

Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of Buddha

Chapter Six Summary

Humanistic Buddhism denotes the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings for humanity. Its sacredness is indubitable. It adheres to the truths of all the Buddha's fundamental teachings and holds the Three Jewels as its core. However, it also emphasizes the humanistic, relevant, altruistic, joyful, universal, and timely characteristics of Buddhism, as well as the global spreading of Dharma.

Only one side of Buddhism was shown, bereft of a comprehensive interpretation of the doctrine, resulting in a divergence from the Buddha's original intents. Unsurprisingly, the spread of Buddhism was thus limited.

In the future, Humanistic Buddhism shall evolve from the passive attitudes of "suffering, emptiness, and impermanence" into one that is positive, beneficial, and essential. Its shall expand from a monastic focus to one that encompasses both lay and monastics, men and women alike. It shall advance from being secluded in distant mountains and forests to connecting with society and adapting to urban life. It shall emerge from being confined to temple grounds and individual practice, towards integrating with family life, as well as with service and contribution as ways of cultivation.

Humanistic Buddhism shall transform temples and families into places of practice. Bridging the gap between seclusion and society, it will ensure greater interaction between Buddhists. Similarly, Humanistic Buddhism shall strive to be socially relevant in whatever ways conditions require. All Buddhists shall unite and advocate the spirit of Buddhism. Peace and stability shall be achieved through a Humanistic Pure Land of the Five Harmonies. That is why we now propose Humanistic Buddhism: holding true to Buddha's original intents.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Ever since I found my faith in Buddhism, I gradually came to realize that this religion is also found in various countries and regions of the world. Thai people follow Thai Buddhism. Burmese people follow Burmese Buddhism. Vietnamese people follow Vietnamese Buddhism. Mongolian, Qinghai and Tibetan people follow Tibetan Buddhism. Korean people follow Korean Buddhism. Japanese people follow Japanese Buddhism. Indeed, the Chinese people would follow Chinese Buddhism.

Amongst the many Chinese faiths, my earliest belief in Buddhism began with Guanyin Bodhisattva, and later incorporated within that of Amitabha Buddha, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Consequently, as I came to realize that Buddhism was founded by Sakyamuni Buddha, Lord of the Saha World, I finally realized how intricate my faith was.

As my faith developed, I eventually gathered the many foci of belief back into one, that is, the Buddha. My faith was thus in Sakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

The Buddha manifests in billions of forms, many of which comprise that of the aforementioned buddhas and bodhisattvas. In such regard, the candor of my faith is further affirmed. For this reason, when in the presence of a Guanyin Bodhisattva statue, I would be prostrating to Sakyamuni Buddha. Before an Amitabha Buddha effigy, I would be prostrating myself to Sakyamuni Buddha as well. In the same manner, when facing a Sakyamuni Buddha statue, I could also be prostrating to Amitabha Buddha and the Medicine Buddha.

Subsequent to the Buddhist saying, “All buddhas are on the same path, and all lights interpenetrate one another,” I am utterly certain that my actions are correct. Each buddha embodies all other buddhas, while all buddhas symbolize the one buddha. All the buddhas and bodhisattvas are represented by the supreme one — Sakyamuni Buddha.

My faith in the Buddha inspired me to write *The Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha* at the young age of 25. In those days, some referred to Sakyamuni Buddha as ‘Buddha,’ others called him ‘Tathagata,’ some regarded him as “the world honored one,” and others addressed him as ‘the Noble Sakya.’ Likewise, Tathagata also has the Ten Epithets. Despite these many names, I still believe that all are redundant save one — ‘Buddha.’

Ever since my decision to simply refer to the Buddha as ‘Buddha’ in *The Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha*, this has been the only title found in my writings.

Humanistic Buddhism is Buddhism founded by Buddha. Buddhism split into Early Buddhism, Sectarian Buddhism, Northern Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism. In China, there is

Huayan Buddhism, Tiantai Buddhism, Consciousness-Only Buddhism, and Pure Land Buddhism. It is simply impossible to follow these numerous and varied types of faith. For example, Chan Buddhism alone is comprised of Five Schools and Seven Sects. Exactly which school or sect do I as a Buddhist belong to?

This edifies me about the so-called faith. In this world, people will insist on their own faiths. Some contend on their faith in Pure Land Buddhism, some in Consciousness-only Buddhism, others Chan Buddhism, and some on Three Treatises Buddhism. Deeming all else as inferior or mistaken, people will each have their specific faith, believing theirs paramount. Truly, it is all Buddhism. The only people who are impairing the Dharma are Buddhists themselves.

There was a gongan about a Chan Master who suffered of rheumatism in his legs. Hence, his two disciples took on the duties of massaging each of his legs. When the senior disciple massaged his right leg, the Master would compliment the junior disciple for doing a wonderful job with his left leg, making the senior very unhappy. When the junior massaged his left leg, the Master would speak about how his senior disciple did a great job with his right leg, causing unhappiness in the junior. As they became jealous of each other, they decided to break their Master's other leg so that the other disciple would be left without a leg to massage. This is the flaw of human nature to show no forbearance to those who are better than them.

In order to impart their own hatred, they sacrificed both of their master's legs. Is this not a phenomenon among all Buddhists? They defame each other merely to legitimize their own faith without perceiving that they are actually extinguishing the future of Buddhism. If we continue to demean each other and condemn one another for being wrong or inferior, how can Buddhism ever prosper? The future of Buddhism is only made possible with the power of all Buddhists united.

There have also been many who developed arrogance and selfishness after becoming Buddhists. Some, as missionaries, took the contributions of devotees for granted. Others, as scholars, criticized and divided the Buddhist faith by means of rivalry and depreciation. In the end, what crumbles is Buddhism, leaving everyone with ruins. All that has been done is nothing but defamation and sabotage. Have you ever come across any scholar or expert criticize and compare the Bible?

