

Comparative Studies on Confucian and Christian Ethics

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Preface

Confucianism and Christianity are two ideological ideas that have had a great influence on the history of China and the West. In the long history of the world, Western culture advocates Christian ethics, but Confucian ethics has consistently played an important leading role in the indoctrination of Chinese moral consciousness. Based on the ethical requirements of Confucianism, people normalize their daily lives and practice their ideals and goals. As you know, Christianity, which is the basis of Western culture, has repeatedly encountered Chinese civilization which centers on Confucianism, and many significant ideological exchanges have emerged. However, despite centuries of efforts, Christianity has been stubbornly resisted by Chinese culture, and has not taken root in China, failing to bear fruit until today. There are various factors intertwined, but the causes are clarified through the historical research. Through it we can think more deeply about the relationship between Christianity and Chinese history, society, and traditional culture.

Confucianism became the basis of Chinese culture through its own historical development. Whereas Christianity originated in Palestine in the Middle East, and began its religious proclamation (Gentile missions) to the outside of the Jewish community from the 1st century A.D. At first, Christianity spread widely throughout the ancient Mediterranean world under persecution. Then it gradually expanded into the West and eventually became one of the sources of Western culture, especially after Roman Emperor Constantine I officially recognized Christianity¹. Confucianism and Christianity, as traditional Chinese and Western cultures, have their own characteristics and their own solutions to their problems. The comparative study of Confucianism and Christianity will be even more meaningful, as the two systems of thought have taken root deeply in their

¹ Shen Jiashan: *The origin of church today*, Oliver Culture and Education Foundation, 1986, pp140-144. Will Durant: *The Story of Civilization-The Age of Faith*, Lion Translation Center, 1973, pp311-336.

own history and life and have become the core and guiding principles of their adherents' cultural and ethical lives.

Comparative studies on Confucianism and Christianity were begun by Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary who did missionary work during the Ming dynasty. In his representative book, "Tian-zhu shi-yi," (天主實義), he quotes the Confucian scriptures and interprets that the Confucian Shangdi (上帝)² is the same as the Christian God and that the foundation of Christianity has been established since ancient times in China. However, without regard to the context of scriptures, he was criticized by both Confucian and Christian scholars by quoting only the parts that were convenient for the perspective he initially set. In the first half of the 20th century, some Chinese Christian leaders seriously discussed the relationship between Confucianism and Christianity. For example, the president of Peking University, Wu Leichuan, in his book "Christianity and Chinese Culture", used his wealth of knowledge about Confucianism, and contrasted Confucianism with Christianity to concretely, systematically, and clearly discuss the significance of Christianity in China. He believed that there was something in common between Christianity and Confucianism, and then tried to make up for the lack of Confucianism by Christianity thereby protecting the value of Confucianism in Chinese society³. However, under the serious invasion of the Western powers and the disturbing economic and political situation in China, the distinguishing viewpoints of both Confucianism and Christianity towards dealing with society must be considered. However, under the particular history of nationalism, it is impossible to make a comparative study of Confucianism and Christianity. In addition, modern Chinese scholars are actively engaged in Confucian and Christian dialogue, paying attention to how Christian ethics have a complementary relationship with Chinese culture. For example, in Wang Xiaoming's book "Confucianism and the Empire Culture", set in one historical era, and discussed the relationship between Confucianism and Christianity. In addition, a comparative study is conducted using the core concepts of Confucianism and Christianity in Yao

² Shangdi is the Chinese term for "Supreme Deity" or "Highest Deity" in the theology of the classical texts, especially deriving from Shang theology and finding an equivalent in the later *Tian* ("Heaven" or "Great Whole") of Zhou theology.

³ Xu Yimeng: Wu Leichuan, the Pioneer of the Indigenous Movement in China's Christianity, *Asian, Christianity and Plurality Vol.4, Contemporary Christian thought studies*, 2006, pp31-42.

Xinzhong's book "Confucianism and Christianity- Comparative Study of virtue and love". But overall, such studies are fragmented, and cannot catch a complete image of Confucianism and Christianity.

Based on the above research, this paper focuses on Confucian and Christian ethics. In an effort to build East Asia ethics in the 21st century by analyzing the differences and commonalities between the two ethical ideas. In addition, this paper also proposes a harmonious path to the peaceful coexistence of Confucianism and Christianity.

