跨文化视角下的中西宗教研究

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摘 要

宗教是一种历史悠久的重要的文化现象。然而长期以来，尤其在社会主义国家中，人们都对宗教采取敌视的态度，宗教常常被认为是虚无飘渺，反动和落后的东西。但是从 19 世纪开始，西方学术界出现了一股研究宗教的热潮。许多学者从不角度探讨了宗教这一文化现象在人类社会生活中积极作用，对宗教的作用给予了肯定。即使在科技高度发达的今天，从事宗教研究的热忱也没有消减，众多学者都认同一点，科学技术的发展并不会导致宗教的消亡，宗教将会长期存在，并继续在社会生活中发挥不可替代的作用。随着中国的日益开放以及同各国联系和交流的增加，宗教交流是不可避免的。宗教特别是基督教文化已经深入到西方社会的各个层面，因此，正确的认识宗教的积极作用是十分必要，这有助于我们更好地理解西方人的思维，世界观，价值观和行为行动等等，也有利于我们在进行跨文化交际的过程中避免产生文化误读，从而更有效的进行交流和增进了解。中国由于历史的原因，长期对宗教存在偏见和敌视的态度，在一些地方，信众进行宗教活动的合法权利也经常受到损害。这与中国的社会主义全面进步是相违背的。因此，本文通过阐述宗教的起源和定义，宗教与文化的关系，以及宗教对社会生活的其他方面如道德等的影响，旨在证明宗教在人类社会文化生活中的积极作用，使人们对宗教有一个比较完整和正确的认识，并且为跨文化研究开辟一个新的视角。

关键词：宗教 起源及定义 文化 影响 作用

THE STUDY OF ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL RELIGIONS FROM A CROSS-CULTRUAL PERSPECTOVE

Abstract

Religion is an important cultural phenomenon with a long history. There was so much misunderstanding on religion in the past. Many people especially in those socialist countries tended to take religion as the synonym of superstition or something that is quite untangible or reactionary and backward. However since 19th century, there appeared a tide of the study of religion in the western academic community. Many scholars paid more and more attention to this cultural phenomenon, with their works mainly covering the role of religion in various aspects of social life. Even the continued scientific and technological advancement cannot put end to religion nor decrease the enthusiasm for conducting religious study. With China's more opening to the outside world and the increase of cultural exchanges with other countries, exchange and communication in the regard of religion cannot be avoided. Religion has so deeply penetrated into the western society that the correct understanding of its role can help us better understand the westerners' values, outlooks and conducts, and it is an effective way for us to avoid cultural misunderstanding. In China, due to the historical elements, people held prejudice to religion, and the relevant study lagging far behind. In many places, religious followers sometimes were infringed and even deprived of their legitimate rights for religious practices. This thesis, by illustrating the origin and definition of religion, the relationship between religion and culture, and the influence of religion on other aspects of social life, for instance, on morality, tends to prove the positive role of religion in human social and cultural life, to help change the hostile attitude to religion, and to conduct the cross-cultural study from a new cultural perspective.

KEY WORDS: religion; origin and definition; culture; influence; role

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I . Introduction

Religion is a special cultural phenomenon in human society. Religion used to be thought as the equivalence to superstition and something that is untangible or untouchable.

Since the late 19th century, there has been a tide of the study of religion in western Europe, which features as the following: firstly, the study gradually shook off the yoke of the traditional theology, taking rational and scientific approaches in analyzing the religious phenomena; secondly, the study of religion divorced with the philosophy system, and became an independent humanity discipline with the name of "the comparative study of religion". In 1870, German scholar, Max Müller made a series of lectures named *An Introduction to the Study of Religion* in the British Loyal Society, when he put forward the concept "the study of religion" for the first time, and this established him as the founder of the discipline in the western academic community. His research on religion went far beyond the scope of the traditional Christianity, and he made comparative study of the ancient and the oriental religions in an all-round way.

The study of religion in the western community generally falls into 2 categories: the first one is from the emergence of the study to the very beginning of the 20th century. The comparative study, influenced greatly by the theory of evolution, mainly probed the origin and progress of religion, which fostered a variety of schools. Representatives are: Tylor and his "animism" (万物有灵论), Durkheim and Freud and their "totomism" (图腾论), Frazier and his "pre-animism" (前万物有灵论), etc.. These theories in fact are somewhat reasonable and enlightening for they break the religious oracle theory advocated by theology. The first world war caused damages to the society, stroke the blind optimism about the social progress and advancement that prevailed in the west, and enhanced capitalist class' demand for religion. Scholars began to realize that the theory of religious evolution actually was shaking the base of religious faith, and it must be abandoned. Due to that, scholars gradually gave up the study of religious origin and evolution. At the second stage, with their abandoning the system of religious evolution, scholars gradually focused on specific religions and carried out positive analysis on the specific religious issues and phenomena, which caused the appearance of many different branches that can be generally categorized into the following three:

Firstly, the history of religion. It analyzes the history of specific religions rather than the general history of all religions.

Secondly, the sociology of religion. It studies the relations between religion and society, the role of religion the social system and the functions of religion in the process of social progress and advancement. Representatives at the initial stage were French

Durkheim and German Max Webb.

Thirdly, the psychology of religion. The psychological elements had long been analyzed in the study of religious phenomena, however, it was until the end of the 19th that the religious psychology broke up as an independent branch. Since Starberk firstly published *The Psychology of Religion* in 1900, more scholars showed keen interest in the relevant research, and the psychological analysis gained great popularity in the west.

We can see that the comparative study of religion in the west has become an independent discipline that owns its research objectives and approaches. By analyzing abundant religious issues and phenomena, it has made valuable achievements. Although most scholars in the circle are not complete atheists in strict sense, they abandoned the mysteriousness in the analysis of religious origin and phenomena, therefore, their results are valuable and scientific to some extent.

Compared to the fast development of this discipline in the west, the study of religion in China lagged far behind due to the influence of the "Left" errors, people usually took prejudice on religion. Religion has been considered as something backward and even reactionary .In schools, teaching books tended to copy the opinions of teachers of the revolution such as Marx, Engels and Lennin, criticizing issues in religious regard purely ideologically rather than academically, which brought about a series of bad results. Due to the ignorance of and bias to religion, there were a lot of cases that religion policy and followers legitimate rights were badly infringed and violated, aggravating the contradiction and confrontation between religious group and non-religious group.

The reform and opening-up to the outside world has brought about ideological emancipation to the Chinese people, more and more scholars in humanities disciplines have become keenly interested in the study of religion. They have begun to attach importance to how religion took shape on the basis of human realistic need and the role as well as impact of religion on the social and historical progress. It is acknowledged that religion not only exerts profound influence on the religious followers but also on those non-religious groups. A large number of relevant works spring out, and religious study in China makes great progress. Luo Zhufeng and Lü Daji were among the first ones in China to touch this forbidden sphere. In his *An Introduction to the Study of Religion* (《宗教学概论》), Luo illustrated respectively in four chapters of the book the religious origin, concepts, relations between religion and social life (including the viewpoints of the western scholars, the role of religious organizations, the ethical concepts in religion and religious ceremonies), and relations between religion and historical cultures such as myths, languages, arts and literature. Enlightened by Luo, Lü put forward the theory of "the four elements in religion system". He thought that each religion had four elements, namely, religious concept, religious experience, religious practice and religious

organization. The relationship among them was illustrated as follows:
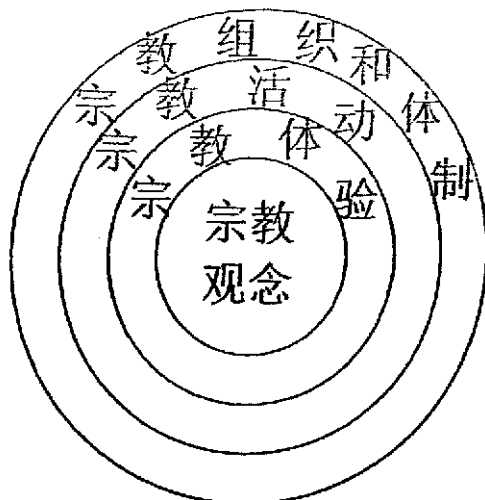
（吕大吉 1998: 77）

In foreign language academic circle, the focus of study has shifted from single language study to cross-cultural communication. However, religion, a cultural phenomenon that has exerted great influence on the ideology and culture of western people, is still seldom touched by researchers. This thesis therefore tends to conduct cross-cultural study from a new point of view.

II. Religion: Definition and Origin

2.1 Definition

Religion is a profoundly influential social phenomenon with a long history. But when asked "What is religion", people usually find it hard to make a scientific definition which demonstrates the nature of religion. People often cannot explain the phenomena familiar to them. Since the past century particularly, with the development of the study of religion, scholars have made study with different ways from different angles, establishing different braches in the circle, and they have drawn different conclusions. Their understanding on the nature of religion and their definitions tend to diversify, some of which even conflict each other. Difficulty in defining religion is due to the complexity of religious phenomenon itself. Definition features high-level universality, with its generalized content being manifested in all defined objectives. Defining religion in lines with that confronts at less two difficulties: the first, covering many aspects, religious phenomenon is hard to define clearly and briefly with only one or two sentences; the second, the difficulty due to the complexity and variability of religious phenomenon itself. The disparity in defining

religion stems primarily from the stance and attitude taken by people. Religion is a social phenomenon depended on human beings. Basically speaking, people cannot view religion from a purely objective point of view like studying other natural phenomena. That scholars on religion take different attitude (positive or negative) will lead to entirely opposite conclusions. The disparity is unavoidable, and the difference in defining religion therefore is inevitable. Defining religion is always a thorny business. We acknowledge that the current various definitions of religion reveal some characteristics of religious phenomena to a certain extent. They are all meaningful and valuable for they have shown the understanding of people in different times and laid down theoretical foundation for further in-depth study later.

2.1.1 Nominal definition

The Old Testament has no word for religion. The nearest approach is the phrase, "the fear of the Lord," which clearly refers to piety and to behavior but not to belief or to organization – which are aspects of religion that we in so-called advanced cultures attribute to it. New Testament Christianity shared with Judaism a confusion about the use of the word "religion". The early Christians were called "Followers of the Way" because they were trying to follow the way of life proposed by Jesus Christ.

In classical Latin, we do find the word *religio*, which we translate as religion, but there is no universal agreement about what the word means. If we examine the phenomenon of religion in cultures whose language does not derive from Latin, the problem becomes even more complicated: Few cultures have raised the question of the essence of religion.

Because of their intimate relation to one another, religion and morality have often been confused. This problem has been intensified by many attempts, beginning with Kant's treatise on religion in 1793, to interpret religion as essentially morality. But religion and morality are distinguishable. Religion concerns the being of persons, who they are and what they acknowledge as their worshipful reality, while morality concerns what people do and the principles governing their relations to others.

From the viewpoint of the nominal definition, therefore, the meaning of "religion" has no universal, strict parameters. It could not.

2.1.2 Theological definition

Western theology distinguishes between religions founded on revelation from God and all other religions. In the former case – revealed religion – the problem of definition may seem simple: the definition appears to be given by revelation itself, at least implicitly: that is that religion has to do with salvation. But there are all kinds of meanings to being

"saved". Some people use it as a synonym for being "fulfilled", which has psychological overtones signifying some kind of self-realization in this world. Others see salvation as pertaining solely or mostly to the next world. Still others see it as something anticipated in the present but fulfilled with God after this life, and yet others understand it in terms of fellowship with God. Some (Spinoza, for example) considered it as a state of ultimate peace that arises when a person sees his or her rightful place in the universe. And some look upon it as a state of bliss in which one cannot properly speak of oneself as a self-conscious individual (for example, the Buddhist state of *nirvana*). And some grasp it as escape rather than fulfillment.

From the subjective point of view, the practice of revealed religion is an experience that leads a person to God the homage due Him and to other people the honor owed them. This transcends a narrow view of salvation. As an objective manner of behavior and concrete manifestation of virtue, revealed religion comprises several things – for example, belief in one God who is personal and who is infinite. Any being less than that is not worthy of being God. In this sense religion, if it is to be meaningful, must also comprises an attitude – an attitude of absolute respect and submission to God. And there have to be actions to show this: "actions speak louder than words" in religion as well as elsewhere. These exterior actions are acts of worship. Lastly in the objective sense, lest the activity deviates from the reverence due to God and the respect due to human beings.

The theological definition of religion is obviously more descriptive than substantive. Like theology itself, a theological definition of religion centers on material that is kept and treasured within a particular historical tradition.

2.1.3 Historical insights

After New Testament times, among Christianity the use of the word "religion" was extended further than before. The Christian communities had a unifying faith. Their zeal contrasted with the rather vague "religiosity" of the time. During the centuries in which the Christian Church tried to establish itself, it was recognized that there were many religions – a fact that had not been remarked upon so much before because up to that time religion was associated with the State.

After the triumph of the Christian Church in the late fourth century, there came to be one Western religion again. The State religion was Christianity. From then on , there seems to have been another decline in the use of the word religion, because there weren't many religions: there was only the official State religion again. Now for the first time the notion arose that if one religion is right, others are wrong: an early Christian writer, Lactantius, used the terms "true religion" and "false religion" for the first time. St. Augustine, in *De Vera Reliiogne*, called true religion timeless.

In pre-monasitc times, "religion" was a noun meaning those who practiced the faith more seriously. It remained that way through the Middle Ages. Monastic times developed the word "religious" into meaning the monastic life. It is still common today to speak of "entering religion" when one goes into the monastery or convent.

In the Reformation and Enlightenment periods, "religion" had further meanings. For John Calvin at first, religion was not a system or an organization or one of the religions; for him, it was simply a sense of piety which is, he said, innates in all people and distinguishes them from animals. Religion therefore came to be regarded as the doctrine and organization of a group, rather than a personal reality: for example, the Moslem, Christian, or Jewish religion.

