

Dialogues on the Theory of Reward for the Good and Retribution for the Evil during Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties

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Abstract: The theory of reward for the good and retribution for the evil (善恶报应) was one of the key issues in the dialogue between Catholicism and indigenous religions in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Under the monotheistic framework, Catholicism advocates supernatural God for rewarding good and punishing evil, thus it had a more logical and rigorous theological arguments. It had exchanges and dialogues with Chinese native religions on the standards of good and evil, who has the rights to reward and punish, and the results of reward and retribution and so on. This article firstly analyzes the Confucian theory of stimulus-response between the heaven and human beings (天人感应). It secondly illustrates the view of the theories of reward for the good and retribution for the evil in Buddhism and Taoism. Then it discusses the Catholic views on rewarding good and punishing evil during late Ming and early Qing, and it also reviews the responses of the native religions in China to Catholic view of rewarding good and punishing evil. Finally, it summarizes the sameness and differences of the theories of reward for the good and retribution for the evil between Catholicism and Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. As to the intentional to do goods, there were some commonalities between Catholicism and Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in the movement of promoting good deeds during late Ming and early Qing. However, there were distinct in the perspective of the standards of good and evil, the subjects of retribution and the roles of individuals in retribution, which caused the conflicts between Catholicism and its opponents in China. The introduction of Catholic theory of reward for the good and retribution for the evil undoubtedly further enriched Chinese religious thoughts since the late Ming dynasty.

Key words: Stimulus-Response, Theory of reward for the good and retribution for the evil, reward-punishment, Catholicism

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Prelude

In the eighth month of the eighth year of Emperor Kangxi reign (1669), under the support of the Emperor, Ferdinand Verbiest (南怀仁, 1623-1688), submitted a memorial to petition for the vindication of the Calendar Case (1666-1669). After the trial by the six ministries, Yang Guangxian (杨光先, 1597-1669), the mastermind of the Calendar Case, was sentenced to be executed. The judgement of the Calendar Case that Catholicism was a heresy was overturned. It was decided that, “We, the ministers, in concurrence with each other, agreed with that the evil man Yang Guangxian made up an accusation against the Catholic Church as an evil cult. Now it is seen that no evil thing is done by the Catholic Church. Accordingly, Catholicism should be worshipped by these people

as before.”¹ With the consolidation of the relationship between Ferdinand Verbiest and Emperor Kangxi, Catholicism was officially recognized and protected, and it began to enter the golden period in early Qing dynasty.

However, after the trial, the officials of the six ministries asked a profound question to Ferdinand Verbiest, “if the Lord of Heaven want to encourage people to do good and enjoy happiness, why somebody who does good will not be blessed in this world; somebody who does evil will not be punished instantly? And why are the evil allowed to be rich and happy throughout their lives, while the good are allowed to be poor, afflicted and sick? Will it not make one doubt that heaven and earth have no ruler, or that the ruler is unjust?”² This question is in fact the Confucian moral dilemma namely “evil thief Zhi (盗跖) was long life, yet sage Yanhui (颜回) was short-lived,” or so-called “Sima Qian’s (司马迁) question”.³ The question means that they doubted that God didn’t exist, or even if the God did exist, he was unfair to people. The questioners use it as a mean to criticize Catholicism indirectly and euphemistically.

The issue of good and evil and its retribution has been fully addressed in various cultural and religious traditions, as it involves ethics, morality and the effectiveness of persuasion and punishment. However, different cultures and religions have different interpretations on such issues as the standards of good and evil and the subject of retribution. Before Catholicism entered China, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, and folk religions all had their own systems of interpretation on the subject. With the arrival of Catholicism in China, missionaries and Chinese believers became involved in the issue, partly to refute the anti-Catholicism’s accusation on the God’s nonexistence or injustice. On the other hand, through the discussion of the subject, they attempted to promote Catholic doctrine and thought to the society. Both local intellectual and west missionaries engaged in an exchange and dialogue on the subject, which enriched the religious thought world of China since the Ming and Qing Dynasties.⁴

Confucian Theory of Stimulus-Response

The Confucian gist of good and evil retribution comes from the *I Ching (Book of Changes, 《易经》)*: “A family that accumulates goodness must have a surplus of celebration, and a family that accumulates badness must have a surplus of calamity.” (积善之家必有余庆, 积不善之家必有余殃。) There were two kinds of interpretations. The first one was that good and evil need to accumulate, and for good we need to accumulate a little in order to become a great good, while for evil we need to prevent a little in order to avoid a great evil. As the followed sentences said that

1 Ferdinand Verbiest, *Brief Explanations on the Remuneration of the Good and the Bad* (《善恶报略说》), collected in *Chinese Christian texts from the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus*, volume 5, Taipei: Ricci Institute, 2002, p. 509.

2 Ferdinand Verbiest, *Brief Explanations on the Remuneration of the Good and the Bad*, p.510.

3 This question is recorded in Biography of Boyi Shuqi in *Historical Recording (Shiji, 《史记》)*.

4 See Tang Yijie, “The Attempt of Matteo Ricci to Link Chinese and Western Cultures”, in *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*, Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991, pp. 147-157.

chancellor kills his ruler, son killed his father. It was not a result of one time, because it is a slow long-time result. Another example is *Xi Ci* (系辞): “It is not enough for good to accumulate to become famous; it is not enough for evil to accumulate to destroy oneself. A villain does no good by doing a little good, and does no harm by doing a little evil, and does not give it up. Therefore, evil accumulates and cannot be covered, and sin is great and cannot be solved.” The second interpretation refers that the retribution of good and evil is to the future generations. In addition, the *I Ching* uses “family” as the subject of good and evil retribution, rather than the Buddhist’s soul or the Catholic individual, highlighting the importance of family and blood lineage in the retribution of good and evil. Only from a literal analysis of the meaning, the emphasis on “must” in this context refers more to a kind of “inevitability”, like “the net of heaven is wide meshed and uncluttered”, however, it has not been specified when, where and to what extent to be retributed by the Heaven. Another implication of the “must” is that retribution is fair and deserved, thus giving the necessary impetus to encourage good and punish evil. This also means that there is not retributed on time and unjustly in the reality world.

The *I Ching* has also explained the relationship between heaven and man. The *I Ching* says, “A gentleman will stop evil and promote good, and follow the will of heaven and his destiny.” It also says, “Heaven has blessed us with good fortune without disadvantage.” Therefore, there are two meanings of “heaven” in the *I Ching*. The first of which is used in conjunction with the earth to refer to the firmament or nature, as in “there is heaven and earth. Then there were all things.” The second refers to the Way or the Law. However, the *I Ching* also emphasizes heaven’s blessing, heaven’s mandate, heaven’s virtue, heaven’s favor and so on. In these terms, Heaven has some characteristics of God’s personality. However, the personal and divine characteristics of “heaven” in the *I Ching* are not very clear. The later annotators always interpreted Heaven as Nature or Way. The relationship between heaven and man in the *I Ching* emphasizes the following of the Way of Heaven, and it also emphasizes the striving of the gentleman. A gentleman’s act of accommodating goodness and reforming wrongdoing is not for the sake of heaven’s reward or fear of heaven’s punishment, but more for the sake of his own cultivation and realm of mind. The characteristics of “humanism” laid down in the *I Ching* has become an important basis for Confucianism’s discussion on the relationship between heaven and man. As the *I Ching* says, “Watching the Divine Principle of Heaven, thus the four seasons run without disorder. The saints set up their teachings with the Divine Way, and the world obeyed.” The emphasis of “teaching with Divine Way” is not on the divinity, but on the teaching.

In the *Book of Songs* (《诗经》), the *Book of History* (《尚书》), and other classical works, we can read a great deal about “Divine Way”. In the *Book of Songs*, the characterizes of God’s personality of Heaven are clearer, such as “The King of Wen (文王) has descended at the Emperor’s right and left”. In the *Book of Songs*, the heaven’s mandate indicates that heaven has its own will and represents the supreme power to administer justices among men. Heaven often orders virtuous people such as the King of Wen to realize its own will. The God in the *Book of*

Songs, on the other hand, often brings blessings directly to people, such as “God is the source of all blessings; He is harmless, the moon is never late, and He gives birth to the gods of grain, and descend a hundred of blessings”. There is a close interaction between “God” and man in the Book of Songs. The *Book of Songs* deal less with heaven and God’s punishment and more with the interaction between heaven and God and the gentleman and the saint. It also emphasizes the role and function of “heaven” as administrating justice and heavenly law. Therefore, the emphasis of the Book of Songs is not on heaven or God, but on man himself.