1. The Problematic issue of Confucianism

When considering the cultural events in East Asia, the role played by Confucianism cannot be overlooked. That is why much research has been accumulated on Confucianism in China. The problematic issue about the religion of Confucianism has been one of the hottest issues in Chinese academia. The focus of academics discussed whether Confucianism is a religion. Or does Confucianism have religious characteristics other than philosophical characteristics? At present, there are two main views. One is that Confucianism is a social entity with religious consciousness, religious ritual, and religious organization. The other is that Confucianism is not a religion, but merely a philosophical discipline that indoctrinates the people. However, in recent years, Confucianism has tended to lean towards the theory of religion. In the discussion of whether Confucianism is a religion often quoted are Confucius's words "Respect the gods and remote from them" (敬鬼神而遠之), which is the basis for claiming that Confucianism is not a religion. However, Confucius's ideas do not represent all of Confucianism. From the perspective of Chinese history, the word "Confucianism" became widespread around the 4th century A.D, including all the ideas, rituals and bishopric events that were attached to the Confucian family⁴. Confucianism was initially called the "Confucian family". A group of people called "Confucian", that is the Confucian family. Confucianism inherited the basics of courtesy during the Shang dynasty and was a system of politics, ethics, thinking, and beliefs that was founded by Confucius during the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period. Since the main idea of Confucian thought is the maintenance

⁴ Fukui Fumimasa: Thought and religion in the Kanji cultural sphere: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Goyo Shobo, 1998, p14.

of social order through humanity and etiquette, it was the most convenient thought among the Hundred Schools of Thought at that time for politicians⁵. Therefore, Emperor Wu (武帝) of the Former Han dynasty rejected the Hundred Schools of Thought and insisted on respecting only Confucianism (罢黜百家、独尊儒術), and Confucian thought became a nationally recognized academic discipline. Since then, Confucian scholars were hired by government officials, and Confucian thought has been revered as a “knowledge for politics”⁶. During the history of 2000 years, Confucian thought is transformed into “Confucianism” by connecting with various external factors of politics and religion. In fact, after the Zhou dynasty in the 8th and 9th centuries BC, the Confucian religious belief that the emperor is entitled to rule on earth has been established according to the command (mandate from Heaven) given by the “Shangdi” (上帝) who is the “Supreme Deity” to rule Heaven. In this way, the emperor was called “Tianzi” (天子) (the child of Heaven) because he is a mediator between Heaven and earth. Therefore, the tradition that the emperor represented the people and worshipped Heaven (festival) at a certain time according to a mandate from Heaven continued until the fall of the Qing dynasty (1911)⁷. Confucianism is a cultural system of comprehensiveness, and its influence not only permeated the whole Chinese society, but also was institutionalized in history. Traditional Confucianism is linked to the political power of the feudal emperor and it was a kind of system that ruled the people as a way of ethics. Sensitivity-based empiricism and reason-based rationalism are the objects of philosophy, while spirituality-based mysticism is the object of religion. Human beings have not only sensibility and reason, but also spirituality. Confucianism differs from other religions in that it includes all spirituality, sensibility and reason. In that sense, Confucianism is both a religion and a philosophy. However, the doctrine of Confucianism is linked to the power of the emperor, the power of the patriarch, and marital rights in Chinese history. The people considered Confucianism to be just secular ethics, education, and political theory, and

⁵ The Hundred Schools of Thought were philosophies and schools that flourished from the 6th century to 221 BC during the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period of ancient China. Confucius, Lao Tzu, Zhuangzi, Mo Tzu, Mencius and Xun Kuang were philosophies. Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism, and Mohism were schools

⁶ Fukui, op.cit.p14.

⁷ Ibid.pp14-15.

overlooked the significance of religious matters of Confucianism. In fact, Confucianism also has religious characteristics. Confucian rituals are very complex and mainly value religious services. But the rituals of worshipping heaven, ancestors, nations, mountains, and rivers did not really have much to do with the daily religious life of the people. Due to the influence of Cheng-Zhu School (朱子学) and Yangmingism (陽明学), which developed from Confucianism after the Song dynasty, Confucianism gradually shortened its distance from the people and began to change into religious ceremonies related to the daily religious life of the people. In the late Qing dynasty and early Republic of China, the transition of modernization of Chinese society had a great impact on Confucianism, and some old knowledgeable Confucian scholars, including Kang Youwei (康有為), were keenly aware of the problem and actively sought a new path⁸.

