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Chinese Cultural Resources in Building a Harmonious World
——A Review of Exploratory Contributions by Chinese Senior Scholars

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Abstract: In consideration of the importance and urgency of interreligious dialogues, the academic world over the past decades has been putting an increasing focus on eastern and western traditions of religious culture, so as to explore historical experiences and intellectual resources helpful for promoting interreligious dialogue, to resolve conflicts between civilizations, and to build a harmonious world. This essay covers the relevant theoretical explorations made by the older generation of leading Chinese scholars and is roughly divided into three parts: 1. a new understanding of the characteristics of the history of Chinese religious culture; 2. a brief summary of the fine traditions of Chinese religious culture; 3. the intellectual resources provided by the Chinese cultural tradition in promoting interreligious dialogue, resolving conflicts between civilizations, and building a harmonious world.

Key words: interreligious dialogue, a harmonious world, the tradition of Chinese religious culture, the intellectual resources of Chinese culture.

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Ⅰ. Introduction: Interreligious Dialogue and World Peace

Over the past few decades, 'interreligious dialogue' has become a hot topic and a frontier field in international religious academic circle. Hans Küng, who is the chief drafter of *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, emphasizes many times that without peace among religions, there could be no peace among nations, countries or cultures; without dialogue among religions, there could be no peace among religions; without religious studies, there could be no dialogue among religions. His argument is actually a "syllogism that explains the importance of interreligious dialogues". According to its inference, interreligious dialogue is so important that it concerns not only peace among religions, but also peace among countries and cultures. At the end of 1980s, many people held the view that Hans Küng's syllogism had overestimated the importance of interreligious dialogue. However, 20 years later, with the growth of the problems and phenomena of religions after the Cold War, and the obvious impact of religious elements or background to the conflicts among nations, countries and cultures, the importance of interreligious dialogue has become a common conviction among global politicians, religious leaders and scholars of religious studies.

Paul F. Knitter, the well-known American theologian, hits the nail on the head in terms of the urgency of interreligious dialogue. He argues that, in the development of geographical-political events (conflicts?), fear causes anger, anger causes violence, and that this is becoming more and more the case in some nations and countries. For many people, Samuel Huntington's view has been verified, and the conflicts among civilizations have become more and more serious. What is even more worrying and threatening is that the conflicts among religions have added to the brimming pot of hatred. Terrorists and Imperialists defend their evil deeds by means of religious beliefs. They call others "evil", while at the same time considering themselves to be "good". It is actually a religious declaration, which means, "God is with me, so let me punish you." In this way, religion has been

used as a tool to abet the spread of conflicts among civilizations, and this is part of the reason why religion has become a global problem. However, religious belief could and should help promote dialogue and cooperation among civilizations, for all religious people would achieve a consensus if they stood by the teachings of the founders and the classics of their religions: religious faith must promote world – peace, rather than turning fostering thoughts of violence. ①

Because of the importance and urgency of interreligious dialogue, academic circles at home and abroad have more and more emphasized the religious cultural traditions of both east and west in order to find the historical experiences and thought sources that help to promote religious dialogue, resolve the civilizational conflicts and establish a harmonious society. This essay is an elucidation of the relevant theoretical inquiries of the scholars of the older generation, and falls into roughly three parts. First is a reconsideration of the historical characters of Chinese religious cultures. Second is a summary of the tradition of Chinese religious culture. Third, Chinese traditional culture can supply the conceptual resources for promoting interreligious dialogue, resolving civilizational conflicts and creating a harmonious world.

Ⅱ. The Historical Character (Characteristics?) of Chinese Religious Cultures

If we want to argue that Chinese religious cultural traditions can help to promote religious dialogue, resolve civilization conflicts and build a harmonious world, we must know the historical characters of Chinese religious cultures. However, ever since the cultural encounter between the east and the west end of Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Qing Dynasty, the question of how to interpret Chinese religious traditions and their character has always been a tough problem.

Ninian Smart, the well – known scholar of comparative religious studies, introduces Chinese religions this way: "The westerners always feel confused about the religions in China…. from the point of view of our westerners, Chinese religion is indeed a hodgepodge." ②What is more, scholars like Hans Küng claim that, "scholars in the west once inferred that there was no religious life in ancient Chinese society." ③ Why is it the case? We can find some thought – provoking clues in C. K. Yang's *Religion in Chinese Society*. The "introduction" of this book contains a section – "some points of view concerning the characters of the religions in Chinese society," in which Yang mentions that the missionaries who first came to China found something that is completely different from Christianity – that religious belief for the Chinese is superstitious belief. From that time on, this view began to prevail in the western world. The other important reason is that Confucian ethics have determined the social value system for most of Chinese history, functioning as the religious ethics as Christianity does in the west. Therefore, there were no religious organizations, nor any long – time conflicts between the government and the church. For this reason, western scholars who study Chinese culture hold the view that the Confucian tradition is secular in terms of value systems and agnostic in terms of religious thought. This is actually a negation of the role that religion plays in Chinese society. Influenced by the view of western scholars, Chinese scholars in modern times developed the view point that "Chinese society is non – religious". For instance, Liang Qichao doubted "whether we could write a history of Chinese religion"; Hushi believedthat "China is a country

① See Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, "To the Chinese Reader", trans. Wangzhicheng, (Beijing: Renmin University Publishing House), 2 – 3.

② Ninian Smart, *World Religions*, 2nd edition, trans. Ganshining etc., (Peking University Publishing House, 2004), 113.

③ Hans Küng, *Sparenreiche Die weltreligionen auf dem weg*, trans. Yang Xusheng, (Beijing: Sanlian Publishing House 2007), 129

without religion, and China is a nation that doesn't have the superstitious beliefs of religion"; Chen Duansheng held the view that "Chinese [culture? Civilization?] is non-religious. China doesn't have a great religion…."④ The reason that I mention the above academic background is to emphasize the value of the following research.