The *Book of History* has a detailed discussion on the reward of good and punishment of evil, e.g., “The way of heaven is that goodness results in happiness, evil results in disaster”; “God is unpredictable. Whoever does good will be descended hundreds of auspiciousness. Whoever does bad will be descended hundreds of calamities “. In the *Book of History*, heaven or God has definite rewards and punishments for good and evil, and the personalities of heaven and God are also more obvious. The God in the *Book of History* not only rewarded good and punished evil, but also ordered the virtuous (such as King Wu) to crush the guilty (such as King Zou). And “God” can be as angry as man; God has a dwelling space. People need to revere God,” or else he will be punished by God. It is stated in the True Meaning of The Book of History that the Heaven surveil the people, good and evil will be retributed. It is said that the five blessings and six calamities of the Book of History were the thought resources for later Confucianism to persuade goodness by the theory of retribution.⁵

The word “heaven” in the *Analects of Confucius* (《论语》) still carries certain characteristics of a deity, e.g., “He who has sinned from the Heaven has nothing to pray for”. But Confucius’ heaven refers more to the blue sky, or the way of heaven, “What does heaven say? What does heaven say when the four seasons run and the hundreds of things are born?” The Mencius says, “Keep your heart and nurture your nature, and so serve heaven.” In both the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, the relationship between heaven and man becomes more subtle. The so-called “heaven’s mandate” by Confucius and Mencius only refers to “heaven’s way” which is bestowed by heaven, not the “heaven’s order”. Confucius did not have much to say about the “Way of Heaven”, so his disciple said, “The words of Confucius about nature and the Way of Heaven cannot be heard.” Although Confucius also talked about respecting ghosts and gods and keeping them away from the world, and offering sacrifices to the gods as if they were there, which have some religious overtones, on the whole, the Confucian and Mencian teachings were a form of humanism; although it speaks of retribution for good and evil, it does not emphasize the need to change evil for good because of external heaven, gods, or ghosts. The relationship between heaven and man laid down by Confucius and Mencius naturally evolves into a realm, or a relationship between man and heaven’s way.

5 Wu Zhen (吴震), “The Way of Virtue and Happiness: A Research on Confucian Religiosity”, in *Chuanshan Journal* 4 (2012): 110-120.

The Confucian attitude of “doing the best one can and obeying the fate of Heaven” is full of pragmatic utilitarianism. Thus, in the real world, there is no strong way to persuade the good and discourage the bad, nor is there a thorough solution to the problem of the moral dilemma of “evil thief Zhi was long life, yet sage Yanhui was short-lived”. In political life, Confucian self-discipline could not restrain the imperial power to realize the Confucian ideal of peace. Under these circumstances, the theory of celestial-human empathy, which is full of theological features, was born. As stated in the book *The Unauthorized Biography of Han Poem* (《韩诗外传》).

At the time of Yin, a grain tree grew in the court of Tang. It became greater rapidly in three days. Tang asked Yin, “What is it?” He said, “It is a grain tree”. And Tom asked, “Why did it grow here? Yi Yin (伊尹) said, “The grain is out of the river. It is a wild thing. Now it grows in the court of the Son of Heaven. This means it is not auspicious.” Tang said, “What should I do?” Yi Yin said, “I have heard that evil comes before misfortune, and good comes before blessing. If you see evil and do good, then the misfortune will not come; if you see good and do bad, then the blessing will not come.” Then Tang fasted, stayed quietly, and was always revived at night, and consoled the relatives of the death and comforted the ill, to alleviate poverty. After that the grain disappeared in seven days. Evil spirits didn’t come and the country prospered. A poem says, “Fearing the majesty of heaven. The heaven must protect you in all time.”⁶

Here, Hanyin (韩婴) explained the ideas of the relationship between disaster and auspiciousness, and the unnormal natural or social phenomena. Natural Phenomena were taken as for signs of the good and evil of the ruler by the Heaven. This relationship between heaven and man was fully demonstrated in Dong Zhongshu’s (董仲舒, BC192-BC104) *The Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* (《春秋繁露》). According to Dong Zhongshu, when politics was clear, then the wind and rain would be favorable: “The wind and rain are harmonious. The brightest star will be seen and the yellow dragon will descend”. If the politics was not clear, “the upper sky will change and the evil air will appear.” In other words, if there was a disaster, it indicated that the ruler’s actions were deviant and the heavens had warned against him. If there was a auspiciousness, it means a reward from the Heaven. The Heaven in Dong Zhongshu’s thought had a will, was the master of nature and mankind, and was able to express his own attitude to man’s good and evil actions through nature and social phenomena. Dong Zhongshu tied the behavior of men, especially emperors, to the will of heaven and attempted to regulate men, especially emperors’ motives and actions, through the external forces of heaven. Dong Zhongshu’s construct of “heaven-human induction” was in fact a theological system of good and evil retribution. In Dong Zhongshu’s theory, heaven and man had an “isomorphic “ relationship,

Whoever gives birth to human cannot make human. Only Heaven can make human. Human’s origin is from heaven, and heaven is also the great-grandfather of human. This is the reason why man is up like heaven. The form of man is made up of the number of heaven; the blood of man

6 Han Ying, *The Unauthorized Biography of Han Poem*, volume 3.

is made up of the will and benevolence of heaven; the virtue and conduct of man is made up of the reason and righteousness of heaven; the likes and dislikes of man are made up of the warmth and clearness of heaven. Human has answers to joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness, which is like to the four seasons, namely spring, autumn, winter, summer, and winter. Happiness is the answer of spring; anger is the answer of autumn; joy is the answer of summer; sorrow is the answer of winter. The copy of heaven is human. The temperament and nature of human is determined by heaven.⁷

It is precisely because of this “isomorphic “relationship that the words and deeds of human and the Son of Heaven must be in accordance with the will of Heaven. Otherwise, they will be punished by heaven, that is, one should “obey the heavens and the earth, experience yin and yang”; or “follow the will of the heavens and the earth, and imitate the yin and the yang with all haste”; and “disobeying the ways of heaven is unrighteousness”. The unity of heaven and man of Dong Zhongshu’s theory is based on this “isomorphic “ relationship. Dong Zhongshu used this isomorphic relationship to discuss the Confucian ideas of the three principles and five constants, the three prototypes of nature, and the Way of Heaven, proposing that “Heaven has a yin and yang, and the Man also has his yin and yang”; “the father is the heaven of the Son; the heaven is the heaven of the father”, and “if the heaven remains unchanged, so does the Way”.

With Wang Chong (王充, 27-97) and Fan Zhen’s (范缜, 450-510) vigorous criticisms on the theory of celestial and human senses, religious doctrines were eliminated from the Confucian system. Although Confucianism from the Han Dynasty onwards was constantly influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, the main feature of Confucianism is humanism from the perspective of the mainstream and the whole. The Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties treats the heaven of personal God, and its relationship with human, as the relationship between nature and human, understood Heaven or the Way of Heaven in terms of Qi (air, 气) or Li (reason, 理). For example, Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200) explained that “the Way of Heaven is blessed with goodness and mischief with badness” as a natural law or tendency, and that “Heaven and Earth have an unintentional mind”; “Question: The Way of Heaven is it just a matter of blessed with goodness and mischief with badness? Zhu Xi answered: like Yin (阴) and Yang (阳) changes, why everything grows in spring born? Why everything withers in autumn? Why heat in summer? Why cold in winter? It is all to be reasoned.” Zhu Xi even denied that blessed with goodness and mischief with badness must exist, but only “as it should be,” i.e., according to common sense, the way of heaven means that goodness must result happiness and badness must result mischief , but there are not the same results in the society. In other words, for Zhu Xi, the way of heaven is not determined by a transcendent and supernatural God,

Question: The way of Heaven is that goodness must result happiness and badness must result mischief. Is this teaching true? Answer: Why not is it false? It is true by the reason. It is reasonable that goodness deserves bless and badness deserves

7 Dong Zhongshu, *The Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*, volume 11.

mischief. If it is not so, it is off the normal reason. Question: Why there are different or unnormal in society? Answer: goodness must result happiness and badness must result mischief. It is just in normal situation. If it is not so, then even Heaven can be unpredictable. Answer again: when Heaven does not do something, it does it intentionally. This is only natural. It likes that it is cold in winter and hot in summer, this is natural. If it is hot in winter and cold in summer, it is a disorder of nature. Question: If it is not normal, is it caused by human? Or is it by chance? Answer: there are some caused by human matters, and some caused by chance. Answer: the huge things will do not change, such as the sun and the moon. It is only the small things that change, such as the cold of winter and the heat of summer. However, sometimes it is very hot in winter, and snow falls in June. In recent years, there has been heavy snowfall in Jing Mountain during June and July.⁸

It can be found that Zhu Xi did not interpret the way of heaven that blessing with goodness and badness with mischief as heaven bless good and punish bad. Accordingly, the contents of personal God totally disappeared in Zhu Xi's thought. Zhu Xi interpreted the theory of good and evil retribution as natural principles, and even thought that this principle is only a "necessary principle", but in the real world, there are violations of the theory of good and evil retribution. Through Zhu Xi's materialistic or naturalistic explanation, the theory of good and evil retribution become laws or phenomena of nature's changes. It does not refer to the relationship between heaven and man or gods and humans. Zhu Xi also explained that "the way of heaven is that bless with good and bad with mischief" as "those who are good want to be blessed, while those who are obscene want to be mischievous". In fact, Zhu Xi changes the teaching of God's bless and punishment into the internal tendency of the human mind, i.e. obedience to reason is blessed, and contradiction to reason is fatal. "Whoever obey the reason will be blessed, whoever disobey the reason will be mischief. How can say that there are gods and ghosts dispense to the people one by one?"⁹

In Zhu Xi's view, heaven, ghosts and gods and emperors do not have the supernatural ability to reward good and punish evil. Zhu Xi interpreted ghosts and gods as the flexing and stretching of Qi, or the traces of nature, or the creation and waning of Yin and Yang. Even in the sacrifices to the gods and ghost, it is just that the flexed Qi continues to stretch. In the sacrifices to the ancestors, it is just the same Qi with them. "The bodies of descendants are here; the Qi of ancestors are also here. Therefore, there is a continuity in their blood. And the word "emperor" is used in the sense of "ruler", but it is not ruled by a personal God, "Everything is only from the Great origin. It looks like a creator, but there is no a real creator. There is no above person to do these. The Book of

8 Zhu Xi, *A classified collection of conversations of Master Zhu* (《朱子语类》) volume 79, collected in *All Writings of Master Zhu* (《朱子全书》), Book 17, Shanghai: Shanghai Rare Book Publishing House, 2002, pp. 2691-2692.