Among Buddhists, Chan practitioners would belittle Pure Land followers, deeming them as ignorant. Pure Land practitioners on the other hand would accuse Chan followers of being delusional. Some believed in self-reliance, while some favored being dependent, all belittling each other oblivious that their futile bickering had only one consequential outcome in the ruin of Buddhism. They may as well simplify their faith and integrate all into a single

teaching. Let each other believe in their own chosen faith without any defamation. This is the true way of a decent believer. This is comparable to the organs encompassing your face. Let the eyes, ears, and nose each do their job. Any act of comparison is meaningless. Only with collaborative effort can we be made whole.

With a single Sakyamuni Buddha featuring billions of manifestations in Buddhism, we should all be allowed to follow our own chosen faith and abide each other. Shall this magnanimous bearing be demonstrated, then my faith in the supreme one — Sakyamuni Buddha will be further affirmed.

Having grown up in Qixia Monastery and Jiaoshan Monastery for over a decade, I seldom saw lay devotees visit the monasteries. Living within were only a few dozen or hundred monastics passing their days and nights chanting and eating. I pondered if this was all Buddhism could ever be?

Some time later, when I returned to my ancestral temple — Dajue Temple in Yixing, I never saw visiting devotees during my two-year stay. The only people were my senior Dharma brother, farmers, some workers and myself. Was Buddhism not supposed to be “Amitabha found in every home, and Guanyin in every family”? If the Chinese believed in Buddhism, why has Sakyamuni Buddha never existed in their faith?

From the time when my faith in Buddhism began, I had always believed in that Buddha. Yet why is Sakyamuni Buddha only found inside monasteries or mountain forests instead of in families and society? The only path to a righteous faith is for all Buddhists to establish their faith in the founder — the Great Buddha.

Stemming from such thoughts, I therefore vowed to bring Buddhism out of the mountains and into society, to ensure that monastics interact with lay Buddhists, and to take Buddhism from temples into homes. I also pledged to shift a faith that focused on meaningless metaphysical discussions to one that is devoted to serving society. It was also vital to alter Buddhism's focus on monastic cultivations of chanting, meditation, and reciting Buddha's name to being open to all Buddhists for collective cultivation, fellowship and interchange.

During my days at Jiaoshan Buddhist College, I attended the Buddhist Association of China's Committee Training Seminar organized by Master Taixu (太虛, 1890-1947). I held my own philosophy about the establishment of a “new Buddhism,” and was aware that Buddhists must be cautious about internal disputes and external threats. Generally, what Buddhism needs is reform. Despite my passion to engage in Buddhist reform movements, the little weight I carried gave me no leverage. Consequently, the only thing that I achieved was

the publication of the monthly *Raging Waves* magazine. When my master — Venerable Master Zhi Kai (志開, 1911-1979) heard of this, he donated fifty reams of paper as a way of encouragement. The support of my Master on my first endeavor meant a lot to me, because it inferred that I had not done it out of my own selfish purpose.

Later, when I assumed the posts of Superintendent and then Abbot at Huazang Monastery in Nanjing, though the tenures were short, I was already nurturing a blueprint for “new Buddhism.” The vision involved endeavors in education, culture, philanthropy, organization of devotees, and enlarged Buddhist community. In those days Huazang Monastery already owned a textile mill, a primary school, and a hot water vendor. All of these services held direct links to people’s daily living. For this reason, I believed that the future of a new Buddhism must involve social services and connection to the people in order for it to endure.

Regrettably, the conservatives within the Monastery hindered such vision and passion. Some twenty monastics who had been residing in the monastery depended on chanting services as a way to survive and to cover daily expenses. However, if a monastery were to do nothing but chanting, unable to teach or propagate the Dharma, or offer service to society, I wondered if they were still in accord with the Buddhist objectives of altruism and propagation works.

By chance I arrived in Taiwan with the Monastic Rescue Team and was fortunate enough to find residence at Yuan Guang Temple in Chungli, doing chores and services for two years. Later I assumed a position as Dean at the Taiwan Buddhist Seminar in Tsingsao Lake in Hsinchu for a year and a half. Subsequently, I found lodgings in Yilan. Conscious that I was still young, and determined, surely I will be able to accomplish great things for Buddhism.

Lei Yin Temple in Yilan started off as a small branch of the Longhua Sect. Inside lived a seventy-year-old bhiksuni, an old laywoman, and three households of military dependents. The only space they could offer to a Dharma speaker like myself was a small room behind the Buddha statue in the Main Shrine. Given the poor living conditions, coupled with my ten years of monastic training, I thus was able to nurture my traits of patience and endurance.

Then I began to think of the need of youths, children, and care for the disadvantaged minority, as well as women in Buddhism. I wondered what conditions were needed in order to convey them from where they were to the face of the Buddha.

The process was not uneventful, but I finally felt that I was settled down in Yilan.

Why so? Many youths were willingly attending my Dharma talks, while veterans and teachers from Yilan Secondary School, Yilan Agricultural School, Yilan Ladies Secondary School, and the Signal Communication Corps School joined me as friends and devotees. They contributed to the founding of the Buddhist Choir, Dharma Propagation Team, and even the Humanities and Sciences Tuition School.

With my faith in the Buddha as my core, I felt it essential for monastics and lay devotees to coexist in harmony. So, I opened the temple door to devotees for chanting and cultivation activities. I also organized events such as the Chanting Association, Meditation Association, Women's Association, Youth Association, Student Association, Children's Class, and others. These served as practical means for people from all walks of life to come in front of the Buddha to discover physical and mental well-being through his blessings and teachings. Thus I also advocated: "Discover your practices in Chan, Pure Land, and collective cultivation, as well as your understanding in all forms of Dharma."