However, it is very difficult to actually define the religious concept of Confucianism. Regarding that, Julia Ching stated the following reasons.

The word “religion” did not exist in the Chinese vocabulary until European books and jargon were translated into Japanese and entered China at the end of the 19th century. This also applies to the word “philosophy”. Prior to that, it was customary to use the word “teaching” to describe various spiritual and intellectual flows that played a role very close to philosophical and religious teaching⁹.

Since the word “religion” has not existed in Chinese for a long time, the religious position and concept of Confucianism is examined by the classification method for religion as known in the West.

Hans Küng recognized that there are three major different religious systems in the world. The first great religious system originated from the Semitic people, characterized by prophecy, was born from the primitive religions of the nomadic tribes. The characteristic of this religious system is “piety in faith”, which builds faith on the revelation of God and emphasizes the transcendence of God and the value of morality and discipline. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam belong this prophetic religion¹⁰.

The second great religious system originated from India with a

⁸ Li Shen: Confucianism in China, Henan People Press, 2005; Asano Yuichi: Confucius Mythology: formation of Confucianism as religion, Iwanami Shoten, 1997; Lin Jiayan: Chinese modern politics and Confucian culture, Toho Shoten, 1997.

⁹ Hans Küng / Julia Ching, translated by Morita Yasukazu: Christianity and Chinese religion, Tosui Shobo, 2005, p65.

¹⁰ Ibid. Preface p. xii.

mystical character. This is clearly different from the Semitic prophetic religion. The characteristic of this religious system emphasizes meditative and abstemious experiences. Hinduism and Buddhism belong to mystical religions¹¹.

The third religious system originated from China, and the model human beings were not prophets or mystics, but wise men. Confucianism and Taoism belong to this third type¹².

Certainly, Confucianism, which belongs to the third religious system, has a strong historical cultural tendency and consciousness, and is relatively close to Christianity, which is a prophetic religion. However, the essence of Confucianism and Christianity becomes ambiguous as a result of the expansion of its prophet concept and the relaxation of all its rigor. For example, H.H Rowley considers Confucianism as a prophetic religion and Confucius refers to the great Israel prophets such as Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah as “prophets” in his book “Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel”¹³. In order to conclude with a common concept, Rowley has brought up “reformer” and an unfamiliar concept such as “politician” together. In the end, Rowley had to admit that Confucius did not have the characteristics of the great Israel prophets¹⁴.

In response to Rowley’s view that Confucianism is a prophetic religion because it expands the concept of the Prophet, Hans Küng criticized Rowley, “He did not take into account the religious type of wise man and the literary genre of wisdom literature”¹⁵.

From the early form of Confucianism, it resembles a prophetic religion. Zi-gong, one of Confucius’s disciples, evaluated Confucius as a “saint” and a versatile genius¹⁶. In the early forms of Confucianism, there is a consciousness that saints come down from heaven. Confucius’s contemporaries have the concept of sending Confucius from heaven as a leader of the people¹⁷.

This concept is very close to Christianity. Christianity teaches us that God sent his Son Jesus to the world to save humans. However, Confucius

¹¹ Ibid. Preface p. xiii.

¹² Ibid. Preface p. xiii.

¹³ H.H.Rowley, Prophecy and Religion in Ancient China and Israel, London, 1956, p.120.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp.125-126.

¹⁵ Hans Küng / Julia Ching, op.cit.p113.

¹⁶ Zhu Xi: The Commentary of The Four Books, Beijing Chinese Prss, 1983, p110.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.99.

tries to strengthen human independence and sense of responsibility through calm and rational contemplation. By Confucius, human virtue and fortune can be influenced by a mandate from Heaven, but humans should never abandon moral practice. It teaches that human beings must instinctively practice morality regardless of happiness. The practice of morality is a constant activity, and human destiny should be overcome by one's own activities in awe of heaven without fear of gods¹⁸. Knowing what were the biddings of heaven, understanding your mission in life, worrying about nothing, creating a place where you can calm down, and gaining a source of heart for your hard work means reaching the highest level as a man of character¹⁹. Confucius mixed religion and morality in the realm of knowing what were the biddings of heaven. In other words, the argument is made on the subject of self-life. The emphasis on subjective spirit is quite different from the prophetic religion of Christianity.

