

## 摘 要

宗教作为一种意识形态,一直对人的社会生活和性格塑造起着潜移默化的作用,而不同宗教间的碰撞与交流自宗教诞生之日起也从未停歇。与西方宗教相比,中国传统文化中的宗教构成极为复杂,不像西方及其他主要外族宗教那样多为单一宗教,前者的宗教情绪也远不如后者那样强烈。中国本土产生的主要宗教当属儒教,儒教体现了中华民族在思想道德和生活准则上的集中反映,其对国人性格特征也产生了深远的影响。透过美国华裔作家的笔端,儒家思想对于那些身处大洋彼岸的华裔的影响也并不显见。而基督教对美国的政治、经济、文化都起着深刻而广泛的作用,故而华裔在不同程度上也会受到基督教的影响。儒教与基督教虽然本质上是两种在很多方面都有不同教旨的宗教,但是两者仍有相通、相融的地方。在美国华裔作家尤其是美国华裔女作家的作品中就能充分地体现出这种相互对立、相互依存的关系。

虽然美国物质繁华,但在认同美国主流文化的同时,华裔还是会不自觉地产生异化疏离感,从而造成一定程度上的信仰危机。而宗教就可以被看作是一种缓冲地带,充分汲取基督教与儒教的精神可以赋予华裔以力量和智慧,对于摆脱生存困境、缓解心态失衡起到了一定的积极作用。

本文从阐释儒教与基督教这两种不同宗教一些主要教义出发,结合谭恩美的《灶神之妻》、黄玉雪的《五姑娘》、任壁莲的《典型的美国人》以及伍慧明的《骨》这四位华裔美国女作家的作品,分析两种宗教对当代华裔社会生活、心理构建所产生的影响与启示,剖析华裔作品中不常被研究界关注的宗教因素,以期为美国华裔文学研究做出一点贡献。

**关键词:** 华裔, 儒教, 基督教, 碰撞, 结合

## Abstract

As an ideology, religion exerts its far-reaching impact on man's social life and the formation of his character. Since the birth of religion, the collision and integration between different schools never seems to cease. Religion plays a fairly important role in Chinese traditional cultural customs which differs from Western culture in many ways. It is mainly because of the diverse structure of Chinese traditional religion, which is unlike the mono-religion of the West. The Chinese religious spirit is far more intense than that of the latter. As China's main religion, Confucianism is the concentration of the moral reflection and psychological wisdom of the Chinese nation and has a profound and far-reaching influence upon Chinese both at home and abroad. Since America is a country dominated by Christianity, Chinese Americans find an echoing voice and get more closely involved with Christian doctrines. Christianity and Confucianism are basically two separate religions with different emphasis, but there still exists communication and understanding between them. The influence of mutual-collision and mutual-combination has been illustrated in works of Chinese American literature and in particular some works of the female writers'.

Chinese Americans have witnessed and enjoyed the material richness of America; but they still can't get rid of the feeling of alienation and strangeness. To some extent this feeling tends to cause a crisis of belief where religion can act as a buffer zone. Embedded themselves with deep spirits of Christianity and Confucianism, Chinese Americans could be entitled with strength and wisdom to get rid of the predicament of life and soften their psychological imbalance.

Through the introduction of some basic Christian and Confucian doctrines, this thesis intends to analyze the influence of the double religions as it is embodied in the literary texts of four female Chinese American writers: Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Gish Jen's *Typical American* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*. It is expected that my thesis could make a tiny contribution to the research of Chinese American studies.

**Key Words:** Chinese Americans, Christianity, Confucianism, collision, integration

## 前 言

宗教是民族共有的现象,作为哲学思想体系的一部分,处于人类文化的核心。不同宗教间的摩擦与交流自宗教诞生之日起便从未停歇。宗教对于不同文明的影响也是广泛而深远。

20世纪60年代以前,美国华裔作家的作品主要是用辩白的方式表述华人及华人文化,与主流霸权话语隐性对抗。自20世纪60年代末期,美国黑人“民权运动”的兴起从而引发了整个美国社会政治、文化生活的巨大变革。美国华裔民族意识逐渐觉醒,美国华裔文学获得了新的发展的契机。美国华裔文学形成于美国多元文化的人文环境中,同时也是东西方宗教影响下杂交的新品种,因而兼具儒教与基督教的基因。一方面,美国华裔作家接受美国的教育,形成了美国主流基督教文化的认知范式;另一方面,他们深受父辈影响对中国文化、对中国儒教的教义有一定的了解,得以使他们的写作充分利用这一背景优势,以独特的儒家文化为创作视角和主题意蕴,以强烈的异质性和独特的风格成为美国主流文化的讨论话题。可是尽管许多华裔作家已经成功打入美国的主流文化,可他们仍时常会不自觉地产生与主流文化的疏离感、异化感。产生这种微妙的心态是因为他们的特殊身份使他们的话语系统既不完全等同于西方社会,又与中国本土大相径庭。就像中国文化形象在许多华裔美国文学中的再创造、再构建一样,对于博大精深的儒家精神的理解,这些华裔作家难免会存在片面不实之处,这其中有很多复杂的原因,其中之一是因为华裔自身因为家庭演变,历史、教育等原因,对儒教的了解常常是以“道听途说”或家庭长辈口耳相传的叙说方式来间接接触儒家的教义。而中国在西方人的心中,留下的印象往往是闭关锁国,思想狭隘,有些整个民族千人一面的感觉。但从严格意义上来说,儒教并不能算得上是一种宗教,但它却具有宗教的特色。更多的时候儒教是站在哲学的高度教授人如何待人处事。因此,西方人对中国的片面理解常常会对波及华裔,影响其正确全面的理解儒家思想。

儒教与基督教各为中西方文明的两大根基,各自兴盛已有两千余年。虽然说两种宗教追求的根本目标各不相同,儒家思想的终极目标可以归纳为修身齐家治国平天下,而基督教作为一种出世的哲学,其宗旨则是追求永生,在现世则以耶

稣为榜样，爱自己爱别人，追求与神的无限接近。而作为一种指导人的生活、树立正确理念的宗教，儒家的观念在很多方面与基督的教义都有相似之处。例如“三纲五常”发端于儒家的早期思想，是儒家对伦理道德、家庭关系等方面人所应该遵循的基本规定，可其对于国人的影响却十分深刻而广泛。而圣经里也相似地教导人民“在上有权柄的，人人当顺服他。凡拒抗掌权的，就是拒抗神的命令。”（罗马书13：1，2）在家庭关系上，儒家倡导女性要遵循“三从四德”，而圣经里也有相似的表述“男人是女人的头，”（哥林多前书11：3）“男人不是为女人造的，女人乃是为男人造的。”（哥林多前书11：9）而父母与子女关系上，儒教倡导“父慈子孝”的家庭伦理道德规范。赡养父母是子女应尽的道德义务，是对父母养育之恩和抚育之情的报答；另一方面，儒家要求父母慈爱子女，把子女视为自己生命的一部分。而在基督教教义中，对于子女孝顺父母也曾作为重要的命令列在十诫当中。又如儒家对于人与神的关系提出“君子有三畏：畏天命，畏大人，畏圣人之言”；而基督教也强调人“要敬畏主与君王。”（箴言24：21）作为儒家核心教义的仁爱 and “天人合一”的思想，与基督教的博爱和“天下一家”的宗旨都有相近共通之处。

一种教义，一种理论在另一文化系统中的作用，同它在母体环境中的作用是不一样的，有时甚而连原意也会变形。因此即使有时在华裔作品中，“中国形象与中国文化”可能会发生不同程度上扭曲，儒家思想的社会功能也被过度理想化或丑化。而这种转化实际是根据他们的语言和心理，根据他们接触的新的文化的思维方式来进行的。这种“西化”或“欧化”，有时不能简单地看成是对儒家思想的曲解，而是他们站在西方基督教文化的价值系统中，对儒家思想的一种蒸馏。在这一过程中，很有价值的一点是，儒家思想作为他者被观察和被投射，这种被观察的意义非常重要。唯有如此，才能更好地理解儒家的思想精髓。

本文从阐释儒教与基督教这两种不同宗教一些主要教义出发，结合四位华裔美国女作家的作品，分析两种宗教对当代华裔社会生活、心理构建所产生的影响与启示，梳理出华裔在应对生活困境、摆脱思想困顿时可供选择的一个缓冲地带——儒教与基督教的教义。著名美国华裔女作家谭恩美的《灶神之妻》是关于一个年长的华裔女性移民向深受美国文化滋润的女儿讲述被夫权压迫，失去自我与尊严的一段历史。在母亲与女儿得以最终沟通的表面形式下，是作家试图用会