9 Zhu Xi, *A classified collection of conversations of Master Zhu*, volume 87, p.2985.

Songs and the Book of History says that it is as if a man were above, such as the god were in a state of shock and anger. But this is only reason. There is no one in the world who don't respect reason, so they name it as god."¹⁰ Zhu Xi, in his explanation of Gao Zong's (高宗) dream of liangbi (virtuous and talented minister, 良弼), expressed his doubts about the existence of a personal God: "Nowadays, when people speak of the god in terms of rulership, they say that there is no image of the god. I am afraid it is not true. If somebody says there is the Jade Emperor. I am afraid it is not true either." For Zhu Xi, Emperor Gao's dreaming of liangbi can be explained through the theory of induction. It is wrong to believe god as real. It is also wrong for Taoist to believe Jade Emperor as a real existence. Zhu Xi believes that it should be understood as the induction of Qi. Therefore, the "emperor" in the phrase "the king of Wen descended to the emperor's right and left" is not "a true God like the statues made in the world. Zhu Xi emphasized that "those who understand the nature of heaven and earth must not be confused with gods and monsters, and those who understand the feelings of all things must not ignore the wrongdoings of others."¹¹

In the early Ming Dynasty, Liu Ji (刘基, 1311-1375) explicitly opposed the idea of heaven in charge of calamities and blessings, "somebody said that is it that heaven sends down calamities and blessings on people? I said: No." Liu Ji also pointed out that in reality, "those who do good need not be blessed and those who do evil need not be mischief. According to Liu Ji, people's happiness and calamities come from the Qi. Qi distinguishes between Yin and Yang, which brings calamities and blessings. However, this is not the intention of Qi to bring happiness or misfortune.¹² In other words, the theory of bless with good and mischief with bad were only natural laws rather than rewards and punishments between heaven and man. Gu Lin (顾璘, 1476-1545) also thought that the cases of long life evil thief Zhi and short life sage Yan Hui was only the result of "irregularities" in the laws of heaven, that is, there were occasional irregularities in the laws of nature in Ming dynasty. ¹³In the early Qing Dynasty, Li Guangdi (李光地, 1642-1718) said, "There are always those who do evil obtain good and those who cultivate good meet mischief. But this is occasional, not very common phenomenon."¹⁴

In conclusion, the Confucian theory of good and evil retribution emphasizes the subjective initiative of human beings, rather than external supernatural spirits as the subject of reward and punishment. "The heaven's mandate cannot change. However, only the one who has virtues can change it."¹⁵ The Confucian concept of good and evil carries a strong sense of purity, that is, to do good only for the sake of goodness itself, and to eliminate evil only for the sake of the evil

10 Zhu Xi, *A classified collection of conversations of Master Zhu*, volume 4, p.191.

11 Zhu Xi, "Jiyou nishangfengshi", (《己酉擬上封事》), in *Rujiao baoying lun* (《儒教报应论》) volume 4, Beijing: National Library Press, 2009, pp. 81.

12 Liu Ji, "Tian shuo" (《天说》), in *Rujiao baoying lun* (《儒教报应论》) volume 4, p.117.

13 Gu Lin, "Tian jie" (《天解》), in *Rujiao baoying lun* (《儒教报应论》) volume 4, p.146.

14 Li Guangdi, "Jiangyi yi" (《讲义一》), in *Rujiao baoying lun* (《儒教报应论》) volume 4, p. 165.

15 Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, *Ercheng yishu* (《二程遗书》), volume 15, in *Rujiao baoying lun* (《儒教报应论》) volume 4, p.75.

itself. “The auspicious man only knows how to do good, and has not yet expected his reward.”¹⁶ Confucian humanism does not emphasize the roles of the supernatural heaven or god in doing good and eliminating evil. Although Confucianism’s relationship between heaven and man was like that the relationship between gods and humans in religion during the pre-Qin and Western Han dynasties, this religious characteristic was not recognized in the Neo-Confucianism during Song and Ming dynasties. It was replaced by the relationship of induction between heaven and man. In the Song and Ming, the theory of good and evil retribution was interpreted as man’s obedience to reason, rather than as a reward or punishment from heaven for human’s good or evil. Confucianism lacks discussions on the soul, afterlife, and theories of the divine. In Confucianism, causes and effects are basically one-time causes and effects, and therefore there are many problems in discussing good and evil and their consequences, as in the case of Zhu Xi’s so-called the theory of bless with good and mischief with bad happens just “in normal” situation. In other words, in secular world, all kinds of goodness do not necessarily result in blessings, and the badness do not necessarily result in mischief.

However, Confucianism had a different dimension in local and popular society. Under the influences of Buddhism and Taoism and in response to the need for education, Confucianism was often characterized by a religious orientation, especially in the movement of persuading good, Confucianism shares the same idea of karma with Buddhism, and the three kinds of teachings gradually integrates with each other. This religious Confucian idea of karma is mainly derived from the *I Ching* and the *Book of History*, which advocates that retribution should be paid to future generations. It is a concept of collective retribution. Although religious Confucianism is deeply influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, it is unclear whether the spirits are in charge of retribution or whether there is any present-day retribution. The main purpose of Confucian scholars was to use karma theory to help teach the masses and strengthen Confucian ethical concepts, not to promote any particular religious theology.

Buddhism, Taoism and the Theory of Reincarnation, the Chengfu Doctrine

After Buddhism entered China, it introduced a new theory of good and evil retribution, namely the theory of karma. According to some scholars, Buddhist karma is the product of the combination of the Indian Karma theory and Chinese indigenous concepts. Ancient Indian religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, all have karma theory or karmic discourses. Karma in the Indian context has three main elements: firstly, karmic connection, which is the use of prior actions, even before this life, to explain the current situation; secondly, ethicizing, namely to explain the ethics of the situation; to explain how the good and bad actions will lead to good or bad

16 Zhu Xi, “Zhengong yipu zhezong” (《郑公艺圃折衷》), in *Rujiao baoying lun* (《儒教报应论》) volume 4, p.82.

in this life or in several lifetimes; thirdly, reincarnation or transmigration.¹⁷ Compared to Chinese Confucianism and folk beliefs, the Buddhist reincarnation retribution has three differences: firstly, Buddhist retribution is karmic retribution based on his/herself; secondly, Buddhist reincarnation is a form of karma; the subject of retribution is Bardo (Intermediate State). thirdly, Buddhist retribution theory composes of complicated argumentations. Based on the synthesis of Chinese and Indian retribution theories, the local Chinese Buddhism puts forward its own ideas, such as “the three karmas have different bodies and are self-consistent and fixed. That is, retribution comes from karma, and karma must be retributed.

慧远 (惠远) theory of retribution is quite representative in the Buddhist thought. In his essay titled *On the Clarifying the Theory of Retribution* (《明报应论》), he gave his own views on whether there are subjects that suffer from retribution and whether the natural emotions deserve retribution. According to Buddhist thought, all things, including human beings, are originated from the four elements (earth, water, fire and wind) and thus are empty. When a person is extinguished then the four elements are scattered, “but no harm will come to the soul if they are extinguished”, then which can take the punishment in the hell? Huiyuan believes that,

Ignorance is the abyss of confusion; greed and love are the houses of all feelings; the two principles interacts together; the both are used by the soul. The good and bad consequences only come from these actions. The ignorance conceals its illumination, so that the emotions are stagnated in external objects; the greed for love flows from its nature, so that the four elements are formed to shape. When the elements are formed, there are boundaries of me and the other. When the emotions are stagnant, good and evil have their own masters. When there are boundaries of me and the other, he will cherish his body and never abandon; when there is a mind of good and evil, he will infatuate with his life and the life never ceases to stop. Accordingly, people would rather sleep in great dreams, and faint in confusion with each other; and doubt all night. It is so obvious. Therefore, loss and gain are pushed together, calamities and blessings attack each other, evil accumulates and heaven’s calamities follow, and when a sin is accomplished, hell’s punishment follow. This is the inevitable law, and there is no need to doubt.¹⁸

Because there are good karma and evil karma, they form the subject of good and evil retribution; the reason for good karma and evil karma is man’s actions which have been selected for different motivations. These motivations derive from the obsession with oneself and not forgetting; this obsession derives from the hysteresis of affection, the clinging to the things of this world, and this clinging is the result of the ignorance. Ignorance leads to infatuation with external objects; greed leads to selfish desires, which is why the four elements are formed. This formation is the distinction between self and others. Because of emotional stagnation, good and evil have

17 He Rong, *Zongjiao jingji zhu xingtai: zhongguo jingyan yu lilun tanyan* (《宗教经济诸形态: 中国经验与理论探研》, Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 2015, p. 124.

