

# CONFUCIAN “REN” AND CHRISTIAN LOVE

**Zhao Jianmin**

Beijing Institute for the Study of Christianity and Culture, Beijing, China

## Abstract

“Ren” (benevolence, perfect virtue 仁) is the core of Confucianism, which says “The benevolent man loves others”. But what is the place of Ren in today’s society? The heart of Christianity is “love” – “The one who loves others is a kind hearted man”. But is “love” being misused in society? In order to create a new spirit for modern society, people should explore their own tradition, which should be combined with the modern values first. *Ren* and *love* could work together to achieve this goal. Great civilizations can not only coexist but also work hand in hand to found a harmonious society for every one.

## บทคัดย่อ

คำว่า “เหริน” (เมตตาธรรม คุณธรรมที่สมบูรณ์) นั้นเป็นหัวใจของคำสั่งสอนของลัทธิขงจื้อที่กล่าวว่า “บุคคลที่มีเมตตาธรรมย่อมรักผู้อื่น” ในทำนองเดียวกัน “ความรัก” ก็เป็นคำสอนหลักของคริสต์ศาสนา “คนที่รักผู้อื่นก็คือผู้มีเมตตา” เพื่อที่จะสร้างสปีริตสำหรับสังคมสมัยใหม่ คนเราควรคนหาจากขนบธรรมเนียมประเพณีดั้งเดิมของตนเองและนำไปบูรณาการกับคุณค่าสมัยใหม่ “เหริน” และ “ความรัก” สามารถไปด้วยกันได้ ในการที่จะบรรลุถึงเป้าหมายนี้ บรรดาอารยธรรมที่ยิ่งใหญ่ทั้งหลายจึงไม่เพียงแต่อยู่ร่วมโลกกันเท่านั้น แต่สมควรอย่างยิ่งที่จะร่วมมือกันสร้างสังคมที่ราบรื่นสมัคสมานสำหรับทุกคน

## “Ren” of Confucianism

“Ren” and “Li” ( ) are the most important concepts in Confucian

thought, but Ren is more fundamental. “Yan Yuan asked about perfect virtue”. The Master said, “To subdue one’s self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue”. (The Analects: Yan Yuan) Therefore, comparing these two concepts in Confucian thought, the latter is the foundation and goal, while the former is the means, which is used by people to transcend the limitation of human nature.

*Ren* contains three key elements. The first, *ren* (human being, 仁). “Mencius said, ‘Benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of man’”. (Mengzi” The works of Mencius. Jin Xin ?). Mencius also said that “the feeling of commiseration is essential to man” and listed sympathy as the first of the four principles. In the *Book of Changes: Qian*, it said that “The superior man is the one who practices and performs the virtue of *Ren*, therefore he can lead other people”. But Liuxi (刘熙) of East Han Dynasty turned this meaning upside down; he said that “the nature of human being is *Ren*. *Ren* can give birth to other things” (Shi Ming/Explanation of all the Names). Zhou Boqi ( 周伯奇 ) thought that the roots of Yuan (Origination, 元) are *er* (two) and *ren* (human beings); while the roots of *Ren* ( 仁 ) are *ren* (human beings) and *er* (two). “When referring to the heaven, we call it Yuan, and when referring to 人 human, we call it Ren. Because human has the nature of *Ren*, he became the quintessence of all the creatures” *The State of Equilibrium and Harmony* (or *the Doctrine of Meaning*) said that “Humanity comprehends the whole man. The greatest is to have affection for one’s parents”. Chenghao ( 程浩 ) thought that human heart is just like the seeds of the grain, the seed is growing endlessly, so does the human’s morality. The nature of continued growth is *Ren*. In brief, no matter what metaphors were used to explain what *Ren* is, *Ren* is the fundamental characteristic of the human being.