说英语的中国神仙“莫愁”与代表美国基督教个体文化的女儿进行沟通的尝试。而在早一辈华裔女作家黄玉雪的代表作《五姑娘》一书中，玉雪的父亲深受基督教教义的影响，突破儒家女性无须并且无权受教育的教条，为玉雪提供了受教育的机会，同时给玉雪灌输了博爱等基督教的思想，为玉雪的个人成长发挥了积极的引导作用。新生代女性华裔作家任壁莲在其奠基之作《典型的美国人》中更是成功地塑造了一位神的使者的形象，张家的大姐特里莎。每一次在拉尔夫一家遇到大麻烦，濒临绝望无助的深渊时，特里莎都会像守护神一样悄然出现，帮助拉尔夫解决困难，共渡难关。而姐弟之间的关系更是本书的一大出彩之处。传统的儒家思想一直强调男性在家庭中的主导作用，即使身在大洋彼岸，拉尔夫也时刻强调他是一家之主并且总在努力维持他是“家里的头”的地位，而对于总时无私爱护、帮助自己的姐姐特里莎，拉尔夫也总是以怨报德。在弟弟拉尔夫深受金钱至上的物质主义的影响、做着空洞的美国发财梦就要落入无底深渊时，特里莎更是凭借牺牲自己的生命的善举来唤醒拉尔夫的良知，为拉尔夫得到宽恕、救赎自己创造了条件。而神再一次彰显了他的奇异恩典，小说结尾特里莎奇迹般的苏醒可以看作是最好的例证。对于基督教与儒教对华裔生活的影响，伍慧明的成名之作《骨》之中也有多处涉及。

总的来说，在中国人与人的关系中，呈现出的是一种自然关系。人们之间最基本的自然关系是血缘关系，而血缘关系又常常通过等级关系来具体划分，这就构成了儒家文化人际关系的基础。而在基督教的教义中，强调的是一种个人平等，最大化实现个人利益这样一种关系。因此对于生活在美国的华裔，如何找到这两种关系之间的切入点，实现这两种关系间的有机平衡就显得尤其重要。这些在美国土生土长的华裔，与中国文化的联系基本都是通过父辈甚至祖辈对往事的追忆和其他间接的渠道建立起来的。他们与生俱来的中国血统和父母潜移默化中传授给他们的儒家文化和思想使他们不可能像普通的美国人那样来看待东方和中国；同样，由于其在美国出生成长，他们也不可能像中国人或其父辈那样去理解儒家文化，参悟儒家思想。而在这两种宗教对他们的影响与作用间找到平衡点，充分汲取基督教与儒教的精神，华裔才会有足够的勇气和充足的智慧，去努力摆脱生存的困境、缓解心态的失衡。

# 学位论文独创性声明

本人郑重声明：

- 1、坚持以“求实、创新”的科学精神从事研究工作。
- 2、本论文是我个人在导师指导下进行的研究工作和取得的研究成果。
- 3、本论文中除引文外，所有实验、数据和有关材料均是真实的。
- 4、本论文中除引文和致谢的内容外，不包含其他人或其它机构已经发表或撰写过的研究成果。
- 5、其他同志对本研究所做的贡献均已在论文中作了声明并表示了谢意。

作者签名： 周霞忻

日期： 2006.5.18

# 学位论文使用授权声明

本人完全了解南京师范大学有关保留、使用学位论文的规定，学校有权保留学位论文并向国家主管部门或其指定机构送交论文的电子版和纸质版；有权将学位论文用于非赢利目的的少量复制并允许论文进入学校图书馆被查阅；有权将学位论文的内容编入有关数据库进行检索；有权将学位论文的标题和摘要汇编出版。保密的学位论文在解密后适用本规定。

作者签名： 周霞忻

日期： 2006.5.18

## **Chapter I Introduction**

### **A. Chinese Americans' Inheritance of Religion**

To most Chinese, religion is more like a subconscious obligation which they have embedded within their makeup. They may not be able to clearly understand religions or distinguish among different religious schools, but due to the kind of authority religion has had in China for thousands of years; it has become an inherited Chinese tradition. Confucianism has been a dominant Chinese religion for a long time which undoubtedly has played an important role in forming Chinese character and influencing Chinese behavior, and it still exerts a far-reaching impact on overseas Chinese. Such as in some classical Confucian doctrines, it is highly emphasized on controlling human's of emotions, forming full obedience to authority and bringing honors to their ancestors. The families and society are emphasized more than the individual. As a typical Confucian golden rule, to achieve harmony is practiced and welcomed by most relative conservative first generation Chinese Americans. To achieve harmony is not merely applicable in keeping up stability of the family life but also instructive to maintain the social harmony. In order to attain this role, it needs everyone in the society to define and properly understand their role in the society, and thereby to behave oneself. That partly interprets why "golden mean" is regarded as the most important character of the Chinese and why Chinese are habitual to be worldly wise and keep their safe position in daily life.

Since Chinese-Americans have lived on the land where emerged modern Western culture has profound Christian characteristics, Christianity has gradually become an influential religion to them as well:

In recent years, Chinese immigrants have been converting to Christianity at an aggressive speed. Nearly a third of Chinese Americans now attend church, compared with the small fraction that did 50 years ago. In the same time frame, the number of Chinese churches in the United States has grown from 66 to more than 1,000. The increase in church membership comes, at a time, when Chinese

are among the largest and fastest growing ethnic groups in the US. In the past, many Chinese immigrants have come to America without a commitment to a religion. Historically, Christianity has been stigmatized in Chinese culture as a relic of Western imperialism. "One more Christian, one less Chinese," was an old saying directed at Chinese converts. Now, as increasing numbers of Chinese build churches, they've become part of a revitalization of American Christianity within the immigrant groups. (Phuong, 1 April, 2006).

In Christianity these Chinese Americans have found an echoing voice, a sort of strength which urges people to face the harsh reality with optimism. Christianity affirms individual responsibility; it emphasizes the individual's responsibility to the community as well. Christian doctrines also stress that it is essential and indispensable for everyone to love others unselfishly and unconditionally, no matter they are friends, family members, enemies or strangers. Gold can't be pure and nobody is perfect. Facing human's careless wrong doings or misdeeds, Christianity encourages humankind to confess and repent with sincerity and truthfulness. Only through sincere and truthful confession, human could relieve their psychological burden and be rescued by God's mercy. In a word, Christianity brings a new way for Chinese Americans to cope with their life's troubles and ease their crisis of spiritual belief.

### **B. Research Actuality and the Writing Purpose of This Thesis**

Among the big family of American literature, Chinese American branch is still a new member embedded with energetic vigor. It does not take too long for Chinese American literature goes through its early unnoticed state into present unprecedented prosperous phase. "Today, almost every month, a wonderful new book by an Asian American, is published.....," Maxine Hong Kingston, one of the most famous Chinese American writer have summarized current Chinese American writing's flourishing situation. The state of prosperity at the same time impels the research on Chinese American literature to gain increasing attention. It is inspiring to find that there are a large number of students and papers completed that take Chinese American literature



as their research focus year by year. During the past two decades, the major concerns of Chinese American studies mainly center on the search of identity, the conflicts between the two cultures, views on interracial marriage, the generation gap and the pursuit of the American dream etc. These major concerns have promoted the further development of Chinese American literature to a great extent. However, to judge Chinese American literature by its quantity and quality in a rational and subjective way; the result is a bit frustrating and less than ideal. Chinese American literature is still being treated as the new member of the literary circle. Some of the themes and techniques composed by the writers are similar to conventional literature, and that directly affects the audience's appetite. Meanwhile even though some Chinese American writers are recognized by the mainstream culture, Chinese American writing still suffers marginalized discrimination or misunderstanding. This is in spite of the fact that Chinese immigrants constitute nearly 30 per cent of the total immigrants to the US over the past two decades. To a certain extent, this marginalization of Chinese American literature is because it is confined mainly to novels and by comparison little poetry or drama is written.

Chinese American literature has undergone a booming period since the beginning of the 1980s, not only in scholarly research and the university curriculum but also in the variety of literary creations and experiments. While certain concerns and themes persist more openings have developed for various kinds of literary explorations of identity politics and cultural expression. However reading Chinese American literature often involves a perpetual process of questioning and negotiating among different Chinese cultural traditions and American civilization. There are different versions of historiography, different immigrant experiences and the reading process is thereby a process of crossing racial borders, culture, language, gender and religion. This process is interwoven through an intricate relationship of power, dominance, and subaltern resistance.