Buddhism in Yilan thus became lively and dynamic. Lei Ying Temple was so small that it offered no space for a conversation lounge, and people had to stand in the corridors to chat, but no one complained. Also, there existed a large community of I-Kuan Tao followers in Yilan, yet they were all willing to join me in my propagation works. The development of Buddhism in Yilan would not have been possible without the support of these people. Due to this, I was free from the subjections of conservative Buddhists throughout the decades of my presence in Yilan.

At first, I was uncertain why Buddhism had to be further divided into many names such as "Humanistic Buddhism," "Life Buddhism," or "World Buddhism," but I nevertheless decided to keep it simple by propagating Buddhism suitable for all.

As time went by, I came to discover that Buddhism truly has evolved along with history, culture, diverse backgrounds, as well as the changing needs of time. No matter the needs, Buddhism must be centered on humans and help them discover happiness, safety, and transcendence in addition to perfection of their character. Therefore, I came to focus on something, which regarded human nature the same as buddha-nature, a principle based on the fact that "a buddha comes from a perfected human," and "humans are buddhas-to-be," namely, the unity of human and buddha—Humanistic Buddhism.

I truly believe that Humanistic Buddhism can encompass all types of Buddhism together with the complex system of faiths and names that have existed throughout the past two thousand years. Humanistic Buddhism shall redirect Buddhism that was once divided by geography, time, and individual bias back to the Buddhism that is rooted in oneself as a human being and the Buddha. Steadily I found myself on the path of Humanistic Buddhism,

for it truly befits the needs of humanity and in my belief, is the only path that shall guide the world towards the light of hope.

Humanistic Buddhism is centered on the Three Jewels and the fundamental teachings of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, selflessness, Three Dharma Seals, Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Threefold Learnings, Four Ways of Embracing, and Six Paramitas. The word 'Humanistic' is emphasized in the hope that all Buddhists shall value the spread of Dharma within this world, in dire need of it. The neglect of this world, and of the daily needs of humanity will result in the marginalization of Buddhism. Humanistic Buddhism offers Dharma that purifies and elevates human character in a world filled with the temptations of the Five Desires and Six Sense Fields.

Back in those days, my mind was focused solely on propagating Humanistic Buddhism. Many times did I decline the invitation to be the Director General of the Buddhist Association of Yilan County. In my mind, if I am unable to join the Buddhist Association of China in the Mainland, then what meaning is there in being the Director General of a Buddhist Association in Yilan? Hence, throughout the decades of my stay in Yilan, I was referred to by no particular title but simply "the Venerable from Yilan," or "the Venerable from the Northern Gate." Most people were even unaware that my Dharma name was Hsing Yun.

Amidst all these endeavors, I never forsook the publication works. On a weekly, sometimes monthly basis, I traveled to Taipei to edit articles for *Awakening the World Periodical*, *Life Magazine*, as well as *Awakening Sentient Beings*, and *Bodhedrum*.

In the 1950s, a few youths from Yilan finally established the Buddhist Cultural Service Center in Sanchongpu, near Taipei, for the publication of *Monthly Buddhist Texts* in vernacular language with punctuation, as well as distribution of some Buddhist instruments and objects.

The reason for such a facility was a question raised by the youths, "Master, other than believing in Buddhism, is there anything else that we can do?" The query struck me like a thunderbolt. Indeed! Other than believing in Buddhism, what else can devotees do for it? I therefore encouraged them to establish a kindergarten and the Buddhist Cultural Service Center as ways to offer their service to the world. Amongst these youths were those who later would become Venerables Hsin Ping (心平), Tzu Chuang (慈莊), Tzu Hui (慈惠), and Tzu Jung (慈容).

Nevertheless, these accomplishments drew envy and jealousy from the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China. In fear that I would supplant them, they began to hinder

my movements in different ways. For example, declining to pass on the applications of our youths to study abroad in Japan, or rejecting our applications for leading pilgrimages in India and other nations. Fortunately, some government officials offered alternatives for these youths.

This also prompted me of the need to join the Buddhist Association of China as a way to remove such obstacles. In those days, merely a few young monastics were actively propagating the Dharma; consequently I was fortunate enough to receive the support and guidance of some elders. Several even nominated me for membership to the standing committee.

However my mind was set only on the role of Secretary-General, a position that could have truly allowed me to plan and promote activities for Buddhism. Moreover, I felt undeserving of the position since I owed neither assets nor resources, which would disgrace the Association by having someone so insignificant assume such a role in it. For this reason, I thus wrote an article, “My reasons for declining the position of standing committee of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China.”

Certainly it was also due to my young age and inexperience. Particularly, the articles that I had published in *Life Magazine* and *Raging Waves*, with my opinions on reform, clearly offended the elders and conservatives. Our names were like the “Four Bandits,” Sun Yat-sen (孫中山, 1866-1925), Yang Heling (楊鶴齡, 1868-1934), Chen Shaobai (陳少白, 1869-1934), and Yu Lie (尤列, 1866-1936) of the Kuomintang Party, and also that of the founders of the Communist Party such as Mao Zedong (毛澤東, 1893-1976). People shirked any connection with us. Furthermore, being a native of Jiangsu, I was mindful of the fact that many of my fellow townsmen also coveted a position in the Association. This made it even more difficult to accomplish anything.

This ambience persisted till 1963, when the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China organized a delegation to Southeast Asia and America; I was nominated by some of the more opened-minded central committee members of the Nationalist Party who had read my articles in *Life Magazine*, as well as *Awakening the World Periodical*. Comprehending that the leaders of the Buddhist Association opposed my nomination, they held a vegetarian banquet for these Elders in an attempt to persuade them as well as remind them of the Nationalist Party's influence. Consequently, the Elders reluctantly agreed to add my name to the list of delegates and appointed me as the spokesperson of the delegation.

The deputation visited Hong Kong, Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and even Buddha's homeland—India, thereby fulfilling my greatest wish. Moreover, it was also an eye-opening experience for a young and philomath Buddhist such as me.