The second element is the affection for parents and relatives (Qingqin “ 情亲 ”). In *Origin of Chinese Characters* Xushen ( 许慎 ) of Eastern Han Dynasty told us that the character of *Ren* was the same as Qin ( 亲 ) and *Ren* was combined by two identified characters which means human (*ren*, 人), therefore *Ren* means the principles which people are following when they deal with each other. It is also said that “Filial affection for parents is the working of benevolence”. (Mengzi: Gaozi ) and “Filial piety and fraternal submission!-are they not the root of all benevolent actions?” (The Analects: Xue Er). So *Ren* has the features of

Qinqin. In Confucianism, Qinqin primarily refers to the family ethics, which requires the fathers to treat their children mercifully, for children to have filial piety for their own parents, for elder brothers to show fraternal love, and for younger brothers to show politeness.

As for social ethics, *Ren* can lead to another result—to love others, which is the third element of *Ren*. So the third element of *Ren* is to love others (爱人). Why the character of *Ren* (仁) is combined by two characters of *ren* (人) Chenxuan (陈玄) provided an answer: due to benevolence or *Ren*, man loves others, so there need more than two people to make *Ren* to be possible. “*Fan chi asked about benevolence. The Master said, ‘It is to love all men’*” (The Analects: *Yan Yuan*). Therefore, we said that “The benevolent man loves others” primarily refers to social ethics.

In The Analects: Yong Ye (雍也) it said that “*Now the man of perfect virtue? wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others. To be able to judge of others by what is nigh in ourselves—this may be called the art of virtue*”. There are more sayings about this feature of *Ren*, such as in the classics such *Er Ya* (尔雅), it said that “To confer kindness is to love”. All in all, “to love 爱他人” in Confucianism means that people thinks that “*all within the four seas will be his brothers*” and hopes that “*Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated*”.

“*Li*” also contains three essential parts. First, is the Sacrificial Ceremony. *The Origin of Chinese Characters* (《说文解字》) say that “*Li* is to the performance of the ceremony in order to please the gods and brings blessings”. So we know, *Li* was one of the sacrificial ceremonies in ancient religions of China. From there *Li* derived its other two meanings in Confucianism. Second are the rules of propriety, feudal ethics and rites. “*They are the rules of propriety, that furnish the means of determining (the observances towards) relatives, as near and remote; of settling points which may cause suspicion or doubt; of distinguishing where there should be agreement, and where difference; and of making clear what is right and what is wrong*” (The Classic of Rites). In the same book, it is also said that “*The function of Li is to tell people how to treat their parents*

and their relatives properly, and how to respect the sages and use them differently according to their virtues and various abilities”. Xunzi (荀子) put great emphasis on decorum, advocated courtesy, and looked on courtesy as the function of moderation and observation, he said that “*Music can promote harmony, and Li can maintain the feudal political and social order*” (Xunzi: On Music). The third part involves etiquette and manners. Mencius said that “*the feeling of modesty and complaisance is essential to man*”. Xunzi thought that “*The spread of the good music can make people’s aspirations and interests pure and bright, while the learning and performances of the rites makes people well behaved*”. It was the last two functions of Li that Confucius was promoting. That is why when Yan Yuan asked about perfect virtue. Confucius gave that answer: “*Generally speaking, that which makes man is the meaning of his ceremonial usages*”. (The Classic of Rites: The meaning of the ceremony of capping)

It is necessary to explain what is *Yuan* (元) in relation to *Ren*, before we give a further explanation. The root of the Character Yuan is er (two, 二) and *ren* (human, 人). In the book of *the essence of Chinese Character* (《中华文字》), Wei Taichang (魏迺昌) of Ming Dynasty said that: ‘*Yuan*’ is a great virtue between the earth and heaven. It created all things in this world. The roots of *Yuan* is *er* and *ren*, while the roots of *Ren* is *ren* and *er*. When talking about the heaven, we said this virtue is *Yuan*, and when referring to human, we called it *Ren*, and when it refers to the human body we called it the head of the body. “The character *Yuan* is the other form of *Ren*. The difference between the two is that the orders of their roots are reversed”. In Yi-jing: I-ching, Discussion of patterns, it said that “*Origination is the growth of the good*”. In *Er Ya* (尔雅) Explanation, it said that *Yuan* is the beginning/origination. “*Yuan* is the beginning of all the things and it is a great virtue in this word, which gave birth to every life and control the emerge of everything. Heaven is the greatest being, and human is less great, that is why, the arrangement of the roots of *Yuan*’s is *er* first and then *ren* (二, 人). The orders of *Ren* (人, 二) is reversed (二, 人) because among all the creatures, *ren* (human) is the best. “In ancient Chinese the character ‘er’ (二, two), that is one of the roots of *Yuan*, is the same as the character *shang* (upper, 上); and ‘Er’ (son, 儿) is a rare word, which is the same as the character *ren* (human, 人)