18 Hui Yuan, *On the Clarifying the Theory of Retribution* (《明报应论》), in *Hongming ji* (《弘明集》), Shanghai Hanfenlou collection.

their own subjects. Because there is a distinction between the self and the other, one loves oneself without forgetting. Because there is a choice between good and evil, one is infatuated with one's own life and it flows on and on. Therefore, ignorance and greed are the causes of good and evil retribution, and form the subject of good and evil retribution. Huiyuan believes that,

Every emotion has its origin, and there is induction followed that in the darkness. Although the omen is slight, it will come out when the situation is extreme. Therefore, the heart takes good and evil as its form and sound, and the influenced retribution is followed by sin and happiness. This is because the heart influenced by the emotion, then the induction comes out. Is there a God in darkness in charge of this? The induction of sin and happiness only comes from the emotion. That is why it is called nature. Nature means that every induction comes from my own influence. What is the matter with the master of the world?¹⁹

Huiyuan does not think that bad retribution is the punishment of the Gods to the people. The good and bad retribution of a person comes from the person himself and not from the external Gods. It has nothing to do with Gods. Huiyuan believes that good and evil come from the heart, and that sin and blessing are the results. However, such sins and blessings do not come from external forces, but from inner emotions, "emotions are the origin, and the induction comes out naturally." The response of sin and blessing is the natural result of good and evil, not the result of external divine rewards and punishments. Huiyuan believes that although man is made up of the four elements, there is a master in man's soul. If there is a master, then there are emotions, and if there are emotions, then there is induction. Hui Yuan believes that "there is no subject of suffering but heart. And heart has no fixed situation. It is affected by one's actions at any time. There affections are slow or rapid. Thus, the retribution is early or late. Although the time of retribution is distinct, it is the affection of different actions. The affection is strong or weak. Thus, the retribution is slight or heavy. This is the natural retribution which is the main content of the theory of three retributions." Prof. Luo Guang (罗光, 1911-2004) believed that Huiyuan used the theory of induction in Han dynasty. However, he did not use the theory of induction of Qi, but the theory of induction of Heart.²⁰

Huiyuan also claims the theory of three retributions, namely, present retribution, next life retribution and future retribution. The present retribution is that good and evil begin in this body and the consequences are received in this body; the afterlife retribution is received in the next life; and the future retribution is received after two, three, a hundred, a thousand lifetimes.²¹ The theory of three retributions better deals with the problem of inconsistent rewards for good and evil in the

19 Hui Yuan, *On the Clarifying the Theory of Retribution* (《明报应论》).

20 Luo Guang, *Zhongguo zhexue sixiangshi weijin suiting foxue pian* (《中国哲学思想史·魏晋、隋唐佛学篇》), Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1971, p.115.

21 Hui Yuan, "Sanbao lun" (《三报论》), in *Hongming ji* (《弘明集》), volume 5.

secular world. “In this world, somebody who accumulates goodness may meet calamity; somebody who is always evil may receive happiness. All this is that the present karma is not accomplished and the previous karma makes an impact. Therefore, do not doubt the retribution when good people meet mischief and evil meets happiness.”²² Huiyuan’s theory of good and evil retribution is based on the theory of the immortality of soul, and it is a synthesis of Indian Buddhist and Chinese retribution idea.

The Buddhist theory of cause and effect is not only applied to human beings, but also to the laws of the development of things in society and nature, i.e., it is believed that things have a cause, there must be an end, and an end must have a cause. The present state of all living beings is the karma of their past lives, and the good and bad of this life will result in the karma of future lives. Therefore, scholars consider the Buddhist theory of karma to be the basic theory for explaining all relations in the world. The main purpose of the Buddha’s theory of karma is to help people understand the real causes of life and death, so that they can be liberated.²³ The Mahayana Buddhist theory of cause and effect is based on the Four Originations, Ten Causes and Five Effects.²⁴ The Buddhist theory of cause and effect highlights the psychological activities of human beings and emphasizes the law of cause and effect of thought and action, with the religious and moral aims to promote good and avoid evil.

The theory of Karma is regarded as the foundation of Buddhist philosophy, “the most influential principle, the root of Buddhism”. The reason of retribution is karma. Karma includes good karma, bad karma and unrecognized karma, and each corresponds to a different retribution. In terms of form of karma, it can be divided into body, mouth and mind. In Buddhism, good karma results in good ends, while bad karma results in bad ends. Buddhist wisdom refers not only to epistemology but also to moral practice, i.e., not only the knowledge of non-attachment, the removal of ignorance, the cessation of worries and the ability to understand the truth, as well as the moral practice of pursuing good thoughts, doing good deeds, and removing one’s faults. Buddhism deals with the issue of moral cultivation by proposing the Ten Virtues and Ten Vices. In other words, Buddhism links the existential (or future) situation of an individual to his or her moral behavior, thus linking transcendent religion to the secular world. Thus, the Buddhist theory of karma has the function to teach believers to promote good. The theory of karma has changed from the original explanation of life and death to a moral admonition; from explaining why one is to become what one should do. This change has not only adapted to the needs of Chinese society, but has also contributed to the development of Buddhist philosophy.

The theory of Buddhist karma bases on three-life time, namely past life, present life and future life. It is therefore more systematic and comprehensive than the theory of Confucian retribution

22 Hui Yuan, “Sanbao lun” (《三报论》), in *Hongming ji* (《弘明集》), volume 5.

23 Fang Litian (方立天), *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), book 1, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2002, p. 76.

24 Fang Litian (方立天), *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), book 1, p. 161.

based on one-life time.²⁵ It combines past, present, and future to provide a rational explanation for the present situation and a possibility to change the future. Thus, the theory of karma based on three-life time has adapted to the needs of traditional Chinese society: people should satisfy the present situation, and can also change his current status, that is, the so-called “destiny is determined by the Heaven, the fate is on my hand” or “I make my own destiny, I seek my own blessing”.

Buddhism believes that the theory of Confucian retribution based on one life cannot explain the difficulty of good and evil retribution in one life, thus making people believe that good and evil are not really retributed. Thus, it makes people unrestrained and do whatever he wants. “The classical teachings and writings are not based on the greatness, so that the great Tao is obstructed in minor achievements.” “The reason is that these classics only talks about the limit life and do not explore the contents beyond this life.”²⁶ The theory of Confucian retribution is bounded by one lifetime, but Buddhism advocates that man has three lifetimes. In these three lives, the main subject of retribution is the spirit and the soul. Unlike Confucianism, where retribution lies on the offspring, Buddhism advocates that the good and bad of an individual determines his own retribution, i.e., “If the father does not do good, the son will not suffer on his behalf. If son do not do good, neither will the Father suffer it. The good will be blessed by himself, and the evil will be punished by himself.”²⁷ Buddhists believe that the result of karmic retribution is that a person goes through the six reincarnations, but those who are good go to heaven and those who are evil go to hell. Goodness means keeping five commandments to have ten goodness; whoever against these ten goodness means ten evils.

Yunqi Zhuhong (云栖祿宏, 1535-1615), one of the four great monks in late Ming Dynasty, also responded to the question of the lack of retribution in the present life with three-life karma doctrine. “There are three kinds of retribution: first is to do evil in this life, and he is to be punished in the present life. Second is to do evil in this life, and he will be retributed in the next life. This is to do evil in this life and he will be not retributed in the next life but he will be punished after many lives. It is same for good. The delay in retribution is due to the cause of each. But when people see that the evil one is not punished, and even more prosperous, he would be very angry and doubt that it is unjust. He does not know the theory of the three lifetimes retribution doctrines. The latter two kinds of retribution are seldom seen by people. Accordingly, people only concern the retribution in present life.”²⁸ Like Huiyuan, Zhu Hong also believes that good and evil retribution is borne by the individual, and that the time of retribution should be in accordance with the laws of nature, and that even the Buddha cannot change the time of retribution:

Someone ask: If the divine power of Buddha is inconceivable, why not he punish the evil in the present to make him fearful to avoid doing evil? And why not he rewards the good in the present life so make him diligently do goodness every day. Then there

25 Fang Litian (方立天), *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), p. 88.

26 Hui Yuan, “Sanbao lun”, citation from Fang Litian, *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), p.90.

27 Xi Chao (郗超), “Fengfa yao”(《奉法要》), citation from *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), p. 94.

28 Zhu Hong, *Zhuchuang suibi* (《竹窗随笔》), Beijing: Beijing Library Press, 2005, p.166.

will be peace and prosperity for all. Why not? Alas! The time of retribution is slow or rapid. The retribution of all persons is so natural, though the Great Buddha cannot change the speed of retribution to make it late, or change the late to make it fast. He can only do is to remind that the retribution is true, and the rewards and punishments are inevitable at last. If you do not believe what you have heard, I don't know what to do either.²⁹

The Taoist theory of retribution is based on the I-Ching which is called Chengfu (承负) doctrine. “Cheng (承) means undertaking which is from the previous generations; Fu (负) means owing which lasts to later generations. Ancestors were originally inspired by the heart of heaven, but they made a small mistake and did not know it. It accumulated more and more. The later generations will be punished and suffer for it.”³⁰ In other words, Taoism is different from Buddhism and like Confucianism in that it is a group-based concept of retribution, i.e. retribution in the offspring.