From the above considerations, the founder of Confucianism is Confucius; the objects of worship are heaven, earth, emperors, parents, and teachers; the scriptures are the Four Books and Five Classics²⁰; and the religious rituals are the worship of heaven and ancestors. The officials in charge of religious ceremonies are Confucians and the believers are the people. It may be considered that Confucianism has religious essence.

2. Virtue (仁) of Confucianism and love of Christianity

For the Chinese, morality is deeply rooted in the human mind. Unless your heart is corrupted, it is natural to have mercy on your neighbors, to love your parents, and to honor elders. Humans are born to live in society and have everything they need. Confucian ethics teaches to gently accept our destiny²¹.

Virtue is the root of Confucian ethics and the goal of Confucius's learning. Confucius once told his disciple Zengzi (曾子), "My life gives importance to keep only one thing" (我道一以貫之哉). "Keep only one thing"

¹⁸ Hans Küng / Julia Ching, op.cit.p.115.

¹⁹ Zhu Xi, op.cit.p.116.

²⁰ The Four Books and Five Classics the authoritative books of Confucianism in China written before 300BC. The Four Books are Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analects and Mencius. The Five Classics are Classic of Poetry, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, I Ching and Spring and Autumn Annals.

²¹ Jacques Gernet, translated by Kamada Hiroo: China and Christianity: the first confrontation, Hosei University Press, 1996, p184.

is too difficult to discuss, but that one thing is virtue. In that sense, the path of Confucius always coincides with only virtue²². Confucius interprets virtue as a kind of love. When the disciple Fan Chi visited and asked about benevolence, Confucius replied “To love people” (樊遲問仁,子曰愛人)²³. In other words, to love people has virtue and morality. Sympathy is the basis, so to love people is benevolence (仁以同情心為本、故愛人為人也). In addition, Confucius said, “Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire” (己所不欲、勿施于人). After Confucius, Mencius further expanded his interpretation of virtue and this appeared primarily in his political theory of benevolence. He sought to convince others with virtue, to seek lords and vassals to respect each other, to keep the country developing and to protect peoples’ happiness and peace, to secure society, to rule the country well.

However, the benevolence of Confucianism is its social and moral attributes. Virtue is a love related to family ethics and blood relations, so it does not depart from a strict hierarchical concept. Confucianism teaches the maintenance of five human relations arranged in order (lord and vassal, father and child, husband and wife, old and young, one and one’s friend.) (君臣、父子、夫妻、長幼、朋友) through expansion of moral character called the five eternal virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, sincerity、仁、義、礼、智、信). Love is done in that order. The ultimate goal of Confucianism is the existence of harmony and order in society by observing the mutual righteousness that arises from these relationships in human society²⁴. However, it is thought that harmony and order are based on the hierarchy of human relationships. In addition, the indiscriminate philanthropy is taught in “The Analects”, “If a gentleman respects others without mistakes and behaves humbly and politely, all the people are his brothers” (君子敬而無失、與人恭而有礼、四海之内、皆為兄弟也)²⁵. The verse “all the people are his brothers” seems to equal love, but it is a conditional love which is to respect others without mistakes and behave humbly and politely. So we can say it is not pure philanthropy. The Confucian society rejected the universal “human love”. In other words, in order to maintain

²² Uno Tetsuto: Chinese Thought, Kodansha Gakujutsu bunko, 1980, p58.

²³ Uno, op.cit.p.60.

²⁴ Hashimoto Keizo: Astronomy and Western studies: early development of liturgy, A study of Confucian ritual in East Asia, Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies Kansai University. 2007, p.79.