The Reformation was also an age of discovery, with explorers like Magellan and Columbus finding new horizons. A highly important factor was the discovery of other "religions of the world" – a phrase used by some writers as early as 1508 to designate different systems of religion. The plural "religions", was something new. Along with words regarded as almost identical with religion – like piety, reverence and worship – the word religion had never had a plural: one doesn't speak of "pieties" or "reverences" or "worships", and one didn't speak of "religions".

As Christianity had its creeds, systems of belief, doctrinal controversies, churches, and organizations, Christians had taken for granted that other religions were similar. That assumption was wrong: Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism and the like are completely different. They predicate a much looser creed, less organization, and a different view of salvation than do religions based on the Judeo-Christian Bible.

Approaching our time, scholars came to realize that the term religion has at least four meanings. One is to equate religion with personal piety, whose interpretation is present in the Epistle of St. James. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world. The second and most common modern meaning of the term religion is to refer to a system of belief and practices: for example, " the Christian religion." Related to that interpretation is the third way in which we use the term today: to refer to specific religions, but in an ideal way – to speak of "genuine" or "true" religion, for example, may denote the perfect system or ideal community. The fourth modern sense of the term "religion" designates the whole complex of human activities which could be included under the heading of the general principles of religion. This fourth sense of religion is very common in modern times. It can be used to distinguish religion from other human activities such as art or economics, but it has the inherent danger of equating religion with other terms like worldview or philosophy of life, and of relegating religion to just one more compartment of human life.

2.1.4 The social aspect

Religions necessarily have a social aspect. The significance of this social expression of religion is indicated by the classifications of types of religion: trial religions, national religions, and universal religions. Some aspects of religion in relation to society may be present at some of these levels and not others – priesthood, for example. We do not find priesthood at the tribal stages of religion: as long as the relationship with the supreme divinity remains the prerogative of tribal members, there is no need for a priesthood. A priesthood appears first in national religions, as a specialization of all religious functions. The religious functions rest in the priest who, as the mediator between God and the people, brings to the people what God has to say and to God what the people want to say.

Another aspect of religion in relation to the individual and society is prophetism. Contrary to popular belief, the religious prophet is not one who foretells the future, but one who speaks to society on behalf of God against the excesses and abuse of either the religious institution, or the civil society, or both. Societies need someone to speak for God: Judeo-Christian history has demonstrated over and over again how much. To attempt to exclude from the marketplace of ideas those values that originate in or are motivated by religion is a serious mistake.

A final aspect of religion in relation to the individual and society is a matter of which we have already spoken: salvation. Some people think that every religion is a salvation religion. Others hold that only universal religions – that is, religions that transcend a tribe or a nation and appeal to humankind as such – can speak in terms of saving people. Tribal religions do not teach the need of a savior, since they propose and effect an integration of individuals into the values of their group and a participation in their universe. They do this without separating the sacred and the profane, which are one. The attitude of such religions is not one of preoccupation with saving or with transforming their world, but of maintaining it, and themselves with it, by adhering to its structures.

2.2 Origin

Since the late 19th century, there has been a tide of religious study in west Europe, characterizing as: gradually casting off the yoke of the traditional religious theology, scholars study the religious phenomena with rational attitude rather than fideism; on the other hand, separating from the philosophy system, religious study has become a new humanist science branch with the name of "the scientific study of religion" or "comparative religion".(张志刚 2002: 5) In modern study of religion, there are three most influential approaches—psychology, anthropology and sociology.

2.2.1 The origin of religion in the viewpoint of psychology

A good working definition of religion in relation to psychology is that it is a personal commitment to God by way of worship, a way of life consonant with true believers, and relating oneself to a community of other believers. Psychologically, religion relates to the whole of personality. Generally, a person who becomes religious or ceases to be religious undergoes a profound transformation.

The view that religion, in both its practical and theoretical aspects, has an anthropocentric origin and meaning probably has its roots in the earliest dawn of speculative concern with phenomena. The thesis, defended by both Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Feuerbach, that religions originate in man is not unique with them, but they developed such a consistent analysis of the meaning of religion, and their understandings of religion were so thoroughly integrated with their views of the human and cultural realities, that their statements of this particular position seem authoritative.

The prevailing psychological position on the origin of religion is perhaps best explored by examining the well-articulated version of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He said that religion's origins are still with us and motivate people to who "have religion." (Freud 1927: 76) He speculated that aboriginal peoples lived in small hordes or clans within which the oldest and strongest male took as many wives as he could, and jealously guarded them against other men. By driving out or killing the others, this jealous father established himself as head of the hordes. (Freud borrowed this idea from Charles Darwin, who had emphasized its biological survival aspects.)

Freud suggested that at some point the expelled sons banded together to murder and eat the primal father, thereby ending the father-dominated horde. Devouring the father also allowed each son and brother to identify with the father, and to share a portion of his strength. But the murder of the patriarch held new problems. Among them was the fact that the members of the clan needed to assuage their sense of guilt for having slain the father and to ensure that his spirit would not seek retribution. They therefore created a totemic system by which they chose some animal to be a substitute for the slain leader. Eventually the totem animal and the father became a tribal god. As Freud pointed out, however, religious are ambivalent. The sons' sense of guilt at their defiance was never obliterated, and the murder could be atoned for only by the sacrifice of another human life. In Christianity, for example, humanity could be redeemed only by the sacrifice of Christ, God and Son.

Freud also gave attention to the psychical development of religious ideas. He called religious ideas illusions – fulfillments of our oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes. He wrote:

The terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection — for protection through love — which was provided by the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one. Thus the benevolent rule of a divine providence allays our fear of the danger of life; the establishment of a moral world order ensures the fulfillment of the demands of justice which have so often remained unfulfilled in human civilization; and the prolongation of earthly existence in a future life provides the local and temporal framework in which these wish fulfillments shall take place.

(Freud 1953: 74)

He went into some details about the meaning of the word illusion. He wrote:

An illusion is not the same thing as an error, nor is it necessarily an error. ... What is characteristic of illusion is that they are derived from human wishes. In this respect, they come near to psychiatric delusions. ... Illusion need not necessarily be false — that is to say, unrealizable or in contradiction to reality.

(Freud 1953: 48-50)

All religious doctrines are illusions and can neither be proved nor disproved, according to Freud. Inasmuch as science is the only road which can lead a person to a knowledge of reality outside oneself, one must reject these illusions as being worthy of children. Freud's positions, especially his early ones, play into an interpretation that he put little value on religion. In most of his early writings, Freud synopsized for many theorists and provided a base for many others who, from a psychological viewpoint, see no direct benefit of religion to personal growth and development.

Freud's concern with religious beliefs and practices was part of his total effort to understand the dynamics of the human psyche and its complex relations with the physical and cultural world. Hence, he was not concerned with the theoretical abstractions of speculative religious philosophy or theology. The speculative content of religious thought, he believed, only served to conceal the hidden, but concrete nature of religion, which was emotional. He wished to remove masks in order to examine the human experience itself.

In general, psychoanalysis has moved beyond Freud and his early negative comments about religious development. Some psychoanalytic thinkers have reinterpreted Freud's position. Erich Fromm (1900-1980), for example, never went along completely with the idea Freud opposed religion. Of Freud's supposed antipathy to religion, Fromm wrote:

Freud holds that the aim of human development is the achievement of these ideals: knowledge

(reason, truth, logos), brotherly love, reduction of suffering, independence, and responsibility. These constitute the ethical core of all great religions on which Eastern and Western culture are based. ... Freud speaks in the name of the ethical core of religion and criticized the theistic-supernatural aspects of religion for preventing the full realization of these ethical aims. (Fromm 1988: 221)

Ludwig Feuerbach also defends the thesis that the origin of religion is anthropological. Religion is an "objectification" of the most primitive needs of man, having no content that is not grounded in human nature. Historically, men achieved their first, indirect, knowledge of themselves through religious beliefs and practices. Feuerbach's claim is that a man knows himself first, in his essence, as projected outside of himself into a religious reality; only after encountering his own objectification as that religious reality can he discovered and know his inner human nature.

Feuerbach's insistence that Divine Essence is man's objectification of his own nature might seem to be a rather thorough-going atheism, but an unqualified charge of atheism could only be founded on an inadequate comprehension of his thought. While denying the existence of a transcendental subject of divine predicates, Feuerbach does insist that the predicates or descriptive properties, when interpreted in terms of their human significance, have a profound religious meaning. It is this unusual distinction in his thought that has led certain thinkers to brand his perspective a "devout" atheism.

Freud and Feuerbach both insist on the anthropocentric character of religion, although they do it for different reasons and within different interpretive frameworks. Both insist that the prototype for the divine being is the human being. Freud discovers the earthly father on a cosmic scale in infantile feelings of insecurity, helplessness, and alienation. Feuerbach, on the other hand, discovers the model for the divine essence in universal humanity, idealized and projected beyond the actual limitations of finitude. In confronting God, man confronts himself and his own humanity as well as experiencing the power of his primitive feelings and sensuality through this projected being. He meets himself in the divine other; in the history of religion we may discern man's continuous uncovering of himself through the mediation of the holy other.

2.2.2 The origin of religion in the viewpoint of sociology

Man is a social being. Social relations constitute and determine much of his life. Human existence is shared existence, and the daily dependence upon others is fundamental to living. Social relationships and institutions are the soil out of which human life grows and is nurtured. Therefore, the impact of the social reality upon the maturation of the human spirit cannot be ignored in the study of the origins of religious beliefs and practices.

Freud emphasized the psychological source of religion, but realized the social function

of such beliefs. He viewed civilization and culture mainly as a repressive system of coercions operating on the human psyche, restraining it from certain actions while sanctioning others by means of social mores. Religion is simply one more form of repression in the cultural system. The rituals and divine figures of religion constitute an externalization of moral authority, reinforcing cultural restraints by providing them with a sacred, holy basis.

By no means, however, did Freud fail to realize the necessity for a systematic, operative system of restraints in society. Culture is an organization of social relations in which man's destructive and aggressive tendencies may be checked while providing, simultaneously, the means for cooperative human endeavors in the struggle for survival, for reasonable gratification of basic urges, and for protection from the hostile forces of nature, both physical and human. For these important reasons. Some measures of restraint is essential; but excessive repression is not productive of healthy growth and human development. Religion, according to Freud, tends to support and nourish restraints that are not based on a rational understanding of human nature or of man's social relationships.

Emile Durkheim shares Freud's conviction that religious beliefs cannot be mere illusions, but in his search for the underlying reality he is not led, as was Freud, to the dynamics of the human psyche and its inevitable tension. Rather, Durkheim believes that the causal ground for religious belief and ritual are social forces. Since society is encountered in human life as the dominant, formative force, Durkheim maintains that it alone is capable of engendering the feeling of the sacred and the divine in its members. Moreover society enables persons to transcend their individual limitations and thereby enhances human existence. Since these are typical fruits of religious beliefs, and religion originates in society, why not recognize that what we take to be divine providence is nothing more than society, viewed as sacred? Durkheim argues that men do not always perceive the reality behind the sacred; they do not realize that the power and strength of the divine come from society.

Furthermore, in contrast to Freud, Durkheim defends the thesis that the rites and rituals of religion increase social cohesiveness and give sustenance and courage to its participants. Through religious ceremony and observance, the moral fiber of the whole community is renewed, and the continued existence of society depends on such renewals. Religious traditions and practices are the foundation of a continuing society as one generation perishes in giving birth to another.

Unlike Freud, Durkheim does not assume any particular or universal sources of anxiety, such as Freud's concept of the Oedipal conflict. Rather, he recognizes that anxiety may spring from many and various roots. Among these are economic uncertainty, and fears of death, of illness, of other human beings, and of natural disasters. In this view, religion

offers a body of belief and ritual which expresses and works to relieve those chronic anxieties which, no matter what their source, are apt to plague some members of any society, by eliciting the concordance of their beliefs with current social affairs.

Durkheim emphasizes the social and collective nature of religion. He claimed that magic is mainly an individual affair in which no lasting social bonds are established, while religion is a collective enterprise that involves a community of fellow-believers. He felt that religious systems of thought and behavior are so pervasive in human culture that it is difficult to believe that they are simply an intellectual mistake or that they deal with purely imaginary concerns. He saw in communal rituals associated with totems people invigorating their social solidarity and maintaining their social unity. Therefore, he saw religion a one of the ways in which people can integrate their personal lives into the larger community as a whole. (Durkheim 1961: 462-496)

Malinowski's studies on primitive society convinced him that Durkheim was essentially correct in urging that religion is a profoundly social affair. However, he could not agree with the reductionist character of Durkheim's theory: that is his tendency to reduce the sacred to social forces. Malinowski's observations led him to conclude that the sacred and the profane are clearly distinguished in primitive societies and, hence, that there are dimensions of a society's life which are purely secular in nature and which have no tendency to produce religious phenomena.

His field work in the Trobriand Islands led him to the conclusion that religion is not born out of speculation, reflection, illusion, or misapprehension, but rather out of the tragedies of human life and the conflict between human plans, on the one hand, and the realities of life on the other.

Malinowski said it is false to assume that religion flourished in the absence of the kind of knowledge called science. Even primitive people, he said, have a knowledge of an empirical nature. He felt that as soon as human beings developed the mastery of environment by implements, and as soon as language came into being, there also had to exist knowledge of an essentially scientific nature. No culture could survive, he thought, if its arts and crafts were based simply upon non-empirical doctrines and creeds. Logical reasoning and knowledge in pragmatic matters, he claimed, are absolute necessities of culture.