During our visit to India, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru received the delegation. Rather regrettably, my speech during the meeting was published on the front page of the *Central Daily News* instead of that of the delegation Chief, prompting his intense disapproval. Consequently, my relationship with them became especially strenuous. Not only was I prohibited from leaving the country for future representations of the Buddhist circle, my attempts in any new Buddhist endeavors were rigorously suppressed. I was not even permitted to respond to the summons of President Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石, 1887-1975).

As averse as I am to mention the merits and demerits of the Buddhist Association, as all are merely mundane affairs and have little to do with the propagation of Buddhism, I nevertheless suffered an endless array of criticisms and accusations. Several from the Buddhist circles held me as “Hsing Yun the destroyer of Buddhism,” “Hsing Yun the Mara of Buddhism,” or “Hsing Yun who is pushing Buddhism towards destruction with his choir.” Notwithstanding, my faith and passion for Humanistic Buddhism remained firm and unyielding. Everything was purely for the sake of Buddhism.

Whenever eminent monks from the Mainland gathered in Taipei, a mere phone call would bring me out of Yilan to accompany these guests, or sometimes to respond to an edict to attend a meeting. The endless salutations and farewells left me with no time to tend to my propagation works. Starting from the 1960's, I continuously travelled back and forth between Kaohsiung and Yilan to cultivate affinities with devotees. Occasionally, the devotees from Kaohsiung were so eager and passionate that I became hesitant to live in Kaohsiung, as that passion could sometimes be as scorching as the weather down South.

Reluctant to wane such passion, and recognizing the difficulty to initiate anything in the North; coupled with the fact that no monks from the Mainland were agreeable to settling in the South, I journeyed southward on my own. I consequently erected Kaohsiung Buddhist Hall, Shou Shan Temple, and Fo Guang Shan Monastery. Contentedly free from the convoluted concerns of the Buddhist circle in Taipei, I became “the Mainland monk in Southern Taiwan” and relished the indulgence of fully focusing on Dharma propagation and education works as well as the rapports with the native Buddhist elders there.

Based in Taipei, the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China was elated to learn of my departure, and several vowed to ensure that I would never return. Not once did I take this statement to heart. Years later, I managed to construct Pu Men Temple, Yonghe Temple, Sanchong Cultural Square, Taipei Vihara in Songshan, and Jin Guang Ming Temple in Sanxia.

Thus far, that I was able to establish branch temples all across Taiwan and worldwide comes from my strong motivation resultant from such duress. Sometimes a loss may turn out to be a gain. Providing we have faith and never fear adversities, we may even be driven to

become stronger and braver in undertaking yet greater things in the future.

Later, when I founded Tsung-Lin University at Fo Guang Shan, the Buddhist Association even held a meeting in Taipei to entertain means to subvert it. Gratefully, then Secretary-General of the Association, Feng Yung-chen (馮永楨), spoke up and said, "If we cannot even topple the Catholic seminaries or Christian Bible colleges, why attempt to bring down a Buddhist college?" His daring speech and fortitude had spared me yet again from another woeful occurrence.

Regardless of it all, I remained disposed and supportive to the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China. For example, having already been excluded from the World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference, I continued to contest for the Association's right to participate. In view of my struggles, I merited to be elected Director-General, my youth notwithstanding. However, Venerable Pai Sheng (白聖, 1904-1989) had held the position for over forty years. No matter what we had to say, these Elders insisted on knocking us with the baton instead of passing it on.

That is why I saw the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China as the key to Buddhist reform. Yet grasping the ineffectuality of that affiliation, I thus resolved to become self-dependent and founded Fo Guang Shan, starting with educational endeavors. At this time, the government had accepted our proposal to establish the Young Buddhist Association of the Republic of China. This was of course vehemently opposed by the Association who went to extremes to ensure that this did not happen.

Respectfully, Tung Shu-pan (董樹藩, 1932-1986), Chairperson of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Committee mediated with them, and advocated for the establishment of the Chinese Han-Tibet Culture Association with me as President. However, given the circumstances amongst the Han and Tibetan cultures, the proposal went unfulfilled.

In light of the way Venerable Pai Sheng seized control of the Buddha Association of the Republic of China without ever valuing the need to foster talent, and thereby severely impeding the development of Buddhism; I deemed it a lesson. At age fifty-eight, having served for eighteen years, I voluntarily retired as the Head Abbot of Fo Guang Shan. This was to ensure that Fo Guang Shan had an established constitution, and to entrust the responsibility of managing the order in the hands of my disciples. I then journeyed overseas alone to pursue my works in Dharma propagation.

Successively, Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles, I.B.P.S., New York, He Hua Temple in the Netherlands, Nan Tien Temple and Chung Tian Temple in Australia, Templo Zu Lai in Brazil, Nan Hua Temple in South Africa, and Fo Guang Shan France were founded,

empowering my work of Dharma propagation to embrace all five continents. In addition, in 1992, we instituted the Buddha's Light International Association World Headquarters in Los Angeles, under whose umbrella are now several million members across a few thousand chapters and sub-chapters across the world.

The Buddha's teaching of "reverse contributory factor" serves as a reminder for all prevailing monastics to respect, encourage, and support each other. Even should we encounter enemies, instead of getting agitated, we might as well be motivated. There will eventually be opportunities for us to realize our vows. For this I remain hopeful and determined in the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism.

Consequently, I firmly believe that only by being good to others will good causes and conditions befall us. Any desire to defeat or demean others is futile, for we will only bring ourselves down. The aforesaid chronicle has been merely a brief one in which I open my heart to the Buddha. We shall strive to learn from the Buddha's arduous cultivation of doing the impossible, and enduring the unbearable.

Speaking of Humanistic Buddhism, in the Spring of year 2000, whilst having breakfast at Fo Guang Shan with Dr. Charles HC Kao (高希均), Professor Emeritus of Wisconsin University, he asked me, "What is Humanistic Buddhism?"

