to, nor had they any need of, governmental approval. Tension between leaders protective of the interest of the local community and officials answerable to the central authorities might, at some point, come into conflict (Leung 1988; we await her further finding there). Perhaps, in the nineteenth century, individual philanthropists who were merchants and industrialists of great wealth, such as Ching Yuan-shan, became even more active in seeking social reforms (Liu 1989). Maybe those reforms went beyond the limits set by the traditional orthodoxy. To cover that would require a further comparison with, not just the Puritan merchants with their sense of a calling (Yu 1968–1969) and their idea of civic duty in Restoration England and after, but also the more recent industrialists and businessmen of great wealth in the West and their private foundations: the Rockefellers, the Fords, and the Luces.<sup>4</sup>

#### VII. CONCLUSION: THE PERILS OF MODERNITY

When the Protestants arrived in China, they reportedly found a poor China where Buddhist monks were lax, unlearned, and too uncaring to help others. Having traced the larger history of charity in China, how does one now read that Protestant report?

One way is to note how such lassitude came only recently, with the decline of the sangha. Two centuries earlier, Ricci did not find the monks that lax or that unlearned. And they were hardly passive when it came to launching a counter-attack against the Jesuits. A thousand years ago, Chinese Buddhist temples and European Christian churches were probably not that different in their care of the poor and the sick. A Chinese monk visiting medieval England would be surprised by the equal division of donations there: "Respecting tithe: the king and its witan have chosen and decreed, as is just, that one third part of the tithe that belongs to the church go to the reparation of; and a second part go to servants [clergy] of God, the third go to the poor, and to the needy ones in

thralldom" (Ierley 1984, 23)." Possibly the Nestorians arriving in T'ang China found Buddhism so hospitable, its institutions so similar, that they too had little to complain of. They blended with the indigenous inhabitants and in time disappeared. Manichaeism seemed to have the same reaction.

Thus, another way to read the Protestant report is to remember the historical developments of these two faiths and perhaps to say that the real difference had to do with the Reformation.

Before the time of Luther, mendicant orders in both traditions tied charity to asceticism and considered menial tasks as service to others as well as trials of the spirit. Because of that, the Jesuits had no problem passing themselves off at first as Buddhist-like monks. If they became combative later, that was because, fresh from battling the Protestants in Europe, the Society of Jesus came to China in 1540 with a new mission and a new charity. The society "looked for the highest expression of charity to large, efficiently managed and heroically executed works, to saving the soul, improving the mind, and relieving the corporal need of a rather abstract and rather passive neighbor" (Bossy 1985, 146). Late Ming China had a taste of that high-handed and ambitious approach. The Buddhist monks did not do so badly in responding in kind.

It was not the Catholics but the Protestants who made it more difficult for the Buddhists to respond in kind. From the start, Protestants did away with mendicants. Long before they found Chinese Buddhist monks lax, unlearned, and uncaring, they had said much the same of Catholic monks. Monks spent too much time doing nothing (contemplating). They seemed to make a virtue of ignorance (of worldly affairs). They seemed more concerned for the souls in the beyond than with caring for the living here and now. For the Reformers, a donor was a donor was a donor. All this talk about a prior "state of charity" best prepared by some self-effacing monk was pride masquerading as humility. It was works instead of faith. With that, the Protestants came up with their own idea of charity.

The Protestants were not against good works. It was only that good works should be one of the fruits of true faith. But "since giving to the individual living and praying for the individual dead were no longer respectable, these [works] were bound to be [more] impersonal or 'durable' goods like schools and almshouses" (Bossy 1985, 147). Committed to the removal of ignorance—initially in order to read the Bible themselves—they had schools built. Since Chinese Buddhism did not renounce mendicancy, it could not match the resources of the Protestants in these two areas. Yet, if we recall the Sung state charities (almshouses) and the commitment then to broad education (schools), the Chinese were not far behind the West at all. And if we count the White Lotus as China's Reformation, the potential of a secularization existed there too. When Protestantism met up with it, it resulted in the modern anomaly of the T'ai-p'ing Rebellion.

Perhaps a better way to read the Protestant critique of the lax and unlearned monks is in the light of the difference between Western modernity and Chinese tradition. Indeed, modern missionaries found the monks in Buddhist countries, everywhere from Sri Lanka through South East Asia, China, and Korea to Japan, to be lax, unlearned, and inactive. Modern Buddhists in all these countries repeated that same judgment about the older, Buddhist establishments they sought to reform. The problem with Buddhism then is that it is medieval; it is out of date.