The focus of his attention tended, therefore, to settle upon the practical consequences of religious activities in the primitive society. Religion, for primitive man, is a quite distinctive mode of behavior, a pragmatic disposition composed largely of reason, feeling, and will. Indeed, religious beliefs function for primitive man as a means of establishing and confirming those mental attitudes which are crucial to his survival. Because of their survival values, these mental attitudes are an abiding confidence in and reverence for

traditional ways of doing things, a persistent urge to maintain harmony with the natural environment, and courage in the face of the vicissitudes of life. Malinowski discovered that these dispositions are embodied in and maintained by the religious practices and ceremonies of primitive religion. Truth of profound importance for survival are expressed in the myths of the scared tradition, and these myths both explain and support the practices of primitive societies.

In the final analysis, Malinowski seems to feel that the function of religion in the primitive world is to render sacred certain dimensions of the social world. He found this work of translation in such religious activities as initiation ceremonies, totem mysteries, and funeral rites. This view brings him into sharp disagreement with Durlkheim who believes that religion derives its sanctity from society.

2.2.3 The origin of religion in the viewpoint of anthropology

Anthropologically speaking, religion is that part of culture which corresponds to an organized conception of the universe and the ideational mechanisms of allaying anxieties created by people's inability to predict and understand events that do not apparently conform to the usual. Religion is woven throughout the institutions of a society, including its sensibilities and forms of expression, connecting them in particular ways, which are different in every society.

It is in this sense that a religion is a distinctive symbolic expression of human life that interprets people and their universe, providing motives for human actions and for a group of associated acts which have had survival value for the human species. A basic difficulty of all religions – especially historical religions – is to effect a constant rebirth of symbols in changing cultures. In the course of time, some of the most powerful images and symbols lost their fertility in promoting concepts that inspired a religious community – for example, the "life" symbol of the Egyptians. Religion functions to assure the survival of society by controlling the health of individuals, organizing human behaviors, saving souls, displacing emotional debris and social and psychological anxieties, providing rites of passage, and restructuring the society when its in danger of disintegration.

When anthropology first took forms as an organized scientific discipline toward the end of the 19th century, the theory of biological discipline as set forth by Charles Darwin was an exciting and revolutionary idea in the scientific world. At that time, many students of primitive religion belonged to the European middle class, from whose perspective the socio-economic history of humankind appeared to be a triumphal march to ever-greater material prosperity and rational enlightenment. It was common for them to regard evolution as the frame of things and to view the history of human thought as did August Comte: as an evolutionary process of emancipation from magical and religious categories,

through increasing philosophical refinement, to scientific rationalism.

In this new field of anthropology at that time, the principal subject of investigation became the manner in which culture had evolved "upward" from very simple beginnings. Those anthropologists who were interested in religion asked how religion began to be monotheism (the form of religion in the scholars' own European societies). The prevailing view held that religion had evolved from primitive beliefs in many spiritual beings to belief in a single omnipotent being, as exemplified by the Judeo-Christian God.

Among the noted pioneer anthropologist in this category was Edward Burnett Tylor. He believed that the human race had in general evolved through a set series of stages from a primitive condition to civilization. Applying this model to religion, Tylor believed that spiritual beings were an invention of humankind to explain the things people could not otherwise understand; he believed that eventually, as people progressed, they would become scientific—Tylor's understanding of "civilized". (Tylor 1871: 26)

Tylor thought that people came upon the idea of spiritual beings when they tried to explain the difference between life and the things that people did in dreams and trances. To explain such things, said Tylor, humankind developed the idea of a soul, a spiritual entity that leaves the body at death, during sleep, and in other state of unconsciousness. From that simple beginning, humankind extended the belief in spiritual beings to the rest of the animate world – and even to the inanimate world.

Other scholars of the time, naturalists by training and inclination, saw the beginning of religion in people's emotional reactions of awe, respect and fear evoked by such phenomena as the sun, the moon, and storms. Humankind personalized these phenomena into gods. One such theorist was Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941), who denied that early peoples had religion. Rather, he argued that early peoples first approached the supernatural through magical means, and religion evolved out of magic. Magic is the use of means (ceremonies, charms, spells) that are believed to have power to cause a supernatural being to produce a particular result (rain, healing) or prevent one (death) considered not obtainable by mundane means.

Frazer saw magic rather than religion as analogous to science for civilized peoples. Magic predated religion, the latter being born as humans realized that magic was ineffective. Instead of trying to control the supernatural through spells and formulas, human now began to supplicate, pray to , and make themselves subservient to the supernatural. (Frazer 1890: 56-60)

III. Influence of Religion

3.1 The soul of a culture

3.1.1 Culture

The opinions on the implication of "culture" vary. According to statistics, there are over 200 definitions of culture. (胡文仲 1994: 200) Definitions with scholars of various schools, differing literarily and contently, seem to have something in common: on one hand, only human beings own culture. Culture is exclusive to human beings, and other creatures do not have the culture of their own; on the other hand, culture is the product of man's creative activity rather than something of spontaneous shaping. Culture belongs to man, but not everything exclusive to man is culture.

"Culture" and "Nature" conflict each other. The pure Nature is no culture. Confucius's understanding of "culture" can be found in *Analects* - "质胜文则野，文胜质则史。文质彬彬，然后君子." *The Book of History* states "经纬天地曰文，照临四方曰明." The Chinese ancient thinkers have taken "wenhua" as something opposite to the pure Nature, culture being the product of people's creative activity.

In western languages, the meaning of "culture" is similar to that in *Analects* and *The Book of History*. Culture (cultura) is a derivation from the Latin word *colere* (cure, take care, etc.). Its original meanings is best seen in its composites: agriculture, horticulture, etc. "Take care of", "take care of a garden", etc. Taking care of something implies interest, dedication, knowledge, competence and even apprenticeship to be able to take care of something. This is especially manifested when we speak of medical "care" of "cure". Only intelligent, rational, provident, and free human beings are capable to take care, are capable of culture, with the possibility and necessity of developing its various fields or horizons. The Latin word "cultura", English and French "culture", German "kultur" share the basic meaning of farming work like growing rice. The derived meaning is people's ideological advancement (knowledge, virtues, sentiment, etc.) Culture is the personalization of Nature and in this process, various contents and forms of culture come into being.

Values and virtues of a people set the pattern of social life through which freedom is developed and lived. This is called a "culture". On one hand, the term is derived from the Latin word for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or mind (*cultura animi*), for just as even good land, when left without cultivation, will produce only disordered vegetation of little value, so the human spirit will not achieve its proper results unless trained or educated. (William 1967: 273-276) This sense of culture corresponds most closely to the Greek term for education (*paideia*) as

the development of character, taste, and judgment, and to the German term "*bildung*" (formation).

Culture as a global term or "family concept', on one hand, and as an inbegriff general term on the other hand. The term culture is an extremely comprehensive and complex term. It contains today much content in a global and often not, in a specific and clarified way; it is therefore not easy to delimit it. In fact, it tends to comprehend everything that is human.

What follow is not a complete list of the contents of culture, but only an indication of its extreme breadth. The term culture includes the traditions and the patrimony of a certain historical and geographical human population together with its environment in a somewhat determined cultural area that has developed historically and has a certain unity; all arts with their specific style, all literature and, preceding it, a language with its vocabularistic, grammatical specifications and semantical relations, the judicial, political, social and economic system with their evolution, technology and the education system; religion with its history, whether true or mythological, its rites, feasts and their structures; especially the moral and social values commonly accepted whether religious or secular; and of course, it includes philosophy and perhaps even logic, mathematics, etc.

As we have seen, the term culture becomes more and more comprehensive, even to becoming philosophical all-comprehensive for every typical human activity and manifestation is culturally determined: is culture – the typical consequence of this is "cultural ethics," but also a cultural worldview, cultural epistemology, and cultural metaphysics. Philosophy as a whole is cultural. It is clear that one is human only insofar as one possesses in some way cultural expressions and activities. But then the various parts or aspects of a culture, which is not the same in a single culture, are the same, are not single parts which could be called a culture. Culture is singular, but in a special and all-comprehensive way.

3.1.2 The relations Between religion and culture

Religion is the product of social development. Its four elements and religion itself are the creation of man and the distillation of human life. Religion essentially features the belief and worship of supernatural power or Deities which are not admit by science. The scientific study of religion tends to prove through rational study that all gods or deity are the alienation of human nature. The religious alienation is more advanced and complex creative activity on ideological level. The advancement of human nature causes the development of the aliened god. So does the religious feeling with deity concepts. Without followers' feeling and experience of god there is no related worship practice, nor the religious culture. Religion is closely connected to the alienation of human nature.

Religion is closely linked to culture. We analyze different religious belief, systems and

morality, so as to find out the answers to problems in cultural life. Religion's prolonged and wide and profound influence on culture and ideology can be found in China, the country likely to have no religious tradition. In cultural ken, religion firstly is an important cultural phenomenon, which reveals man's social life in a particular way, and whose concepts are materialized into a social system and life style. As Mou Zhongjian put it,

Religion is not a lonely and untouchable spirit, and it is always attached to a series of cultural forms such as religious morality, religious philosophy, religious literature, religious arts, customs, classics and practices so as to influence people's thinking and become an integrated part of social ideological life system.

(宗教并非一种孤独的思想游魂在空中飘来飘去，它总要附着在某种文化实体上，通过一定的文化系列在社会生活中发生实际作用，例如通过宗教道德、宗教哲学、宗教文学、宗教艺术、宗教习俗、宗教典籍、宗教活动，影响人们的思想情趣，成为社会精神生活的一个组成部分。)

(牟钟鉴 1988: 5)

In human's history, religion sometimes was the whole cultural system, for instance, in primitive society and in western Medieval Ages, and after the secularization of religion, the role of religion in cultural system can still be concluded as the core of culture. (罗秉祥 2003: 60) After the cultural study in 20th century, the opinion that religion is the core of culture has been accepted by most scholars. People further realize that religion, controlled by the whole cultural systems, is the product of cultural environment and a way to represent culture. In most time in history, in each country, religion was the core power to unite culture, and it defined the whole society within a definite cultural boundary. We cannot understand the achievements obtained by a culture without understanding the core role of religious belief, and without religion, we cannot give a complete explanation of culture. Religion, a cultural phenomenon with a long history, still plays an important role in today's society.

3.1.2.1 Religion as a cultural universal

Culture refers to the learned behavior by experience, as opposed to inborn genetically-determined behavior. Anthropology centers on identifying the different aspects of culture. Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor 1871: 176)

Culture, since it is a cumulative set of ideas that provide for a society's answers to the basic problems of living, is the fundamental vehicle for human adaptation. Every culture includes a body of techniques by which its participants produce their food, clothing, and

tools. Cultures everywhere include patterns of organization designed to regulate the social interactions of individuals.

Anthropological investigation of the world show remarkable similarities. No human society has ever gotten along with a religious system any more than it has gotten on without an economic system: some kind of religious system is a cultural universal. In the realm of religion, many mythic concepts and ritual events are found everywhere: ideas of spirits, souls, gods, demons, personalized and impersonalized power, rites that celebrate events of importance, and so on. Although anthropologists usually focus their attention on religions and cultures of non-literate peoples, their interpretations are generally valid for religions in any age. By recognizing the roles of religion wherever they are found, we can enhance our understanding of religious systems in our own time and place.

3.1.2.2 Religion in preliterate culture

From speculative interpretations of the functions of religion in preliterate culture, we proceed to the actualities. These cultures are multifunctional – and hence in the communities there are varieties of religious ideas and behavior. In preliterate societies, social relationship tends to be multiplex: that is, each servers a plurality of interests at the same time. Religion is not a single institution. In preliterate societies, this saturation of religious and moral implications into all of the rest of activity is fuller than in modern societies.

Another characteristic of multifunctional communities concerns the varieties of religious ideas and behaviors. The religion tends to be tinctured with evaluations, imagery, sentiments, rules, customs, lifestyles, and so on, which are derived from experience in other types of situations, such as the economic, political, domestic, and legal. The tendency of preliterate to personify natural powers may well be connected with the personal character of multiplex social relations, whereas the tendency to spiritualize and almost every force that can affect human beings may be linked with people's inability to bring practical resources to bear against them.

Still another aspect is cults of the dead. These may take many forms, but may be broadly regarded as falling into two categories: the placation of hostile ghosts and ancestor veneration. (Middleton 1970: 315) Cults of the dead may simultaneously coexist with another aspect of religion in multifunctional communities of primitive cultures: belief in a creator spirit or "high god".

Another characteristic of multifunctional communities is polytheism, the belief in many gods. Polytheism tends to flourish in societies which are relatively well-endowed technologically, and especially where the natural habitat of the primitive community is diversified. Often the gods in such a case are arrayed in hierarchy which forms a pantheon

of gods.

The final aspect of religion in primitive communities is revelation. With all of these societies we see that religion has a very definite and important relation to the order of worldly affairs. Peter Lawrence exposes that relationship as being both epistemological (cosmological) and moral (social norms /rules /obligations). (Lawrence 1964: 23) Indeed, religion is among the most important means for maintaining life values.

3.1.3 Western views on religion and culture

3.1.3.1 The ultimate concern

In Old Testament, the great commandment is given: "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." This is what ultimate concern means and from these words the term "ultimate concern" is derived.

The ultimate concern and the ultimate existence, as the important concepts in religion and philosophy, are rich in content and are quite abstract. People can explain them from different angles, but they can hardly grasp the essence.