It must be clarified that although past studies through various perspectives have discussed many outer specialties endowed in Chinese American literature; this thesis is by no means a simple repetition of what has been done before. It aims to examine

and justify the root spirit of Chinese American writing from a possibly new perspective. Namely, in relation to the collision and integration between Christianity and Confucianism that is embodied in the works of a few female Chinese American writers. There is no intention to discuss in an overall way how these two philosophies intermingle with each other, but by making an inquiry into some key doctrines and display the interfusion of semi-unified and semi-opposite relationships between Christianity and Confucianism. Residing in America a high developed society, Chinese Americans have witnessed and shared the booming buoyant material civilization. However, most of them unconsciously acquire a peculiar feeling of alienation and strangeness in their attitude towards America and China. Spiritually, Christianity and Confucianism also influence their outlook of the world or their way of life differently. Through an analysis of the conflict and integration between the two religions that embodies in some female Chinese American writers' works, it is to find how religious doctrines influence Chinese Americans' daily routine life. Religion is never far away from human being and it is instructive and beneficial for human to form a proper outlook. The protagonists enrich themselves by absorbing some meaningful and educational doctrines, in the mean time; they get strength and courage based on the accumulation of spirits of Christianity and Confucianism in dealing with tough situations such as their crisis of belief or search for self-identity. The formation of such kind of buffer zone is beneficial to relieve Chinese Americans' tensions and create a harmonious environment. It is expected that based on this new approach at least some small contributions can be made to the study of Chinese American literature.

This thesis will be divided into four chapters. Chapter I is an introduction. A brief summarized Confucian and Christian doctrines will be presented in Chapter II. In Chapter III, the author attempts to give an analysis of the collision and combination between Christianity and Confucianism and the relevant influences embodied in some female Chinese American writers' works. Men are born as unforgivable sinner. Through thorough confession and redeem of this life's wrong doings, men can receive God's forgiveness and be rescued from their sufferings thereby. In Jade Snow Wong's

*Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Gish Jen's *Typical American* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, all these female Chinese American protagonists bodily bear strong Confucian signs. Dwelling in the society surrounded with abundant Christian doctrines, they form a close touch with Christianity little by little. Christian doctrines help them to discover their own value of existence as an individual not as an appending belong. They attain their salvation through their accumulation of knowledge and self-cultivation. It is said that only through confessing to God, human could get peaceful mind and be rescued thereby. To most Chinese Americans, they interpret the process of confession in a combined way, they not only confess verbally but also in a non-verbal way, that means even though confessing to God is inseparable, they could also choose to confess to their family members so as to fulfill their special confession expecting their salvation. Love is another key Christian doctrine and this is welcomed and embraced by Chinese Americans. As the Christian doctrine acclaims "God is LOVE," (John 4:16) here love is equal to agape love which has extended bodily Eros up to a high level that is to love somebody regard his or her social classification or economic status. Nevertheless, to Chinese Americans, love not only includes God's love but also contains family love or so-called human love that is highly stressed in Confucian doctrines. In *the Kitchen God's wife* and *Typical American*, when the protagonists face some severe difficulties or dilemmas, different type of love sustain them to live on and fight off all the misfortunes. Chapter IV is the general conclusion of this thesis.

## **Chapter II Brief Doctrines of Christianity and Confucianism**

### **A. Some Basic Christian Doctrines**

#### **1. The Deity and Humanity of Christ**

Christianity is a fundamental philosophy which has presided over the Occidentals for many decades. Christianity seeks participation in the affairs of the world by emphasizing human's role in this life that could lay a solid foundation for their afterlife. Christianity signifies the inequality between the venerated object (God) and the self-humbling human being. God is the only Supreme Being. He is holy, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. They are all coeternal and of the same nature. There is one God existing as three entities: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each is coequal, co-powerful and coeternal with the other. Without the coexistence of the three elements there is no God, all comprise the one God. There is only one God in all existence. Why saying God possesses humanity is because God is holy and omniscient. Only God could sacrifice His own life so as to atone for the sins of the world, this is His Deity and holiness. And God is willing to send His son Jesus to taste and experience human being's suffering, this is His humanity. Jesus is the only mediator between God and human. "He advanced in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and human." (Luke 2:52) As a human, Jesus is the same to us in every respect except sin and the consequences of sin. Like any human being born with blood and flesh, Jesus experiences love, joy, sorrow and anxiety; He is also tempted once for a while. Facing the social injustice or troublesome living situation, He is compassionate, sympathetic and is moved with indignation towards human's suffering; He is angry, grieved and experienced agony in the mean time. He shares with human's suffering, "He offers prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." (Heb 6:7) Christ, having taken human nature, "a true body and a reasonable soul," into indissoluble union with His Deity, namely human nature could never be separated from His Deity. Christ's humanity which never had a personality independent of that of the Son of God for one moment. Christ's death was not the separation of His human nature from His Divine nature but the separation of His "reasonable soul"

from His “true body” and never were they separated from His Divinity. His human nature was not equal to His Divine nature but always remained in the two distinct natures. The human nature of Christ can never attain to the infinite wisdom of His Divine nature.

## **2. Human’s Depraved Nature and Their Need of Salvation**

Human was said to be originally made pure and without sin, and human was created in the image of God. When Adam and Eve rebelled at God’s will by eating the forbidden fruit, human’s sin is turned up. Since then on, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). Here, sin is not equal to crime. Human might not even feel guilty since guilt is not a feeling but a judicial reality. Human is sinful because of human’s disobedience of God’s will, that is partly interpret why Christianity believe that human is born as an unforgivable sinner. And that directly affects human’s after life according to Christian doctrines. Therefore human is in need of God’s salvation urgently and that can be granted through God’s mercy. “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy” (Titus 3:5) Salvation is a gift from God; it cannot be earned by good works or baptism (an act of obedience that symbolizes ones commitment to God), but by faith. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) It is not difficult to understand why Christianity attaches great importance on human’s faith in God. Spiritually close to Christian doctrines can human apprehend Jesus’ sacrifice is for atoning human’s sin, His resurrections is seen as God, the Father's seal of approval on that life. Through Jesus’ self-sacrifice, His generosity is presented to human, thus human should listen to God’s words and will and repent and redeem for his or her wrong doings. Human could be rescued and get his or her salvation by following sincere repentance and confession.

The Christian view of life is one of optimism. The Christian faith encourages people to serve the family, the society, the nation and the world at large. They feel that the more they serve the more they can glorify God and get closer to spiritual salvation.

This life's proper behaviors closely connect to after life's situation. God loves the world that He creates and assigns His only son Jesus to the world with an aim to save human from falling into the sinful abyss. Therefore, "whoever believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). "Such a life is not physical, or carnal, desires of flesh; it is spiritual life and comes from God." (John 1: 12-13). "Such life is not obtained after death, but begins in the present world, when human is born against in Jesus." (John 5:13). Such life is a gift from God's mercy and aims to overcome sin, and strengthen the previous feeble spiritual life instead of keeping with the desire of the flesh. Such life is human's communication with God and the spiritual foundation of one's salvation.

### 3. God's Unconditional Agape Love

"God is love." (John 4:8) This does not mean that one of God's attributes is love; but that He is love and therefore everything else about Him and His acts must be understood in the context of this love. The greatest stumbling block to understand God's love is our own humane love. Christianity believes that by it is inaccurate and improper by projecting human ideals of love on to God. By doing this, God's love will be reduced to a human level; that will lead to misrepresent God and also distort His saving grace in Christ. Speaking of Christian love, it is another point needed to be understood in Christian doctrines. In our modern language, 'love', the single word, can't cover the original meaning of 'love' originated in the Christian doctrines. In the New Testament, there are at least four words chosen to tell of divine and human love. *Storge* is used to describe family love or love for one's own relatives; *Phileo* is used to convey affectionate love between two lovers or a kind of brotherly love; *Eros* is an obscure word and its common meaning is love between the opposite sexes, it is called as "heavenly *eros*" (platonic love). *Eros* is defined as a kind of love detaching oneself from sensual and materialistic interests. Generally speaking, humane love (heavenly *eros* or *phileo*) is changeable, conditional and therefore reciprocal. It needs arousing and depends on outward beauty or goodness. When this humane love is projected onto God, it converts the gospel into legalism or conditional good news or

good advice. It then implies that human must do something good before God can save or even listen to him. Humane love at its very best (heavenly *eros*) is self-seeking. We are by nature egocentric and therefore everything we do is polluted with self-love or selfishness. “We are all slaves to our own way.”(Isaiah 53:6) “Consequently all of us without exception fall short of God’s glory or ‘*agape*’ love.”(Romans 3:23) In the contrary, *agape* love is used to mean loving others without a selfish motive. God’s love towards everyone alive is such sort of unconditional *agape* love. In contrast to our earthly love, God’s love (*agape*) is invariable, unconditional and therefore spontaneous. God’s love is independent of human’s goodness or self-worth. It is for this reason the Bible clearly tells that mankind is saved by grace alone—undeserving or unmerited of any favor. But human’s love is the very opposite for it is self-giving. “For this reason Christ did not cling to His equality with the Father, but emptied Himself and became God’s slave, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” [Philippians 2:6-8] Jesus’ self-sacrifice gives a good comparison between human love and God’s *agape* love. All His earthly life Christ demonstrated God’s ‘*agape*’ love. Jesus lived for the benefit of others; He actually became poor for our sakes that we “through His poverty might be rich.” (Corinthians 8:9) God’s love is not self-love but a kind of love that produced in human’s indwelling spirit. Only through human’s sincere faith and spiritually drawing near the distance between God and man, God’s love can be apprehended and appreciated accordingly.