(Origin of Chinese Characters). “Those rooted in heaven are close to high things” (Yi-jing:I-ching, Discussion of Patterns), therefore Yuan means that heaven is the origination of everything, including human, and human is the most distinguished among all the creatures. As for the character of *Ren* (仁) it seems that both *Ren* and *Yuan* has the same root er (二) but the meanings of this roots are totally different. Because, in ancient Chinese, the roots of *Ren* (仁) are actually the combination of *qian* (千 a thousand, 千) and *xin* (heart, 心). Because the character of *Ren* has the combination, it said that *Ren* has the meaning of *qin* (勤). That is why Chenghao (程颢) thought that “*Human heart is just like the seeds of the grain, which has the nature of growing, and this nature is Ren*”. Afterwards, when people say “the roots of *Ren* (仁) were *ren* (仁) and *er* (二)” or “the benevolent man loves others, that is why the roots has *er* (two, 二)”, as a matter of fact, it is only a method of traditional Confucian exegesis.

In the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu regarded that, Confucian tradition is handed down from generation to generation. First it handed down from Yao to Xun, Yu, Tang (唐), King Wen, King Wu, Zhou Gong (文武周公) then to Confucius, but after Mencius (孟子) tradition is stopped. Though Xun Zi and Yang Xiong did choose to inherit their learning from this tradition, but their learning is not the best and they did not give a detailed interpretation of their studies (Han Yu: Yan Dao/Exploration of Tao). Further more, Han Yu said that “since the decline of Zhou Dao (周道) and the death of Confucius, the world has witnessed many events, like Qing Shi Huang burned ‘the Book of Songs’ and ‘the Classic of History’; the spread of the teachings of Huang-Lao School in Han Dynasty; Buddhism continued to flourish among the dynasties of Jin, Wei, Liang, Sui (南北朝). At that time, the people who were talking about moral virtues either belonged to the schools of Yang Zhu or Mozi, or they were either believers of Daoism or Buddhism”. In this situation, Han Yu (韩愈) made up his mind to revive Confucianism. Maybe he noticed that the original meaning of *Ren*, that is, ‘the most important thing is to love one’s parents’, was too individual-centered to provide for public interests and contribute to world peace, therefore, he emphasized and promoted the concept of “*The benevolent man is the one who loves others*” and “*The universal love is Ren, and the righteous behaviors are the ones that follows Ren*”. Han Yu

considered his concept of Universal Love derived purely from the Confucian tradition, directly from Mencius, and is the essence of Confucian teaching. “If a person performs universal love, then he will bring himself good luck; if he applies it to others, then he will be seen as a loving and fair person; if he treats it as the heart of his”.

*The School of Principles* of the Song and Ming Dynasties redefined the meaning of *Ren*. The most important scholars of this school were Cheng Brothers (Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao) and Zhuxi. They added to Han Yu’s definition of *Ren*, which is “Universal love is *Ren*” and proposed that “*Though the benevolent man must love others?we can not equate universal love with Ren*”. (Jin Si Lu 近思录 Vol.1). They said that “*Ren* is the true principle of the world, without which there will be only chaos” “*Xing (性) is Li (理) whose source all are good*” (Jin Si Lu? Vol.1). This school was against mixing the concepts of *Ren* and Love. “Mencius once said, ‘to sympathize with other’s misfortunes is *Ren*’. Later people treat love as *Ren*. How can we make the mistake of equating love with *Ren*? We should know that love comes from Qing (情) and *Ren* comes from *Xing* (性). For Mencius said that to sympathize with other’s misfortunes is the beginning of *Ren*. But 惟其素 only the beginning and is not fulfilled, then we can not call it *Ren*”. This school treats *Ren* as the substance and Love as its function. “Only when people possess *Ren*, can he show toleratance and love. Only if *Ren* is carried out, can people know how to forgive and how to love” (Jin Si Lu, Vol.1) Wang Yang-ming, an idealist Neo-Confucian also maintained that *Ren* is the inexhaustible source of every creation. (Chuan Xi Lu 传习录, Vol.1). In sum, the schools still put Love into the category of practice, but classify *Ren* with the scope of ontology. It is the special contribution of the school to shift the focus of Confucian tradition from moral practice to a theory of ontology.