"Ultimate" literarily means "end" and "final", and "ultimate concern" as a term in philosophy, religion, sociology and ethics at lest has three connotations: firstly, in terms of time, ultimate concern lays stress on the initial and the final stages; secondly, it is a transcendent concern on the present world, a pure spiritual concern that is similar to the pursuit for Aristotle's "metaphysics" or Hegel's "absolute ideology"; thirdly, it is concern of the elementary and prime values and meaning of life, or the concern of life's highest objectives. Based on the above contents, the ultimate concern in theology means a concern of the highest value, the elementary meaning of life, and a thinking on a mystical and holy values. Stelen once explained as the following, " In religious sense, ultimate entity is the highest value known to men, and serves as the pillar and driving force on which relied by people to lead a life." （斯特伦 1992: 3）

Pall Tilich, one of the most influential theologian in the 20th century. A center theme in Tilich's writing is the significance of Faith as ultimate concern, a phrase so perceptive that it has entered the theological vocabulary of our time. Religious faith, for Tilich, grows out of those experiences with which we invest ultimate value and to which we give our ultimate allegiance. Behind Tillich's assertion that religious faith is ultimate concern lies two assumptions: the first assumption is that ultimate concern is common to all religions. No matter what their differences, one's faith experience is precisely what makes an ultimate claim on our loyalties. The second assumption is that no one is without some kind of faith in the sense of an ultimate concern. To use Tillich phrase, their "faith" is their ultimate concern, and like all faith, it demands the individual's commitment to it.

The western philosophical and religious traditions have emphasized the rational aspects of our nature to such an extent that reason, argument, and logic are considered by many to be the only guarantee of truth. We tend to identify rationality as the hallmark of our humanness, and coupled with this is a parallel tendency to downplay the non-rational aspects of our nature as unable to provide any useful information about the world. To be sure, we would agree that there is a place for the emotional and non-cognitive, but it is thought by many to be a small place, especially if we are concerned with defending our commitment by appealing to logical proofs. Perhaps that part of our distrust of the non-rational aspects of our nature stems from our feeling that we are no much as less firm ground when we leave the security of logical argument. Freud opened the pathway for psychology to explore the non-rational aspects of our psyche, but we do not have to wander in the labyrinths of the unconscious to be convinced that there is more to our humanness than merely our ability to construct logical arguments or rational proofs.

To underscore this point we should distinguish among the terms rational, irrational, and non-rational. The rational refers to that aspect of our nature that reason according to logical principles and that provides insight into the nature of things by means of intellectual insight. (Stwart 1992: 140) Armed with data provided by the sense, we can produce proof for many of the conclusions we reach about the world, and the starting advances in our ability to understand and master the physical world speak forcibly of the power of reason to enlarge our intellectual grasp of things. So confident have we become about reason's power to distinguish truth from error that to show how an action or viewpoint is contrary to reason is to discredit it completely. If a person says that it is possible to fly merely by flapping his arms while jumping off a cliff, we would conclude that the individual is thinking irrationally, for there is solid evidence from physics as well as from past experience that this type of behavior will produce a bad fall. Most of us would agree that when there is rational guidance for our actions and belief, we should follow it. Tillich raises the possibility, however, that not everything with human experiences can be neatly divided into the categories of rationality and irrationality.

In summary, Tilich's point is that within human experience there arises something that calls for an act of ultimate commitment. In this sense, then, religious experience for Tilich is not some mystical vision of God but an experience within which ordinary world of something that elicits our ultimate concern, something to which the individual is devoted with passionate intensity and that , in turn, provides a center and focus to the individual's existence. This is an experience that everyone has, but whether one's ultimate concern is directed toward that which is really ultimate or to something that is not ultimate but falsely claims ultimacy determines whether this faith is genuine or idolatrous.

The proposition that "man is creature of rationality" means not only man's favor and

pursuit of nationality but also means that man lives in a world full of reason and order, which differs from animals that adapt to the external world instinctively. Chaos and disorder means the non-meaningness of life and it is the last thing that people can tolerate. In such circumstances, religious belief has ultimate concern. Whether attributing the disorder to preordained fate or to the will of God, religion helps restore the meaning of life. Why religion belief can become a ultimate concern system of followers? Because religion as a symbol unfolds "ultimate value". In the ultimate explanation, people, relying on knowledge and faith and imagination, go beyond dilemma and obtain harmony, a sense of comfort, sense of security, sense of fulfillment and sense of holy. No matter what it is—an expectation, a faith, a symbol or an imagination—the ultimate value or ultimate concern enables people to understand the meaning of life, to gain courage and to experience the happiness and permanence of life. As Hans Kung put it, in the sense, people's thinking and concern of ultimate value are in fact the concern of the ties between man and the world, that between man and history and that among individuals, which uncovers man's meta nature and makes it possible for man to go beyond limit. It is the ultimate concern that gives people enough courage and faith to reject spiritual stains, to recognize the chaos and loss of values.

Religion, an ultimate concern system, whatever is its concern of ultimate existence, its explanation of ultimate values or its promise of ultimate meaning, is a world outlook or values that characterizes people's concern of man's existence, of the ties among individuals and that between man and the world. The concern, not only gives people confidence, courage and objectives to survive, but also urges them to examine their own thinking and practices in order to realize ideological and mental transcendence and improvement. It is in the sense that Hegel considered religion and philosophy as "absolute spirit".

3.1.3.2 Viewpoint of Dawson and other scholars

In history, the initiation, development and reform of western culture were closely related to religion, with Hebrew religion and ancient Greek rationalism together laying the solid foundation for it. What Christianity advocates—God, Original Sin, Degradation, Salvation—has deeply rooted in western culture and exerts great influence on politics, economy, laws, education, literature and arts. In western countries, it is Christopher Dawson who stressed most on the relationship between religion and culture. From the angle of European cultural history in Medieval Ages, Dawson made in-depth study on the relations between Christianity and the western culture. In his *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, Dawson illustrated with lots of historical evidences that it was Christian universalism that served as the spiritual impetus for the development of western culture. (Dawson 1950: 7) It is acknowledged that in the medieval age, Christianity belief had been

the spiritual element that maintained the culture unity of western society, which exerted influence on the shaping and progress of western culture and the personality of western people as well. For that reason, Dawson opposed to the opinion that medieval age was the dark times between classical civilization and modern western culture. He emphasized that Christianity was the real resource for European integration. Medieval Age was no stagnant times, and it created a new time form which we came from and to which we belonged.(Dawson 2002: 1) To the role of religion in culture, Dawson said, "as what I believe, religion is the key to history. It is impossible for us to understand a culture unless we understand the religious root of this culture." (Dawson 2002: 1) Dawson strongly objected to the opinion of modern rationalists that religion was the obstacle to the development of culture, and he advocated that religion played a key role in promoting the shaping and advancement of culture. He said, "Even the religion that likely denies all values and standards of human society can give rise to social reform." (Dawson 1950: 7) For Dawson the social and ideological crisis facing the modern western people was due to the one-sided rationalism and secularization for centuries in the western culture. That Christian belief has been substituted with the rise of modern science worship and material worship does not give any spiritual impetus to the western society, on the contrary, these worships have shaken the deep religious foundation of western culture and made the modern people encounter unprecedented faith crisis and chaotic value orientation. When the western people delighted in talking about scientific advancement and material progress, Dawson warned that the loss of values and morality cored at traditional Christian belief should bring about disasters to the modern society. To some extent, there was only slight partition between civilization and barbarian. The two world wars have made deep impression on people.

Like European religion that propelled spiritually the development of western culture and influenced profoundly the characteristics of western culture and personality of western people, religion such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism also served as the ground for the Asian social structure and order that went on for thousands of years. The Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism maintained the integration and unity of the Chinese society and enabled the Chinese people's values and attitudes to keep unchanged for a rather long time. As Dawson commented, "Great religion is no by-product of world's civilization, but in real sense, it is the basis for great civilization. A society that loses religion will sooner or later lose its culture." (Dawson 1973: 245)

Christian church used to be the owner and keeper of culture and the only interpreter of culture, with its ideals becoming that of the whole Europe. The Renaissance objected to theocracy and advocated rationalism, and it has greatly influenced the later progress of western Europe. In the 16th and 17th centuries, religious reform throughout Europe

accelerated the secularization of Christianity, and the enlightenment campaign in the 18th century propelled the rationalization of religion. Enlightenment thinkers criticized religion as the obstacle to social progress and the cause of man's ignorance and backwardness. Due to the uprising of rational thoughts, Christianity influenced less on culture. Modern scientific advancement made religious belief lose its ground. Russell once made a description that in the combat against science, religion failed again and again and was almost driven out of the cultural realm. In the 19th century, the western academic circle was indulged in cultural optimism, when theory of evolution prevailed and people believed that both the Nature and human society had an evolution process, and so did culture.

Wilhelm Dilthy, a German philosopher once advocated the concept of "spiritual science", (Geisteswissenschaften) holding that human studies had their own particular research field and methodology that were distinct from scientific research. Method adopted by natural science was not the only scientific one, and nor the criteria provided by natural science. Science may provide people with the knowledge to know and reform the world, but not with guarantee for happiness. Science can only tell people what the world is, but can never tell them how to face the world. In general, science cannot cover every field. There is always a field out of the reach of natural science. In western countries, the field has been being dominated by Christianity. Beyond natural science, religion plays a big role: When people feel lonely and helpless, God gives them hope and love and happiness. God was no external object but a specific "person" who had personality and feelings. However, such God was killed by modern people, and in advanced society, God had nowhere to go. Nietzsche proclaimed "God is dead" and strongly appealed to re-evaluate all values. People faced dual spiritual abyss: "God is dead" shook the ground for westerner's ideological life, while the ruin of new social ideal made people at a loss.

Like philosophy, in the "post-culture" times, religion encountered the disintegration of "post-religion". However what post-religion disintegrated is the personal gods rather than the faith tradition of man. Though gods have faded from material and spiritual life of man, the sense of mission and sense of justice and morality that originated in this cultural tradition did not disappear but stays as a traditional cultural form in man's concern system and becomes a spiritual code and support for man to survive the chaotic and disorder post-modern society. As David Ligvin, a post-modern thinker put it, "the holy entity is our creator, but not the external one-sided creator; it gives us a dream not a driving force that moves us. Imitating the holy entity is to give others a dream, with which people may unearth the deepest creativity and potential inside them."(里格芬 1998: 21) The value of religious returning in today's world can serve as a good example. People do not return to the traditional mystical ceremonies, but they hope that the returning will bring them back to a society full of order, friendship, justice and meaning.

It is clear that what people need is not a supernatural supervisor—God or gods, nor the religion emphasizing on ceremony, but the traditional culture passing down on to generations, the tradition that contains philosophy, science, ethics, arts and religion. All this needs to be integrated into a holy faith in man's responsibility and obligation and in the ultimate meaning of life.

We notice that many scholars such as Dawson, Tilichi, Dilthy have made in-depth analysis of the religious elements embodied in various cultural aspects. In western countries, the tide of cultural secularization that started from the Renaissance is still making progress after centuries, which is followed by the loss of traditional religious belief, the overthrowing of values and the instability of social cultural ground. The studies by the scholars like Dawson have to a large extent re-stabilized the foundation of western culture and have resumed the traditional morality and values based on Christian belief.

In the cultural progress course, religious concept has dominated a role of great importance. We should treat it in a serious and scientific manner, rather than deny it entirely. How can we achieve real cultural exchange if we do not understand thoroughly the religious thoughts emerging in the development of western culture in the 20th century?

3.2 The way of behavior: influence on people's conduct

People of western world tend strongly to identify morality with religion, seeing as the greatest strength of religion its force as a sanction for moral behavior; sometimes they define religion as a moral code. Few people today think that moral codes are supported only by religion, but the relationship between religion and morality is generally regarded as close.

The question of the nature of the relationship between religion and morality was examined in the infancy of anthropology by Tylor, who found that relationship to be partial. Anthropology finds that morality has multiple contexts and referents apart from worship and the supernatural that generally identify what is sacred in a society. Society, and particularly key social relations are where anthropologists first sought this, later including more "everyday" contexts and references. Anthropologists find morality to extend beyond religion-as-supernatural in its identifications of the sacred, valued, honored, and ceremonialized, and beyond special loci to everyday contexts.

Moral codes – ideals of proper behavior of person toward person – exist in all societies and are necessary for the survival of society and the human species. Anthropologists assume that moral codes are as old as humankind and that their formulation has been part of the complex of self-domestication that fostered the evolutionary emergence of homo sapiens from earlier primates which lacked religion,

morality, and other attributes of culture.

Social sanctions – forms of approval and disapproval of behavior- are everywhere, and are much alike. For the most part, sanctions are known by their names in everyday vocabularies: praise and punishment, many kinds of legal regulations, and supernatural rewards and punishments. The role of supernatural beliefs as a sanction for behavior reaches into two important areas: etiquette and achievement.

(1) Etiquette

Etiquette, a continuation of morality, consists of rules of behavior that apply universal standards of conduct to all persons among specific categories of people. Member of society often look upon violation of rules of etiquette as less serious than moral offenders. But the border between etiquette and morality is not clear. In some societies, the rules that we call etiquette take on the hue of morality and are supernaturally sanctioned.

Japan is a good example of etiquette taking on the appearance of morality. In modern Japan, where the old social hierarchy has crumbled, these ideals and the behavior associated with them are extinct or weakly lingering echoes. Morality as explicitly taught in the public schools is wholly "secular", omitting traditional Buddhist origins. The emphasis in teaching is on universalistic rules: one's behavior to all other people, concepts which the Japanese call pubic morality and which refer to proper behavior in the public places.