## **B. Some Basic Confucian Principles**

### **1. The Three Cardinal Guides and the Five Constant Virtues**

The central theme in Confucianism is that of relationships and the differing duties arising from the different status one holds in relation to others. Individuals are held to simultaneously stand in different degrees of relationship with different people. Confucianism regards the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues as the keystone in constituting the social and ethical framework. The three cardinal guides are: the Ruler guides the subject, the father guides the son, and the husband guides the wife. The five constant virtues are: benevolence (humanity), righteousness, propriety,

wisdom and fidelity. Generally speaking, Chinese society is a big kinship family with strictly ranked partitions. Everyone, every family has a position in this sequence of kinship rank. According to one's position in the family hierarchy, one's social status is decided accordingly. The three cardinal guides regulate the normal order among social members; human's power varies due to different social ranks. The five constant virtues thereby put forward the moral and ethical requests for everyone to obey. These moral principles located in daily customs and traditions are reinforced through education. Confucius' social philosophy largely revolves around the concept of benevolence, compassion or loving others. Such concern for others is demonstrated through the practice of forms of the Golden Rule: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others." (Confucius, Analects, Chap.12) Subjecting oneself to ritual does not mean suppressing human's desires, but instead it means learning how to reconcile human's own desires with the needs of their family and community. On the human level, all are *born into the world in a relation to our parents and the social world. That is the reason why Confucianism concerns mostly the harmonization of a human being's relations with his fellowmen.* One of the main concerns of Confucianism is the meaning of the social order and the meaning of human existence therein. In Confucianism, a life in harmony must be firmly related to a life of virtue. Virtue is seen as both the excellence of natural human abilities and the harmonization of human relationships. Obligation is considered necessary as it helps to form and achieve virtue. Confucius cherished such virtues as wisdom, humanness and bravery. Confucianism strongly stresses an individual's responsibility as righteousness when it conforms to the golden rules. Whenever human comes into the world, the responsibility accompanies he or she for the entire life, and mostly the responsibility is towards the family, the community and the whole society. Confucianism does not value an individual's responsibility towards oneself the way Christianity does. Confucianism regards both life and death as a responsibility to society, the fundamental concept of the Confucian view of life and death, is "[l]ife and death are determined by fate, wealth and nobleness, are determined by heaven," (Confucius, Analects, Chap.12) thereby Confucianism *emphasizing life rather than death. Since Confucianism lays more emphasis on the*



responsibility in human's lifetime, it pays less attention to the world after death. In a broader sense, the concept of "life" should be taken as the essence of "benevolence". Chinese are generally in harmony with nature because of their beliefs such as the need to "awe the mandate of Heaven" (Confucius, Analects, Chap.16) and the necessity to be benevolent regarding of everything under Heaven and on Earth as an integral unity.

## **2. Five Principal Relationships of Confucianism**

Confucianism is the essence of Chinese culture. Confucianism stresses the importance to live in a proper way during this life. Confucianism believes that people because of their nature, desire to live in the company of other people, that is, in the society. It is only in society that people reach their fullest development. Therefore, it is important for people to know how to properly behave themselves in the society, which means, understanding their relations with other people. According to Confucianism, each person has a specific place in society and certain duties to fulfill. Confucius hoped that, if people knew what was expected of them, they would behave correctly. Therefore, he set up five principal relationships in which most people are involved. These relationships were (1) Ruler and subject; (2) father and son; (3) the elder and the younger; (4) husband and wife; (5) friend and friend. All except the last involve the authority of one person over another. Power and the right to rule belong to superiors over subordinates; that is, to older people over younger people, to men over women. Each person has to give obedience and respect to his or her superiors; the wife to her husband, the son to his parents, and the younger brother to the older brother. The superior has a loving and caring responsibility to the inferior, and the inferior is obligated to follow the superior's order. Filial piety is one of the most distinctive and important phenomena which makes the Chinese civilization different from that of America. As a metaphysical idea of moral consciousness religion and philosophy, Chinese filial piety belongs, in the narrow sense, to a category of spiritual or moral culture. If filial piety is considered in the historical context, or as a political result and social extension, it belongs in the broader sense of cultural development. The original sense of filial piety includes worshiping ancestry, repaying forefathers,

bearing children and procreating life to continue the family line. Filial piety was entirely changed by Confucianism from the original religious and philosophical sense to a purely ethical sense where religious morals gave way to family morals. In Chinese traditional culture, filial piety is a waiting-upon-parents ethical idea, which was the norm and practice of everyday life. It was also an idea, which embodied the sense of respecting ancestry, pursuing the eternal nature of patriarchy and humanistic religion. Moreover, the concept of filial piety reflects the philosophical sense of protecting and cherishing the life of the Chinese people. At the same time, filial piety, as a kind of love created from the bottom of human's heart, it is the spiritual basis upon which Chinese traditional society and relationships develop. Filial piety forms the foundation of traditional Chinese education because the core of traditional education is moral education. This emphasizes the ethical education on which society is based thereby cultivating filial children, loyal officials and docile people. That education also protects feudal governance and provides social stability leading to widely harmonious socializing and politicized education.

## **Chapter III Collision and Combination Between Christianity and Confucianism as Embodied in the Works of Four Female Chinese American Writers**

### **A. Women's Salvation through Education**

Life is full of toil and hardships and the Christian doctrines stress human's suffering due to his unforgivable original sin. Huan attains salvation through making his or her confession of piety to God and showing his or her faith in the expectation of receiving God's forgiveness. With Confucianism, as a human-centered philosophy, it mainly holds an optimistic view toward human's life. Through self-cultivation and self-elevation, human can relieve his or her misfortune to some extent. Here, the important role of education is elevated to a high position. Both Christianity and Confucianism emphasize the function of educating oneself or the whole society's education. It is necessary to point out that Confucian doctrines mainly entitle only men to enjoy the right of education since education is the way to success, the way to wealth and the way to power. Family life is viewed as a kind of training ground and the adults in the family are responsible for educating their children. Those who are of the inferior class should also seek out education as a way to elevate themselves. Confucius believed that the society should be governed by reasonable human with humane sensibilities and not merely by the passions of individuals or arbitrarily empowered by hereditary status. That ideal could be achieved through education and the unification of cultural beliefs. Cultivated citizens whose intellects and emotions are developed and matured by conscious thought would benefit the nation. Through education or ritual practices, human can gain wealth. Based on the accumulation of wealth, human can achieve power. As Confucian principles have indicated, this kind of cycle seems to be an essential way to living a satisfactory life. However, under the strict patriarchal clan system, women tend to be the most vulnerable since nearly all of them are deprived of the opportunity to be educated. Christian doctrines didn't deny women the chance to receive education, but women education were viewed as preparation for human's daily life. This emphasizing is on the inculcation of modesty good manners, good religious practice and good home craft.

For those Chinese American women, they tend to find more resonance in Christian doctrines since their female consciousness and their aspiration for equal rights are awakened and encouraged. Here, salvation has a broader meaning because it is not just women's physical and mental spirits that is rescued by God. It is a pathway to a new way of life. In a sense, women come to find their meaning of life and save themselves from the durance of their historic traditions. Therefore, women get their salvation not only through their confession but also through their self-cultivation and the accumulation of knowledge.

The following female Chinese American writers skillfully present their unique understanding of salvation through the combination of Confucian and Christian doctrines.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Amy Tan first subtly made a comparison between Occidental and traditional Chinese outlook on education. This is interpreted through Winnie, the protagonist, in an entire new way as her understanding and practice of salvation. In the earlier part of the novel, the case of Winnie's mother is a good example to despict the impact of education brought by Christian missionaries on the traditional Chinese family.

Most girls are raised in a feudal family, the traditional way: The girl's eyes should never be sued for reading, only for sewing. The girl's ears should never be used to listening to ideas, only to orders. The girl's lips should be small, rarely used, except to express appreciation or ask for approval. (Tan 121)

This custom has been followed for thousands of years and most women have taken it for granted as their role of habitual submissiveness. Though Winnie's mother was one of the pioneers who had once attended "a missionary school in Shanghai, the first Chinese school girls could go to" (Tan 120) and was "educated against Confucius thinking," (Tan 123) her education in the missionary school trying to inspire her to "choose for herself" (Tan: 123) and form her own idea about everything around her as the way to finding her own happiness. The result apparently was unsuccessful. From the first looking, the Christian education did not seem to make a difference. The

reason were diverse. Christian education encouraged Winnie's mother to find the strength and courage to break away from the old tradition, though the way out was a dead alley during that feudal period.