Later, the representatives of the Confucian tradition like Kang Youwei (康有为) and Tan Sitong (谭嗣同) had to face the challenges of the developments of humanities and sciences. Tan Sitong proposed a new version of *Ren* to connect all subjects of humanities and sciences. He thought that “*Ren* is the origin of the universe” “if we can communicate smoothly with others then it is *Ren*” “if not then it is the opposite of *Ren*”. Concerning the humanities, he said that it included three aspects: academics, politics and religion. If the academics are divided, then people

should focus on researches in sciences; if the politics is divided, then the urgent thing is to promote human rights; but religion is the most difficult as it cannot be compromised. Regarding the proper order of doing research on these three subjects, the first is to study physics, then politics, and these studies will allow people to understand the essence of religion. “Religions is the most important one among the three, if religion does not prosper, politics will degenerate, which will result in decline of academics. That is why, without religions, politics and academics not only will become useless but it also will become a tool for murder”. Concerning the various religious traditions, he believed that the three religions: Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity can work together. “The founders of these three religions are different, but it does not mean that they are of different ranks. They are just the different faces of the same true master. According to the *Stele of the propagation of the luminous Roman faith in China*, it said that the three religions, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity, are on”. I think it is a really good interpretation about the relationship of the three. When facing the challenges of contemporary physics, he borrows the concept of *Ether/Aether* ( ) to connect physical things and spirit. He said that only when scholars understand the concept of Ether, they then can discuss with him what *Ren* is. Ether was the most popular concept among the academics, though it was later cast aside by people when the new discoveries of physics rejected it. Tan Sitong knew how to use the most popular concept to promote his idea. In his book *On Ren*, he said that “Although people give different names to Ether, the essence of them is the same. *Ren* is one of the many functions of Ether, from which came all the creature, and through which all things fulfill their destiny”. Obviously, Tan developed his own thought about freedom and equality from the cultures of his time. He said that “Though the three religions are different, they all seeking reformation. Though the reformations are varied, their aims are the same, that is, to achieve equality”. That is the final goal of his *Ren*.

Before the May Fourth Movement, the focus of the Confucian scholars was to trace back to the source of the tradition. They appealed to the classics of this tradition, employing all kinds of exegesis, and shifting their focus from practice to theoretical research. During this process, many people absorbed many new and good ideas and discard the out-

dated ones. The typical one is Tang Sitong's Ether, which we already mentioned above. He wanted to enrich the concept of *Ren* and abandon the feudal ethical codes of the tradition. The May Fourth Movement basically rejected all aspects of Confucianism. The New Culture Movement called for the creation of a new Chinese culture and a powerful country based on global and Western standards, especially democracy and science. Because of these movements, the Confucian tradition was badly damaged. But at the same time the new ideas of freedom, equality, sciences, democracy and patriotism slowly filtered into people's minds. Confucianism is no more the dominant culture force in China.