In order to eliminate the negative influence of "western viewpoints" on Chinese religious studies, Prof. Lou Yulie has mentioned ten features of Chinese religious tradition in many conferences and lectures recently.

First, in Chinese history, the authority of god has never exceeded that of the emperor. The view that "all the lands belong to the emperor, and all the people live on these lands belong to the emperor" has always been the dominant standpoint ever since the Shang and Zhou dynasties. Therefore, the authority of god has been always subordinate to that of the emperor. While in the European Middle Ages, which lasted for a thousand years, it was just the opposite.

Second, there has never been a "belief in one god" in Chinese history; instead, there has always been a "belief in many gods". Although there are all kinds of names that designate the superior god, like as "Di", "God", "Heaven" and "the One", they are do not by any means imply exclusive claims to belief or. Therefore, there is no command that "you can only believe in this god rather than that god". The people always burn incense whenever they see a temple, and bow down on their knees whenever they see a statue of a god. It is completely different from the western Christianity, where "the worship of God alone is allowed.".

Third, worship of ancestors. The gods in China were always ancestors. For example, "Di" and "God" on oracle bones mainly mean "the ancestors of the primitive tribes", namely, the heroes that had once made great contributions to the tribes. People believed that when these ancestors died, they would bless their posterity. This is in fact a kind of worship of heroes, or of the sages. However, in the Zhou dynasty, this point of view began to change. These gods of the ancestors or the sages never blessed their posterity blindly; rather, they blessed them according to according to whether they were virtuous or not. For example, the thought that "Heaven is just, and only blesses people who are virtuous" first came into existence in the Zhou dynasty; in the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu) period, there was the concept that "what Heaven sees is actually what the people see, what Heaven hears is actually what the people hear"; "the people are the masters of the gods". In this way, beginning with the Western Zhou (Xi Zhou), the tradition of "people-oriented humanism" gradually developed.

Fourth, people don't obey the authority of the gods, for don't believe the gods have absolute right; rather, they handle the relationship between god and the people as they deal with interpersonal relationship. Confucius says, "if you cannot handle secular affairs, how can you deal with the affairs concerning gods?" He also says, "in order to help people lead a good life, we should teach them to respect the gods, but never attempt to go near to the gods. This is what we call wise." Liang Qichao once pointed out that the religions in the west can be called "the religion of the divine logos", while the religions in China can be called "the religion of the human logos", which means, in Chinese culture, that the emphasis on the personal relationships overrides the relationship of human beings and the gods.

Fifth, Chinese religious belief is characterized by its worldliness and utilitarianism, while a sense of transcendent divinity is what it lacks. Just as the case in *Tan Jing*, "Buddha Dharma is right in the secular world, so one doesn't need to look for it beyond the world. It is as silly as loo-

④ Yang Qingkun *Religions in the Chinese Society: A Research of the Social Function and the Historical Elements of Chinese Society*, trans. Fan Lizhu, (Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2007), 21-24

king for the horns of the rabbit as to search for the Buddha Dharma outside the world." Prof. Fei Xiaotong stakes out the position that the Chinese have very practical attitudes towards ghosts and gods. We worship them in order to ask for timely wind and rain for raising crops, and to escape from disasters. Our sacrifices and worship are like offering a bribe to somebody. Ghosts and gods for us are rights, powers instead of ideals; sources of financial resources instead of justice.

Sixth, Chinese religious beliefs are more rational rather than emotional. Ever since the beginning of modern times, some people have argued that Buddhism is religion, some hold that it is philosophy, some say it is both religion and philosophy, while there are still others who maintain that it is neither religion nor philosophy, but rather a kind of method – Buddha Dharma. The reason why people have argued over this so much is that there are many rational elements in Buddhism. From another perspective, Buddhism is a kind of "religion without gods", for it rejected the view that "God creates the world" with its theory of "Yuan Qi" and "Ye Bao". It suggests that we look for the ultimate reason from within things, which is "self do, self have".

Seventh, Chinese religious belief emphasizes "the inner transcendence of the self". Chinese culture that is directed by Confucian thought is a kind of "culture of cultivating morality", namely, cultivating oneself, transcending oneself by means of "Xiushen". Under these circumstances, Chan School, the largest sect of Chinese Buddhism, has completely developed the humanism of the self – freeing of Buddhism, which emphasizes thinking through your own problems and knowing yourself completely; getting to know that the nature of all human beings is Buddha makes a Buddha. It is the aspect of Chinese religion that emphasizes the ethical cultivation of body and soul. Daoism takes Dao as its base, which respects nature and advocates natural inaction. In the final analysis, it is to respect the nature of human beings and to develop spontaneous activity as completely as possible.

Eighth, Chinese religion lacks an intense missionary spirit. It largely relates to Chinese traditional culture. Confucianism is a typical example. As it is said in *Liji*, "people come from all around to learn Li, rather than the Li being spread actively by the teacher." It is "Jiang Ziya went fishing – freedom is always for volunteers." Buddhism and Daoism are also the more – missionary. Buddhism doesn't force someone to believe. Buddha helps the person who has "Yuan" with him. How could western missionaries have this attitude? The missionary work of western religions is aggressive, while the Chinese religions are conservative.

Ninth, the emperor and the government in Chinese history were tolerant about religions, and they allowed all kinds of religions to co – exist. The authority of the emperor always held the leading position, so it adopted a tolerant attitude that reconciled and used all kinds of religions, which let these religions compete with each other, and fostered the consolidation of the power of the emperor and the government. This allowed all religions to communicate frequently in teachings activities and in ceremonies. These religions assimilated to each other among themselves, while at the same time keeping their independence.