Never having thought of this question, I nevertheless provided an answer. "Humanistic Buddhism is, 'What was taught by the Buddha, needed by human beings, that which purifies, and that which is virtuous and beautiful.'"

"Wonderful! I now know what Humanistic Buddhism is." Replied Dr. Kao joyously.

For an honorable professor, who was not a Buddhist, to grasp the meaning of Humanistic Buddhism from just a few simple words, an enlightened mind is clearly needed. From this it can be seen that only with prajna wisdom as well as a mind that is clear and aware can the profound meaning of Humanistic Buddhism be thoroughly perceived.

As I reminisce on my life as a monastic, any endeavor that I have ever been involved in has been for the sole purpose of propagating Humanistic Buddhism. Such efforts comprise: erecting monasteries for monastic cultivation, founding Tsung-Lin University, and advocating the dual practice of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism as well as daily spiritual cultivation. I vow to liberate people from suffering and adversity, as well as value family happiness and peace. Therefore, I have proposed the Four Givings: Give others faith, give others joy, give others hope, and give others convenience, in addition to the Three Acts of Goodness, Five Harmonies, Seven Admonitions, and Noble Eightfold Path. Subsequently, the teachings of Humanistic Buddhism began to spread.

Upon hearing that the elderly faced a communication gap with the younger generations, I thereby vowed to establish retirement homes. Upon hearing that there were children from broken families left uncared for, I built a children's home. Upon hearing that children from impoverished families may be on the verge of forsaking their education, I thereby founded kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools. Upon hearing the need for mass media communication, I thus established radio stations, a television station, and a newspaper company. Anything needed by humanity is my responsibility, and I shall endeavor to give, in the form of Dharma, in every way possible.

As the devotee community grew larger and more resourceful, I recalled that while there were already many religion-founded universities across the world, and dozens of Buddhist-affiliated universities in Japan as well, Chinese Buddhists had yet to establish any universities. In fact, at one time, the word "*tsung-lin*" meant university. It was a place of learning for students from all derivations. Regretfully, the monastery's abbot held no grand vows or visions. His sole focus for the monastery was as a place for monastics to inhabit instead of expanding it as a public school or place for spiritual cultivation. It was now time to amend its meaning, instead of simply establishing monasteries, we may as well found universities.

I thus initiated the "Million-Member Fundraising Campaign" and established five universities in and out of Taiwan. However, having never received a formal education, thus unqualified to even teach in a secondary school; how was I to establish a university? Auspiciously, the law still allows me to serve as a founder and board chairman, and there are, at present, more than a thousand teachers instructing at universities, secondary schools, and primary schools founded under my name.

I am grateful for all the opportunities that have made the establishment of FGS's universities possible. Also, for the affinities shared by the many who have invited me to give lectures on campus as well as bestowed upon me doctoral degrees and the title of emeritus professor. For instance, I have taught Buddhist Studies for six years at the Christian-affiliated Tunghai University, and also served as Dean of the Institute of Indian Cultural Studies at Chinese Culture University for many years. In my mind, justice will be served as long as we make solid accomplishments.

At this point, I cannot help but ponder...In the long course of history, how can people of all nations, races, social strata, gender and age accept Buddhism? If Buddha was able to convert some ninety-six 'heretics,' why is it that we are not able to do so with humanity today?

Thinking further, why is it that bodhisattvas and deities have larger followings than the Buddha? Is it perchance because Buddha has not offered them the wealth, safety, and

longevity that the deities have supposedly bestowed on them, or the deliverance and salvation which bodhisattvas have offered them? Hence these believers feel a deeper connection with deities and bodhisattvas, yet are unable to take in the universal and eternal truth of Dependent Origination taught by the great Buddha. It is truly regretful to see this!

As I recall, how is it that Mazu (媽祖), Lu Dongbin (呂洞賓), Guan Yu (關雲長) and the City Lord (王爺), once followers of Buddhism are now deities with independent followings that have outgrown the Buddhist community?

Buddha entrusted the Dharma to his disciples in the hope that they would further propagate and exalt their faith. The future of Buddhism lies not solely on the Buddha but upon all Buddhists. For our own faith, for the Buddha, for the future of humanity, and for ourselves, we shall ensure that the Buddha's light shines universally. Once the light of the Buddha illuminates our own minds, we shall also be free from all affliction, ignorance, sorrow, sadness, suffering, and troubles.

For this reason, I have proposed the following Buddhist principles:

1. *Glory goes to the Buddha*
2. *Success goes to the multitude*
3. *Benefit goes to society*
4. *Merit goes to devotees*

Our faith in Humanistic Buddhism lies not within the blessings of the Buddha but in our aspirations to contribute to his endeavors as well as all living beings. This is the only way for Buddhism to have a future.

The Dharma incorporates all teachings and forsakes nothing. With such inspiration, Buddhists never neglect anyone in need. We are willing to do anything, and everything. With the concerted effort of monastics and lay Buddhists, men and women, Humanistic Buddhism shall be widely propagated and touch all corners of the world.

In our endeavor to reconnect Buddhism with real life, practitioners of Humanistic Buddhism, comparable to Buddha's countless manifestations and Avalokitesvara's thirty-two forms of responsive manifestations, have reached out to society through expedient means to serve, contribute, and cultivate affinities. With unceasing diligence, the following achievements and innovations in Dharma propagation have been accomplished over the past decades:

1. **Education:** Primary, secondary, and tertiary schools, Buddhist colleges, institutes of Buddhist studies, Chinese schools, devotees seminars, urban Buddhist College programs, and public education trust funds. **Media:** Magazines, newspaper, radio

station, television station, and online courses.