In China, in those days, a woman divorcing her husband was seen as a disgrace. And for those stubborn superstitious ones, they believe that the root cause behind Winnie's mother's leaving her husband in such a totally derogatory way was:

Her education was the cause; they put Western thoughts into a Chinese mind, causing everything to ferment. It is the same way eating foreign food---upset stomach, upset mind. The foreign teachers want to overturn all order in the world. Confucius is bad, Jesus is good! Girls can be teachers; girls do not have to marry. Upside-down thinking!

(Tan 122)

In traditional Chinese thinking, "[t]hat's what got her into trouble, thinking for herself." (Tan 123) Most women during that period never had the power to make their own decision; therefore, new ideas were regarded as dangerous since they did not comply with the old tradition. Those traditions set up fixed taboos for women, and the price for freedom would cost them dearly. These traditions have been shaped over several thousand years, and nearly no women ever tried to strive for their own right in defiance against men's dominant role. Women simply took it for granted that this was the order of the world. Why didn't they dare ask for equality? One reason was that in the traditional Chinese society, women were not given the chance to be educated and they had no concept of women being equal to men. Confucianism attaches great importance on the role of education, but reserved the right for males only. Women were constantly taught to obey the "three submissions and four virtues." (Yi Li, Zi Xia Zhuan ; Zhou Li, Tian Gong) Their roles were to obey their father before marriage, to serve their husband during married life and to be subservient to their sons in widowhood. Women were expected to observe the four virtues of fidelity, physical charm, propriety in speech and efficiency in needle work. Day after day, year after year, women were taught to try their utmost in consolidating the importance of male sovereign.

Because of their lack of education, the old ladies, who condemned Winnie's mother, remained "brainwashed" in the mores of the traditional culture. Their words still influenced Winnie who believed that women are inferior to men, "[a] woman had no right to be angry."(Tan 210) and it is only through enduring humiliation they can ensure "the true love between the couples". (Tan:207) Women's lives are closely controlled by their husband's command and the family's needs. Women are not love for themselves; they live as an appendage to their husband with no freedom to choose any other way of life were it desired. Under some circumstances, women need to sacrifice their life in order to keep their husband's good name. Chastity Arch came to be a popular way to measure the standard of a woman's virtue. No one else can change the fate of these pitiable women because it was regarded pre-destined. As a result, the old ladies could only blame the departure of Winnie's mother on the advanced education she received from the women school. Winnie believes the key reason for her mother's misfortune was "[h]er education only made her unhappy thinking about it--that no matter now much she changed her life, she could not change the world that surrounded her."(Tan122) As twigs of the family tree, the way of a woman's life is not chosen by themselves, their role is to follow the commands of family hierarchy. It is almost impossible for a woman to run away from her destined fate. That is why Winnie thinks her mother couldn't change the living surrounding that surrounded her. No matter what kind of new ideas women might have, it is always advisable to hide those ideas in their heart because there is very little chance they will ever defeat the patriarchal system. Winnie's mother chose her own way to find her freedom even though it meant she could never return to her previous smooth life. Winnie doesn't copy her mother's old way when she becomes caught up in difficulties because she knows her mother's way doesn't work. She understands that if she has to escape she has to take the entire responsibility on herself and she could not rely on anyone except herself. Winnie is caught "between the devil and the deep sea" and she has nothing to look forward to and has to accept whatever is offered. In spite of all the sufferings that Winnie faces in her life, she doesn't feel disillusioned; she still bears hope for the future because she was taught "[t]here will be a way out".

Therefore Jimmy's emergence is not merely a miracle spared by God's grace but also an opportunity she earned for herself. Her education lays a solid foundation for her self-achievement such as her apprehension about the relationship between chance and luck that adapt from Confucian "golden mean", "Chance is the first step you take, and luck is what comes afterward. If you don't take a chance, someone else will give you his luck. And if you get bad luck, then you need to take another chance to turn things from bad to good. Everything is connected." (Tan 149-150) Winnie's life works on this principle to which she remains steadfast through her entire life. That belief is really helpful in rescuing Winnie from her sufferings under Wen Fu's abuse and torture. Basically, Confucianism holds a positive view of life; one can accumulate one's wealth and step higher up the social ladder through hard work. Sometimes, one needs opportunity to make things change even in a tiny and unlike way. As the old saying goes, "Opportunity is for those who are ready to take it." Winnie is not an opportunist but a practitioner who is willing to face the harsh reality and takes the challenge. She is even courageous enough to make a comparison between her own life and that of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was born, he was already the son of God. I was the daughter of someone who ran ways, a big disgrace. And when Jesus suffered, everyone worshipped him. Nobody worshipped me for living with Wen Fu. I was like that wife of Kitchen God. Nobody worshipped her either. She got all the excuses. He got all the credit. She was forgotten. (Tan 322)

Winnie's further education inspires her to understand that women are equal to men. Winnie dares to compare her trauma with that of Jesus, thus indicating her defiance against patriarchal dominance. Winnie can't justify her suffering in the same way as Jesus because the tortures which Christ faced in his life had a purpose and a moral lesson. His life is message for the world; His Crucifixion symbolizes a sacrifice for humanity, and His agape love is towards all people. But Winnie asked herself: why should she suffer? The agony, which she faced at the hands of Wen Fu, has no meaning or purpose. Nobody is going to worship her as a person just because of her

suffering. Winnie dares to ask, why no one worships the Kitchen God's Wife since she suffers the most while knowing she can't change anything about the present unfavorable situation. This sort of comparison makes it clear to Winnie and helps her gain the determination and confidence to begin a new life. At the end of the novel, Winnie burns the Kitchen God's picture while the Kitchen God Wife metaphorically shouts "Yes! Yes! Yes!" This symbolic gesture is in fact the final salvation of Winnie as she successfully gets rid of her long-time fear. The Lady Sorrow Free she presents to her daughter Pearl actually becomes a Chinese American Goddess,

She would live there, but no one would call her Mrs. Kitchen God.

Why would she want to be called that, now that she and her husband are divorced? See how nicely she sits in her chair, so comfortable-looking in her manner. Look at her hair, how black it is, and no worries. Although maybe she used to worry. I heard she once had many hardships in her life. So maybe her hair is dyed. But her smile is genuine, wise and innocent at the same time. And her hand, see how she just raised it? That means she is about to speak, or maybe she is telling you to speak. She is ready to listen. She understands English. You should tell her everything. Sometimes, when you are afraid, you can talk to her. She will listen. She will wash away everything sad with her tears. She will use her stick to chase away everything bad. See her name: Lady Sorrow free, happiness winning over bitterness, no regrets in this world. (Tan 531-532)

This newly created goddess not only brings hope for Winnie and Pearl's future but also symbolizes a perfect combination of Christian and Confucian spirit. From her appearance, Lady Sorrow Free is a Chinese goddess, who understands English and is willing to share the Americanized Pearl's sorrow. It is both the Christian doctrine of grace and Confucian positive outlook on life that enable Winnie, in the truest sense, to attain her salvation. Winnie hopes that this goddess, as a mediator between Confucian and Christian thoughts will also be instructive and beneficial to Pearl, the Americanized daughter.



In Jade Snow Wong's milestone autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Wong touched the issue of the education as well, but she presented it in an ideal and milder way:

From this day until I see fit to place you in the Chinese evening school, I shall continue to give you half an hour of Chinese instruction every morning before you to the American public classes. ....Many Chinese were very short-sighted. They felt that since their daughters would marry into a family of another name, they would not belong permanently in their own family clan. Therefore, they argued that it was not worthwhile to invest in their daughters' book education. But my answer was that since sons and their education are of primary importance, we must have intelligent mothers. If nobody educates his daughters, how can we have intelligent mothers for our sons? If we do not have good family training, how can China be a strong nation? (Wong 13)

So you see, the peace and stability of a nation depend upon the proper relationships established in the home; and to a great extent, the maintenance of proper relationships within the home depends on intelligent mothers. No I don not want you to question why you should study Chinese (Wong 14)

When I first came to America, my cousin wrote me from China and asked me to return. That was before I can even tell you where you were. But I still have the carbon copy of the letter I wrote him in reply. I said, 'You do not realize the shameful and degraded position into which the Chinese culture has pushed its women. Here in America, the Christian concept allows women their freedom and individuality. I wish my daughters to have this Christian opportunity. I am hoping that some day I may be able to claim that by my stand I have washed away the former disgraces suffered by the women of our family.' (Wong 227)

Jade Snow's father was a businessman and also a protestant church minister as well as a traditional intellectual. Though he was far from his homeland, his mind and blood was imbued with long-time cherished Confucian doctrines. Through his contact and acceptance of some Christian principles little by little, he came to reconsider some of the Confucian philosophy. Under the influence of his newly found belief, he wrote that:

Do not bind our daughter's feet. Here in America is an entirely different set of standards, which does not require that women sway helplessly on little feet to qualify them for good matches as well-born women who do not have to work. Here in Golden Mountains [America], the people, and even women, have individual dignity and rights of their own.(Wong 68)