Tenth, China is a country with many religions, so China has many problems concerning ethnic religions. Ethnic religions have something in common with the religions mentioned above, but they are also different. For example, Buddhism coming from Xizang and from Southern China is different from that from the Han areas. The former two have combined with the local ethnic culture, and they even become the symbol of their ethnic culture. [5]

Scholars in domestic academic circles all know that Prof. Mou Zhongjian has devoted his life to the history of Chinese religions studies, and that he completed a great work of nearly a million words – *The History of Chinese Religions* (two volumes, 2000). In the last chapter of this book, Prof.

⑤ The above summary is in "religious studies in search of local cultural tradition", in *Chinese religions* (vol. 11, 2008)

Mou summaries five characteristics of Chinese religions. They are, first, the continuing existence and development of an original religion; second, the authority of the emperor always overuling that of religions; third, diversity and inclusiveness; fourth, humanization and secularization; fifth, the connection and disconnection of the three structures. We can draw these conclusions if we compare Prof. Mou's 5 points and Prof. Lou's 10 points.

First, the two persons share consensus at many points. Point 2 of Prof. Mou is what Prof. Lou emphasizes in point 1, "it never occurred in Chinese history that the authority of god exceeded that of the emperor," in other words, "the authority of the emperor always overrules the authority of religion." However, this consensus is more clearly expressed in the following aspect:

Second, points 1, 3, 4 of Prof. Mou are more general than those of Prof. Lou. For example, with regard to point 1, Prof. Mou pointed out that, in accordance with the age-old patriarchal society, the original religions, namely, the worship of nature, of ghosts and gods, and of ancestors have been kept intact, and have developed and strengthened, in contrast to what happened in Greece, Egypt, Persia and India, where their original religions were gradually replaced by creation religions. In this way, the worship of Heaven, god, and ancestors has been combined with the authority of the emperor, which together formed the religion of patriarchal society. This explanation not only contains points 2 and 3 of Prof. Lou, but also helps us to understand its historical reasons. When it comes to point 3, "diversity and inconclusiveness", Prof. Mou emphasizes the diverse-unity structure of Chinese traditional culture, the philosophy of Confucianism, the view of "accommodating divergent views" and the tolerant circumstances of Chinese society. This concept thus includes points 2,9,10 of Prof. Lou. What's more, "humanization and secularization", point 4 of Prof. Mou, includes points 4, 5,6, and their main points are almost the same as well, referring to the ethics, secularity, utilitarianism, humanity and rationality that the Chinese cultural tradition exhibits.

Third, although these two scholars share different viewpoints, they both have profound insights, which can help us use their views as references to help us understand the overall characteristics and the complexity of the tradition of Chinese religions. For example: what Prof. Lou pointed out in 7, 8, namely, "Chinese religions emphasize inner transcendence" and "Chinese religious traditions don't have an intense missionary intent". Another example: Prof. Mou states in in point 5,that the beliefs of the Chinese are mostly constituted of "official belief", "scholar belief" and "folk belief". The three kinds of belief are consistent with each other, but relatively independent, and even do not have much relationship with each other. Therefore, we cannot summarize the characteristics of the beliefs of Chinese people with a simple judgment.

Hans Küng keenly pointed out that "the China as the western scholars who do research in Chinese cultures see it" and "the China that the Chinese see it" are totally different.⑥With what has been discussed above, we can draw the conclusion that views of the cultural tradition of Chinese religions are also totally different, for "the former Chinese scholars" and "the Chinese scholars nowadays". Now it's time to see how senior scholars summarize the fine tradition of Chinese religious culture based on contemporary research.

⑥ Hans Küng, *Spurensuche Die weltreligionen auf dem weg*, trans. Yang Xusheng, (Shanghai Sanlian Publishing House 2007), 129

Ⅲ. The Fine Tradition of Chinese Religious Culture

Based on a long – time of research on the history of Chinese religions, Prof. Mou summarizes the tradition of Chinese religious culture in 5 points.

(1) One of the remarkable historical features of Chinese religious culture is diversity – unity, namely, diversity and harmony, or, difference within harmony.

China is a large country with multiple ethnic groups, religions and beliefs, but these three kinds of multiplicities by no means put China into a situation of division and hostility. Instead, all the ethnic groups are becoming more and more harmonious despite their differences; their beliefs are becoming more rational with communication, and different religions become more abundant in interaction. ⑦

First of all, China is a multi – ethnic country with fifty – six ethnic groups. Various ethnic groups in China live in peace with each other and constitute the Chinese nation together. As a community of oriental ancient culture, the Chinese nation has great cultural cohesion. China has also been a unified country for two thousand years and is still in the process of renewal, which makes it unique in the world.

Secondly, China is a multi – belief country. It not only has Confucianism which is characterized by humanism and rationality, but also numerous religious beliefs characterized with Shinto] worship. Philosophy, religion, and literature mingle with each other, making Chinese philosophy possess an element of religious sanctity and mystique, and also some strong humanism and rationality at the same time. Therefore, neither strong tendencies toward excommunicaton nor zealous religious fanaticism have ever appeared in the Chinese history.

Thirdly, China is a multi – religion country. Throughout its history, there have been a national religion that worshiped Heaven, ancestors and the state; Daoism that occurred and developed in mainland China; religions from outside of the country like Buddhism, Christianity and Muslim, and formerly even Judaism, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. China is like a "religious garden", where religions from native religions to world religions can co – exist in peace. There never has been major bloodshed among religions in Chinese history, nor were there cruel and long – lasting wars like those that took place in western history.