After the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies, along with the development of the economy, the moral disorder resulting from this quick culture transformation led people to be interested in Chinese traditions. All of a sudden, neo-Confucianism and masters of Sinology appeared and there was a revival of Chinese culture. Yet people can not understand the true Chinese traditional culture without understanding Confucian traditional virtues. The first two virtues, according to some scholars, are listed as *Ren*, Love, Filial Piety, and Fraternal Respectfulness ( ); Modesty and loving ( ).<sup>1</sup> No doubt, among these virtues *Ren* and *Li* are the most fundamental ones. *Ren* was viewed as the "symbol of Chinese spirit. Though it was used improperly by some governors, we can not deny that it is the long-lasting and shared virtue of the nation". What derived from *Ren* are filial piety, fraternal respectfulness; loyalty and forgiveness. *Li* (礼) was viewed as "the significant feature of Chinese culture... which was the mother virtue of the Chinese."<sup>2</sup> "The ethics and moral orders which originated from *Li* (礼) were called *Li Zhi* and *Li Jiao* (ritual system and feudal ethical codes; ) while the manners and customs about how to treat people were called *Li Jie* and *Li Yi* (etiquette and courtesy) ( )".<sup>3</sup> Even the one who considers *Li* as the mother virtue of the nation admits that, *Li* (礼) originated from the sacrificial ceremony, then immortalized by Confucius, and later reshaped by Dong Zhong-shu, and finally transferred to the absolute Tianli in the Song and Ming dynasties.<sup>4</sup>

We can say that Confucianism is still limited within the categories of *Ren* ( ) and *Li* (礼). How can we find a way out?

## “Love” in Christianity

“Love” is the heart of Christian faith. John said “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Love was regarded as the golden rule by Christians. “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31). To love God and your neighbor is the greatest commandment.

There are four Greek words for “love”. The first is *στοργή* (*stergo*), which means affection. It is natural affection, like that felt by parents for children. It is mainly used in family. The second is *φιλία* (*philia*) which means friendship. This concept was developed by Aristotle, into which such elements as loyalty and equality was included. The third is *ἔρως* (*eros*). That is passionate love, but does not have to be sexual in nature. It mainly applies to romantic relationships as well as marriage. This is the love Plato refers to, and he also used this word to express the seeking and appreciation of beauty itself. The last is *ἀγάπη* (*agape*). It refers to a general love. It can be described as the feeling of holding one in high regard.

Christianity borrowed the concept of love from Greek civilization at the very beginning. The Greek translators of the Old Testament like to use *φιλία* the most, then sometimes *στοργή* and *ἔρως*. They rarely used *ἀγάπη* and almost never used *stergo*. “Of the three Greek words for love, *eros*, *philia*, the love of friendship, and *agape*, New Testament writers prefer the last, *agape*, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage”.<sup>5</sup> They sometimes used the second one, and nearly never used the other two. Christianity not only borrowed the *agape* from Greek, but redefined and enriched it.

There are six essential factors in the love of Christian faith. First is divinity. “There is a certain relationship between love and the Divine: love promises infinity, eternity—a reality far greater and totally other than our everyday existence”.<sup>6</sup> The Christian love comes from the holy Creator, which is transcendental, and has the ultimate value. Second is uniqueness. “God is love”. This love is unique. “Yet *eros* and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more these two differing aspects find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized”.<sup>7</sup> “God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*”.<sup>8</sup> Human beings were created according to the image of God, therefore they also

have love. Human's love originated from God's love as a model. Therefore, human's love can be called *agape* and *philia* also. One aspect of human's love is the "love of one's neighbor", which included both the narrow love that is limited to one's family and universal love. The other aspect is "Love of God". This love requires people to devote their emotions and allow for reason to be guided by faith. The third is life. "Love embraces the whole of existence in each of its dimensions, including the dimension of time. It could hardly be otherwise, since its promise looks towards its definitive goal: love looks to the eternal".<sup>9</sup> The relations among the Trinity are the relations of love. Because of love, God became man. The internal God is love. "Starting from the depths of his own sacrifice and of the love that reaches fulfillment therein, he also portrays in these words the essence of love and indeed of human life itself".<sup>10</sup> Love is the expression of life. Life can reach eternity only when it was combined with love. The fourth is communication. Love needs communication. God's love is the communication of the Trinity. St. Augustine said that whenever you meet love, you meet the Trinity.<sup>11</sup> God loves humanity, so he hopes his love is returned by his children's love. Human beings need to love others, but also need to be loved. Love has the ability to spread *agape*. The fifth is justice. God is not only love, but also justice. "Here Christians can see a dim prefiguring of the mystery of the Cross: so great is God's love for man that by becoming man he follows him even into death, and so reconciles justice and love".<sup>12</sup> Love and justice are one in God. This unified justice also became the goal of human. "God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love".<sup>13</sup> Human's love also contains justice. The sixth is practicality. Besides the dimensions that we mentioned above, the Christian love also contains the social practical dimension, which containing two levels—love of God and love of neighbor. These two are actually one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with your entire mind; and your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27) "love of God" is the basis with "love of neighbor" as its expression. "Those who say I love God and hate his brothers or sisters are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not see (1 John 4:20)".