After the formation of the Buddhist theory of karma in China, Confucianism raised many questions on it. According to Prof. Fang Litian's (方立天, 1933-) research, Confucianism's doubts about the theory of karma mainly include: human beings are composed of Qi, Qi disperses after human's death, and there is no subject of retribution; the human mind and lust are natural phenomena and should not be punished; everything is creation of nature; determinism or fortuitism; killing should be punished; who believes in Buddhism do not necessarily get rewards; good people in history had not always received good retribution, thus the theory of karma cannot be verified; whether soul exists or not should be verified. These doubts focus on four aspects: to deny the theory of karma from the construction of the human body, the nature of lust, and the relationship between flesh and spirit; human's calamities and blessings are all natural, determined by nature or by chance; retribution of killing does not comply with nature, nor with the interest of mankind and common sense; the theory of karma cannot explain the relationship between virtues and happiness, and it has no real evidence or verification.³¹ Confucianism also criticizes the Buddhist view of reincarnation, arguing that reincarnation confuses the boundary between humans and animals; reincarnation is a technique of “terror” and “temptation”, while reincarnation is a kind of “trading of happiness and selling sins”. It can be found that Confucianism's questioning on the theory of karma and reincarnation reflects the difference between Confucianism and Buddhism in terms of good and evil retribution.

These differences include: Confucianism emphasizes retribution in one life, retribution on the offspring, doing everything in one's best and obeying the destiny of heaven; Buddhism, on the other hand, is a concept of retribution based on the theology of the immortality of the soul, heaven

29 Zhu Hong, *Zhuchuang suibi* (《竹窗随笔》), p.167.

30 *Taiping jing* (《太平经》), Beijing: Zhonghua Book Store, 1979, p. 79.

31 Citation from Fang Litian (方立天), *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), pp. 81-83.

and hell, etc. In the late Ming Dynasty, there was an obvious trend for the three religions to merge. Zibai Zhenke (紫柏真可, 1543-1603), one of the four greatest monks in late Ming, equated the Buddhism karma to the Five Happiness and Six misfortune from the chapter Hong Fan (洪范) in the *Book of History* and denied that the theory of karma was only a technique to confuse fools.³² Qi Song (契嵩, 1007-1072) said that the teaching of Five Happiness and Six Misfortunes in Hong Fan was obviously the theory of retribution of Confucianism. Confucius omits this content. However, he stated the beginning of this theory.”³³ After the Song and Ming dynasties, the Buddhist doctrine of karma was often combined with the Confucian ethical principles and became a powerful tool for Confucian education. The moral belief of karma has become a common ethical resource for the three religions since the Ming and Qing Dynasties. For example, although the Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution (*Taishang ganying pian*, 《太上感应篇》) is a Taoist book of goodness, it was highly praised by the Confucian scholar Zhende xiu (真德秀, 1178-1235), because he thought this book “expresses the retribution of good and evil”, which can “help the righteous and inspire the conscience”. Thus, this book has always been valued by generations of Confucian scholars and rulers, such as Jiajing (嘉靖, 1507-1567) Emperor, Shunzhi Emperor, who sponsored to engrave this book and distribute to the nation, “release to all the ministers and also to these imperial students in different levels.”

Confucian theory of heaven and human induction had many shortcomings in its moral teachings, especially in its inability to deal with the dilemma of long-life evil thief Zhi and short life sage Yanhui. Therefore, Confucian scholars supplemented their works with Buddhist and Taoist resources. Gao Panlong (高攀龙, 1562-1626), the leader of the Tung Lin Party, once said that Confucianism “originally did not need the help of Buddhism,” which actually meant that in some aspect’s Confucianism needed the help of Buddhism and Taoism. The moral purism emphasized by Confucianism makes it feeble in persuading the good and punishing the bad, especially in late Ming period when there was a highly developed commodity economy the rites and music were in ruins. That’s why Guan Zhidao (管志道, 1536-1608) explains why Confucian need to use the theory of Buddhist karma.

Master Cheng and Master Zhu said that “if a gentleman does goodness for some aims, then the goodness he has done is not true. It doesn’t need to talk with karma.” This saying is perfect to encourage gentleman. In my view, from the mind of gentleman and villain, none of them do something without any aims. Gentleman does goodness mostly for fame. If they do not totally understand the causes of this world, it is not easy to remove their eager to pursuit fames. Cheng and Zhu encouraged gentlemen do goodness without any aims. However, he neglected that villain without fear is

32 Zhenke, *Zibai laoren ji* (《紫柏老人集》), Volume 9, p. 25, citation from Fang Litian (方立天), *Zhongguo fojiao zhexue yaoyi* (《中国佛教哲学要义》), p. 97.

33 Li Ming edited, *Yinguang yinguo zhengxin jushiguan yanjiu* (《印光因果正信居士观研究》), Beijing: Religious Culture Press, 2012, p. 28.

arbitrary to do evil. And then we know that Confucius' teaching of good and evil retribution is thoroughly wise saying.³⁴

Guan Zhidao criticized Cheng and Zhu's moral purism, arguing that the Confucian persuaded gentleman to do good for the sake of goodness was an ideal state. In the real world, a gentleman does good mostly for fame, while a villain does evil mostly for gain. If we rely only on Confucian moral teachings, it is not enough to eradicate the roots of their pursuit for fame and gain. According to Guan Zhidao, only with the theory of karma can one "cleanse the roots of fame of the gentleman" and "get rid of the roots of profit of the villain". The philosophy of Cheng and Zhu only saw that a gentleman could do good for the sake of goodness, but this doctrine was invalid when applied to a villain. Therefore, Guan Zhidao believed that the theory of karma is consistent with the Confucian thought that "a family with accumulated good deeds will have surplus celebrations; a family with accumulated bad deeds will have surplus calamities".

Wang Ji (王畿, 1498-1583) argued that "what the Buddha calls karma, our Confucianism calls retribution". Wang Ji not only believed in the theory of karma but also put it into practice in his life. For example, when Wang Ji suffered a fire in his later years, he believed that it was a punishment or warning from God for his mistakes. Wang Ji even listed several crimes what he had done to reflect himself. Gao Panlong also believed that "Buddha's theory of karma is the theory of our Confucian induction". However, Gao believed that the theory of Confucian induction was to obey the heavenly principles for righteousness, while Buddhism used the theory of karma to terror people for interests. Although Gao agrees with the Buddhist theory of karma, he disagrees with the Buddhist theology and opposes the existence of souls and gods. Gao Panlong equates ghosts and gods with moral principles, and that ghosts and gods can take charge of weal and woe, but in fact, they are dominated by the moral principles. The reason why Gao Panlong agrees with Buddhism theory of karma, because he thought it has the function of educate the popular. Thus, it shows them the ghosts and gods.³⁵

Therefore, the Confucian recognition of the theory of karma is in fact a manifestation of instrumentalism, i.e., "before the human heart is solid, it cannot be taken away from the theory of karma so as to make up for the shortages of the royal educations".³⁶ Both of Buddhism and Taoism have the teaching of heaven and hell. It can be used to persuade people to be filial piety and punish those who are unfaithful, unbrotherly, and do evil work. Thus, it is helpful to Confucianism.³⁷ For Confucian conservatives, however, the theory of karma appears absurd because it involves the

34 Li Ming edited, *Yingguang yingguo zhengxin jushiguan yanjiu* (《印光因果正信居士观研究》), p. 31.

35 Wu Zhen (吴震), "The Way of Virtue and Happiness: A Research on Confucian Religiosity", p. 116.

36 Liu Shengmu (刘声木), *Changchuzhai suibi* (《苕楚斋随笔》), volume 2, collected in *Jindai zhongguo shiliao congkan* (《近代中国史料丛刊》), book 22, Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1968, p. 35.

37 Shen Que (沈澹), "Can yuanyi shu" (《参远夷疏》), in *Shengchao paxieji* (《圣朝破邪集》), volume 1, collected in *Siku weishoushu jikan* (《四库未收书辑刊》) series 10 book 4, Beijing: Beijing Press, 2000, pp. 328-329.

relationship between gods and humans, such as the editor of Siku (四库) thought Wang Shihuai's (王时槐, 1522-?) *Guangren leibian* (《广仁类编》) is, "teaching and cultivating people with the way of deities to educate foolish. Thus, some of the contents do not comply with Confucianism."³⁸ He also thinks that these books which promote the theory of karma are all nonsensical. He also believed that Liu Zongzhou's (刘宗周, 1578-1645) *Renpu leiji* (《人谱类记》), which deals with the theory of karma, is to persuade the foolish, which "establishes a teaching for the middle class, but loses the essence of his work."³⁹

In conclusion, the theory of karma of Buddhism and Taoism differs from folk beliefs in terms of philosophical and moral principles. From the philosophical and theoretical point of view, the theory of karma of Buddhism and Taoism emphasizes a kind of law of cause and effect, like a kind of necessity, even with no relations to the gods.⁴⁰ In other words, Buddhism and Taoism have, to a certain extent, absorbed Confucianism's idea of retribution, which advocates that there must be retribution for good and evil, but that retribution has nothing to do with gods. It is a necessity rather than a supernatural being in charge. Buddhism advocates individual retribution, that is, one should bear the retribution for one's own good and evil. Taoism is the same as Confucianism which advocates collective retribution for good and evil, namely personal good and evil will be retributed to his offspring. The theory of karma of Buddhism and Taoism has gradually evolved into a teaching tool to persuade good and punish evil.