(2) Another remarkable feature of Chinese religious culture is that it paid great attention to doing good in order to accumulate merit, teaching the people morality, and eliminating evil at the source. This is the chief spiritual purpose of Chinese religion.

For instance, Buddhism teaches mercy, "the deep and broad mercies of all people", namely, to have mercy on all living beings. Influenced by the thought of "respecting the Dao and Virtue" and "Paying back hatred with virtue" of *Laozi*, Daoism placed great upon emphasis the key function of morality and virtue in practicing the Dao. There were conflicts among Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism in the Northern and Southern Dynasties periods. In the end they reached a consensus that though they are different, they are one in terms of teaching human beings to do good. These "three religions" are actually three ways of teaching human beings to be moral. Therefore, the essence of traditional Chinese religions is to cultivate public morality. This kind of moral tradition also had great impact on Muslim and Christianity (including Protestantism) in China, making the moral character of their teachings more prominent.

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⑦ Mou Yhongjian, "Inherit and Carry forward the Fine Tradition of Chinese Religious Culture", in *Exploring Religion*, (Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2008), 86 – 87

In China, all kinds of religions could survive and develop only by virtue of their good moral reputation. Religious denominations that preach vendetta and punderism are seen as evil cults, thus can by no means be welcomed in broad daylight. Therefore, Chinese religion, with such a profound moral tradition could help to purchase more moral force instead of producing extremism.

(3) The third feature of Chinese religious culture is that it is good at combining loving religion with loving one's country.

China became a vassal of western imperial powers after the Opium War, and suffered a lot from western colonialism. Imperialist Japan invaded China, confronting the Chinese with the danger of losing their own country and race. In the war for the independence and liberty of our nation, almost all the personages from all different kinds of religions who loved the country joined actively in the social movements that defended their own country. Buddhism teaches that "benefiting all the living beings, making the world we live solemn". During the War of Resistance against Japan, Grand Master Hongyi appealed to the society that "you should never forget to save the country even when you are praying to Buddha." He called forth all the monks to resist the Japanese invasion. Chen Yingning, the Daoist master, advocated the spirituality of Daoism, saying that "one believes in Daoism in order to preserve oneself; one promotes Daoism in order to save the nation." Muslims in China established the "Muslim Association for saving the country". Muslim scholar Hu Songshan proclaimed that "Muslims are responsible for the rise and fall of the country". Muslim hero Ma Benzhai organized the "Muslim Group", and vowed to "ask for the blood back for the sake of our country and our people".

In China, the love for one's religion must be combined with the love for one's country. A religious believer who doesn't love one's country cannot live in this society. The religious believers that helped the imperialists invade China were condemned by the people…. At the same time, the mainstream of the religious circle in China is not constituted by the narrow nationalists. What the believers struggled for were the revival of the country and the equality of all ethnic groups. What they fought against were the oppression of the weak by the strong, and the ugly deeds of the evil against the good. They wish to get along well with all religions and ethnic groups all over the world, resolve hatred, fight against war, and defend the peace of the world.

(4) Chinese religious culture also has the fine tradition of advancing with the times, of being ready to innovate.

For example, Buddhism has been innovating in its theory ever since it was introduced to China, ending up with Chanzong, which bears Chinese characteristics, and "Buddhism in the World" that established in the modern times. Another example, from "Waidandao's theory of the immortality of the body" to "Neidandao's double exercises of nature and life", from "the new theory of the Spirituality of Daoism" to "Daoism in life", Daoism has been writing its history with consistent innovation. Islam combined with Chinese culture, bringing innovation in both teachings and ceremonies, especially diluting the idea of "the Divine War", and emphasizing the spirit of peace and mercy. Catholics and Protestants both faced the problem of localization. At the end of Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Qing Dynasty, Jesuits respected propriety and Confucianism in China, which received praise from the Chinese, while Dominicans and Francis attempted to use the authority of the Pope to forbid religious ceremonies in China, naturally ended up with being expelled by the Chinese. In the Republic of China, there was "a movement of non-Christianity". Christianity made an effort to establish "the Chinese Church", which aimed "on the one hand, to ask for Chinese Christians to take up their responsibility, on the other hand, to make good use of the grand tradition of eastern culture, to eliminate the belittled name of Yangjiao [foreign teaching] given to Christianity." The patriotic movement of the "Three Spontaneities" since the 1950s, and the theology established since the 1990s are expressions of consistent innovation as well.

(5) It is also one of the good traditions of Chinese religious culture to stress the importance of one's humanity and cultural qualities so as to make more contributions to social and cultural prosperity.

For example, Buddhism and Daoism, with their broad and rich cultural systems, have been exerting extensive and far-reaching influence over Chinese philosophy, Chinese morality, Chinese literature, Chinese

arts, and Chinese folklore, as well as China's science and technology and exchanges between China and other countries, thus becoming constituent parts of Chinese superior culture. In terms of philosophy, Buddhist wisdom in experience – based enlightenment and the Taoist doctrine of life and character have their distinctive features and both have played supporting roles in the enrichment and development of such aspects of Chinese philosophy as cosmology, ontology, mind – nature theory, life theory, epistemology, personal accomplishments and dialectics. Among the three theoretical peaks in the history of Chinese philosophy, including the wisdom of Zen Buddhism, Neo – Confucianism and the Internal Dan of Taoism, two were related to Buddhism and Taoism, while Neo – Confucianism that thrive in the Song Dynasty and the Ming Dynasty was reinvigorated by absorbing nourishment from Buddhism and Taoism. In terms of morality, traditional moral values advanced by Confucianism have been supplemented and enriched by the doctrines of the three retributions, moral living and five commandments and later ten commandments, which belong to Buddhism, and by quietness and passivity, redemption from bitterness, and severe treatment of self to benefit others, which belong to Taoism. ⑧

Mr. Mou's ideas, summed up above, have never been his only, but are shared by the older generation of Chinese scholars. Mr. Fang Tianli, when discussing the important roles religion plays in the construction of a harmonious society, briefly summarizes the superior traditions of Chinese religions in the following four points:

(1) Tolerance among different religions. As shown in religious history, different religions, in spite of their conflicts, have a tendency to be reconciled with each other. For instance, Buddhism and Taoism were reconciled after a period of conflict, and Taoism has long been reconciled with folk religions. Different beliefs between different Chinese religions have never caused long – term conflicts, or even caused religious. On the contrary, different religions enjoy their own proper places while getting along well with each other.