Christian doctrines teach father to respect women's right and social status. Jade Snow's father also finds that it is unfair and unjustifiable to think that "[i]gnorance in a woman is a virtue". Women ought to enjoy the same right as men do; the importance of education applies for women as well. Christianity makes him understand women's education benefit the whole family and the entire society. This is a great progress compared to those ignorant ones appearing in *The Kitchen God's Wife*. Father's intention to encourage his daughters to receive education is to nurture good mothers so as to keep a balanced family, thus laying a solid foundation for the son's further education. Although Jade Snow's father took pride in educating his daughters in both Chinese and American customs, he valued the future potential of his sons over that of his daughters. In a sense, education does not merely serve to maintain the family's balance and harmony as Confucianism has always preached, but it also points out a practicable way for women to attain their salvation. Knowledge is power; knowledge is a useful weapon for women to safeguard their own right. Jade Snow's family educations as well as Chinese evening school education encourage her to learn discipline and respect. Those qualities from the traditional Chinese heritage allow her to succeed in gaining respect from others. Jade Snow's father finds a combination between Christian precepts and Confucian propriety, and especially filial piety that is important to a stable family. These values constitute the basic doctrines declared in

Confucianism and that is why he asks her daughter to “[r]espect your older sister in all manners” (Wong 68). Meanwhile, the Christian faith preaches agape love, which also exists among the family members as well, thus Jade Snow’s father adds this request to his daughters: “Love your brother and sister, according to Christ’s teaching” (Wong 68). Here, Christian love has extended the Confucian social level classification and through her father’s belief has opened a bright new way for the family to find their Chinese American salvation. Jade Snow’s mother once instructed her, “Even if another should strike you, you must not strike him, for then your guilt would be as great as his.” (Wong 13) Toleration as a typical Confucian doctrine embedded in the Chinese characters for many decades. The same rule is emphasized in the Christian doctrines as well. “[b]ut to him who gives you a blow on the right side of your face let the left be turned.” (Matthew 5:39) On the one hand, Chinese tradition lays a solid foundation in forming Jade Snow’s character and temperament as a traditional Chinese female. On the other and, Jade Snow’s knowledge about Christian doctrines which comes from her father’s personal examples or her daily contact with local Americans further impels her to pursue her worth as an independent individual and fulfills her self-achievement. Her “college courses challenged the traditional Chinese concept of education as echoing wise words of the past. Her new ideas also dismissed her parents’ ideas of proper female behavior.” (Wong 38)

In the grim depression years, the Wong family doesn’t lose their hope or become a desperate family. Confucianism generally holds an optimistic view towards life when it preaches due to men’s benevolence; virtue can mean overcoming a troublesome situation. At the same time, it regards human’s fate is pre-destined. Similarly, Christianity does not stand aloof from this earthly life when confront the harsh realities of men’s sufferings. It encourages men to work even harder, and through this sort of self-reliance and hard work, can they taste the sweetness from the bitterness.

But it is my desire not to apply for relief, even though we may need it. I do not want my children to experience getting anything without first working for it, for they may become selfish, and a selfish

people can wander the world over and still starve of food. Selfishness often starts with a spirit of dependency; therefore I want my children to learn to cope with the world, and to understand that they get what they want only after working for it. (Wong 50-51)

From this they can find the meaningful value of life that will lead men to their salvation. As a milestone work of Chinese American literature, Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is also an outstanding literary text that combines Christian and Confucian doctrines in a harmonious and successful manner. It is fascinating to witness Jade Snow's transformation from a submissive child to a woman of integrity and perseverance. Something more than her father's offer of the chance to be educated impelled Jade Snow to find her psychological salvation. It was also through her self-cultivation and family education that allowed her to strive for the values of individuality and equality.

### **B. Human's Salvation Through Mutual Confession**

In Christian doctrines, confession is a necessary and significant phrase for human to attain their salvation. It is believed that through confession to God, human can ask Jesus Christ to draw His presence near to human beings. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded" (James 4:8). Confession means to agree with God that a particular activity is wrong and is against God's desire and law. The ritual steps of confession include the idea of repentance that we do not want to practice the sin anymore. True and sincere confession carries with it a willingness to develop a genuine plan for avoiding the sin in the future. St. Augustine once said, "The Confession of evil works is the first beginning of good works." However, in the works of some female Chinese American writers, their confession is presented in a diverse way. These writers present the confession in verbal and non-verbal ways, but to family members rather than to God.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the main style of the novel is Winnie's narration of her past to her daughter Pearl. And the exposure of all Winnie's secrets could be seen

as a process of confession. Confession is not only a way to relieve one's psychological burden but it also brings Winnie and Pearl closer together. Confucianism preaches that modesty and prudence are virtues which need to be held and emphasized by gentleman. For first generation Chinese Americans, these traditions are habitual and tend to be embedded with the result that all the secrets are kept in one's heart. However, when these secrets become too great a burden, they tend to create tensions and disharmony in the family. Winnie's confession relieves her of much of her tension and thereby becomes her saving grace. Without the frustrating and agonizing confession, Winnie's long-time secrets might well have been buried with her and the distance between the mother and daughter never drawn closer. Even though that gap between mother and daughter and between generations is narrowed, it still exists. Pearl's confession to Winnie about her illness is also influential in improving their relationship. Without their mutual confession, the former two separate voices would not have found it is possible to bridge the psychological barriers and communicate with each other frankly.

*Bone* is Fae Myenne Ng's representative literary achievement. The novel tells the story of Ona's suicide and the agony and burden it causes everyone in the family. It also forces each member of the family to look back into their lives in an effort and regain the courage to search for the value of life. When the eldest daughter Leila tried to help her father Leon get the money coming in by applying for social security, she discovered he couldn't offer the any accurate identification materials. She then found that

The past came up: a moldy, water-damaged paper smell and a parchment texture. The letters were stacked by year and rubber banded into decades. I only had to open the first few to know the story: 'We Don't Want You.'

A rejection from the army: unfit.

A job rejection: unskilled.

An apartment: unavailable.

Leon kept things because he believed time mattered. Old made

good. These letters gained value the way old coins did; they counted the way money counted. All the letters addressed to Leon should prove to the people at the social security office that this country was his place, too. Leon had paid; Leon earned his rights. American dollars. American time. These letters marked his time and they marked his endurance. Leon was a paper son. (Ng 57-58)

Leon was right to save everything. For a paper son, paper is blood.

I keep everything too, and inside I never let go. I remember everything.

I never forget. I'm the stepdaughter of a paper son and I've inherited this whole suitcase of lies. All of it is mine. All I have are those memories, and I want to remember them all. (Ng 61)

*Leon bears many strong marks of the Confucian doctrines. His collections of old papers are in fact his non-verbal confession. As a son, he can't fully achieve his filial piety to his father by sending the ashes to the motherland where he should "pack them in a clay pot, accompany them back to the home village for a proper burial" (Ng: 82). As a father, he has little right to have a say in the family and he can't say or figure out what caused his beloved Ona to commit suicide. As a man, he is a social wanderer and vagrant and it is difficult for him to find a proper position in the society, thus he is frequently excluded from the normal social life. Leon also fails to fulfill the Confucian obligation and responsibility of a gentleman because he hasn't the courage to confess the truth about the beautiful lies he has lived with. What he could do is to collect all the papers that represent his nonverbal confession whether they are useful or not and admit to himself rather than confess to Jesus or other Gods that his entire life has been a lie. This is the only way he can find peace and keep his dignity through the achievement of a degree of salvation.*

### **C. God's Love and Humane Love**

*According to the Christian doctrines, humans are doomed to suffer in this life*

because of their depraved nature. When any Christians confront hardship and trouble in their life, usually they will not share the sorrow or puzzlement with their family members or friends. Occidentals believe in the importance of keeping their privacy, but they can atone for their wrongdoings by going to the priest and confessing. In this way they place themselves under God's mercy and rely on His love to ease their emotional turmoil. Things are quite different in China since family and kinship are elevated into a higher position. It is quite normal for young people go to consult with the elderly about their misgivings and listen to any advice the elders may offer. Friends also take an active part in one's life process as implied in the old saying, "[o]ne's parents are his only dependence at home, and he could rely on his friend when he is away from home." Since Chinese stress the importance of building a stable kinship, some close friends are often looked upon as sworn brothers to become part of the extended family. When some female Chinese American writers describe the suffering of their prime characters, the Christian and Confucian doctrines entitle them the courage and original strength to withstand all the misfortunes. The power of love often appear as catholican that sustain these protagonists during the hard times. Here, love not merely contains God's love but also includes humane love, such as family love.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the challenge to Winnie's sprit and her determination to fight against all odds are the main theme. The desire to live instead of committing suicide and taking the easy way out is strength of character depicted in Winnie. Sustaining oneself all alone in a tough world is not a simple task for a woman. In the miserable life that Winnie leads with her arrogant rapist husband Wen Fu, the emergence of Jimmy Louis is like a silver lining akin to Christ's rescue of the helpless person. Jimmy is an American-born Chinese language interpreter, who is presently working with the United States Information Services. As a translator, Jimmy Louie is the link between the Chinese and the Americans. Jimmy's sudden entry into Winnie's life could very well be compared to God descending to earth and saving mankind. Just when life seemed to be so bleak for Winnie, Jimmy comes as a ray of hope. Without Jimmy's appearance, Winnie wouldn't taste the sweetness of life and get rid of the