The fulfillment of Christian love is to build a "Civilization of Love" on earth. Christian love is based on the Ultimate Concern, and it is not

only transcendental but also socially practical. “Love of God” makes people pay attention to his ultimate concern and transcend the limits of their narrow love. “Love of God” makes people notice that life is infinite, because God himself is infinite and eternal. Because human being is both physical and spiritual, without spiritual pursuit, he will become a walking dead body. “Love of neighbor” leads people to practice and externalize this transcendental love. We need more love and caring for each other in this fast changing society. People want a world that is full of love. The mission of Christianity is nothing but to follow the commandment of God, that is “to love God” and “to love your neighbor”. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21) was a classical interpretation of this love. These commandments got its name from *Adversus haereses* (4, 16, 3-4) by Irenaeus (130/48-200). Jesus concluded these commandments as “you should love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). The object in the sentence can be divided into three categories: God, human beings, things, which actually including all the aspects of human life.

Now, Christianity developed the interpretation according to two principles-tradition and current situation. “To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other”.<sup>14</sup> Based on this reflection, Christianity stated that “Drawn from the treasures of Church teachings, the proposals of this sacred synod look to the assistance of every man of our time, whether he believes in God or does not explicitly recognize him. If adopted, they will promote among men a sharper insight into their full destiny, and thereby lead them to fashion the world more to man’s surpassing dignity, to search for a brotherhood which is universal and more deeply rooted, and to meet the urgency of our ages with a gallant and unified effort born of love”.<sup>15</sup> Thus the urgent demand of the age is that all people should cooperate and try hard to build a ‘civilization of love’.

## A Civilization has a Harmonious Cooperation between *Ren* and Love

During the long history of human kind, some civilizations have disappeared, but some old traditions continue to prosper. In the past, most of the great civilizations such as Chinese, Greek, Middle East and India were developed separately, although there were some similarities between them. But in this global age, many civilizations are flourishing simultaneously. What is needed now is communication, even though many conflicts still exist.

Modern world values are the development of many different civilizational sources. The imposition of values from one civilization to another has often led to ruin. And yet, “The institutions, laws and modes of thinking and feeling as handed down from previous generations do not always seem to be well adapted to the contemporary state of affairs; hence arises an upheaval in the manner and even the norms of behavior”.<sup>16</sup> In his book *Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis*, the American former president Jimmy Carter wrote an elegy for the degradation of American values and appeal America to return to the right path of morality.<sup>17</sup> In China, “running the country with morality” is another way of expressing this moral concern. In the East culture transformation is increasingly intensified, and numerous schools are emerging, for instance, “the Quintessence School, the Westernized School, the Western Technology Application School, the Chinese Culture Application School, the Mutual Substance School, and the Comprehensive Innovation School”.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, concerning Religion, “growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike former days, the denial of God or of religion, or the abandonment of them, are no longer unusual and individual occurrences”.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, people observe that “around the world over the past generation, the basic tenets of modern cultures—including equality, personal freedom, and self-fulfillment—have been eroding the domains of traditional cultures that value authority, filial obedience, and self-discipline”.<sup>20</sup> Some people predicted that “cultural modernization will continue to assault the world’s traditional cultures, provoking widespread political unrest, psychological stress, and social tension. In developed nations, the great majority embrace the tenets of modernization”.<sup>21</sup> The situations of religions are the same. The leaders of some

religions also appeal to *aggiornamento* (keeping up with the times). Christianity developed Neo-Scholasticism and La nouvelle th?ologie (Neo-Theology), while in the East, Neo-Confucianism and Neo-philosophy (led to a mixture of Western, Chinese, and Marxism Philosophy). The field of modern thought seems to be very rich, but it is actually in a state of great disorder.