(2) Achievement

The second area into which the role of moral imperative reaches is that of achievement. This is one traditional view of morality with some historic depth, which is distinctive in its intensity and in its relationship to religion. The application of the Christian religion to the notion of achievement has been called the Protestant Ethic. The Protestant ethic is an ascetic devotion to work fortified by the doctrine of vocations, which under the leadership of Martin Luther interpreted secular occupations in the same light as the call to the pulpit. Unremitting industry, thrift, frugality and sobriety are the moral imperatives. Laziness, extravagance and self-indulgence are sins. Rather than being the source of this set of values, however, it is possible that religion here has the role of providing validation and a rational for socio-cultural conditions that have their true source in other places. The scholarly term for the Protestant ethic in the United States has become "motivation toward achievement". Its strength has frequently been linked with traits such as self-esteem, risk-taking, excelling in school, conforming behavior, more competition than cooperation, the value placed upon independence, aesthetic and perceptual sensitivity, affiliation with social class, the nature of family relations, and the ways of training children for their roles as adults.

In the long history, religion was the core of superstructure, dominating the ideological

world of human beings, and influencing various cultural forms in the society. In the early stage and later on, religious feeling and worship were the stimulus and incentive to the continuous advancement of arts. The study of cultural anthropology reveals that arts in the early and the religion-prevailing period were affected by religion, both in content and in form. Morality, laws and customs had been closely connected to the religious life and practice. Faith and taboo and norm gradually became the "superb order" in life, restraining man's instincts. With time going on, the faith and taboo and norm turned into values of social community. In the long history particularly in the primitive times, it was hard to achieve social and cultural progress or to maintain and establish order and ethical codes without the helping hand of belief system, religious etiquette as well as taboos and rigid punishment. Religion, in the name of "holy", makes deified the ethic morality, laws and political system that are related to social relationship, which enhance the members' recognition and obedience to the social relationship and to the relevant ethic morality, laws and political system. Religion's effect in terms of them, is to meet the need to maintain common life in social community, without any class nature. All religions in the world have related disciplines of their own.

Buddha discovered that there are Four Truths to explain how the highest levels of *samsara* (the wheel of rebirth) can be reached. These four principles stand at the top of all Buddhist cultures, no matter how far removed they may appear to be from the Buddha's original teaching. The Four Noble Truths are: Suffering (*dukkha*) is universal; the cause of suffering is craving, or selfish desire, the cure of suffering is the elimination of craving; the way to eliminate craving is to follow the Middle Way between asceticism and self-indulgence, whose technique is described in the Noble Eightfold Path. The "eightfold path" consists in ① right knowledge of the four truths; ② right resolve to curb malice; ③ right speech, true and kind; ④ right behavior, respecting life, property, and propriety; ⑤ right occupation; ⑥ right effort to free the mind of evil qualities and to retain the good; ⑦ right control of sensations and ideas, and ⑧ right contemplation. The last takes place in four steps: isolation, resulting in joy; meditation, causing inner peace; concentration, producing bodily happiness; and contemplation, rewarded with indifference to happiness and misery. The Way, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path are all talking about the same thing. As a definition of rightness, Buddha gave Five Precepts, or moral rules of conduct: to refrain from killing, stealing, lying, sensuality, and intoxicating liquors and drugs.

In meditation, Buddhism asks that a man try harder for himself. It is a lonely task, consisting of passive meditation, contemplation of one's own misery, elimination of all desires, separating from the outer world in the hope of finding the utmost core of one's being, through the process attempting to reach enlightenment or liberation from itself.

Good men who have extinguished desire and attachment enjoy *nirvana*. No amount of theoretical knowledge of the Buddha's teaching is enough to achieve *nirvana*. What he taught his followers was a Way of Deliverance, a practical method for gaining one's own salvation. Buddhism begins and ends with the experience of the individual. The only thing necessary is for the individual to follow the Way of Deliverance taught by Buddha without distraction and without irrelevant diversions. But an initial confidence in the Buddha has to give way to the other elements of the Path: right speech, right action, right living, right striving, right vigilance, and right meditation. A monk must strip himself of all attachments – vanity, craving, anxiety, and finally all self. Buddhism has a contribution to make to a speed-driven and time-anxious society. With its emphasis on the discipline of body and mind and the power of the will over the mind, Buddhism gives a message of peace, of quiet, of tolerance, and of the need for reflection and meditation.

To the social members with faith in those religions, these disciplines not only demand their compulsory obedience and loyalty, but also help form the laws and political system in the society. The non-class-natured interpersonal relations and the relevant ethical morality, laws and political system, though not the product of God's will or the creation of religion, gain recognition and implementation in the society, which is on the basis of "deifying' by religion.

Morality is a code of conduct to regulate the ties among individuals, which comes into being on the basis of certain production relations and represents the objective inter-relation among individuals under certain social condition. Morality belongs to social ideological realm. Religion as a special social cultural phenomenon is surely to reveal realistic social life in its theory, attitude and codes. Religious morality is the code and creed to regulate people's conduct.

In mainland China, Lu Daji was the first to illustrate the ties between religion and morality. Lu said,

Religion and morality both belong to social ideological realm, and both of them share the same source of social and economic basis. Religion tries to unfold in an illusion manner the alien force that dominated people's social daily life, while moral ethics try to regulate and maintain the social ties among individuals with conduct code, social opinion and traditional customs. Both are social ties in essence based on economic relationship. Without economic basis, neither religion nor morality has no objects and loses ground for existence."

(宗教与道德都是社会意识的一种，同属于上层建筑的范畴。社会的经济基础是二者的共同源泉。宗教是以幻想的超人间形式来表现现实世界中支配人们日常生活的异己力量；道德伦理观念则是以行为规范、社会舆论和传统习俗的形式来调节和维系社会中人与人之间的社会关系。它们的本质内容都是人们生活于其中的社会关系，而经济关系则是一切社会关系的基础。宗教和道

德如果离开这个基础，就都没有反映和表现的对象，失去其存在的客观根据。)(吕大吉 1988: 36)

The elementary social function of religious morality is that under certain social condition it can maintain secular morality in the name of gods so as to maintain social stability. When God becoming maker, supervisor and judge of secular moral ethics, a religious follower will link his own conduct to the praise and punishment by gods, and is bound by secular morality. When feeling that his conduct does not meet the demand of gods, a follower will have a sense of guilt; when gaining god's forgiveness, he feel comfortable. Though it is an illusion that God supervises and judges people's conduct, but sense of reverence and sense of guilt towards God aroused by the illusion in his mind is real and vivid, and this psychological experience can play an effective role in restraining followers' behavior. In history, there were many enlightenment thinkers and atheists who doubted and denied the existence of supernatural Deity in their world outlook but fell it a necessity to keep god's authority so as to maintain social ethical order. Those were like Xun Zi, Wang Chong, Hobes, Voltaire, Cante, etc.

Religious morality effectively regulates followers' behavior, with its contents sharing some common ground with secular morality. Religious morality can serve as a supplement to secular morality, and it is certain that religious morality is an important moral code that restrains people's behavior in China. In believer community, religious morality is usually much effective than secular morality as conduct code. Religious morality is based on man's worship and reverence towards Deity, so followers' absolute loyalty and fear of punishment by gods can better restrain their conduct. While secular morality is based on social opinion and people's consciousness, which makes it possible for those less-disciplined and lack of moral concepts to transgress social morality unscrupulously.

3.3 Inexhaustible source of literature: influence on literature

Religion as well as morality, politics, arts, science, philosophy, etc. is culture created to meet the demand of human beings. As culture of "hommization of the Nature", the above are the various manifestations of this process, having very close connection among them.

The most important symbol of ancient Indian culture is the formation of "religion with classics" in 2000 BC. The classics is "Rigveda"(《梨俱吠陀》), which interprets the religious concept through lots of myths and paeans.

In the east and in the west, such arts as poems, novels, drama, music, paintings, dancing, sculpture, architecture, exhibit all religious concepts, feelings and spirits, in terms of style and content and form. Countless ties between arts and religion are like those

between the Chinese traditional arts and the traditional patriarchal religion (Buddhism and Taoism), those between western traditional arts and Christianity, and those between Arabic culture and Islam.

Religious literature is one of the prime manifestations of religious concepts and feelings. Religion cannot prevail without the support of literature and arts. In a long history, religious concepts spread depending on people's recitation from myths. Religious concepts prevailed more rapidly after the appearance of characters. By reading religious classics and literatures, people went beyond the yoke of time and space and understood religious concepts of other nations. Religious concepts not only served as the media for recording and spreading religious concepts but also a measure to express religious feelings. There are a variety of religious arts, literature, poems, drama, dancing, painting, sculpture and architecture, all of which played a dispensable role in expressing religious belief and feelings. Later, though gradually separating from arts, religion still exerts great influence on the development of arts.

Religion and literature belong to ideological scope, influenced by certain economic an political systems, and are cultural phenomena loading on a certain economic basis. They are the results of emotional motivation and spiritual pursuit in man's social practice, and exert dynamic influence on economic basis.

In ancient times, religion and arts integrated with primitive witchcraft. In mid-ancient times, with the establishment of the feudal system, religion dominated people's ideological world, philosophy becoming the maid of religion, science, the servant of theology. Literature at that time was the tool of religion. Modern Capitalist revolution brought about religious reform in many western countries. Literature then shook of the theological shackles and was divorced from secular literature, works on anti-religion topics spreading rapidly, causing literature further diversion from religion. However, religious influence on literature still existed. Today, ties between religion and literature are antinomy. Particularly since 1920s, there appeared the so-called "new literature" breaking entirely with religion or theology in the socialist countries guided by materialism. The mainstream in literature and arts was realistic, but religion had influenced more or less. After the second world war, the style of western literature diversified, seeking to explore the internal world of human beings. Works on religious topic and religious mysteries sprang up, ties between religion and western literature being very close.

Religion is the product of a particular historical stage, and literature is the manifestation of social conditions at a certain time. As inter-related ideologies and two different cultural phenomena, religion and literature influence each other, and promote the advancement of their own.

The tone of ancient literature is realism and romanticism based on religion. On

particular stages, religion propelled the development of literature. In mid-ancient times, contained by theological politics, literature tended to be simple and mystical, with such church literature forms as doctrines, prays, charts, religious dramas spreading throughout the countries. In Renaissance, the newly-emerging Capital class advocated humanism, leading to the flourish of literary creation. In enlightenment times, the ideological system cored at "rationality", and works that advocated capitalist humanity mushroomed, which attacked the classical principles and the scared rules of the religious orders and liberalized the literature. In realistic works, literature shook of the negative influence and regarded religion as certain social ideology and cultural phenomenon. However, even those outstanding literary masters could hardly free themselves from the influence of religion. Take Tolstoy as an example. His ideal like "moral self-improvement", humanity, reformism all revealed his influence by religion.

As a cultural phenomenon, literature holds the traditional ideology, social psychology, feelings and customs, and values as well as ethical norms of each nation, and the absorption and integration with other foreign cultures. Religion with different social and cultural background fostered nations with different faith and different literary trends.

3.3.1 Buddhism and the Chinese literature

Buddhism is the fruit of oriental culture. Since the establishment by Sakymuni 2,500 years ago, Buddhism has been exerting profound influence on eastern material and ideological life, covering varieties of aspects of social life. In Chinese history, there were a lot of great thinkers, writers and artists who were tied to Buddhism, such as Xie Lingyun, Bai Juyi, Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, Wang Wei, Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan. Kang Youwei once said, "佛学之博大精深，至于言语道断，心行处绝，虽有圣哲，无所措乎，其所包容，尤为深远." Zhang Taiyan also commented, "佛教的理论，使上智人不能不信；佛教之戒律，使下愚者不能不信。通彻上下，这是最可用的." The well-knit ideological system of Buddhism has aroused interest of more and more western scholars, with the study of Buddhism becoming a new trend in cultural exchange.

It is no doubt that there is difference among Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Therefore, as an alien culture, Buddhism conflicted with the Chinese traditional cultures at the very beginning. Buddhism's causationism denies and criticizes fatalism and advocates gratitude-requiting and devotion, all of which plays a positive role in improving personality and in guaranteeing social laws and orders. Unlike the Confucianism that disciplines people's behavior with cardinal guidelines and feudal virtues, Buddhism attaches attention to death and afterlife. Buddhism has more profound understanding on life. Confucianism characterizes positive aspect and utilitarianism, advocating self-realizing. Compared to it, Buddhism is relatively negative. Taoism stresses on

self-consciousness, requiring complete emancipation of man's individuality, in pursuit of an inactive lifestyle.

In the Tang and Song Dynasties, there prevailed the saying of "the integration and harmony of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism". (三教合一) Zhang Shangying thought that Confucian theory was similar to such proposals of Buddhism as 识心见性，无上菩提. He said,

The three were like therapies, with Confucianism curing the disease of skin, the Taoism, the disease of vein, and the Buddhism, that of bone; therefore, there was no conflict among them. (儒以治皮肤之疾，道以治血脉之疾，佛以治骨髓之疾；三教本无违)

(何小莲 2002: 143)

Buddhism seeks to help people out of sufferings. Zhu Guangqian once said that Buddhism, though renouncing the world, treated the real world in a pragmatic manner. (佛教以出世的精神，干入世的事业) Through the objective observation and the subjective thinking on the external world, man may entirely understand the nature of life and reach nirvana or Pure Land.

In the late Qing Dynasty, the study of Buddhism became popular. Buddhist ideas enlightened and encouraged many intellectuals. Liang Qichao said in his *An Introduction to the Theories in the Qing Dynasty* (《清代学述概论》) that the so-called new scholars in the late Qing Dynasty were all related to Buddhism. Famous scholars like Tan Sitong, Kang Youwei, Zhang Taiyan all took some Buddhist ideas as their ideological weapons. For instance, Liang and his *Eighteen Essays on Buddhism Study* (《佛学研究十八篇》), Tan's *Ren* (《仁学》) etc. Sun Yixian also sang highly of Buddhism, and he said,

Buddhism, mother of philosophy, was an approach to save the world. Buddhism could assist science. Citizens could not be deprived of religious belief. Religion and politics may coordinate and mutually benefit each other.