nightmare under Wen Fu's shadow. Never in her life did Winnie expect she would meet a good-humored man like Jimmy after her torturous sufferings brought by Wen Fu. Jimmy turned up just at the right time, when her married life was badly deteriorating; Jimmy's arrival can be seen as a miracle from God or interpreted through Confucianism, as "Heaven's" test upon Winnie. Generally, Confucianism is regarded as a human-centered philosophy, and Confucius classify the existing unnatural or supernatural power as "heaven" because it is beyond men's comprehension. Under Confucian doctrines, men feel awe for "Heaven" and practice rituals in order to show their respect as well as to pray for good luck. "[h]eaven and man are in harmony" represent the deepest infinite ambit for a gentleman. As we consider Winnie's predicament of her suffering and later salvation can accordingly be depicted as "concerns of heaven". In China, it is well-known that "when Heaven appoints a person to undertake a great mission, he must first of all suffer from a spiritual pain, undergo physical hardships and be distracted from his actions. In this way, his soul will be touched upon and he can develop a spirit of perseverance and endurance. He will be strengthened to perform what he could not perform." (Confucius, Analects, Chap.16) Confucian's "Heaven" is not far from human's life; because human can only apprehend the true meaning of fate through his strenuous efforts. In this sense, Winnie is not merely rescued by Christian's love through Jimmy's emergence but also her own realization of "Heaven." Furthermore, Winnie's sudden meeting with Jimmy after five years can be interpreted as totally the work of fate or a sign of "Heaven". Winnie believes it is the result of fate, "One minute later, and our lifetime would have missed each other. Isn't that fate meant to be?"(Tan 435) However, Jimmy doesn't think "it was fate, at least not the Chinese idea of ming yun. Fate is somebody else deciding your life for you. Our love was greater than that. We loved each other from the moment we met, that's why or two wills joined together to find each other." (Tan 435). "Later, when Jimmy became a minister, and he decided it was God's will that bring us together." (Tan 435) Whether it is a Chinese fate or American destiny, Winnie's is finally compensated for all her suffering. "A good person will be well paid", and Jimmy's love surpasses all the misfortune and misery



that had happened to Winnie.

God's love is also implied in Gish Jen's *Typical American*. Whenever the Zhang family comes across troublesome times, the big sister, Theresa's arrival is like welcome rain, helping them to solve the difficulties. When Ralph Zhang is on the verge of collapse and embroiled in the trouble of "no job, no family, no visa," (Jen 36) his sister arrive just in time to rescue him:

That there should be a purpose to suffering, that a person should be chosen for it, special----these are houses of the mind, in which whole peoples have found shelter. Ralph was not religious in general, but in times of hardship, gods grew up, some to test and prod, others to look in on him. Interested in himself, he believed himself a subject of interest. (Jen 36)

'Was miracles.' And even so many years later, anyone could still hear in his voice all that the word meant to him---rocks burst into blossom, the black rinsed from the night sky. Life itself unfurled. (Jen 37)

Agape love, a core principle of the Christian religion, is initiated not by feeling but by choice. For those people, chosen by God, whether they are believers or non-believers, God will always extend His agape love. Ralph's case is a good example. Theresa graduated from convent school with some fresh ideas and opinions that were quite unlike her other sisters. God exerted a subtle influence on her through her education more or less. She even regarded the picture of her among the newlywed couple as "The Mystery of the Trinity." (Jen 46) As Ralph's deliverer, Theresa's emergence brings not only her deepest concern for her younger brother but it also brings Ralph a pretty wife Helen, which results in setting up his own family. Ralph's troubles with visa and job are eventually resolved. In the latter part of the novel, when the Zhang family is again involved in further troubles, Theresa again saves the family from extreme misery.

It was her duty, she told herself. She was in many ways Americanized, but in this respect she was Chinese still---when family

marched, she fell in step. And wasn't this what she'd longed for? Reunification, that Chinese ideal, quan jia tuan yuan---the whole family together. Her exile was over." (Jen 216)

To some extent, Theresa is likened to the messenger sent from God, to save the helpless. No matter how rudely Ralph offers her a cold shoulder. Theresa is still willing to try her very best in helping him either materially or mentally. The concern of sibling love has been elevated into a high level, closer to the Christian understanding of God's love. When Ralph is lured into a take-away restaurant business because of his dream to get rich quickly, he is driven to the brink of suicide by the ruthless competition and the tricks of a villain. Theresa again rescues Ralph from his suffering and this can be seen as a sign of God's agape love. Ralph's salvation is at the price of Theresa's life and the lesson of spilt blood changes Ralph to a great extent. He leaves his empty illusory fantasy behind and comes back to earth and the reality of a normal life. Jesus' crucifixion is His sacrifice to rescue the mankind. Theresa's car accident is a Christian sacrifice which saves Ralph from sinking into the abyss and not as Confucian beliefs would imply the concerns of "Heaven" in one's misfortune. The news that Theresa is alive let he think that "this was a miracle, this was a gift."(Jen 241) His very survival in America is finally brought about by resorting to the inner strength of his Chinese cultural tradition. Those traditions of forbearance and hope, which lead him to see clear the American dream of materialism. Although the enormous uncertainties and many difficulties loom ahead for Ralph, he is able to face the future with a different view towards life:

What escape was possible? It seemed to him at that moment, as he stood waiting and waiting, trapped in his coat, that a man as doomed here as he was in China. Kan bu jian. Ting bu jian. He could not always see, could not always hear. He was not what he made up his mind to be. A man was the sum of his limits; freedom only made him see how much so. America was no America. Ralph swallowed. (Jen 242)

Ralph knows he almost murder Theresa, and he has no other escape but to face

that reality. He is used to be run away from problems by finding the excuse for things he didn't want to see or hear, but since he has grown up that does not work any longer. Theresa not merely helps Ralph to know himself better but also encourages him to shoulder the responsibility that he was endowed with.

“The more children, the greater happiness”. The proverb indicates a sort of philosophy that has been imprinted in Chinese mind for many years. Of course, in the Chinese tradition, more children generally mean more sons. Male heirs are greatly welcome, for it is the foundation in passing down the family line from generation to generation and bringing honors to one's ancestors. The different social status between men and women significantly influence the family relationship between men and women. As Confucian doctrines have indicated, “The eldest son takes the role of father,” (Confucius, *Analects*, Chap.13) “Women are required to listen to son after their husband's death,” etc. All these rules create the inequality of traditional Chinese sibling relationship. However, for Chinese Americans, sibling relationships have a broader range but still exert a positive influence on their life. In some of the works of female Chinese American writers, the depiction of sibling love is endowed with a more enriched meaning.

In Gish Jen's *Typical American*, the relationship between Ralph and Theresa is a typical Chinese sibling relationship. Younger brother as Ralph is, the inner desire to be the head of the family takes hold of him, he want to dominate his elder sister as well. when Theresa is included as a member of his family, Ralph has to emphasize his role as the absolute “father”. The problem is that Theresa and Helen are no longer submissive and docile which were the typical characteristics of Chinese women that Ralph expected. The conflicting and fragile sibling relationship never seems to cease until the tragedy of Theresa's accident.

Jesus preached that one should not only love one's family but also anyone with whom we are associated. Therefore sibling relationships in Christian doctrines are no longer constrained to family members, but also include the people close to oneself. Christian doctrines encourage people to develop and nurture equal relationship even among sibling ones. For instance, in Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, the

daughter is influenced by Christian principles because her father asks her to respect her elder brothers and sisters but at the same time, she is required to love them all.

In Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Helen, when first introduced into the story, is supposedly not a blood relative of Winnie, but Winnie declares Helen to her sister-in-law and so she can gain entry into the States. Their encounter is a matter of chance and not something that was planned or chosen. Their friendship grows despite their apparent differences. Winnie is educated and sophisticated, contrary to Helen, her new found friend who is illiterate. No matter what the difference in temperament or consciousness between Helen and Winnie lies, Winnie could not have stood Wen Fu's abuse for so long and could not found a happy life with Jimmy without Helen's assistance and support. Helen's threat to reveal Winnie's past also enable Winnie to disclose the secrets about the hidden past to her daughter after long-time silence. From that time on, the mother and daughter came to know each other better for the first time. Winnie has the challenging spirit to fight all odds in her life, but sustaining them alone in a tough world is never a simple task. Feminine potential is put to the test and finally succeeds in the war raged against patriarchy and dogmatism. But the friendship between Helen and Winnie goes much deeper than the bonds of blood relation. Most of the time, they have been true to each other and have been custodians of each other's secrets. This sort of friendship has extended the sibling relationship from a traditional point of view because it enriches the extent of sibling relationships. However, the sibling relationship between Helen and Winnie undergoes challenges as well. Helen informs Wen Fu of Winnie's whereabouts when Winnie tries to run away from Wen Fu's control for the first time; Helen is unable to understand Winnie's reasons for leaving Wen Fu because in the traditional Chinese Confucian society, a woman has no existence without her husband. Helen believes she has helped her friend by maintaining her marriage. Despite knowing Helen very well, Winnie cannot forgive Helen for careless betrayal.