²⁵ Uno Tetsuto, Chinese Philosophy, Kodansha Gakujutsu bunko, 1980, p186.

the universal “human love” to obliterate the humble and justice is like animals which have neither father nor brother²⁶. Therefore, the benevolence of Confucianism is hierarchical differential equality²⁷. Everyone has a different mind and body, and is never equal. This claim may mean that indiscriminate equality is a bad equality for Confucianism²⁸.

About what Christian ethics is, Yoshihisa Odashima said, “Relate to our faith in Jesus Christ, living in the freedom and love that Christ gives. The central foundation is not in Christianity, but in the living Christ himself. This living Christian faith that precedes and supports all ethics and moral acts, and is the source and driving force of life”²⁹. Haruo Kaneko stipulates “a consideration of human behaviors with Christ before God”³⁰. The basics of the Christian faith is the Bible. For Christianity, the Bible is a book written by divine revelation, and from a religious view. It is the supreme authority. The ethics derived from the Bible also occupy the highest authority. Christian ethics is a discipline between God and man, man and man. Among them, the relationship between God and man is the core. The relationship between people is a social expression of the relationship between God and people and has a subordinate disposition. Love is the core idea of Christian ethics and morality. The life of Jesus Christ is a paradigm of ethics. Jesus summarized that the new Christian law is love. Love as taught by Jesus has two sides. First, love God (love between God and man). Next is to love neighbors (love between people). “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark12:29-31). “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew5:43-45). The love that Christianity teaches is not irrelevant to value, but there is clearly a new

²⁶ Max Webb, translated by Morioka Hiromichi: *The Religion of China-Confucianism and Taoism*, Chikuma Shobo, 1970, p312.

²⁷ Hashimoto, *op.cit.*p.61.

²⁸ Uno, *Chinese Philosophy*, *op.cit.*p.187.

²⁹ Odashima Yoshihisa: *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, Jordan Press, 1988, p56.

³⁰ Kneko Haruo: *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, Kyobunkan, 1987, p9.

value relationship that is created beyond the value of the object. That love has the nature of holy love. Just as God has loved us, we love our neighbors. God's love for people is a universal and equal love. People are all equal because they are created in the shape of God and have infinite value to God. Thereby, the love between people must be equal. Love must transcend even differences in race, ethnicity, and religion³¹, because the source of love is God. Moreover, by Christianity, we must wear the love of God in order to be perfect. The apostle Paul said "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

However, while Christian love has considerable commonalities with Confucian virtue, there are also significant differences. Christian love comes from God, and Confucian virtue is human essence. Faith, virtue, knowledge and love are given only by God, not by our efforts. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." (2Peter1:2-7). By Christianity, love has its basis in the existence of God. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:7-8). The revelation of love is the ultimate and apocalyptic expression of the essence of God. "God's love" became clear in time when God sent Jesus into the world³². "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did

³¹ Kume Hiroshi: Christianity-thought and history, Shinyo Sha, 1993, p.72.

³² H.E.Todt, translated by Kawashima Sachio: Christian Ethics, Jordan Sha, 1995,p.32.

not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16-17). This love is a grace that God gives to humans. Due to human sin, we cannot create such love with our own abilities. By dying for humans who have lost their relationship with God because of sin, Jesus Christ reconciled God and man. “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). There is a chain relationship between God’s love, Jesus Christ’s love, and human love³³. Humans relied on the grace of God to do their beloved acts.

Christian love is not only in the moral field. For example, Augustine divides love into two types according to what love is oriented towards. He said that the love that rises toward the highest good (love for God and love for neighbors) is called Caritas, and the love that falls toward the lowest good (love for the world) is called Cupiditas. Both Caritas and Cupiditas are love, and but love itself is ethically neither good nor evil, and its value depends on what it is attracted to³⁴. Indeed, Caritas and Cupiditas are reciprocal and interactive because all are grace from God and have divine significance.

Christianity emphasizes the transcendence of love, and transcends differences of nation, ethnicity and blood relations, and promotes a kind of philanthropy. The salvation and heaven which Jesus spoke of are for everyone who believes. Both Jews and Gentiles can be saved and enter into heaven. Because of this, Christianity is manifested as a global religion

3. The relationship between God and man in Confucianism and Christianity

Confucian Tian (天)³⁵ has two means which includes the highest God and nature . Tian is sometimes seen as just a tangible sky, but sometimes means that God is above the higher sky. According to the concept of Confucianism, Tian is visible heaven and the principle of natural order. It cannot be separated from the object, substance or the activity. Tian is a fusion of moral reason, natural rules and spiritual will. For the Chinese, Tian has a rich meaning and is a manifestation of God, nature, society, and

³³ Kume, op.cit.p.74.