(佛教乃救世之仁，佛教乃哲学之母，研究佛学可佐科学之偏。国民不可无宗教思想。政教可相得益彰，并行不悖。)

(何小莲 2002: 144)

That the traditional religions have wide and profound influence on the development of arts is attributed to the superb position hold by religion in the history. Religion made other cultures and art forms attached to it. In art field, all art forms were to exhibit the religious concepts and spirits, to express passion and to meet the need of religion's spreading. Besides, the influence by religion on arts is due to that religion needs to be manifested by

art forms. All religious elements like concepts, feelings, behaviors and rites are symbolized by arts, and religious influence on arts shapes and proceeds the ties between them. The influence in general lies in the essential common ground shared by these two cultural forms.

We take the influence of traditional religions on arts in China as an example.

In China, the appearance of traditional patriarchal tradition can be traced back to the earliest Shang Dynasty. Since the Han Dynasty, Confucianism revered by the ruling class as the dominant thinking had become the consistent orthodox ideology in ancient China. Taoism was developed from the wizard-natured religions in the East Han Dynasty when Buddhism was introduced into China and later spread very rapidly. The coexistence and compromise of the three biggest religions - Buddhism, Christianity and Islam - in terms of doctrines and concepts, influenced deeply the social life and cultural forms in China. In art field, the influence of Buddhism and Taoism is particularly profound. Religious worship not only aroused fanaticism and passion among followers, but also arouses the magnificent imagination of artists, who created various arts relevant to religion. Scholars on Chinese history of arts value the profound influence of Buddhism and Taoism on arts development. Ge Zhaoguang illustrates in his well-known masterpiece *Taoism and Chinese Culture* how the spirit, concept and rites of Taoism had influenced and incited the aesthetic consciousness:

Unlike the theory of Laozi and Zhuangzi, Taoism arouses among people passion and fanaticism, rather than tranquility or calm. What Taoism brings about to Chinese literature is an aesthetic pursuit for splendid and colorful image, and an enthusiastic but illusory imagination.

(因此，与老庄不同，倒嚼带给人们不是一种宁静的情感与恬淡的心境，而是一种热烈与狂迷的情绪，它带给中国文学艺术的，乃是一种追求绚丽神迷的审美情趣，一种色彩缤纷，瑰玮怪诞的意象群，一种近乎沉浸与幻觉之中的热烈想象力。)

(葛照光 1987: 317)

According to Ge, Taoism provides Chinese literature with three kinds of images as follow: the first is the image of fairy and fairyland, the second, image of ghosts, and the third, the image of Taoist priest and their magic arts. The conclusion drawn by Ge on Taoism is also applicable to the study of Buddhism, for the Buddhism concepts and rites exert equally profound influence on Chinese literature. As early as in the Han Dynasty, Fan Ye had concluded the influence in his *Post Book of Han*: "然好大不经，奇谲无比，虽邹衍谈天之辩，庄周蜗角之论，尚未只概其万一。又精灵起灭，因报相寻，若晓而昧者，故通人多感焉。" And Sun Changwu generalizes three features of the Buddhist scriptures in literature thinking and means of expression as follows in his *Buddhism and*

Chinese Litrerature:

Firstly, exaggeration. The Buddhist scriptures repeatedly adopt exaggeration to describe a complete scene...The Chinese people do not have such odd fantastic thinking as that of Indians, who describe in exaggeration way another illusory world which is eccentric but real.

Secondly, illusion. Literature links closely to imagination. The imagination used by Buddhist scriptures to create a world in mediation is similar to that in literature.... Such concepts as the six great divisions in the wheel of karma (六道轮回) and retribution for sin (因果报应) in Buddhism, though groundless, have made room for art imagination and increased expressing means in literature. At the very beginning, superstition depended on imagination and then in process of development, religious illusion may turn into arts.

Thirdly, myths. Buddhist scriptures are filled with exaggeration, illusion and myths, creating a supernatural and splendid realm that impresses readers deeply.... They also made more new room for art conception and expression.

Sun's conclusion shares similarity with that of Ge. The concept and mediation of Buddhism have influence on lifestyle and aesthetic of the Chinese people, both Buddhist followers and many persons in art circle, promoting the development of various arts.

The Chinese literature (poems, novels, drama, etc.), in content and in form, in style and in type, particularly in imagination, is influenced by Buddhism directly or indirectly. The earlier poems such as the ones with four characters each line in *The Book of Songs* and ballads in the Han Dynasty, basically are short ones to express individual feelings. The first idyll and epic are respectively *Mulan* and *Peacock Flying Southeast* in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. According to Liang Qichao, it was on basis of the Chinese translated version *Ode to the Buddha* (《佛所行赞》) that developed this new style of poem.

The emergence and development of Chinese novels were also related to Buddhism. Lu Xun in his "*古小说钩沉*" concluded the stories in Buddhism as the embryonic stage of Chinese early novels; short stories of the Tang and Song Dynasties originated from Taoism and Buddhism; Lu said,

The Chinese people used to believe in witchcraft. Since the Qin and Han Dynasties, there has been prevailing the concepts of fairy, and witchcraft re-gained popularity at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, when people were fascinated about ghosts. After its introduction to China, Hinayana (小乘佛教) gained growing popularity. Therefore, the concepts of fairy and ghosts gradually prevailed in novels. From the Jin Dynasty to the Sui Dynasty, there were more odd novels, some of which were written by men of letters, some of which, by followers.

(中国本信巫，秦汉以来，神仙之说盛行，汉末又大畅巫风，而鬼道愈炽；会小乘、佛教亦入中土，渐见流传。凡此，皆张皇鬼神，称道灵异，故自晋迄隋，特多鬼神志怪之书，其书有出

丁文人者，有出于教徒者。)

(鲁迅 1986: 43)

Some novels by the Tang authors such as *the Legend of the Prefecture Chief in Nanke* (《南柯太守传》) contained the Buddhist concepts like "life is dream" and "renouncing the world", and the popular literature since the Tang Dynasty derived directly from peach means of Buddhism in the Wei and Jin Dynasties, and then developed to be non-religious works which described and recorded folks, stories, historical events and current affairs at that time.

Besides providing rich content and styles for the Chinese literature, more important, is the stimulus of imagination among Chinese literati and artists. Without the rich and outstanding imagination, they could not produce large number of great works. The traditional patriarchal religion has been serving as the orthodox down the ages. With Confucianism as the orthodox, religion took Confucian thoughts as basic creed, the patriarchal religion serving as the ethical guidelines and principles in the patriarchal society. Under the Confucian thoughts and the patriarchal religion, the Chinese people tended to be pragmatic and aggressive, not upholding any illusory thinking, therefore, their arts works were realistic and lack of imagination. The introduction of Buddhism into China and the spreading of translated Buddhist scriptures brought about not only the Buddhist philosophy and creeds but also the highly-developed imagination, which vitalized the progress of Chinese arts. Great works like *The Pilgrimage to the West* and *Gods of Honor* may serve as representative ones. Hu Shi said in his *The History of the Vernacular Literature* (《白话文学史》),

The Chinese literature in the past was lack of imagination. Even the works of Qu Yuan and Zhuang Zhou can not rival to those of the Indian writers who are highly-imaginary. In light of that, the introduction of Indian literature full of illusion into China definitely showed its magic power. In the past, there were only the simple and uneasy fairy literature. After that, great works like The Pilgrimage to the West and Gods of Honor were all influenced by Indian literature full of illusion. (中国固有的文学很少是富于幻想力的，像印度人那种上天下地毫无拘束的幻想力，中国文学里竟寻不出一个例（屈原庄周都远不够资格），长篇韵文如《孔雀东南飞》只有写实的叙述，而没有一点超自然或超过空间、时间的幻想，这正是中国古文学所表现的中国民族性。在这一点上，印度人幻想文学之输入确有绝大的解放力。试看中古时代的神仙文学如列仙传，神仙传，何等简单？何等拘谨？从列仙传到《西游记》、《封神榜》，这里面才是印度的幻想文学的大影响。)

(胡适 1985: 114)

Generally speaking, all arts in the world are more or less influenced by religion.

Without the traditional religion as sources, arts could hardly flourish.

3.3.2 The Christian spirit and the western literature

When talking about western modern literature, few deny the influence and position of Christianity. From historical point of view, that Christianity had influenced so profoundly the western literature and culture is not because of the religious customs descending for generations together with religious belief and experience, but because of the ideological system formed through human experience. The ideological system was not hampered by Christian church, but absorbed much essence of other cultural schools, which made the so-called Christian spirit the generalization of western cultural connotation since modern times. After Jesus and Luther, the Christian faith tended to be a contemporary and rational theology as Kant's "ration-defined" ideology. The involvement of rebel and atheist was unacceptable to the secular cultures. Nevertheless, it was these people that had motivated the development of Christian spirit. Because of that, when the secular elements were abandoned by people, the valuable proportions were preserved. In light of that, the basic spirit of Christianity can finally integrate with human beings' ultimate concern and ultimate pursuit, by means of literature.

Western culture originated in Greek and Hebrew traditions, and Christianity is physically the integration and complementation of these two. It was till the Renaissance and religious reform that thoughts against the traditional creeds became the mainstream in theology advancement. Their re-explanation of Christianity gradually substituted the old and narrow creeds and exerted influence on the life style, values and attitudes as well as the ethical principles of western people. Christianity's prime influence on western culture is due to the *universal cycle theory* composed of "original sin" and "salvation", both of which influence the westerners' thinking on man's nature, condition and destination and provide a dual choice for human beings. The dual choice asserts man's natural instincts and desires and also sets a non-utilitarian permanent pursuit for man. After Calvin's times, the positive aspect of "sin" obviously was involved more actively in the progress of modern Capitalism. The relevant literature featured personality created by devil and God together. "Salvation" meant to deny good and evil, the secular authority and values and ethical norms, which could not be achieved by secular means. Salvation for human beings, is a pursuit or wish, whose outcome means the end of the secular world. Therefore, western culture under Christianity is both practical and transcendent. The western literature attacked the society with such ideas as primitive nature, humanity and illusory "Utopia" as weapons.

Western literature is primarily influenced by Christianity. The Ancient Greek civilization is the source of western culture. That the ancient Greek civilization cored at

personal god exerted decisive influence on Greek literature, and the prime feature of Greek myths is the mixture of gods and people. Gods had the same physical and psychological desires as men. Gods in Greek myths are both holy idols for worship and the masters that have conquered and reformed the Nature in literary works. Gods were personalized. Marx considered the integration of religion and myth as the treasure of Greek arts. It is the combination of religion and Deity worship that has nourished the ancient Greek literature and thus has laid down the cornerstone for western culture.

Bible is the classics of Christianity and the summary of Hebrew literature, in which there are a large number of brief and passionate stories, lyrics and epigrams that are quite helpful for people later to study and understand the social condition and man's mental outlook at that time. In nearly 2000 years, various Bible versions spread widely around the world, playing an important role in establishing and normalizing the English and German languages. Besides, literature after Bible, is more or less related to the Bible in subject and in style. For instance, Dante and his *The Divine Comedy*, Tolstoy and his *Resurrection*, Goethe and *Faust*, Victor Hugo and his *Notre Dame de Paris*, Voynich and *The Gadfly*, Eliot and *"the Wasted Land"*.

The Bible holds an important position in world literature. Milton once said that Bible, the prime classics of religion and the sum-up of figures of speech, can rival the greatest works in ancient Greece and ancient Rome, in terms of aesthetics. The Old Testament covers lyrics, epics, comedies and tragedies, etc. The Bible has inspired generations of writers and artists, helping them handle those thorny figures of speech. (林太，张毛毛 1993: 115)

3.3.2.1 Christianity and the western literature in the 20th century

That lots of western literary concepts of significance undertook substantial turning ties to Christianity. For example, the decisive element "fate' in ancient Greek tragedy was replaced by "the trial of God" in medieval. People then attributed punishment to their own sin and wrongdoing, rather than taking "fate" as an excuse. The later tragedy theory did not depart from this concept. Under modern theology, Christian concepts such as superb truth, ultimate concern and expectation for salvation began to stay away from specific objects and manifestation. In line with the trend, western literature in the 20th century intended to demonstrate the contradiction of traditional values, irrationality of orders in secular society, meaninglessness of human behavior, and to express the feelings like tiredness, desperateness and loneliness. Literature and theology had the same orientation and direction in that time, in terms of starting point. Scholars like Carl Barter and Paul Tilichi recognized from theological point of view that modernism in literature in fact was the extension of religious feelings in the 20th century; Jacque Ellul with *The New Demons* then

pointed out from literary angle that " Alienation and illusion, that is modern religion".

The western literature in the 20th century manifested in-depth the modern theological concept by directly re-integrating with Christian spirits. We found that a large number of western writers were associated with Christianity—Joyce and "the God's summon in the Bible, Camul and "degeneration". (缪勒 1959: 11) They realized that it was necessary for man to retrieve faith, seeking to re-defy the status of belief by fighting against the absurd secular belief. In recent years, there appeared the phenomenon of "fever of religion". The advancement of high technology did not bring about the decline of religion but give rise to the flourish of religious study.

(1) Paradox of man

The core issues concerned by Christianity are the nature of man, the environment of man and the destination of man's life voyage, all of which are also the great concerns of literature. The existence of man itself may be the biggest paradox. The all-round paradox about the above three issues has been debated repeatedly in Christian classics and other western literary works.