Another character who develops an amiable friendship with Winnie is Gan. Gan who becomes the first man to truly knows Winnie well. The relationship between Gan and Winnie does not last long because of his death; but it leaves a tremendous impact

on her life. Although their relationship was devoid of any commitment, somewhere deep in their psyche they were one. Gan is a soul mate or another self of Winnie and it is Gan who inspires Winnie to find strength in herself: “[y]ou see yourself only in a mirror. But I see you the way you can never see yourself, all the pure things, neither good nor bad.” (Tan 256-257)

I had never felt love from a man, or for a man. I felt the danger, that this was how you love someone, one person letting out fears, the other drawing closer to soothe the pain. And the more would pour out, everything that has been hidden, more and more---sorrow, shame, loneliness, and all the old aches, so much released until you overflowed with joy to be rid of it, until it was too late to stop this new job from taking over your heart. (Tan 254)

Winnie’s feeling towards Gan is not Eros, but a pure innocent sibling love that gives a comfort to Winnie’s suffering. Without Gan’s appreciation and understanding of Winnie’s worth, she would never find her value and would never know there are other men who are kind-hearted.

## Chapter IV. Conclusion

Religion is never far from people's life but it is a philosophy rather than a superstructure. Religious beliefs or doctrines can empower men and present them with the strength and ways to deal with a harsh social life. Chinese Americans, residing in the United States with its solid Christian background, must find a practical way to deal with the tensions as well as to seek harmony between Christianity and Confucianism. The female Chinese American writers discussed in this paper have provided us with a good example of how to find that balance.

Among the early pioneers who introduce Christian doctrines into Chinese American literature, Jade Snow Wong is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable. Her writing creation intends to paint a portrait of the model minority and establish positive stereotypes for later born Chinese Americans to follow. As she says,

"[i]t continues to be a dilemma for a young person today to decide for himself/herself how much of his/her parents' standards and how much of his/her new found outside knowledge should be the values he/she accepts as his/her own. Thousands of years of feudal thinking with a magnificent culture must adapt to international standards of the modern world." (Wong 39)

When public opinion had shifted to a more favorable view of China and Chinese Americans, the second generation Chinese American writers realized that their ethnic affiliation was no longer a liability. This group aspired to the American Christian values and was interested in seeking a thread that could link Christian doctrines with the Chinese Confucian beliefs into which they were born. They strove to turn their ethnic legacy into an advantage that could help gain admission into mainstream society.

However, in the past few decades, the pillars of American moral values have undergone unprecedented challenges, in regard to family, school and race. As a model minority, Chinese Americans could never seem to be entitled the same right as the privileged "real Americans" white men although the American born Chinese regard themselves as completely Americanized in many ways. Race will continue to play a

significant role in the way subsequent generations of Chinese Americans view the United States. The causes leading to Chinese American feeling of alienation and heterogeneity are diverse. In part, it might be due to the uniqueness of Chinese Confucian characteristics imbued in the blood of Chinese Americans when they are confronting the cruel aspect of life. Generally speaking, religion is a kind of buffer zone for human beings, irrespective of what kind of religious schools it belongs to. Although the major doctrines of Confucianism or Christianity have different emphases, on a certain degree, they are similar when bringing the strength for Chinese Americans to face the life's miserable realities and difficulties. From another point, the very fact of this multi-religious background also might provide the chance for Chinese Americans to find a balance between the confrontation and integration of Confucianism and Christianity. Combined with Confucian spirits and Christian doctrines could entitle Chinese Americans the power to look through themselves and find their proper position in the society.

## Works Cited and Consulted

Blackburn, Di Gan. "Christianity in Contemporary Asian-American Literature: (Mis)-Translations of the Word." Waco: 2004.

Bromley, Roger. *Narratives for a New Belonging Diasporic Cultural Fictions*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

Daban, Mary. (2005, January 27). "Chinese Confucian and Christian Identity Construction in the North American Context." [Eighth International Conference on Philosophy and Culture](#). [On-line]  
<<http://www.networkforpeace.org/PDFs/Daban.pdf>>(2006, April 1).

Ho, Ann Jennifer. *Consumption and Identity in Asian American Coming-of-Age Novels*. New York: Routledge New York & London, 2005.

*Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Simplified Chinese Characters*. Shanghai: National TSPM&CCC, 2002.

Hong, Qing-fu. *A Lead-up to Confucianism*. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Publishing House, 2003.

Hong, Qing-fu. *Confucianism in Cross-cultural Dialogue*. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Publishing House, 2004.

Jen, Gish. (2003, March 25). "Interview with Gish Jen." [Becoming Americans: the Chinese Experience](#) [On-line]  
<[http://www.pbs.org/becomingamerican/ap\\_pjourneys\\_transcript1.html](http://www.pbs.org/becomingamerican/ap_pjourneys_transcript1.html)>(2006, April 1).

Knippling, Alpana Sharma. Ed. *New Immigrant Literatures in the United States: A Source book to Our Multicultural Literary Heritage*. West Port: Green Wood Press, 1996.

Lan, Dong. (2004, November 1) "Gendered Home and Space for the Diaspora: Gish Jen's Typical America." [Third Space Volume 4 Issue 1](#). [On-line]  
<[http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol4/4\\_1\\_Dong.htm](http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol4/4_1_Dong.htm)>. (2006, April 1)

Li, David Leiwei. *Imaging the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent*. Stanford: California Stanford University Press, 1998.

Ng, Fae Myenne. *Bone*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 2003.



Oster, Judith. *Crossing Cultures: Creating Identity in Chinese and Jewish American Literature*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003.

Phuong, Ly. (2003, January 20). "Chinese-American community moving toward Christianity." *The Washing Post* [On-line]  
<<http://www.yellowworld.org/society/112.html>>. (2006, April 1)

Robinson S. Lillian. Ed. *A Library of Literary Criticism: Modern Women Writers*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1996.

Tan, Amy. *The Kitchen God's Wife*. New York: Ivy Books, 1991.

Tan, Amy. (1996, June 28), "Interview: Amy Tan." *Academy of Achievement*  
<<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tan0int-1>> (2006, April 1).

Wong, Cynthia Sau-Ling. *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Ying, Xiao-huang. *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Young, Mary E. *Young Mules and Dragons: Popular Images in the Selected Writings of African-American and Chinese American Women Writers*. West Port: Connecticut Greenwood Press, 1993.

Zamora, Lois Parkinson. Ed. *Longman Critical Readers: Contemporary American Women Writers Gender, Class, Ethnicity*. London: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1998.

陈建明 何除主编, 《基督教与中国伦理道德》, 成都: 四川大学出版社, 2002。

程爱民主编, 《美国华裔文学研究》, 北京: 北京大学出版社, 2003。

程爱民, 《20世纪英美文学论稿》, 上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 2002。

董小川, 《儒家文化与美国基督新教文化》, 北京: 商务印书馆, 1999。

何光沪 许志伟主编, 《对话: 儒释道与基督教》, 北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 1998。

何光沪 许志伟主编, 《对话二: 儒释道与基督教》, 北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2001。

黄玉雪, 《五姑娘》, 太原: 山西教育出版社, 2002。



康士林著 谢惠英译, “华裔美国文学作品中的基督教”, 单德兴主编:《第三届美国文学与思想研讨会论文选集: 文学篇》, 台北: 中央研究院欧美研究所, 1984。

孔子著 Arthur Waley 译, 《论语》, 北京: 外语教学与研究出版社, 1998。

马振铎 徐远 郑家栋, 《世界文明大系——儒家文明》, 北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 1999。

钱满素, 《美国文明》, 北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 2001。

任壁莲, 《典型的美国人》, 太原: 山西教育出版社, 2002。

单德兴主编, 《再现政治与华裔美国文学》, 台北: 中央研究院欧美研究所, 1986。

王光林, 《错位与超越: 美、澳华人英语作家的文化认同》, 天津: 南开大学出版社, 2004。

卫景宜, 《西方语境的中国故事》, 杭州: 中国美术学院出版社, 2002。

姚新中著 赵艳霞译, 《儒教与基督教——仁与爱的比较研究》 北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 2002。

赵文书, *Positioning Contemporary Chinese American Literature in Contested Terrains*. 南京: 南京大学出版社, 2004。