³⁴ Kaneko, op.cit.p.174.

³⁵ Tian is one of the oldest Chinese terms for heaven and a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophy, and religion.

the order of the universe. Confucius had three ideas about Tian. First, Tian is a clear thing that must not be deceived. Second, people should be in awe of Tian. Knowing that Tian must not be deceived, Tian awes people and people try not to disobey their destiny. Third, people believed in Tian. Tian is the only way of knowing people and oneself if the people are in awe of Tian³⁶. If people believe in Tian, they become one with Tian with no anguish, do not resent heaven and do not blame others. Mencius also emphasized that he recognizes his will through real self-reflection in the theory of "with all you heart and experiencing Heaven" (尽性知天). Furthermore, in the Song and Ming dynasty, the Confucian Tian is regarded as the universe or Taiji (the root of all things), an entity of super-material beings, and the organizer of the world. Confucian scholars understand Tian as the principle at that time. To put it concretely, it is the principle of duality. It is called the "one yin and one yang, this is the Dao" (一陰一陽之謂道) of which all things grow and multiply without end by Yin-yang. In other words, everything in the world is born and grown by the intersection Yin-yang³⁷.

An important proposition in Confucianism is the oneness of God and Mankind (天人合一), and it is the highest boundary sought by many ancient Chinese sages. According to Confucianism, the relationship between heaven and man is close to each other, one inseparable manipulative treatment, and it is the oneness of God and Mankind. The oneness of God and Mankind has two main meanings. First, heaven and man are similar, heaven is the original, and man is a copy of heaven. The human body is received from heaven, and various human emotions such as human blood, morality, joy, anger, grief and pleasure are all compounds of the heavenly condition, disposition, and season. Heaven, the universe, and nature are one big heaven, but human beings are also one small heaven. The other is interactions between God and Mankind. Because the essence of heaven and man is unity, they can interact with each other. Since all human resources obey the rules of nature, people and nature reach a state of harmony. The oneness of God and Mankind is to unite the way of Heaven and the way of men. The way of Heaven is the way of men, and the way of men is the way of Heaven. According to "Golden Mean", "Sincerity is the way of Heaven and the attainment of sincerity is the way of men" (誠者,天

³⁶ Uno, Chinese Philosophy, p.114.

³⁷ Ibid. pp.124-125.

之道也,誠之者,人之道也)³⁸. Tian is the source of human ethics, and when the morality of humanity is raised, it becomes one with the way of Heaven. If people's true character is sincerity, sincerity becomes the way of Heaven. If people simply act according to sincerity, people will fulfill their own way, and there is no need for education or training. However, people are not born to acquire all virtues and knowledge, so in the process of growth, people train, learn morals and knowledge, and reach sincerity³⁹.

The Christian God is unique, absolute, transcendental, and eternal. God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and human beings are his creatures. The essence of the Christian God is the true character that transcends the created world and the true character that is inherent in it. As a personality, the former is closely related to the world, is willing to appear in front of human beings, and actively works and guides human history. The latter has been expressed as an invisible image of God, and a spirit, beyond time and space. God has several qualities. First, He is Almighty. Of course, Almighty God actually knows everything in the created world. God is the LORD in this world and outside of this world, and He also rules the human spirit. All things should be obedient to God and trusted to God. Then, God is holy, distinguishing from this world, transcending this world, He is moral purity. Third, God is righteous and love. God does not forgive evil and iniquity and does not overlook good. The righteousness God judges, and punishes sinners⁴⁰. At the same time, He gives love to people and loves those who repent. That love is not just the so-called active love that is given by God, but also the responsive love that you receive from God⁴¹.