However, in the theory of karma to teach and cultivate people with the way of deities, there are spirits in charge of rewards and punishments. For example, in Taoism book *Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution*, there are spirits of Siguo (司过) who are in charge of punishments, and three councilor of the Northern constellation spirit lords who record people's crimes, and spirits of three corpses and the god of the kitchen who report the crimes of men to the Jade Emperor. The theory of retribution in *Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution* is that the gods of destiny calculate man's good and evil deeds. If the reckoning is subtracted, then retributed with poverty, depletion, sorrow and punishment. If the reckoning is exhausted, then death will be followed, and the children and grandchildren will suffer. One thousand three hundred good deeds can be done to seek heavenly immortals, and three hundred good deeds can be done to seek earthly immortals. Like *the Ledgers of Merit and Demerit* (《功过格》), which advocates the accumulation of good deeds and the correction of faults, the role of the spirits is to supervise and calculate. Another popular book of goodness is *The Book of Hidden*

38 Ji Yun (纪昀), *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* (《四库全书总目提要》), Haikou: Haiyan chubanshe, 1999, p. 677.

39 Ji Yun (纪昀), *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* (《四库全书总目提要》), p. 486.

40 See Wu Zhen, *Mingmo qingchu quanshan yundong yanjiu* (《明末清初劝善运动研究》), Taipei: Taiwan University Press, 2009, p. 119.

Virtues, which focuses on doing good from the perspective of blessings, i.e., if you seek blessings you must do good. It is the heaven that controls rewards and punishments.

Catholic Theory of Reward and Punishment

Before Catholicism entering China in late Ming Dynasty, the theory of karma became an important basis for the unity of the three religions and a common religious idea shared by them. Lien-sheng Yang (杨联陞, 1914-1990) said that the theory of natural or heavenly retribution is a deep-rooted tradition in Chinese religions.⁴¹ Although the Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism differ in the specific content of good and evil retribution, persuading good and punishing evil through good and evil retribution has become the common goal of all three religions. It has also become an important resource for Buddhism and Taoism, which have the same status as Confucianism. Confucianism was also influenced by Buddhism and Taoism, and absorbed the ideas of karma and retribution from Buddhism and Taoism to realize the Confucian goal of perfection and peace. The flourishing of the *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*, the *Book of Hidden Virtues* (《阴鹭文》) and the *Book of goodness* (善书), all indicate that persuading goodness has become one of the legitimacies for the existence of religions in the society.

Although Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism all share the theory and idea of karma, the level of reward and punishment is different: Confucianism basically does not approve of any supernatural personal gods in charge of rewards and punishments; the theory of Buddhism and Taoism karma tends to be a kind of cause and effect law. When Catholicism came to China, it claimed that only God could reward good and punish evil, thus appearing as a unique monotheistic position in front of the three religion. It poses a great challenge to the traditional three theories of good and evil retribution in China.

The New Edition of the *True Records of the Lord of Heaven in the West Zhu Kingdom* (《新编西竺国天主实录》) was the first Chinese Catholic work in the late Ming Dynasty. In this book, Michel Ruggieri (罗明坚, 1543-1607) pointed out that God is omniscient, omnibenevolence and omnipotent. “He is righteous and can reward good and punish evil”.⁴² Michel Ruggieri also pointed out that God rewards good and punishes evil in this world and afterwards. The good and evil deeds of people would not been retributed in this world. After death, it will be done: “For those who have done good, though they have not been rewarded in this world, they will be blessed after death; for those who have done evil, though they have not been punished in this world. As for afterlife, misfortune will be imposed upon them.”⁴³ This book has been reprinted with some

41 Yang Liensheng, “Bao zuiwei zhongguo shehui guanxi jichu de sixiang” (《报作为中国社会关系基础的思想》), collected in John King Fairbank edited, *Zhongguo de sixiang yu zhidu* (《中国的思想与制度》), Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2008, p. 332.

42 Michel Ruggieri, *The True Recordings of the Lord of Heaven* (《天主实录》), in *Chinese Christian texts from the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus*, volume 1, p. 16.

43 Michel Ruggieri, *The True Recordings of the Lord of Heaven*, p. 17.

changes. “For those who do good, though they are not fully rewarded in this world, they will be spared eternal blessings for their posterity; but for those who do evil, though the punishment will be not fully meted out in this world, yet in the world to come, eternal misfortune will be added.”

⁴⁴The revised text conveys more accurate Catholic idea of good and evil rewards and punishments. Although Catholicism advocates retribution in this world, the main retribution of good and evil happens in the afterlife. Michel Ruggieri also mentioned that if one can repent and change his ways, God will forgive him.

The theory of good and evil retribution proposed by Michel Ruggieri in the *True Records of the Lord of Heaven* is a theory of reward and punishment within the framework of monotheism. Thus, the standard of good and evil is that whether he believe the Only One God; Then is the ten Commandments; the third is the secular ethics shared with Confucianism and Buddhism, such as it is forbidden to kill a human being. Therefore, although Catholicism and Confucianism and Buddhism overlapped in part, there was a great difference in the standards of good and evil. In the late Ming Dynasty, the literature on exhortation to goodness often regarded the making of pilgrimages, worship of the Buddha and recitation of sutras, and extensive practice of the three religions as good, while the destruction of the Buddha and defaming monks and the cursing of the gods were regarded as evil. The Buddhism and Taoism forbid killing. Confucianism takes concubines for the purpose of procreation. The Catholic missionary challenged these established standards of good and evil. Michel Ruggieri insisted that chanting sutras was not good, and therefore chanting sutras could not be useful for blessing. Although reciting sutras and praying to Buddha is efficacious, it is possessed by the devil and those who recite sutras and pray to Buddha not only do not practice good deeds, but their souls will fall into hell after death.

The *True Records of the Lord of Heaven* has already dealt with the “Job’s Dilemma” or Theodicy, i.e., why good people suffer, and why the wicked are blessed. Catholicism advocates retribution after death, so the explanation for the suffering of the good and the blessing of the wicked in this world is mainly through the fact that the good have the slightest evil and the wicked have the slightest goodness. However, Michel Ruggieri also stressed that no matter what the situation is in this world, everything is arranged by God. This is like the Confucian saying that “the gentleman should stay in simplicity and wait for his destiny”(君子居易以俟命). *The True Records of the Lord of Heaven* introduced the places for rewarding good and punishing evil, namely heaven and hell; introduced the types and different functions of hell; and introduced original sin and soul. The descriptions of hell and purgatory are very similar to those of Buddhism, especially folk Buddhism.

Praised by Li Zhizao (李之藻, 1565-1630) as “diligent in debating the good and the evil, and in detailing the response to calamities,” *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (《天主实

44 Michel Ruggieri, *The True Recordings of the Holy Teachings of the Lord of Heaven*, collected in *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenzina xubian* (《天主教东传文献续编》), book 2, Taipei: xuesheng shuju, 1966, p. 772.

义》) put forth radical critics to the Buddhist theory of Samsara.⁴⁵ But like Buddhism, Matteo Ricci (利玛窦, 1552-1610) proposed that the immortality of the soul. However, Ricci denies that the soul reincarnates in the six paths, and based on the distinction between the three types of souls, Ricci believes that the Buddhist cessation of killing is absurd. In Ricci's view, the human soul is the core of one's identity, with functions such as enlightenment, and is the recipient of rewards and punishments. As a result, the soul cannot transfer to other forms. On this basis, Ricci systematically refuted the doctrine of reincarnation through the absurdity of reincarnation and the harm of reincarnation. As to the question of whether it is sinful to kill a living being, Ricci argues that it is not sinful to kill a living being because God has human beings in charge of everything in sky and earth.

In order to prove to the Confucian scholars that heaven and hell is a place to reward the good and punish the bad, Ricci spends some time discussing the question of whether it is intentional or unintentional to do good. Confucianism opposed doing good for utilitarian purposes, as LIU Zongzhou in late Ming Dynasty once said, "To do good for intentionally purpose is also evil. If it is unclear, there is no one who does not enter evil."⁴⁶ Li Erqu (李二曲, 1627-1705) said, "To do good for intentionally purpose, though good, is also selfish."⁴⁷ In Ricci's view, the Confucian concept of doing good without intention is not about doing good for the sake of doing good, but about doing good not for the sake of private or evil intentions. The reason why the behavior has moral properties is in its "intention", the real unintentional behavior does not actually exist in the good and evil. In Ricci's view, if one acts for good, one can seek the reward of heaven, and if one removes evil, one can avoid the punishment of hell. Ricci believes that it is desirable to do good for the sake of merits, as "merits do not harm virtue", and that the future merit is so great that one should be careful in this life. On this subject, Catholicism is quite similar to the Buddhism, Taoism and the religious Confucianism in the late Ming, in that they all advocate "doing good for merits".