The paradox-like description of man's existence and man's behaviors serve as the basis of the fate-oriented literature in western history. That the topic of man had exerted profound influence on western literature is closely related to Christianity. After penetrating into literature and then expressed by literary forms, the Christian concepts also made many adjustments so as to meet the demand of the society, and became integral part of human beings' ultimate pursuit. The Christian concepts gradually covers more because of western literature, while the western literature can go much in depth influenced by Christianity. In a broader sense, the link between them has determined not only the topic and characters in western literature, but also the western culture-philosophy mode since modern times, and the general thought pattern of western people as well, allowing them to create a culture both ideal and pragmatic, which differs a lot from the oriental counterpart.

(2) The maximum of pessimism

In general, Christianity is a religion of maximized pessimism, while the western literature is an equally pessimistic one. (杨慧林 2002: 117) The so-called pessimism does not necessarily mean complete desperation, but to completely abandon all illusion about realistic existence and measures, seeking to transcend. God's sadness is also the sadness of western writers. The maximized pessimism contains hope. Many writers, by probing the relationship between literature and Christianity in their old age, suddenly found out a complicated integration: Shakespeare, though having fully perceiving the feelings of heroes, resorted all hope to those uncertain demons; Tolstoy in his fifties, devoted himself to religion, seeking to save the society from becoming degraded; Mark Twain was unique, in whose last novel *the Secret Stranger* he boldly abused God and meanwhile deliberated

questions like " what is man", "what is the destination of man" etc. (曾胡 1989: 56) which were the typical concerns of Christianity. Donne，British metaphysical poet, once commented on this phenomenon, 我青年时代的情妇是诗歌，老年时代的妻室是神学.（杨周瀚 1987: 213）

  (3) Human nature and sin

  "Original sin" is the basic concept in Christianity. Original sin, for the westerners, is not a "heavy Cross" as we think. Original sin's first companion is "salvation" not "punishment". It is a thought pattern or an ethical ideology that is entirely different from the oriental counterpart. The "original sin" concept enables a person to feel himself as among the sinners rather than the only one that should bear the responsibility alone. Under the condition, sin is the shared characteristic among human beings, with the western culture with "original sin" background stressing more on the naturality and rationality, of "sin" and "evil", entirely denying the existence of ideal personality and developing into a good-and-evil cognition.

  The western literature's recognition of contradictions among men, and its denying of human's civilization originated from Christian concepts. Christian "universal cycle theory" composed of "original sin" and "afterlife" in fact provides westerners with a dual choice between good and evil, realistic achievements and ideal homeland. The choice itself may serve as the most primary source of western literature with the transformation and development of Christianity, the existence or non-existence of paradise and God becomes less important. Their value lies more in the permanent reference with which they provided man, enabling human beings' civilization probably wrongly-directed to follow the right way, and that the society also allows the western literature to involve vigorously in the society.

  In the Bible world, human beings are always between God and Saddam, neither deserting from God nor being out of the control of the latter. Shakespeare had in-depth understanding on it. In his works, the denying of pure good means the denying of pure evil. In strict, there is no "devil" in his works, "all motivations are incited by personality".(Gardner 1978: 83) Shakespeare always tried to look for causes that forced those people to do evil. Hugo said, it was Christianity that led poem to truth. (雨果 1963: 183) The starting point of Christianity also serves as that of western literature and the original sin became the ideological agent of the western literature.

  In a sense, Shakespeare's understanding and expressing of the Christianity's substantial concepts determined the later development of the western literature. His works enabled us to find out the trace of Christianity in western literature. The modern literature with him as core, on one hand, defined man with "original sin" in Christianity, and on the other hand, denied all contradiction in the real world with Christian "salvation". The dual

choice caused by Christianity's values in western literature is the basis on which science and humanity, civilization and desire may become an integration. The 20th century in the west is a century when faith was throttled by rationality. The existing statements like "I think, that I am " and "knowledge is power" and the achievement of classical philosophy in Germany allowed rationality to hold superb status, and meanwhile aroused the pondering of Shakespeare and the like over the ties between reality and future, fate and destination. However, rationality was later wiped out by the crisis and wars and riots, having only Nietzsche's famous saying as "God is dead". The status of religion in the 20th century decreased sharply, and the western literature at the time integrated with the ultimate concern of Christianity, putting an end to the eulogizing of rationality and freedom.

In this wasted land-like world, the thorough sense of alienation and the everlasting dilemma became the major topics in literature. Feelings as loneliness and being abandoned were closely related to the deep religious spirits. Some commented as follows: Behind various senses of loss is the loss of God. (Lewis 1959: 26) Therefore, secular literature turned to theology and Christianity.... In our times, many works of utmost importance inevitably stretch to the so-called theology layer. (Wilder 1952: 14) More writers seemed tied to Christian tradition like Focner, Hemingway, Yatz, Eliot, Joyce, etc. who did not follow the way of the writers before them but directly turned illusion to desperate. The contradiction in the real world made them have an acute sense of incredibility of life and at the same time the dual choice in Christian culture enabled them to see new hope.

In the process of self-recognition and civilization advancement, westerners have all along tried to find out a transcendent starting point. They once resorted to religious faith, literature and ideal social mode, all of which seemed to core at a rational theology. As Frye put it in his works, "Modern literature tends to go to myth." (Frye 1945: 233)

IV. Significance of the Study of Religion

Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, the three biggest religion disciplines in the world, still exist and show renewed spirit after 2,000 years of time, each having large number of followers around the world. Born in particular countries, they influence greatly people in many other countries and regions.

Religious phenomenon is manifested variously in the fields of social life. In spiritual realm, it is shown as a variety of faiths, feelings and concepts or is materialized as classics, literary and art works. It also can serve as ethical norm to restrict social relations and practices. What is more important is that religion as the core of specified cultural traditions exerts continuous influence on social development in a profounder and wider manner.

Religion as social ideology played an important role in the development of human

society. Man's original consciousness on the world and life is religion. In primitive society, religion assisted people to distinguish themselves from the surrounding world, and explained the various phenomena people encountered.

Civilization is the sum of a variety of cognition, feelings and practices fostered in the long history. Religion once served as the core in the advancement of civilization. Religion not only provided man with an explanation on world and life, but also met the emotional need of human beings, and constrained man's behavior. Religion, as the product of cultural development, integrated with other cultural forms and exerted profound and prolonged influence on cultural progress. Attention should be attached to the role of religion when studying the history of civilization and the cultural characteristics of various nations or when making comparison among different cultural traditions. The study of religion lays necessary foundation for understanding cultural movement of human beings. In a sense, studying religion is of particular importance. China is now on the way to achieve highly-developed socialist material and ideological advancement, which requires frequent and further cultural exchanges with other countries, which should be carried out on the basis of understanding their cultural traditions. Without the study of religion, "the understanding will not go further." (罗竹风 1991: 28)

People gradually realized that science is not omnipotent. Undoubtedly, the development of science has deepened man's understanding of the Nature, and greatly improved man's material life. However, science is incapable in some fields. The first, the issue of ethical morality. The scientific advancement is not necessarily accompanied by the improvement of ethics. Nuclear power can be both used to benefit human beings and to destroy the world as nuclear weapons. How to use the new science and technology arouses many ethical problems that cannot be solved by science alone. Besides, science can only meet the need of man in material regard, but cannot satisfy man's metal and ideological demands which are more profound and diversified. Religion may answer such questions as the good and evil in human's nature, the ultimate meaning of life and the fate. Professor Zhang Junli once put forward in 1923 that science was incapable of solving the issue concerning values. With the upcoming of the new century, an unprecedented sense of crisis spreads throughout the world.

As the assisting measure to laws and morality, religion can control the society. Religion encourages people to be good and to do good deeds, therefore, to some extent, it can build up people's confidence to fight against disease, failure and poverty, disease their fear and puzzles when they are in dilemma. Besides, religion can assist the mutual understanding and communication among people. Sociologists hold that social existence and development demand revolution and reform and stability and order as well. It is a necessity to make the society under control. Religion along with laws, morality and

customs are all important measures to control the society. To some extent, religion is revolutionary. Though religion places hope on the other world, it can become the spiritual weapon of the oppressed class in their combat against oppression.

4.1 Better understanding of religion

Many see the role of religion somewhat like they see a clergyman at a political dinner: a symbol of domestication invited to ease with vague but affable prayers the consciences and the digestive tracts of those with the real power. There are, indeed, many faces to religion.

Religions deal with all the basic aspects of life that give meaning: God, persons, nature, and self. Further, the meaning of the terms we shall be dealing with are complex and often misunderstood. We must therefore attempt to define them clearly. We shall spend more time on the definition of religion than the others, because it means many different things to different people.

As a working concept of religion, we might use Webster's unabridged dictionary's first definition of religion as

The personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands especially as found in accepted sacred writings or declared by authoritative teachers, a way of life recognized as incumbent on true believers, and – typically – the relating of oneself to an organized body of believers.

(Webster's Third New International Dictionary 1961:1918)

Religion is different from theology, faith, belief, church, cult, sect and denomination, all of which some people see as being allied to religion and often confused with it.

A formal religion, in contrast to all of these, is the search for and personal adherence to an ultimate and transcendent reality that gives meaning to living. It necessitates communal involvement in accord with a creed and code which are defined, at lest loosely. It has ritual and doctrine, which are simultaneously historically rooted and continually developing. A basic difficulty of all religious understanding is to balance intelligibility and mystery. If intelligibility is neglected, religious belief can become dishonest and religious people can loose integrity. If mystery is neglected, there may be good philosophical discussion, but the heart of religion will have disappeared.

4.1.1 Fulfillment of basic human needs

Many human needs are not met by the outer aspects of our life on earth. One of these

is the difficulty of accepting the commonsense notion that this life is all there is. We are born, we struggle to support ourselves, we age, and we die. If there is nothing more, fear of death may inhibit enjoyment of life and make all human actions seem rather pointless. Not only do we want a sense of some kind of eternal life; we also want this present life to have some meaning. For many, the desire for material achievement offers a temporary sense of purposefulness. But once achieved, these material goals may seem hollow. All religions help to uncover meaningfulness in the midst of the mundane. They do so by exploring the transpersonal dimension of life—the eternal and infinite, beyond limited personal or communal concerns. In doing so, some religions totally deny the value of earthly life; others seek to bring heaven to earth, infusing each moment with awareness of the whole.

There is in some of us a desire for perfection, which is confounded by the environmental degradation and human injustices of modern industrial life. That which is absolute, ultimate, and perfect does not seem to exist in the world that we perceive with our five senses. For example, if we look for perfection in human love, we are likely to be disappointed. Yet we can imagine an absolute, divine love that never ends and that accepts us unconditionally, despite our flaws. Religious practices may offer us access to this perfection.

Some of us also have a strong sense of our own imperfection and long to outgrow it. Religions describe ideals which can radically transform people. People long to escape from personal problems. Those who are suffering severe physical illness, privation, terror, or grief often turn to the divine for help. Religious literature is full of stories of miraculous aid which has come to those who have cried out in their need. But sometimes help comes as the strength and philosophy to accept burdens. Rather than seeking help from without, an alternative approach is to seek freedom from problems in our "own" minds. According to some eastern religions, the concept that we are distinct, consistent individuals is an illusion; what we think of as "our" consciousnesses and "our" bodies are in perpetual flux. From this point of view, freedom from problems lies in recognizing and accepting the reality of temporal change and devaluing the "small self" in favor of the eternal self. Many contemplative spiritual traditions teach methods of tuning within to discover and eradicate all attachments, desires, and resentments associated with the small self, revealing the purity of the true self. Once we have found it within, we begin to see it wherever we look. This realization brings a sense of acceptance in which, as philosopher William James observed:

Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome, which may fill any place on the scale between cheerful serenity and enthusiastic gladness, has taken its place

.(James 1958: 49)

In the midst of the turmoil of life, both inner and outer, people long to be happy and yearn for peace. Some people feel that their true selves are part of the world of light, dimly remembered, and long to return to it. When we encounter nature in all its original beauty, or humans acting in pure love, we may be struck by another religious impulse – appreciation for this extraordinary creation. Behind the miracle of creation, there may be an intelligence. Some of us want to know who or what it is. We look to religions for understanding, for answers to our many questions about life. who are we? Why are we here? What happens after we die? Why is there suffering? Why is there evil? For those who find security in specific answers, some religions offer systems of doctrines proclaimed as absolutely true and accepted as such, even if they lie beyond the domain of one's personal experiences. Religions provide some people with a sense of relief from anxieties, a secure feeling of rootedness, meaning and orderliness in the midst of rapid social change. Religions may also provide rules for living, governing everything from diet to relationships. Some religions, however, encourage each person to explore the perennial questions by themselves, and to live in the uncertainties of not-knowing intellectually, always breaking through old concepts until nothing remains but truth itself.

A final need that draws some people to religion is the discomforting of being alone in the universe,. This isolation can be painful, even terrifying. The divine may be sought as a loving father or mother, or as a child. Alternatively, some paths offer the way of self-transcendence. Through them, the sense of isolation is lost in mystical merger with the one, in communication with all.

4.1.2. Pragmatic aspect and "opium of the people"

Is there a viable materialist conception of religion? This is a less simple question than it appears to be. Plainly, there are materialist conceptions of religion, from Epicurus through Marx and Engels, which explain religion as a function of material needs, and of the material conditions of human life which give rise to these needs. The questions is: Are such theories viable or adequate to explain the phenomenon of religious belief? A viable conception of religion is one which doesn't simply explain religion away, but rather explains its origins, its distinctive cultural and historical forms, its persistence in various institutional contexts, its changes and development, its continuing and present existence in the modes of belief and action individuals. The question of whether there is a viable materialist conception of religion is therefore a question of whether any of the presumptively materialist theories meet these requirements.

Classical historical materialism, the historical materialism defended by Marx, Engels and Lenin, claimed that all phenomena of great cultural significance, including all such religious phenomena, were economically relevant phenomena and were explained by

historical materialism.