Almighty God is considered to have two main relationships with people. First, human beings are completely submissive to God. God gives orders to people and seeks obedience. For rebellious human beings who do not obey God's command and maintain their sovereignty, God punishes them. Next, the relationship between God and man is love. Human beings were separated from God by the sin of their physical greed, destroying the beautiful relationship between God and man. Those who survive in this wicked world do not have the power to change their destiny, so they entrusted it to God's salvation as hope. Because God loves man, he sends his Son, Jesus Christ to the world, and Jesus takes the form of man and

³⁸ Uno, Chinese Thought, p.88.

³⁹ Ibid, pp.89-90.

⁴⁰ Kume, op.cit, pp.26-30.

⁴¹ Gou Yoshitaka: Christianity -Groping for 21st Century, Gakuyo Shobo, 2000, p.42.

completes the redemption work on the cross instead of man's sin. Jesus restored the relations between God and man and provided people with a moral style of ultra-natural experience by resurrection. This is the work of God's love. This love of God could be achieved by the sacrifice on the cross of Jesus. People should emulate the virtues of Jesus, who can restore relationship, harmony and peace between God and man. Peace and harmony between God and man is a guarantee and a driving force for maintaining a good relationship.

As analyzed above, the notion that Confucian Tian which is the origin of the universe, transcendent, and creator coincides with the Christian God. However, for Confucianism, Confucian Tian is different from the Christian God when it is understood that Tian has the idea of material attributes, the strongest object, and a permanently rotating entity. The Christian God is the supreme and absolute being above the Confucian Tian. For Christianity, we can ask God for salvation, but human beings cannot become God. But for Confucianism, human destiny is achieved not by relying on God's salvation, but by human self-discipline and observance of virtue.

4. Theory of Innate Goodness in Confucianism and Sin in Christianity

The Chinese believe in the theory of innate goodness, which is the fundamental idea of Mencius's doctrine. Zisi⁴² says that sincerity is the way of Heaven and people's nature, but Mencius goes one step further and says that human nature is fundamentally good. For Mencius, people have four principles. The feeling of commiseration implies the principle of benevolence; that of shame and dislike, the principle of righteousness; that of reverence and respect, the principle of propriety; and that of approving and disapproving, the principle of knowledge⁴³. For Confucianism, people believe that they can expand these four principles through individual training; manifest the four virtues of "Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge"; and lead people to become saints. The four principles are like human limbs, which are innately attached to and rooted in the mind.

The best way to make efforts to Heaven is to develop one's innateness,

⁴² Zisi is the grandson of Confucius.

⁴³ Uno, Chinese Thought, p.95.

through education and self-discipline, and revealing innate goodness as much as possible. Keeping the balance and peace of mind is the source of all goodness. However, innate goodness raises the question of what is the cause of evil. Mencius says because of the flesh, greed depresses one's true intentions. Mencius is said to be a great man for innate goodness, and a small man for desire, and an established great man will control a small man⁴⁴. As a result of preaching the theory of innate goodness, Mencius defined the theory of innate conscience. People have a conscience by nature. Mencius calls this the true intention. Because there is a real intention and a conscience, therefore human beings have innate knowledge and ability.

Confucianism teaches that the person born is good. In that sense, Confucian human beings lack the intention to one future goal and the concept of fundamental evil (original sin). Those who obeyed the orders made for the average human ability were spared from sin. For an elite Confucian Chinese refuses to be guilty of constant sin, and never prays or repents⁴⁵. Confucianism can be said to be a secular morality, because Confucian morality emphasizes the morality of secular people within the world, and adapts to secular orders and customs⁴⁶. The content of the Confucian Chinese duty is always everywhere, dutiful respect to the living or dead who were intimate with themselves through the given order. It means that never dutiful respect to one super-worldly god, one "sacred thing" or "idea". This is because the Confucian "Dao" (道) was neither a matter nor an idea, but rather an embodiment of traditionalist ritual⁴⁷. Fulfilling traditional responsibilities and obligations, being attentive, classy and polite is the goal of Confucian self-completion. Moreover, what the Confucians expected as a reward for morality was longevity, health, wealth, and retention of fame beyond death in this world⁴⁸. Human beings will shorten their lives if they are constantly worried and struggling, but human beings can fulfill their destiny because they have reached the level of peace of mind⁴⁹. Max Weber said, "The Orthodox Confucian Chinese fulfilled their Confucian proprieties for their own destiny in this world, such

⁴⁴ Uno, *Chinese Philosophy*, pp.142-143.