Meanwhile, Globalization is so powerful that it influences all civilizations. Nowadays, no civilization can preserve its own purity and integrity. No civilization can develop without paying attention to others. In the East, you can see both the people who want their country to be completely Westernized, and who only want their national culture. But we see a similar process happening in the West which is “being strongly influenced by other cultures in which the original religious element is very powerful”.<sup>22</sup> Globalization has always been equated with Westernization; but actually, this is not the case. Today’s globalization is based on economics, but its influence extends to politics, science and technology, media, culture, education, environmental protection, sports. But people are not sure who are the masters behind the scene and this leads to anxiety. “Today’s spiritual agitation and the changing conditions of life are part of a broader and deeper revolution”.<sup>23</sup> Facing this, the ancient civilization on which people had once depended upon seemed fragmented and powerless, and can no longer offer human the comforts they need, no matter mentally or spiritually. People can no longer confront the big questions, concerning the meaning of life, which used to be answered by civilizations. Providing answers to this kind of questions is central to the dynamic of civilizations’ growth.

The fundamental function of civilization is to provide life meaning and “...the increased exchanges between cultures, which should lead to a true and fruitful dialogue between groups and nations...”.<sup>24</sup> Under globalization, how should civilizations develop is a question. Many theories about the relations of civilizations emerged, such as the Clash of Civilizations by Samuel Huntington and coexistence of the civilizations by TANG Yijie. Different people hold different opinions towards these theories. But no matter what your personal ideas are, we all have to actively participate in the creation of a new civilization, because all of us benefit from it.

With the help of *Li*, Confucian civilization wants people use *Ren* to achieve their transcendence. *Ren* means human, humanity and “ego” who are the subjects of humanity at the same time. Human beings are not static, but dynamic. While the metabolic processes of the human body is continuous and our cells are continuously replaced, some parts of “me” are never changed. The stable part is humanity. Humanity or *Ren* has a spiritual continuity and a lasting nature. With the accumulation of experiences and knowledge, humanity will become increasingly rich and mature. The real mature humanity must conclude the inborn nature, the narrow love and the universal love, that is *Ren* in Confucian culture. In Confucianism, *Ren* does not refer to biological man; rather it means the one who has both the stable inborn nature and the possibilities of continuing development, no matter in spiritual or self-cultivated fields. “Confucianism and Christianity are concerned about the transcendence of humanity. *Ren* and Christian love both are the expression and means of this transcendence”.<sup>25</sup> In Confucianism *Ren* is transcendental, but it is realized through feudal *Li*, which is no longer suitable for today’s world.

Love is the main means to reach human’s transcendence in Christian civilization. “Love embraces the whole of existence in each of its dimensions, including the dimension of time. It could hardly be otherwise, since its promise looks towards its definitive goal: love looks to the eternal”.<sup>26</sup> This love is both *eros* and *agape*, which are inseparable. It is unified both in God and human beings. “God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*”.<sup>27</sup> So it is in human beings. According to some physiological research, love can cause subtle chemical changes in the human body and even change one’s mental state. For human beings, love is both the reaction to *eros* and the experiences of *agape*. Love is a seeking beyond the limits of the individual and towards the eternal. “Starting from the depths of his own sacrifice and of the love that reaches fulfillment therein, he also portrays in these words the essence of love and indeed of human life itself”.<sup>28</sup> Love and life are one, and are working together to reach eternity. The fruit of Christian love is universal love, which includes fundamental modern spiritual values such as sacrifice, human dignity, equality, peace and justice, responsibility, gratitude, joy.