The time of retribution is also analyzed in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Ricci argued that the retribution in this world is incomplete, "not enough to satisfy the desires of the heart", so there must be a time of retribution after death. However, Ricci pointed out that the term "afterlife" refers to the soul being rewarded and punished after death, not to the offspring. Retributions on the descendants violates the doctrine of God's justice. In Ricci's view, the Catholicism also has a present-day retribution, whose main purpose is to punish evil and persuade good. Ricci's analysis of the mixing of good and evil was that if there was evil in the good, it was rewarded with poverty and ascends to heaven after death; if there was good in the evil, it was rewarded with riches and descends to hell after death.

45 See Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, collected in *Tianxue chuhan*, book 1, Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1964, pp. 491-521.

46 Liu Zongzhou, *Liuzongzhou quanji* (《刘宗周全集》), book 3, Hangzhou: Zhejiang Rare Books Press, 2007, pp. 521-522.

47 Li Erqu, *Erqu ji*, volume 18, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Store, 1996, p. 198.

Ricci also dealt with the issue of repentance. Ricci argued that although the wicked have sinned and committed sins, if they change their hearts and turn to goodness, God will “help them and forgive them” and “forgive them their sins and grant them heaven”. This has often led to attacks by anti-Catholics who believe that the Catholicism is violating the principle of justice by advocating that the wicked can go to heaven if they repent of their sins. In Ricci’s view, repentance and self-punishment are the price to be paid for a person’s previous sins; if there is no self-repentance or if the repentance is not deep enough, then the person can go to heaven. In other words, even if one repents of his sins, he should pay the price for his sins, or else he would not be in heaven.

Ricci said that the greatest good is to love God, followed by loving others as oneself, and the key repentance is the confessions. Therefore, in Ricci’s view, worshipping Buddha images and chanting Buddhist scriptures not only does no good, but also increases evil. Ricci argued that recitation of scriptures is not fair if it is good. In Ricci’s view, the recitation of scriptures to absolve sins not only cannot persuade the good and to stop the evil, but also “leads the world to conduct evil”.⁴⁸

Jules Aleni (艾儒略, 1582-1649) and Ye Xianggao (叶向高, 1559-1627) had a dialogue on the issue of good and evil retribution. Jules Aleni argued that God rewards good and punishes evil, and this saying was the same as Confucian teachings on goodness and evil retribution.⁴⁹ But Ye Xianggao asked, If God rewards good and punishes evil, why do good people suffer? Ye Xianggao thought that if “this doubt is not clarified; I am afraid that people in the world cannot understand your teaching and convert them to believe in Catholicism.” Aleni’s answer was similar to Ricci’s, namely, that good people suffer because of their minor evils. In other words, if there is only one evil, he is a wicked man. In other words, if there is only one evil, he is an evil person. Therefore, it is very difficult to distinguish the so-called good people from the evil people, because “when we observe people, we only observe their outward appearance.” Aleni also suggested that the suffering of the good man also meant to try the good man by God.

Ye also pointed out that there are evil people in the world who are not only unpunished, but also “blessed”. The evil people were not punished. His offspring would be punished? Firstly, Aleni rejected the idea that retribution would be on the descendants. In addition, Aleni emphasized that retribution happens after death, because the soul never disappears, and each is judged after death. The retribution was small in life, but it is great afterwards. Like Ricci, Aleni also pointed out that the wicked are blessed because there is a little good done by the wicked. He also pointed out that the blessing of the wicked also means to persuade them to change their ways. He stressed that the power to reward good and punish evil is only managed by God, “the upper Lord is the only one

48 Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, p. 596.

49 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji* (《三山论学记》), collected in *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxina xubian* (《天主教东传文献续编》), book 1, p. 446.

who can reward good and punish evil. There is no such thing as a person who does evil which the Lord of Heaven could not know about it, and condemning the sin with suitable punishments.”⁵⁰

Ye believes that since good and evil are inevitably retributed by God, why don't God make people have more goodness and less evil, so that the world can be ruled with peace? “Is that perfect?” These questions have been answered in details in Christian theology. Aleni explained it by using free will, which means that God gives people free will, namely free choice of good and evil, choice of good to be rewarded, choice of evil to be punished; without free will, there is no such thing as good and evil, nor reward and punishment. “If the Lord of Heaven bestows people the nature of good and make him do good and do not do evil. The lord of Heaven is omnipotent, he can do this. However, the merits belong to the Lord of Heaven, not to the people.”⁵¹ Aleni believes that there is much evil in real world because of original sin, and evil nature and habits.

Ye also asks, if God punishes the wicked, why doesn't he destroy all the wicked in the world? Aleni answered that if the Lord of Heaven destroy the wicked, there would be no one left in the world, meaning that everyone is wicked because everyone has sinned. Aleni argued that God is most righteous and most merciful, so he allowed the wicked to repent. There would be no way to self-improve if once one has sin then God should destroy him. Ye also argued that God is omnipotent, so why not reward good immediately and punish evil immediately, but retribute it until after death? It is impossible to persuade good and punish evil. According to Aleni, if one good deed is rewarded and one evil is punished immediately, then in the course of one's life, in the course of one day, good and evil will be rewarded and punished in equal measure, “the power of retribution of God will be in chaos.”⁵² In addition, rewarding the good immediately will make those who do good deeds for the sake of world blessings, which will lead to impure virtue cultivation. The world's blessings are too small to be rewarded, and only with heaven's blessings can good deeds be rewarded, and evil can be punished in the same way. The same goes for punishment of evil. However, Aleni also emphasized that the Lord of Heaven still has a present-day reward: “In the midst of the manifestation, the Lord of Heaven has repeatedly revealed Himself to others, such as a great virtuous person will receive high position and good fame, and a long life. He who is exceedingly wicked will suffer terrible calamity.”⁵³

Ye thinks that if the flesh disappears after death, then what is the recipient of rewards and punishment? Aleni pointed out that the soul is the subject of rewards and punishments. Ye believed that although the soul was immortal, it had no body and could not accept bitterness and happiness, so rewards and punishments were meaningless. Aleni answered that “the soul's bitterness and happiness are very real and very great, and the so-called bitterness and happiness are not felt by the body, but by the soul, both before and after death”. The suffering and happiness, whether in the

50 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji*, p. 458.

51 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji*, pp. 460-461.

52 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji*, pp. 465-466.

53 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji*, p. 468.

body or in life, do not come from the body, but from the soul. It is not because there is a body that soul is aware of it; it is because there is soul that the body is aware of it.”⁵⁴

As a Confucian scholar, Ye Xianggao also questioned the theory of heaven and hell, saying, “Good should be done without the wish of rewards, and evil should be avoided without the fear of punishment.” Aleni emphasized that heaven and hell embodied the fairness of good and evil retribution, “if there is no heaven and hell and neither the Creator, it is easy for villain and difficult to persuade them to do good.”⁵⁵ Ye Xianggao’s questioning of the theory of Catholic retribution is quite representative of the late Ming scholars, and reflects the distinctions between China and the West on the theory of good and evil retribution.

Like Buddhism and Taoism, the Catholic theory of good and evil retribution is often used to explain the realities of various dilemmas so that the believer can be at peace with the status and remain steadfast in his faith. For example, in the *Diary of Oral Exhortations* (《口铎日抄》), a believer asked if it was God’s punishment that the weather was unstable, causing unproductive crops. If it is the punishment of God, why is it the same for good and evil? Aleni pointed out that if one cannot do all goodness, he should not be called good. The so-called good man in the world may be not a good man. If he is a good man, and he knows it is God’s punishment, he will be more fearful and reflective.⁵⁶ Aleni even took earthquakes and hurricanes as God’s punishments, and human life and wealth are also controlled by God. Therefore, no matter whether a believer has done good deeds or not, he should be cautious and fearful, and always do good deeds.

In the *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, a believer said that there are a certain number of evil deeds done by evil people, but eternal punishment is “eternal misery for ten thousand generations, and its punishment is infinite”. It seems unfair to retribute the evil with the endlessness punishments. Aleni pointed out that although what the evil done is limited, his mind of evil is infinite. It is therefore proportionate to punish evil with infinity. At the same time, if the wicked can repent, God can also forgive, i.e., “God is most merciful, his punishment is always less than the sin; God is most righteous, his punishment always matches the sin.”⁵⁷

The *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, records that some have questioned the possible contradiction between the Catholic theory of individual retribution and the doctrine of original sin, i.e., the Catholic opposes the retribution on offspring, but the theory of original sin argues that the crimes which ancestors had committed would affect the offspring to the endless. According to Aleni, the good and evil of an individual corresponds to the reward and punishment of that individual, but it also affects his descendants, and this is “addition to the original reward and punishment”.

54 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji*, p. 473.

55 Jules Aleni, *Sanshan lunxue ji*, p. 480.

56 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 2, collected in *Chinese Christian texts from the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus*, book 7, pp 119-120.

57 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 3, pp. 184-186.