2. **Art:** Exhibition centers, art galleries, publication of the *Encyclopedia of World Buddhist Arts*, and museums such as the Buddha Memorial Center.
3. **Food:** Vegetarian restaurants and Water Drop Teahouses to provide vegetarian meals.
4. **Charity:** Cloud and Water Mobile Clinic, children's homes, retirement homes, sickbays, hospice rooms, Community Service Team, and Mentality Protection Center Vehicles.
5. **Activities:** Summer camps, Young Adults Divisions, children's classes, BLIA Scouts, Devotees' Dharma Gathering, alms processions, social movements, Buddhist weddings, Dharma lectures, pilgrimages to India, pilgrimage groups, Cloud and Water Mobile Library Trucks, Forums, Million-Member Fundraising Campaign, correctional center Dharma programs, Dharma visits to Armed Forces and remote islands.
6. **Sports:** Basketball teams, baseball teams, gymnastic teams, soccer teams, and cheer squads, augmenting the Buddhist faith among athletes.
7. **Conferences:** International conferences such as the Symposium on Humanistic Buddhism, International Sangha Conference, World Buddhist Forum, various Cross-Strait Buddhist and cultural forums, World Fellowship of Buddhists general conferences taken beyond Asia into FGS branch temples in America and Australia.
8. **Academic publications:** Publishing houses, collections of papers from various international academic conferences, *A Collection of Contemporary Buddhist Works: Chinese Buddhist Academic Series*, *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*, *Humanistic Buddhism: Journal, Arts and Culture*, and hundreds of other magazine and journal publications.
9. **Spiritual cultivation:** Holiday retreats, Humanistic Buddhist Reading Association, Short-Term Monastic Retreats, and Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremonies.
10. **Music and dance:** Music groups, Buddhist choirs, and Buddhist music concerts.
11. **Constitution:** Establishment of organizations, advocating equality between monastic and lay Buddhists, the BLIA Lay Dharma Lecturer, Sudana and Sumagadhi Lecturer's systems, advocating gender equality, and petitioning for Buddha's Birthday to be listed as a national holiday.

These Buddhist undertakings have subsequently been taken in hand by numerous youths who continue to provide further opportunities for people to likewise be of service and play a role in the development of Buddhism. Many of these young Buddhists even established Buddhist Monastic Choirs, performing in different parts of the world, each time well received by the locals. Evidently we are living in the golden era of Humanistic Buddhism.

Besides the aforesaid endeavors, we are also grateful for the good causes created by

the leaders from the Mainland to develop Cross-Strait Chinese cultural exchanges. For instance, five million people attended the welcoming of the Buddha's finger relic to Taiwan. The concerts of the Chinese Buddhist Music Performance Group in different parts of the world were also quite successful. Later, I was given permission to restore my ancestral temple – Yixing Dajue Temple that now houses the Yunhu Program, Yangzhou Program, and Humanistic Program. In the prosperous time of Humanistic Buddhism it is hoped that we, as Buddhists, will place greater resolve on what we can do for the Buddha and Buddhism instead of what they can offer us.

So-called “Humanistic Buddhism,” is simply Buddhism itself and not some contrived attempt at distinctiveness. Since Buddha was born in the human world, if his teachings were not Humanistic Buddhism, would it be better to call them Rebirth Buddhism? Animal Buddhism? or Hell Buddhism, Asura Buddhism, or even Hungry Ghost Buddhism? This is indubitably objectionable.

Humanistic Buddhism inspires us to establish a Buddha's Pure Land in this world. Just as Master Taixu said, “The attainment of Buddhahood is concurrent with the perfection of our human characters.” The Dharma should help each Buddhist find spiritual peace and eradicate one's greed, anger, and afflictions so as to find a home in life, maintain harmony within the family, love oneself as well as others, and enjoy life.

Especially, contemporary Buddhists are gradually discovering that just a single phrase in Humanistic Buddhism or a single teaching by the Buddha suffices to truly change their lives, their families, their attitude, and their ways of dealing with the world. Having benefited from the teachings and practices of Humanistic Buddhism, one will come to realize that Buddha Land and Pure Land can be found right here, in this world. Providing our human characters are refined and improved, we will not be distant from the Buddha.

This is exactly what Humanistic Buddhism proposes. It is hoped that the Buddha's spirit of sacrifice and benevolence can be fulfilled forthwith, so that the history and Dharma of Humanistic Buddhism can prevail. It is also hoped that outstanding Buddhist organizations and leaders will step forward to guide the world in the continued heritage of Buddhism. May those who share similar aspirations come together to “Let the Buddha's light shine universally, and the Dharma stream flow eternally.” As the saying goes, “The duty of Dharma propagation lies in the hands of monastics.”

In summary,

- Humanistic Buddhism holds true to Buddha's original intents.
- Humanistic Buddhism is Buddhism in its truest form.

- Humanistic Buddhism is for humanity.
- Humanistic Buddhism is universal Buddhism.
- Humanistic Buddhism is a ray of hope for the future of humanity.
- Humanistic Buddhism is a compass for life.
- Humanistic Buddhism is a spiritual provision for life.
- Humanistic Buddhism offers a mental and spiritual home.
- Humanistic Buddhism serves as a remedy to political, social and economic inadequacy.
- Humanistic Buddhism shall enrich human minds.
- Humanistic Buddhism shall enhance social norms.
- Humanistic Buddhism will be a cause for social stability.
- Humanistic Buddhism shall enrich individual harmony through wellbeing, interpersonal harmony through respect, family harmony through deference, social harmony through cooperation, and world harmony through peace.

None of the above arises from my individual intent. Instead, these are all what the Buddha had intended to teach to the world. Thus we hereby dedicate everything to Buddha and hold true to his original intents. It is hoped that present-day monastics and lay Buddhists may offer their utmost sincerity to the Buddha. That anyone who does not bear faith in Buddhism is willing to understand Buddha's teachings, especially Buddhism's influence on spiritual well being, as well as Buddhism's contribution to the Chinese People and Chinese culture.