(2) Loving and benefiting others. For instance, Buddhism holds ideas of equality, mercy, tolerance and generosity, and Taoism holds ideas of equal mercifulness and goodwill between different kinds , and Christianity and Islam hold ideas of love, mercy, charity and public benefit, and all these ideas are conducive to harmonious relationships between one and others and between individuals and society.

(3) Attachment of the state and the church. It has been shown both in history and reality that Chinese religions favor the unity of attachment to the state and attachment to the church, leading to a positive maintenance of national sovereignty, national independence, national honor and national fundamental interests. For instance, Buddhism holds ideas of sovereign land with people enjoying happiness, and Taoism holds ideas of searching for the way of saving the country by spreading Taoism, while Islamism holds that every Muslim has a share in the responsibility for the fate of his country. All these ideas reflect a noble patriotism and flinty protection of the country among Chinese religions.

(4) Treatment of nature with care. Chinese religions generally acknowledge that the universe is a whole and man and nature form a whole, too. For instance, the doctrine of Conditioning Cause and coexistence in Buddhism holds that man and nature coexist, complementary to each other, according to various causes and conditions. Taoism considers heaven, earth and man as a whole. They all pay much respect to nature, advocating good treatment of all natural things and a harmonious coexistence of man and nature. ⑨

In a comparison between the summaries made by Mr. Mou and those made by Mr. Fang, two impressions are left. On the one hand, it is obvious that the former three points, among five points summarized by Mr. Mou and four points summarized by Mr. Fang, on the superior traditions of Chinese religions, together with their supporting arguments, are in substantial agreement, which may be synthesized into three superior traditions, including advocating of all – embracing, attention to morality and ethics, and solid attachment of

⑧ In the concluding part of his *Panorama of Chinese Religions*, Mr. Mou presents a comprehensive review on the historical contributions Chinese religions have made to Chinese culture and society, the details of which may be seen in the section "on the historical functions of Chinese religions", Chapter 13.

⑨ The details of the 4 points mentioned above may been seen in Fang, Litian, "The Construction of Harmonious Society and the Function of Religion", in *Chinese Religion* (No. 7, 2005)

the state and the church to each other. On the other hand, the last three points made by both Mr. Mou and Mr. Fang, though expressed from different angles, are complementary to each other, and all are conducive to a more complete elaboration of the superior traditions of Chinese religions in the future. As for the theoretical value and practical significance of this study, Mr. Mou explains as follows:

When looking back and observing the journey of Chinese religious culture in the light of crossing different cultures and from the standpoint of comparative religious studies, we will find some traces and characteristics of Chinese religious culture that are quite different from those of western religious culture, with the traditions of Chinese religious culture standing out as valuable in many respects. Especially in the world nowadays when national religious conflicts are getting more and more violent, and the antagonism between the United States with the background of Christianity and the Arabian countries with the background of Islam are getting more bitter, the superior traditions of Chinese religious culture show still more obviously its distinctive values and strong points, of which we can be proud, and which we are required to cherish as our inheritance and transmit, and it is important to do so, both for promoting the stability and prosperity of Chinese society and for promoting the world's peace and development. [10]

IV. Ideological Resources of the Chinese Cultural Tradition

Based on the above two sections, our train of research should go deeper to explore the inner relationship between the outstanding characteristics and superior traditions of Chinese religions, as discussed in previous sections, and ideological resources of the Chinese cultural tradition. Why should it be explored? Because religion, as Mr. Lou Yulie points out, "is an important social cultural phenomenon. Religion, as an important part of culture, covers its values, thought patterns, ways of life and religious customs, while being closely related to overall cultural ideas and concepts. Therefore, studies of a religious culture, whether national, regional or historical, cannot be made without the whole cultural environment it depends upon, otherwise its cultural characteristics would never be precisely revealed." [11]This opinion is applicable not only in studying the characteristics of Chinese religious culture, but also in understanding the cultural traditions of Chinese religions. So, only by exploring the ideological resources Chinese religious culture depends upon, putting Chinese religious culture into the whole of Chinese culture, can we arrive at a thorough understanding of the reasons why Chinese religious culture possesses the outstanding characteristics and superior traditions summarized above.

It is generally acknowledged in Chinese academic circles that the Chinese cultural tradition mainly embraces three ideological headstreams, namely, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Mr. Fang Litian has made a concise description of this as follows. Chinese traditional culture, under the unique Chinese geographical conditions and historical background, mainly consists of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism as three supporting pillars. Their essential thoughts are alike, all paying attention to humanistic values, but their connotations are remarkably different, presenting different branches of each cultural tradition. According to Mr. Fang, in order to advance the superior traditions of Chinese culture, the most urgent of all necessary tasks is to advance Chinese traditional philosophy, mainly the superior traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. History indicates that the superior traditions of the three philosophies, with widespread and enduring influence, have long been nurturing and permeating the spiritual world of the Chinese people and, as an intrinsic force to promote social harmony and national development, have been playing a positive

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10 Mou, Zhongjian. *An Exploration in Religion*. (Beijing: The Religious Culture Press, 2008), 86.