⁴⁵ Max Weber, *op.cit.*p.300.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*p.200.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*p.312.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*p.300.

⁴⁹ Uno, *Chinese Thought*, p.65.

as longevity, children, wealth, with very little for the well-being of their ancestors. They never act for destiny in the other world”⁵⁰. “ At least in official Confucianism, a completely agnostic and essentially negative mood prevailed over all hopes for the afterlife”⁵¹.

Compared to the Confucian theory of innate goodness, the teaching of Christianity focuses on man’s sin. Christianity emphasizes that human beings are sinners by nature and only through Christ can get the salvation from sin. Adam, the ancestor of mankind created by God, lost to the temptation of Satan, disobeyed God’s will, ate the forbidden fruit, and committed his first sin. As a result, “sin” entered the human world⁵². And all human beings, descendants of Adam, are born with sin. As such, human beings became guilty and unclean by the fall in the Garden of Eden. Both guilt and uncleanness have been passed down from father to child. Because of the fall of Adam, the nature of sin has spread to all⁵³.

According to the Bible, “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10). On the basis of God’s holiness, human beings are all involved in the mighty plan of God’s salvation. Salvation is possible only by the forgiveness and atonement of sins. It is impossible by human power, but only by the Savior and mediator Christ. So, in order to reconcile God and man, to save man from sins, and to make man righteous, His Son, Jesus Christ, carries the cross and original sin, and gives all sinners absolute love and forgiveness as grace. And those who believe in Christ and repent of their sins will be saved after death and given eternal life in heaven. The original sin of human beings has fundamentally established the need and urgency of moral renewal. Christ’s exemplary morality has become a cohesive bond in human society. Christian ethics are centered around God. For humans, afterlife is a model and ideal of the morals of this world. By God’s intervention in this world, He eliminated war and resentment and gave the people faith, hope, and love. To go to this afterlife world, people must constantly repent of their sins and seek God’s forgiveness. To admire heaven was a strong encouragement for people to observe the ethics.

As analyzed above, sin in Christianity refers to the finiteness and flaws of humanity. This finiteness and flaw finally solved the problem of sin

⁵⁰ Max Weber, *op.cit.*p.189.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*p.190.

⁵² See Genesis Chapter 3.

⁵³ Louis Berkhof, translated by Morita Katsumi: *History of Christian Doctrines*, Seikeikai Press, 1993, pp.168-169.

by faith in God. Confucianism teaches the ethical doctrine that human nature is fundamentally good and uses a tradition of ethnic culture and ethics to deal with the problems of sin and greed. For Confucianism, the traditions of ethnic culture and ethics make people interested in life values and to seek personality ideals. Without the tradition of ethnic culture and ethics, the Chinese people would lose the driving force and direction of their lives. Confucian traditional thought lacks one extrinsic, transcendental, personal, and ultimate reality, but the theory of original human nature is used to solidify the roots of life and moral consciousness.

Conclusion

Differences in Confucian and Christian ethics are the result of differences in religious, social foundations and ways of thinking. However, the many differences exist between the Confucian and Christian cultures, but not interfering with the exchange. Christianity and Confucianism are representatives of Western and Chinese culture, constantly absorbing the outstanding achievements of human culture. This process is still underway, and the powerful tolerance and uptake enable mutual understanding and fusion of the two cultures.

From the beginning of the 20th century, due to the transformation of China's modernized society, the peculiar rituals of Confucianism and the idea of self-cultivation received strong criticism from society. Certainly, it must be said that some of the traditional ideas of Confucianism do not suit the development of humankind. Confucian scholars must follow the development of world civilization, make new interpretations of traditional ideas, and match traditional ethics with modern China. Therefore, Chinese scholars should not just look at the problems of China and the Chinese.

From the perspective of the development of human culture in the world, we always discover ideas that can contribute to the development of world civilization from traditional culture, and distinguish the strengths and weaknesses of Confucianism and Christianity. China can take up the essence of Confucianism and Christianity, incorporate ethics such as equality, philanthropy, honesty, and service advocated by Christianity into Confucianism, to supply the deficiencies of Confucianism, and to build a Chinese ethic that can serve as a model for the world.