It is okay if you do not choose to believe in Buddhism, because Buddha does not need you to believe in him. What matters is that you believe in your own compassion and kindness that enables you to think for others, refrain from unwholesome deeds, and inspire all good deeds. Should you have the slightest faith in Buddha, how can you not share an affinity with him?

Consequently, regardless of the different levels of faith amongst the millions of Buddhists, faith remains unified, and faith remains our only way of life. If we were able to hold true to Buddha's original intent in rediscovering the joy and freedom offered by our faith, then life would be truly carefree.

Based upon this principle, I persist in my service for Humanistic Buddhism as well as my endeavors for the New Buddhism Movement. Whether this is a merit or a demerit matters not to me. As I have explained in an article in the *Merit Times*, "I am not a Buddhist monk who 'feeds on' Buddhism." Rather than depending on Buddhism, I strive to ensure that the future of Buddhism lies in me. This has been my lifetime motto.

As I reminisce on my lifetime endeavor to propagate the Dharma, I am also reminded of the arduous path undergone by Master Taixu. He too experienced disagreements with the Buddhist Association of China, thereby powerless to realize his visions. It seems like I have followed after him, and I cannot help but lament on the circumstances given to Buddhism. I speculate either time, luck, or destiny was on my side.

In the recent Taiwan election, Professor Chai Sung-lin (柴松林) demurred about how the people only voted for their favorite candidates instead of those who could truly make a difference. How could there be hope for the Chinese people? Truthfully, it was likewise with the Buddhist Association. People voted only according to their factions, discounting people of talent or influence. How can Buddhism progress this way? As stated earlier, "It is the people who glorify the Way, not the Way that glorifies the people." This is perhaps another reason why the revitalization of Buddhism was not possible.

Possibilities for revitalization did arise during the late Qing and Ming periods. For example, when Master Taixu proposed *Rensheng Fojiao* (Life Buddhism), those who were jealous of him tried to suppress and sabotage him, thwarting his vision. Fortunately, many of his peers each played to their strengths and sustained the propagation of Buddhism. For instance, Buddhist masters Xuyun (虛雲, 1840-1959) and Lai Guo (來果, 1881-1953), Pure Land master Yin Guang (印光, 1862-1940), Master Zong Yang (宗仰, 1861-1921) who was affiliated with the Cai Yuanpei Education Association in Shanghai, Venerable Yue Xia (月霞, 1858-1917) who focused on Huayan Buddhism, Venerable Dixian (諦閑, 1858-1932) from the Tiantai School, and also Venerable Yuan Yin (圓瑛, 1878-1953) the eloquent Dharma teacher.

Circumstances were undeniably difficult for Master Taixu. Owing to traditionalist obstructions, Master Taixu only ever served, for a short period, as Abbot at Hangzhou Jingci Temple. He was precluded from any other position. Nevertheless, he established Buddhist colleges such as Minnan Buddhist College and Wuchang Buddhist College to foster talents, many of whom did indeed later emerge as elites of Buddhism.

For example, Venerables Daxing (大醒, 1900-1952), Fa Fang (法舫, 1904-1951), Le Guan (樂觀, 1902-1987), Wei Fang (葦舫), Zhi Feng (芝峰, 1901-1971), Yin Shun(印順, 1906-2005), Chen Kong(塵空), Mo Ru (默如, 1905-1991), Fa Zun (法尊), Fa Hui (法慧), and Liao Can (了參). Furthermore, there were many young monastic from across the Mainland: Master Hui Jue (會覺) from Zhejiang Wuling Buddhist College, Master Wei Xian (惟賢, 1920-2013) from Sichuan Huayan Temple, Master Ming Zhe (明哲, 1925-2012) from Qingdao Zhanshan Temple in Shandong, Master Xue Fan (雪煩, 1909-1994) from Jiaoshan in Jiangsu, Master Dong Chu (東初, 1908-1977), Master Ming Shan (茗山, 1914-2011), and

also Venerable Zheng Guo (正果, 1913-1987) who served as President of the Buddhist Association of China after the Cultural Revolution, Venerable Zhu Mo (竺摩, 1913-2002), and Venerable Ju Zan (巨贊, 1903-1984). They were all pupils and successors of Master Taixu.

In addition, there were laymen such as Yang Renshan (楊仁山, 1837-1911), Ouyang Jian (歐陽漸, 1871-1943), Tang Dayuan (唐大圓, 1885-1941), Ding Fubao (丁福保, 1874-1952), Chen Hailiang (陳海量, 1909-1982), Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929), Dai Jitao (戴季陶, 1891-1949), Qu Yingguang (屈映光, 1883-1973), and Zhao Hengti (趙恆惕, 1880-1971) who actively contributed to the revitalization of Buddhism. All are truly great bodhisattvas and protectors of the Dharma.

As hope for new Buddhist endeavors was kindled, the separatist regime, the Anti-Japanese Resistance War, and the civil war erupted end to end, bringing the revitalization of Buddhism to halt by force of arms.

Auspiciously, the torch of the Dharma was relayed to Taiwan with the advent of the monastics from the Mainland. In light of the chaotic times, many of them remained passive and conservative towards the development of Buddhism. Several even tried to encourage relinquishing the idea of founding Fo Guang Shan as the ongoing turmoil meant that Taiwan was nigh on being removed from the United Nations. They told me that there was no hope in attempting whatsoever in Taiwan and I might as well stop wasting my time. Regardless, holding true to my principle of “continuing to strike the bell for each day that I remained a monk,” I strove on with my works of propagation.

As we recall the possible causes for Master Taixu's unsuccessful New Buddhist Reform Movement, several points stand out; one being that he passed away before the age of sixty-two, that the conservative forces of Sangha remained too powerful, and three, he lacked a foundation for his mission. Nevertheless, his students and disciples have all been stupendous in continuing his efforts. For this, I hold Master Taixu in great esteem.