Religion – all religions – is taken by Marxists to be ideology. Religious beliefs are said by them to be ideological illusions, expressive of a religious ideology. That is to say, the religious belief of believers are at best false and not infrequently incoherent. But Christians and the like suffering from false consciousness, take them to be deep, mysterious, sometimes ineffable truths about ultimate reality. Moreover, they are taken to be belief essential to sustain and to make sense of their lives – lives which, without these religious beliefs, would, the people in the grip of the ideology believe, lack all significance. But this, Marxians contend, is an ideological illusion, which is standardly, but not invariably, used in various ways – some subtle, some not – to further or protect the interests of the dominant class. Thus, in capitalist societies, Christianity typically but not invariably functions to support capitalism, and it does so by giving people a false or incoherent conception of their nature and destiny. Marxian explanation explains religious beliefs ideological illusions mystifying, for the people hoodwinked by them, their social relations and conception of the world in a way that supports the socioeconomic structure – the relations of production – of their society.

Following Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx and Engels regard "the Christian God", in Engels' words, as "a fantastic mirror image of man".(Marx and Engels 1884: 290) In fact, all religious entities in all the various religions are, they believe, such projections of human attributes and wishes. Where religion developed beyond animism, these human projections were turned into what in the imagination of human beings were thought to be supernatural entities. But such conceptions are incoherent; belief in them is, as Engels put it, nonsensical. That the dominated have these religious beliefs answers to the interests of the ruling class, but these projections of human feelings also answer, though in a deceptive and illusory way, to the interests of the dominated, despised people in class society, people with little hope that their needs could be met, their earthly aspirations satisfied, their lives made decent or, in some instances, even tolerable, Engels maintained, religion would not answer to their interests, but since their tangible, genuine needs and interests cannot be met, such an eschatological religion gives them an illusory hope and in that way goes some way towards answering a need in their lives. Moreover for them religion, and a certain kind of religion at that, was factually speaking inevitable. In perhaps his most famous passage on religion, Marx remarks:

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.

(Marx 1844: 42)

Return to Engels' narrative of the origin, development and function of religion. Engels remarked that our conception of the gods first arose through the personification of natural forces. As he put it in *Anti-Duhring*:

All religion... is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. (Engels 1878: 146)

The statements include the following contents: ① the feature of religion as ideology -The objects of religious belief and worship are illusory and non-existent, which is the particularity of religious ideology.② The illusory object is a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces, which shows that the object is no transcendent elusive power, but the external power that closely relates to and controls people's daily life. The holy religion is then back to its secular base. Nevertheless, Engels here did not equal object to "deities', for he had noticed there had been controversy in the western comparative religion since the late 19th century, taking into the account complexity of various religious belief since the primitive times. At that time, many researchers thought that there were no clearly-defined personal deities in the primitive religion. However, as Engels put it, the object of religious worship, whether illused as personal deity or not, was always "an external force that controls people's daily life". ③ It shows that religious concept takes a special representing way----supernaturalization. The supernatuttalizaiton of human power is the prerequisite to the emergence of religion. That the object of religious belief is represented in the form of supernatural power. ④ It explains the reason for the supernaturalization of human power, unfolding the secular basis and the objective origin of religious ideology. According to Engels, only the "external force that controls people's daily life " can serve as the object of religious belief and worship. Only when the external power controlling their daily life as an alien force do people possibly and necessarily take it as support and governor of their life. And it is by discerning matter that Feuerbach considered the sense of dependence as the origin of religion. By developing Feuerbach's idea, Engels then put the alien force that controls people's daily life as the objective basis for the emergence of religion. Therefore, his statement not only shows his idea about the nature of religion, but also explained the cause and ground for the alienation of religion. However, rather rich in content, the statement strictly speaking only concerns the "God" concept of religion. If we take the statement as the definition of religion, it is not enough because religion is not only the subjective concept in human brains but also a social phenomenon really exists. Religion is not only the illusory belief in a certain supernatural

power, but also a social force that has something to do with the social structure. Religious concept as individual belief is one thing, the existence of it as social reality as an another. Once people represent the alien force that controls their daily life as a supernatural power, the representation becomes religious concept. Without this representation, there is no object nor behavior of religious belief and worship, nor is the existence of religion. But this representation can only exist in people's minds, rather than physically turning into the worship of Deities. For example, though it is possible that some idealist philosophers acknowledge the existence of a certain transcendent "absoluteness" such as personal gods or God, all of them are not followers of religion. Religious concept seems as the prerequisite to religious system, but prerequisite does not equal to conclusion. Only when religious concept is materialized as belief behavior or social norms and codes of conduct does religion become a social cultural phenomenon.

In the most primitive societies, religion so reflected the forces of nature. But, as societies grow more complex, and particularly as a social division of labor becomes embedded in the social fabric of people's lives and classes come into existence, "the fantastic figures, which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of nature, at this point acquire social attributes, become representatives of the forces of history." (Marx and Engels 1844:147) I think it is quite mistaken to assume, as Engels does, that religion was first simply a personification of the forces of nature and that only later did religion become involved with the personification of social forces. From what we know about primitive religions both the personification of natural and social forces are involved in the religion of primitive societies. The religions of more complex societies – religions which have become more elaborately socialized – quickly took various forms among different peoples, who were differently socialized.

They claimed that religious belief-systems and practices generally tend to function to support and sustain the dominant socioeconomic structure of the society. Religious institutions generally function to reconcile people, and most particularly the dominated and oppressed people in the society, to the social order in which they live, no matter how miserable the social order is for them.

Most Marxists, in addition to seeing Marxism as an emancipatory social theory, have also seen it as a world-view. Moreover, they have attached considerable importance to its being a coherent and rationally sustainable world-view. Religious beliefs, they believe, are at lest false and generally have harmful effects.

Lenin's view of religion as "medieval mildew" or "one of the most odious things on earth" go hand in hand with Marx's and Engels' description. But the comparison of religion to opium is neither very precise nor original to Marx. This famous metaphor was anticipated by Bruno Bauer in his book *Die gute Sache der Freiheit,* where he talked of

how religion "in the opium-like stupefaction of its destructive urge, speak of a future life where all shall be made new". To what extend this comparison is valid should be left to us and not mixed up with questions as the falsity of religious belief.

Karl Marx was critical of religion because he felt that religion took the masses' minds off the real problems of the day and because people tended to use religion in times of uncertainty or stress. He saw religion as a needless distraction that could only slow the workers' revolt and their subsequent freedom from oppression. (Freedman 1968: 230) Marx contended that the multitudes have been duped or coerced into perpetuating current values through false promises that conformity will lead to a better life. Marx's social theory of religion called religion "the opium of the people". But the opposite – religion as a stimulant of the people – is also documentable.

As the founders of Communism, Max and Engels are the undoubted authorities in Communist system. For nearly one hundred years, their ideas have influenced greatly the analysis on religion by socialist scholars particularly in the former Soviet Union, in East Europe and in China. As Lenin described this saying as "the cornerstone of religious outlook of Marxism", some Marxist researchers tend to think that this classical statement has unfolded the essence of religion. However, here Marx also focuses on the social function of religion. To Marx, the social function of religion concentrated on stupefying people's thinking. From that point of view, religion was the opium of people. We have mentioned above that the function is the representation of nature. And these two can not be mixed up. Things of different nature can have similar social functions, therefore, not only religion can stupefy people, but all those "reversed worldviews" can serve the "reversed world" and become "the opium of people". The feudal ethics like "the three obediences and the four virtues" and the pornographic books are practically the spiritual opium of people. Therefore, the opium of people is no essential feature that distinguishes religion from other social ideology.

The above statements were made by them before January 1844, when their historical materialist worldview began to take shape. These statements uncovered religion's secular basis, social function and representation of nature. Religious issues occupy an important position in Marxist system.

In history, religion has played a dominant role in the realm of the superstructure, linking closely to the political structure. We seem to draw a conclusion that in the history of social development, each social class took advantage of religion, consciously or unconsciously. The dominating religion is always the religion of the dominating class. However, many Marxists, usually neglect the positive role of religion once they combine religion and the dominating class, regarding religion as something reactionary. Even though adhering to Marxist materialism, we will not necessarily draw the conclusion that

"Religion is nothing but reactionary."

We should treat the religious theory of Marx and Engels equally as those of other scholars, which means we should adopt a practical and realistic approach. Marx and Engels' theory is very important and valuable for the study of religion. It is sure that when we study religion, we can not neglect the social function of religion. Religion plays a positive role in the human society. However, religion at the same time has negative sides, which can not be neglected. Marx and Engels have illustrated the negative role of religion. Their results are quite valuable and propelled the development of the study of religion. Based on the accomplishments, we can make in-depth study.

4.2 The need for international communication and understanding

Religion is an international cultural phenomenon, and exchanges in this regard have never faded out in the history. There are totally over 2 billion religious followers, who usually judge the development level of democracy and freedom of a nation based on the current situation of religion in the country. Since 1950s, people in China's religion community have increased the exchanges with other countries, which gives a great help to clear up the misunderstanding by the foreign countries and enhance the communication and friendship with them. With China's reform and further opening-up to the outside world, exchange and communication among countries in the field of religion are inevitable.

Religion, Christianity in particular, has been exerting great influence on the culture, values and social life of western people. Many scholars have conducted valuable study of the role of religion in society from various perspectives. Even in today's highly-advanced industrialized society, the enthusiasm for the study of religion does not decrease. People gradually value the positive role of religion in human society, and there appears a return to religion. A poll of 2,727 Americans in March through May, 1990, contained the question, "Is making a strong commitment to your religion or spiritual life absolutely essential, very important, not very important, no opinion?" One American in three—32 percent—said "absolutely essential," and an additional 30 percent answered "very important." 21 percent said "somewhat important," 10 percent said "not very important," and 7 percent had no opinion. An unprecedented opinion poll taken from April 1989 to April 1990 of 133,000 people around the United States confirmed that the country is broadly religious. Some say that, in view of the fact that the country is high-tech and highly affluent, this result is astonishing. Religion is in the forefront of current discussion about such areas as teacher preparation, parental obligations, the rights of church-affiliated schools to exist, values education, the proliferation of crime, the moral aberrations and loss of personality identity of our day, and society's legitimate concerns about its destiny. We may find that more and

more westerners go to church, and works and movies about religious topics prevail in the western world. Recently, the movie *the Passion of the Christ* is a big hit.

With the frequent exchanges between China and the western countries, a growing number of Chinese people especially the young become quite interested in the western culture. The western Christian culture has deeply penetrated into the aspects of social life including economic practices in our country, for example, many young people show keen interest in the celebration of those religious holidays such as Christmas. However, most of the Chinese people do not have deep and clear understanding of the western Christian culture, which sometimes causes many misunderstandings in cross-culture communication. China usually is taken as a country without religious tradition, the Chinese citizens are taught to consider religion as the synonym of superstition. It is very difficult to the Chinese without any religious faith to understand why some western people are so fanatic about religion. Nor do they real understand the content of Christianity and the role of Christianity in today's life in the western community. Therefore, when we conduct cross-culture study, the field of religion should not be neglected. We further analyze the influence of religion on the social and cultural life, and it will help more Chinese people better understand the western community and avoid cultural misunderstanding in the communication process.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China clearly defines the citizen's legitimate right for freedom of religious faith, and the legal religious practices should be protected. However, in many places, there are still cases that followers' legitimate right is infringed and violated. Many still hold a hostile attitude towards religion and ignore the positive role of religion. The foreign language learners, with the better access to foreign cultures, by studying the influence of religion on western society, can help more Chinese people realize the positive role that religion can play in our social life, so as to gradually reduce and even dispel the prejudice towards religion, this important cultural phenomenon with a prolonged history. By that, we may make some contribution to the socialist ideological and spiritual progress.

V. Conclusion

Religion is no simple superstition nor something reactionary. Religion is an important cultural phenomenon with a long history that will continue to exist and exert great influence on human society. Religious life, in the forms of emotion, belief and practice, pervades human culture; it shapes the conduct and experience of men. Since religion addresses itself to the most pressing problems of human existence, it is certain to attract our intellectual interest. Religion not only produces many works of arts, architecture and rites, but what is more important, it influences the spiritual and ideological world of humankind. Religion, in the long history, gradually integrates in human worldview and values, shaping the cultural tradition of different nations. Conducting the study of religion does not mean to deny religious concepts with scientific ideas, instead, it aims to understand religion's development on the basis of human beings' realistic need and the way in which religion exerts influence on human society. Through the study of religion, we can better understand human beings and human society, and at the same time, we demonstrate the positive role of religion in social cultural life from a scientific perspective.

In the western countries, scholars have conducted in-depth study on religion, especially Christianity. They probed the origin of religion from different points of view, the influence of religion on western culture and values and other aspects of social life. They do not tend to deny the role of religion with the achievements in scientific and technological progress, on the contrary, they re-affirm and admit the role of religion in helping people face the harsh and chaotic reality, overcome fear for diseases, death and other dilemma so to gain psychological and mental peace and comfort. Religion, they think, also can play an important role in forming morality and in regulating and adjusting the relationships among people, so as to maintain the stability and continued progress of the society.

China is now more opening up to the outside world, and the communication and exchanges with other countries keep growing. In the process, better understanding the foreign cultures in an all-round way serves as a foundation for effective cross-cultural communication. The study of religion then may help better understand the foreign cultures, in order to avoid cultural misunderstanding. Meanwhile, the study may help people get a much clearer picture about religion in China, reduce the prejudice and attach importance to this important cultural phenomenon in our society, which can give a full play of the positive role of religion in the socialist ideological and spiritual progress.

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攻读硕士学位期间研究成果

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