

孝:中国文化与基督教文化冲突的一个症结

Filial Piety: A Focal Point in the Conflict
between Chinese Culture and Christian Culture

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[英文提要]

In the exchange and blending of Chinese and Western cultures, the notion of "filial piety" is a decisive point of contention. This is especially true in the dialogue between the Confucianism and Christianity.

"Filial piety" is one of the most fundamental mores in the value system of Chinese culture. The core doctrine in Confucianism is "ren" (benevolence), and the quintessence of "ren" is "love for men". "Love for men" presupposes "filial piety" from which "ren" radiates. Therefore, "filial piety" is the basis of "ren". When the ruling class of China embraced Confucianism, the "three net ropes", of which "filial piety" is an important component, became the cardinal principle in the ordering of China's feudal society for two thousand years.

In contrast to the humanitarianism of Chinese culture, Christian piety scarcely discusses "filial piety". In the Old Testament, the fifth injunction in the Ten Commandments speaks of honoring our parents. The first four commandments address the God-man relationship. Since the fifth commandment on "filial piety" is the first of the remaining body of the code which addresses interpersonal human relationships, it may be construed that it ranks highly in Jewish culture. In the New Testament, the principle Christian charge is love for God and love for others (philanthro-

pism), including one's enemies. Once, Jesus did however affirm the fifth commandment.

Here lies an important difference between Confucianism and Christianity. Confucianism propagates different degrees of love for different spheres of human relationships. Christianity propagates universal fraternity. This difference accounts for many of the problems and conflicts that arose in the proselytization of the Christian faith in China.

The Christian notion of universal fraternity reflects a higher level of ethics. But the Confucian notion of "filial Piety" ought also to be esteemed. It remains economically relevant for the modern day Chinese family where the needs of the elderly are still cared for within the individual's family unit. "filial Piety" continues to be a fundamental part of popular Chinese ethics. However, we are well advised to blend the virtue of traditional Chinese "filial Piety" with the egalitarianism of universal fraternity in Christian ethics, and thereby transform the negative, outmoded elements of feudalism in the Chinese culture.

在历史上,基督教曾四次较大规模地传入中国,自唐代迄今已有1300多年。唐代的景教和元代的也里可温教多依附于统治者的庇护,在很大程度上局限于宫廷宗教,并未与中国文化在思想层面上有实质性的接触。16-17世纪明清之际,基督教再次掀起对华传播高潮。耶稣会士利玛窦切实感到中国传统文化的深厚影响,以及文化差异对理解教义所造成的巨大障碍,从而开始刻苦研习中国经籍,利用儒家经典中关于天、上帝等概念,论证基督教至上神的存在,并顺应中国传统文化和祀孔、祭祖等传统礼仪和社会习俗进行传教,取得了较大成效。中国文化与基督教文化的实质性接触,也就由此而始。利玛窦的这种作法,后来被称之为“利玛