Still, though some of his disciples categorized me under the “Taixu Sect” based on what I had accomplished, I never considered myself to be his successor. All I have done is to carry out my duty as a disciple of the Buddha. What I cannot refute is my spiritual compatibility with his aspirations and compassion. No matter how much suppression and ostracism I had been subjected to, and irrespective of any public opinion or criticism against me and Buddhism; I am fortunate to be blessed with something that Master Taixu was not, namely, the support of a large following of disciples and devotees. Their efforts have made the establishment of temples around the world possible.

To date, Fo Guang Shan has stood for over sixty years, thirty of which I have been a retired abbot. There is presently a following of over one thousand monastic disciples, two hundred of which hold a Master's or Doctorate degree. Some two hundred of these disciples are also in their prime, waiting to elevate and propagate Humanistic Buddhism.

Concurrently, many outstanding leaders of the Fo Guang Shan Order are currently carrying out their duties across the five continents. I am confident that they will continue their endeavor in propagating the Dharma and allow the era of Humanistic Buddhism to shine. Providing the heritage of Buddhism endures, what need is there to fear for the future of Humanistic Buddhism?

Having propagated the Dharma in Taiwan for over sixty years, I can clearly remember the countless eminent masters who have contributed to the spread of Buddhism in Taiwan. For example, Master Miao Guo (妙果, 1884-1963), Venerable Bin Tsung (斌宗, 1911-1958), Venerable Cheng Kuang (證光, 1896-1955), Venerable Chi Hsing (智性, 1884-1964), Venerable Chi Yu (智諭, 1924-2000), Venerable Hsiu Ho (修和), Venerable Sheng Yin (聖印, 1930-1996), Venerable Pu Miao (菩妙, 1921-2009), Venerable Kai Cheng (開證, 1925-2001), and Venerable Long Tao (隆道, 1906-1987).

Buddhism in Taiwan is not the sole representative. Other than the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism, there are also many outstanding organizations. For example, Huayen Lotus Association, Huafan University, Dharma Drum Mountain, Thousand Buddha Mountain, Museum of World Religions founded by the Lin Jiou Mountain Buddhist Society, Ling Yen Mountain, Chung Tai Chan Monastery, Ching Chueh Buddhist Sangha University at Kuang Teh Temple, Xiang Guang Temple, Fu Zhi Feng Shan Si, Tzu Chi Foundation, Hai Ming Temple, Ci Fa Si, Cih Ming Temple, and many others. Their roles in the history of Humanistic Buddhism shall be contingent on their vows and aspirations.

Hope abounds that the Buddhist colleges founded by Taiwan's historic monasteries such as Ling Quan Temple, Guanyin Mountain, Shitou Mountain, Fa Yun Monastery, Yuan Kuang Ch'an Monastery, Da-Sian Temple, Dagan Mountain, Kai Yuan Temple, Nanputuo Temple, Tung-shan Ssu, and Fu Yan Vihara can continue to nurture talents for Buddhism. To all aspiring young bhiksus and bhiksunis whose names I am unable to hereby list, may you continue to strive in letting the light of Humanistic Buddhism shine.

Moreover, it is hoped that scholars, professors, laymen, and eminent leaders who are pious Buddhists or friends of Buddhism will follow the examples of Buddhists such as Wu Po-hsiung (吳伯雄) and his seniors: Tai Chi-tao, Lee Ben-nan (李炳南, 1891-1986), Lee Tzu-kuan (李子寬, 1882-1973), Chou Hsuan-te (周宣德, 1924-1988), Nan Huai-chin (南懷瑾, 1918-2012), and Yang Baiyi (楊白衣, 1924-1986) in recognizing the value of Buddhism and

empower it to radiate. It is in the hands of both monastic and lay Buddhists to ensure that the light of Humanistic Buddhism shines forever.

Following the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China, Zhao Puchu (趙樸初, 1907-2000) began to carry the name “Humanistic Buddhism,” which in my opinion was the right thing to do. Because if anyone should object, it means a failure to understand what Buddhism truly is. Since Humanistic Buddhism is originally Buddhism itself, any rejection of it means the rejection of Buddhism. Try stating any fact that makes Humanistic Buddhism not what it is? Since the Dharma never forsakes any teaching, why forsake the word ‘Humanistic’?

There have been people who are concerned with the issue of Humanistic Buddhism being overly mundane and even profane. Actually, the spirit of Humanistic Buddhism involves “this-worldly” undertakings with an “other-worldly” mind. Namely, it is a combination of both tradition and modernity. By tradition is not meant whichever tradition has existed for hundreds or even thousands of years. Instead tradition in this instance denotes advocating Buddha’s fundamental, genuine wisdom and cultivation. That is why I say that Humanistic Buddhism holds true to Buddha’s original intents.

Fortuitously, there are many rising talents in Mainland China, such as Venerable Xuecheng (學誠) currently President of the Buddhist Association of China, who are disposed to propagate Humanistic Buddhism. Given my limited knowledge of the numerous talents who are out there in Mainland China, I hereby apologize for being able to name but a few in my old age.

Nevertheless, it is fervently wished that mutual support is tangible and existent. Just as the saying goes, “The light of the Dharma cannot shine without the mutual praise of monastics.” I sincerely hope that not only will monastics aspire to develop the Bodhi Mind and undertake the endeavors of Humanistic Buddhism, may they also find the heart to tolerate each other. It is the only way for Chinese Buddhism to flourish. The bigger your heart, the greater your success. May you countenance unceasing exchange and unity, willingly be in the company of virtuous ones, support your juniors, foster young talents, and allow the light of Humanistic Buddhism to shine as one. As affirmed in the lyrics of “Rhythm of the Buddhist Youth,”

*The devotion of his children is swelling the mighty ocean of his following.
As the age of enlightenment now is drawing near.*

May all children of the Buddha reward his grace by empowering the torch of Humanistic Buddhism to blaze bright, the turning of the Dharma wheel to continue, and the Buddha’s days be exalted for eternity.