In conclusion, the dialogue between Confucianism and Christian-

ity can contribute to bringing harmony to the world. In fact, when interpreting the ancient writings, Confucianism always follows the tradition in order to harmonize the heaven and the human. The original meaning and roots of *Ren* (仁, human nature) is the same as Yuan (元, the beginning). Afterwards, in the Confucian tradition, *Ren* was interpreted as human nature. Regarding this human nature, in later Confucian tradition such as in the Conversations of Master Chu and of his students, it is maintained that people should “preserve (Tianli, the Principle) and get rid of the unwanted human desire”. They thought that Tianli (天理) is *Ren*, that is human nature. *Li* (礼) was the means of reaching *Ren*. If traced back to the very beginning, we will see, *Li* only derived from *Ren* in a much later period. Actually, the core of Confucian culture is *Ren* rather than *Li*, which is only a late interpretation of the former. Furthermore, according to the researches of modern anthropology, physiology, psychology and neuroscience on human, Confucian culture also need to adjust its way of looking at human. It will be really helpful, if Confucianism could combine ‘love’ with “*Ren*” to grasp the true essence of humanity. We should use the spirit of universal love to replace the feudal code of ethics, which was seeking to extinguish human desire. ~~With~~ Confucianism and Christianity will greatly benefit from the new civilization which combined both Confucian *Ren* and Christian love. First is using this new combination to replace the *Ren* as the heart of Confucian culture, because love was only one of the main factors of Confucian *Ren*. The Confucian love was lacking in life and transcendence, unlike Christian love. But life needs love and love is the complete expression of life. Love is also the essential part of humanity. The new combination can complement the short-comings of the two cultures, allowing humanity to have both the immanent transcendence which is common in Confucian culture and transcendence from the Christian background. Second, the Confucian immanent transcendence needs the Christian love to conquer its selfishness. Because love should be “not boastful or arrogant. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Third, Christian love always over emphasizes transcendence but does not pay enough attention to the aspect of immanent transcendence. That is why St. Augustine said “God did not need your help when he created you, but needs your help when he saves you”. In order to achieve salvation, people need both the

help from God and their own effort. Both are important. Fourth, in Confucianism innate goodness, love of one's family and love others are the methods of self-cultivation, while in Christianity "love of God" and "love of one's neighbor" are the paths leading to salvation. The combination of these two will become a powerful instrument to rebuild a Chinese Civilization that abounds with Ren and love, and can also offer people the true meaning of life.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>???, 2004? 1??2?? 212-219?.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.212.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.213.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.224.
- <sup>5</sup>Benedict ??, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, no.3.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid. no.5.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid. no.7.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid. no.9.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid. no.6.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid. no.6. 《~~福音书~~《福音书》》,
- <sup>11</sup>Augustine of Hippo, On the Trinity, ??, 8, 12.
- <sup>12</sup>Benedict ??, Encyclical Letter, no.10.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid. no.11.
- <sup>14</sup>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). No.4.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid. No.91.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid. No.7.
- <sup>17</sup>Reference News (Simplified Chinese: ) December 20, 2006, p14.
- <sup>18</sup>YU Dunkang, Confucian Ethics and Global Ethics, Editors.HE Guanghu,XU Zhiwei, Dialogue 2: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2001, p12 余敦康, , 见: 何光沪, 许志伟 主编,《对话二: 儒释道与基督教》, 社会科学文献出版社, 2001年, 页12.
- <sup>19</sup>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World . No.7.
- <sup>20</sup>David Pearce Snyder; Five Meta-Trends Changing the World, The Futurist; Ju1/Aug 2004; pg.23; 戴维·皮尔斯。斯奈德, , 见: 《参考消息》, 2004 29 第三版.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid. p. 24.
- <sup>22</sup>*The Tablet*, 19 August 2006, p.8.
- <sup>23</sup>Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World No.5 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). No.4.

<sup>24</sup>Pstoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World No.56.

<sup>25</sup>Ji Zhen, Unbalanced Bipolar---On Traditional Ethical Culture, Fujian Forum, December, 2005. 纪真, “不均衡的两极——对传统伦理文化的一种分析”, 《福建论坛》, 2005. 12.

<sup>26</sup>Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, No.6

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. No.9.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. No.6.