11 Lou, Yulie. "An Exhortion in Religious Study Theories in conformity with the Native Cultural Traditions". in *Chinese Religions* (No. 11, 2008)

role in promoting social progress and encouraging national advance. [18]This advocacy of the importance of carrying forward the traditional ideological resources of Chinese philosophy is in high affinity to the background of Chinese culture, learning and ideology. Mr. Fung Yu－lan pointed out that "the place philosophy occupies in Chinese civilization is always as important as that which religion occupies in many other civilizations." [19]Here, let us make some appraisals of how the older generation of Chinese scholars elucidated the philosophical ideological resources of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, by focusing on key theoretical issues and practical questions.

Can the Chinese cultural tradition make new contributions to the coexistence of civilizations? That is the question Mr. Tang Yijie has been thinking about for his refutation of the theory of civilizational conflict. In his essay "Conflicts between Civilizations and Coexistence of Civilizations", Mr. Tang focuses on the positive ideological resources provided by the philosophical ideas of Confucianism and Taoism. The following are some essential points.

1. Some positive ideological resources provided by Confucian humanity

It is said in *The Bamboo Slip from the Guodian Chu Tombs* that "Dao comes from feelings." Here Dao indicates humanity, that is, principles in human relations and social relations. Human relations begin to be built up from feelings, and that is the starting point of Confucian Humanity. According to Confucius, to be humane is to love people. Where does humanity come from? Confucius said, "humanity means loving people, among whom family and relatives are the foremost." Loving one's family and relatives is the essential feeling that naturally exists in human beings. What is more, loving people goes even further. In Confucian Humanity, loving one's family and relatives expands into loving all people. That is to say, the feeling of loving one's own people expands into a larger sense of loving all people.

It is not an easy job to expand loving one's own people into loving all people. In order to love all people, being honest and considerate is the essential code. One should "treat others in the same way as one would like to be treated", and "if one wishes to stand firm, one should help others stand firm, too, and if one wishes to be successful, one should make others successful, too." When humanity is spread into society, it is what Confucius said about "controlling oneself and regaining order". Zhu Xi, later, gave a further explanation: "to control is to fight against, and one covers his own private desires; to regain is to return, and order includes the laws of nature and universal morals." That is to say, one should get over one's own private desires and conduct oneself in conformity with grace and propriety. Fei Xiaotong pointed out that "only by controlling oneself can order be regained, and controlling oneself and regaining order is one of the essential requirements for one to step into society as a social being. One of the key differences between eastern culture and western culture perhaps lies in controlling oneself in the east and indulging oneself in the west."

Humanity is man's inner morality, and order includes grace and propriety that normalize people's conduct. "It is better to normalize people's conduct by peaceful means." So people normalize their conduct from spontaneity and consciousness, and from a heart of loving people. As Confucius said, loving people is one's own free choice, and humanity can never be reached by external forces. With a conscious pursuit for humanity, hearts of loving people may be expected to be formed in accordance with grace and propriety in the whole society, which is sure to be harmonious and peaceful. "Once self is controlled and order regained, the world returns to humanity."

These Confucian thoughts are hardly of less significance for the rulers of a country and for the ruling elite of developed countries in today's world (especially for the United States). It is through

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⑱ See Fang, Lilian. "To Carry Forward the superior traditions of Chinese culture", in *The People's Daily* (Feb. 4, 2005), 15.

⑲ Fung Yu－Lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, Edited by Derk Bodde, (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1976), 1

"benevolent governance" and "kingly ways", instead of "tyrannical ways", that a country is well governed and the world is made peaceful. Different cultures may coexist and develop together where benevolent governance or kingly ways prevail. If tyrannical ways prevail, conflicts between civilizations will arise, and cultures are apt to go in one direction so as to breed cultural hegemony. If Confucian humanity theories are applied to dealing with relations between different civilizations, no conflicts or even wars will aroused between them, and their coexistence will be realized. [14]

2. Some positive ideological resources provided by Taoism

In *Daodejing* by Lao Zi, Tao there is a basic concept, with natural inaction as its fundamental characteristics, which is said in Wang Chong's *Lunheng* to be a universal truth.

Natural inaction advocated by Lao Zi may be understood as follows: never do anything against people's will, and social tranquility and world peace will result. Lao Zi quoted ancient sages: "If I am in natural inaction, people will be naturally humanized; If I am in tranquility, people's conduct will be naturally normalized; If I make no disturbances, people will naturally get rich; If I have no desire, people will be naturally modest." That is to say, rulers of a country should not interfere much with people (should be in inaction), should not disturb people's normal life (should be in tranquility), should not do anything against people's will (should make no disturbances), and should not greedily exploit people (should have no desire), so that people will humanize themselves, normalize their conduct on their own, get rich by their own efforts, and prefer a modest way of life.