The problem, however, is more complicated than that since it is Western modernity that in fact destroyed Eastern tradition, exposing it as lax, unlearned, and uncaring. Myanmar is the classic example. Then known as Burma, it was a pastoral paradise—the model for the economy of "small is beautiful"

—in the reports of visitors in the eighteenth century. Only in the nineteenth century were the same monks, once admired, called lax, unlearned, and uncarving. In between, the British colonists had destroyed its simple way of life. In many areas, the plantations had destroyed the self-sufficient indigenous economy. The changes brought into being new cities and, with them, the problems of the city poor, problems that the monks had never dreamed of and had no experience in dealing with.

Once the learned educator, the monk was suddenly relabeled the ignoramus. With new sciences being taught in the missionary schools, time-honored beliefs were dubbed superstitions. For those who acquired a knowledge of "Original Buddhism," these monks were not even deemed Buddhist. With copies of the Western work ethic in place, the quiet life of the monk was now caricatured as an excuse for not doing anything useful. Was the monk necessarily less caring than the missionary? Probably not. It is just that, having weathered the storms of the Industrial Revolution, modern Christian institutions of charity could far better address the new social needs. The rural monastery was geared only to helping the few; it was not meant to handle the urban unemployed. Most Buddhist temples were never meant to be downtown missions; they were traditionally located on the edges of villages and towns anyway. Traditionally, monks do not come to you; you go to visit monks.

In that tragic sense, the West exported its own social problems and then left it to the missionaries to offer solutions as once, back in England, the industrialists had unloaded such problems on the private charities of the church.

So, if from the coal mines with their joyless, hard labor there once rose the exuberant songs of a John Wesley, then both hard work and free grace had reached the East. Once, against the tyranny of rational productivity, the Methodist hymns were an outpouring of emotion in a protest of the spirit. It is a form of "wretched work and amazing grace" that Young Man Luther, an Augustinian monk, never knew. (Luther had the good fortune of escaping from the mines where his father had once worked.) That too came to the East. Later, from the depression that gave us the downtown mission, the soup kitchen, and the bread basket would also rise and "onward march!" the soldiers of the Salvation Army, marching to similarly depressed cities in Burma or China.

A century back, English Christian philanthropy not only provided personal aid to the new poor but also in time set the precedent for new state policies to follow (Owen 1964). The factory and the mill owners might equate their wealth with others' hard work, but the true Puritan meant by *work*, not just an ethics of the workplace (honesty, etc.), but above all works of charity. He did not always reinvest his earnings in his business; a great deal went into charities, into civic causes, into what we would now call human capital. The social ameliorationism that was Puritan charity was also brought to China by the missionaries. These included dispensaries, which came with some missionary doctors or doctors serving missionaries; schools, which were built up slowly; the YMCA, later still; and the modern hospitals and medical training facilities, the latest.

Each of these has its own history. Educating the young had always been important, but, as the Puritans turned away from politics to civics following the debacle of Cromwell, the schools, including ones for girls, and colleges received even greater attention. Holding wayward youths suspect, the Puritans believed in their strict supervision. In that sense, the YMCA came from a more trusting and enlightened period. It went with a whole new phenomenon, the generation of the educated young in the cities. The modern hospital and medical profession were created in this century and, in one case, had direct ties with the Rockefellers and capitalism (Brown 1979; Bullock 1980).

The story of religious charity, of course, does not end there. The problem of

the modern poor stays with us. Indeed, it has been with us since the collapse of feudalism and the rise of modern society. The great personal freedom granted modern men has meant that one can be free and rich, or free and just getting by, or free and poor or destitute—and with no master to fall back on. Since the French Revolution, Europe has caught up with England in having to face an urban underclass of the permanently poor. The modern state and the modern charities have not solved this problem. (Sweden is atypical.) The role of church and state and the place of public welfare and private philanthropy are still being debated, but only where pluralism allows such debate.

In China, Buddhists have learned to appreciate and to emulate the Christian charities. But perhaps, in better times, Christians might also learn from the Chinese experience with Buddhist economy on a human scale and mutual aid based on a just sharing of goods and the idea that, in a world of limited resources, it is not the producing or the consuming but the sharing that truly counts. And that is as much a part of Christian *agape* and *caritas*.

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## NOTES

1. Wang was one of the few Christian scholars knowledgeable about Buddhism, although he made only one other reference in his history to it (1940, 209).

2. The history and the provisions of this rule have been laid out by Tomomatsu (1965), who founded the study of Buddhist economics in Japan. This socioeconomic arrangement in the Buddhist sangha had as much to do with the rise of Buddhism in northeastern India, where non-Aryan tribal kingdoms probably used councils of elders