In today's interpretation of the above passage, natural inaction has significance not only for a country's internal peace but also for removing conflicts between different civilizations. Further interpretations of the above passage may be added as follows. The more a country interferes in other countries' affairs, the more disorderly the world will be. If big countries or powerful countries are apt to use force or threaten to use force, the world will get more and more turbulent and disorderly. If big countries or powerful countries plunder small countries or weak countries in the name of assisting them, small countries or weak countries will become poorer and poorer. If developed countries contend, from an ever-increasing desire, for the wealth and the reign of the world, it will become a terrible world destitute of morality. I think, therefore, that "natural inaction" may be a good remedy for the leaders of the new empire. If they accept that idea, the world will achieve peace and tranquility. [15]

3. Some positive ideological resources provided by Chinese Buddhist philosophical ideas

In modern society and in the course of the world's modernization, has Chinese Buddhist philosophy certain values? If it has, what are they in modern terms? That is the question Mr. Fang Litian answers in the conclusion of his magnificent book *The Essence of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy*. Therein, Mr. Fang first investigates the "fundamental characteristics and fundamental contradictions of human society", and then, having an eye on the developing | or, trends of development | trends in the 21st century, he explains some basic ideas of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, such as "conditioning cause", "cause and effect", "equality", "mercy", "harmony", etc. And finally, in view of the three basic contradictions in contemporary human society——contradictions between man and ego, between man and his fellow men, between man and nature, he elucidates the modern meanings, one by one, of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. Among them, what is dis-

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[14] Tang Yijie. "Conflicts between civilizations and coexistence of civilizations". Academic Mis- - - -Selected Essays from Journal of Peking University to Celebrating Its 50th Anniversary of Publication (Volum for Arts and Humanities). Cheng Yuzai, Tang Xiefan ed. (The Peking University Press, 2005), 518.

[15] *Ibid*, 583-584

cussed in the second part, under the title of "harmonizing the contradiction between man and his fellow men so as to maintain world peace", is closely related to what we are discussing now.

Mr. Fang discusses those relations among human beings, including multiple relations between man and his fellow men, between man and society, between man and his nation, between man and his country. Judging from this view, there are two big problems in today's world: one is disturbances and conflicts in some parts of the world, caused by such factors as national conflicts, religious conflicts, territorial disputes, contentions for resources and interests, from which some local people in those troubled areas are suffering; meanwhile nontraditional security problems such as terrorism become more and more serious. The other is the ever-widening gap between the rich north and the poor south of the world, owing to which quite a number of people are living in poverty.

With the two problems mentioned above, peaceful coexistence stands out. The two world wars in the 20th century slaughtered millions upon millions of people, and if world wars are repeat in the 21st century, the whole of mankind will possibly be doomed. In order to avoid wars, the causes of war must be rooted out. One of the causes of war is ignorance of the truth that human beings must coexist, rely on each other and be self-interested while altruistic. Also ignored are communication and reconciliation, and respect for other lives. The Buddhist concept of equality stresses equality between all human beings, who are all equal in nature, in personality, in dignity. Equality means respect and peace, and peace comes from a deep understanding of equality between one and others, and only based on equality can peace be real and enduring. Therefore, the Buddhist idea of mutual respect is conducive to human coexistence, and to their common pursuit of a pure land on earth. In addition, such theories as "mercy saving the world", "the five commandments" and "the ten commandments", all put "no killing" at the first place, prominently revealing Buddhist noble qualities in respecting life and respecting other fellows. And the Buddhist idea of mercy incarnates sympathy and affection with other fellows, far above war and showing care for peace. Since Master Taixu initiated humanistic Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism has been paying attention to world peace, longing for world peace, and appealing for world peace. It may well be said that to maintain world peace has become one of the utmost Buddha Dharma for contemporary Buddhism to carry forward, and Buddhism has been playing a unique and irreplaceable role in promoting world peace.

The wide gap between the rich north and the poor south and the poverty some people live in do not only concern the existence of disadvantaged groups and toiling masses, but also become root causes of social disorder, and constitute a direct threat to regional or even world peace. Buddhist ideas of equality and mercy provide direction for the solution to those questions. Buddhism has always been attaching importance to mercy saving the world, so as to relieve people's pain and make people happy. It is an important Buddhist practice to show generosity, giving welfare to others from a mind full of compassion, providing others with money, goods, strength and wisdom, and thus making others happy and wise. Nowadays, Buddhists on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are making great efforts to promote Buddha's comprehensive kindness and mercy to relieve all living creatures from suffering while seeking no comfort for oneself, and they are emphasizing philanthropy by helping the poor, providing medical care, supporting Hope Projects, converting delinquents and criminals, so that the beneficiaries are not only adequately provided for, but also promoted in their human qualities.

The significance of Chinese Buddhist philosophy in modern times lies in the fact that its important principles have been well elucidated and their functions have begun to be highlighted with originality. If the philosophical thought of Chinese Buddhism is applied to relieving human social contradictions, it is sure to be conducive to the promotion of people's humane qualities, to the alleviation of people's present sufferings, to the meeting of people's new demands, and even more, to the fa-

cilitation of the peaceful coexistence and common development of the world community (or, human society, depending on your meaning). ⑩

4. The Essential Philosophical Spirit of the Chinese Cultural Tradition

In the previous passages, the important practical significance of the ideological resources provided by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have been reviewed. The Chinese cultural tradition, which is a blend of the three ideological streams, is obviously an organic whole. What, then, is the philosophical essence of the whole Chinese cultural tradition? What kind of important ideological resources may this philosophical essence provide for the promotion of religious dialogue, for the reconciliation of conflicts between civilizations, and for the construction of a harmonious world? Those two questions may well be considered the frontier subjects Chinese scholars have been exploring since China's opening and reform, especially in the past dozen years. Among major academic achievements, those theoretical explorations made by the older generation of Chinese scholars, whose knowledge expands to cover both the East and the West, are the most notable ones.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Mr. Ji Xianlin summed up the essence of Chinese traditional culture in one sentence: it is the unity of heaven and man, and it is harmony. Nowadays, most Chinese scholars stress the idea of harmony when dealing with the philosophical essence of the Chinese cultural tradition, and explain harmony by Confucius's term "to reach a state merging while retaining differences". But this term alone is not adequate, though we understand the idea of harmony through it as a main concept. It should be raised to one of the basic categories of the Chinese philosophical tradition so as to reveal the wisdom it contains. Let us look at some understandings and interpretations offered in this category by Fung Yu-Lan and Zhang Dainian, the two founders of the discipline of the history of Chinese philosophy.

Confrontation is not only conflict, but also often the contrary of conflict, namely, harmony. Harmony is not sameness, and those in harmony with each other are not necessarily similar to each other. Harmony is not unity, either. Those in harmony with each other, though forming a unity because of their relationship with each other, reflect another relation outside the unity. Harmony consists of four aspects: the first is difference, that is to say, the condition of never being absolutely the same; the second is avoidance of mutual destruction, that is to say, no negation of each other; the third is complementation, that is to say, supporting each other; the fourth is a balance maintained between each other. ⑪

That is Mr. Zhang Dainian's definition of harmony, which is raised to the level of a philosophical concept and understood as one of the basic concepts of dialectics. So is Mr. Fung Yu-lan's training of thought. His *New Version of the History of Chinese Philosophy* (in 7 volumes), completed at the age of 95, concluded with the demonstration of the historical clarification[?] of the idea of Supreme Harmony (Taihe). He points out that Zhang Zai, a philosopher in the Song Dynasty, summarized the laws of dialectics in a few sentences: "a phenomenon must have two opposite sides, which must go in opposite directions. When they are opposite to each other, they must hate each other and fight against each other. As a result, their mutual hatred and fighting must tend to be harmonized and dissolved." ("Supreme Harmony", *Discovery of Veiled Truths*) Harmonization is an important category in Zhang Zai's philosophical system, and he says at the beginning of *Discovery of Veiled Truths*: "Supreme harmony is the wisdom of Dao, where there are factors conceived to be op-

⑩ Fung, Tianli. *The Essences of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy*. Vol. 2. (Beijing: The Renmin University of China Press, 2002), 1218-1219.

⑪ Zhang Dainian. "Philosophy Thinking——One of Five Lectures on Unity of Heaven and Man". *The Complete Writing of Zhang Dainian*. Vol. 3. (The Hebei Province Press, 1996), 35.

posite to each other, such as ascending and descending, floating and sinking, motion and inaction, and wherein arise antipathies, conflicts, fights, victories and defeats, shrinking and expanding." So what is to be harmonized is full of contradictions and conflicts, rather than the contrary. "Factors opposite to each other, such as ascending and descending, floating and sinking, motion and inaction," are contradictions, while "antipathies, conflicts, fights, victories and defeats, shrinking and expanding" are struggles. Therefore, according to Zhang Zai, a normal state of society is a state of harmonizing contradictions, and so is the normal state of the universe. This state is called "Supreme Harmony". Mr. Fung goes on, with a deeper understanding, to the following conclusion:

In classical Chinese philosophy, "harmonization" is different from "sameness". "Sameness" cannot tolerate "differences", while "harmonization" tolerates "differences", and cannot be called what it is without "differences" to be harmonized.

It is an objective dialectics that "hatred must be harmonized and dissolved". No matter how people may wish it to be otherwise, modern society, especially the international community, has been developing in accordance with this objective dialectics.

Modern history has been developing in the direction of harmonization of hatred, but the progress of the development of history is usually circuitous, taking as much time as necessary, sometime even centuries……Human beings are the most wise and rational of all creatures, and they will never take the road of "keeping hatred to the end". So, harmonization represents the future of both the Chinese philosophical tradition and philosophy worldwide. [18]

The above perceptions of Mr. Fung and Mr. Zhang not only represent the identification of the basic philosophical essence of Chinese cultural traditions to be found among Chinese scholars, but also find echoes among learned scholars in other countries. For instance, Hans Küng, advocate of religious dialogue and global ethics, when introducing Chinese religious cultural traditions to a western television audience, said that in the whole tradition of Chinese philosophy, a consistent trend is the seeking for a harmony between heaven and earth. Even up to now, the Chinese people are still seeking for the harmony between heaven and earth, between man and nature, between mortal and immortal, between oneself and society. He calls this tradition of Chinese philosophy the "great harmony", and believes that it does only not have great significance for China's future, but also will make a great contribution to the construction of world ethics. [19]

As for the prospect of the development of human society and world culture, Mr. Fei Xiaotong has a wise saying: "one appreciates one's own beauty and appreciates others' beauty, too, and a mutual appreciation of each other's beauty leads to a universal harmony in the world. Can this "harmonious spirit", full of "appreciations", provide "Chinese experience with ancient wisdom" for promoting religious dialogue, dissolving conflicts between civilizations, and building up a harmonious world? My answer is Yes.

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[18] The above overview and quotations are seen in Fung Yu-lan. *New Version of The History of Chinese Philosophy*. Chapter 81, Vol. 7; See also Fung Yu-lan. *The History of Chinese Modern Philosophy*. The Guangdong People's Press, 1999. pp. 251-254.

[19] Refer to Hans Küng: *Spurensuche Die weltreligionen auf dem weg Hans Küng*, Chinese version, Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2007, p. 180

中文题目：

共建和谐世界的中国文化资源——中国前辈学者探索成果评述

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提要：基于宗教对话的重要性和紧迫性，国内外学术界近十几年来越来越注重反思东西方宗教文化传统，以发掘有助于促进宗教对话、化解文明冲突、共建和谐世界的历史经验和思想资源。本文所评论的是中国老一代著名学者所做的相关理论探索，主要包括二部分内容：一是，关于中国宗教文化历史特点的重新认识；二是，关于中国宗教文化优良传统的概括总结；三是，中国文化传统可为促进宗教对话、化解文明冲突、共建和谐世界提供的思想资源。

关键词：宗教对话、和谐世界、中国宗教文化传统、中国文化的思想资源