But original sin is not a punishment; hell is an eternal punishment, and original sin is simply the exclusion from heaven.⁵⁸

The rewards to the good who was never converted into Catholicism, is distinct between Catholicism and local religions because of the different standards of good and evil.⁵⁹ For example, according to Confucian standards, King Wen is a saint and should be rewarded in heaven. However, King Wen would be in hell according to the Catholic standards, because he disobeys the ten commandments and had concubines. In the case of good non-believers, who do not explicitly violate the Catholic doctrines, the missionaries confirm and praise these people, “If any man is able to do what he knows to be good, although he never heard of the Catholicism, the Great Lord would still be sympathy and save him, and never fail these people’s good mind.”⁶⁰

Catholics believe that it is inevitable that God will punish evil, i.e., sin will be punished, but it is not inevitable that good will be rewarded, i.e., good will not always be rewarded. In other words, no good deed is enough to be rewarded in heaven, i.e., the merits in life are not enough price for heaven. According to Aleni, the reward of heaven is “according to the amount of grace received by each person during his lifetime”. If one has only merits but no grace, one will still not be rewarded by heaven.⁶¹

Similar to the *Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution*, the missionaries believe that the demons record the faults of men, and that the angles record the merits, even if they have the momentary evil thoughts, the demons will record them.⁶² Another rather important issue is whether people who sacrificed for the Catholic Church are rewarded? According to the missionaries, if one sacrificed, he will be blessed, but “if living is not easy, neither is sacrifice for martyr.”⁶³

In conclusion, the Catholicism advocates that good and evil are to be rewarded and punished by God, and that the present world is not enough to reward good and punish evil but after death. The soul is the subject of the retribution. The good ascend to heaven; and the evil fall to hell; those who mix good and evil go to purgatory. The rewards of man must come from the Holy Grace, and man’s merits are also from the Holy Grace. People is easy do evil because of original sin. Therefore, the Catholic Church emphasizes the role of baptism, repentance, conversion, the Eucharist and the keeping of commandments in the correction of sins. Catholicism also emphasizes the role of the mind in the thought of good and evil, highlighting the purity of the purpose of the act. Catholic theology better explains the difficulties of retribution between good and evil, and is different from the three religions in its ideology of retribution. Catholicism emphasizes the role of “other laws”

58 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 3, pp. 229-230.

59 See Xiao Qinghe, “To be Holy: Discourses on the *Sheng* (Holy) by Catholicism in late Ming and early Qing”, in *Sino-Christian Studies* 27 (2019): 43-93.

60 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 3, p. 233.

61 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 8, p. 571.

62 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 6, p. 409.

63 Jules Aleni, *Diary of Oral Exhortations*, volume 7, pp. 515-516.

in good and evil retribution, which is different from the local Chinese system of thought. The local Chinese religions emphasized the importance of human initiative in the retribution of good and evil. Under the highly developed situation and the collapse of the traditional moral order, the persuasion of goodness based on human self-discipline loses its effectiveness. In addition, the Confucianism and Buddhism theory of retribution is a kind of instrumentalism, which often brings about inconsistency between knowing and doing. It is not difficult to understand that when the Catholicism appeared before the scholars in late Ming with its monotheistic teachings, it captured the hearts of many of them, such as Xu Guangqi (徐光启, 1562-1633), Wang Zheng (王徵, 1571-1644), and other literati. One of the reasons why Ricci's writings were praised by the scholars was that they were regarded as a kind of book of goodness. The great success of Ricci in Nanchang, an important city of the learning of heart, could be attributed to the fact that the learning of heart placed great emphasis on persuading goodness.⁶⁴ Thus, the Catholic theory of reward and punishment played a positive role in the successful spread of Catholicism in the late Ming society.

Chinese Religions' Responses to Catholic Theory of Rewards and Punishments

The huge differences between the Catholicism and Chinese Religions on the doctrine of good and evil retribution, and the Catholic critiques to the Buddhist theory of karma, triggered fierce responses from the anti-Catholics. They believed that if one believed in God, one could go to heaven whatever the evil he had done. In the Nanjing Case in 1610, the initiator Shen Que alleged that Catholic church used the idea of heaven and hell to confuse the fools. According to the affidavits of the Nanjing Case, missionaries did use the theory of heaven and hell in their missionary work to attract people to the Church. People often join the Catholic Church because it can avoid disasters and obtain blessings.⁶⁵

According to Catholicism's standard of good and evil, saints, gods and Buddhas in the local Chinese religions were all punished, and were even regarded as devils. For example, Aleni once told Huang Zhen (黄贞) who was the leader of anti-Catholicism that the King of Wen (文王) was afraid of going to hell, which prompted Huang Zhen to call for the literati and monks from Fujian, Zhejiang, and other regions to attack Catholicism.⁶⁶ Catholicism's "no salvation outside the Church" led the anti-Catholics to believe that Catholicism denied the goodness of other religions and cultures. For example, Huang Zhen believed that if one did not convert to Catholicism, one's soul would forever be in hell without salvation, despite one's good deeds and merits.

64 Wu Zhen, *Mingmo qingchu quanshan yundong yanjiu* (《明末清初劝善运动研究》), p. 70.

65 "Huishen Zhong Mingli dengfan yan" (《会审钟鸣礼等犯一案》), in *Shengchao poxieji*, volume 2, pp. 346-348.

66 Huang Zhen, "Qing Yan Zhuangqi xiansheng pi Tianzhujiao shu" (《请颜壮其先生辟天主教书》), in *Shengchao poxieji*, volume 3, p. 365.

Catholic theory of good and evil retribution advocates the supernatural God commands the rewards and punishment, which is different from Confucianism. Those who are anti-Catholic think that Confucianism is not flattering the God to reward whereas Catholicism is flattering God and “one’s heart is only focused on God”. Those who oppose Catholicism believe that Catholics “have nothing to do but to put themselves under the yoke of sin, and when they have committed no sin, they pout and beg for help. Where is the joy of vivacity, and where is the joy of being live?” Anti-Catholics have a dismissive view of Catholicism’s over-emphasis on God’s role in good and evil retribution. The difference in emphasis between Catholicism and indigenous religions on good and evil retribution can easily lead to attacks on Catholicism by the anti-Catholic community.

Anti-Catholic leader Xu Dashou (许大受) pointed out that local Chinese religions and traditions do not advocate the cultivation of virtue for the sake of blessing, nor do they seek to replace evil with good in order to go to heaven. In other words, the cultivation of virtue has nothing to do with whether heaven or hell exists or not. Xu also made it clear that the Catholic standard of good and evil is the opposite of the Confucian standard: “What is good and what is not good of the Catholic barbarian is just the opposite of what the Confucian sages said.”⁶⁷ Xu also understood the dominant role of God in reward and punishment as flattering God. Xu said, “If you are good in your whole life and do not flatter God, it is useless to be good; if you are evil in your whole life and flatter God in your whole life, all evil will be gone.” Xu believed that this indicated that the Lord of Heaven was “selfish” and would make everyone flattering himself in every possible way, which was not enough to be the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Confucianism uses Qi to explain the various injustices in the world, and Ye Xianggao once expressed his dissatisfaction with this. Aleni explained it in terms of Christian theology. Xu Dashou also asked the same question to Aleni, who at first explained it by using Confucian Qi. However, Xu realized that the use of Qi would indicate that God was not omnipotent. “If as your Religion saying, the Lord of Heaven is omnipotent, the heaven and the earth are both created by him. However, the Qi could be the boundary between the Lord of Heaven and his creation. It is to say that the Lord of Heaven is not omnipotent.”⁶⁸ Then Aleni used the original sin theory to explain it. However, Xu thinks that the original sin theory was ridiculous, such as the original sin was one, but the punishment for it in the descendants is very different; the original sin is light, but the punishment for it in the descendants is heavy and so on. Therefore, Xu thinks that the Catholic doctrine of original sin is not as fair as the Buddhist idea that one’s retribution is only on himself.⁶⁹

Aleni once mentions that sacrifice for Catholicism is viewed as martyr. Xu thought that this was the Catholic Church’s way of confusing the fool and making them dare to die. The Catholic desire for death is in serious conflict with the idea of cherishing life of Chinese religions.⁷⁰

67 Xu Dashou, “Shengchao zoupi” (《圣朝佐辟》), in *Shengchao poxieji*, volume 4, p. 383.

68 Xu Dashou, “Shengchao zoupi” (《圣朝佐辟》), p. 385.

69 Xu Dashou, “Shengchao zoupi” (《圣朝佐辟》), p. 386.

70 Xu Dashou, “Shengchao zoupi” (《圣朝佐辟》), pp. 392-393.

Xu thinks that Catholicism has stolen the theory of confession of Buddhism and turned it into flattering God. Xu thinks that a crime originates from the heart, flattering shows that the heart is not pure. Then what is the use of confessions? Xu thinks that Confucianism's ethical principles are good, while Catholicism's idea of unworldly is evil. Xu clearly points out the fundamental difference between Confucianism and Catholicism in the standards of good and evil, the former is the worldly secular ethic, and the latter is the religious ethics of unworldly.

As for heaven and hell, Buddhism holds that it is caused by karma, like the sickness of a patient which is a situation of people during the cycle of samsara. In other words, heaven and hell are not as real as external objects, but depend on one's consciousness itself. The Catholicism, on the other hand, advocates the existence of heaven and hell as real, and as instruments of reward and punishment.

Yang Guangxian (杨光先, 1597-1669), an anti-Catholic in the early Qing Dynasty, also made a detailed critique of the Catholic theory of heaven and hell. In his view, the Buddhist theory of heaven and hell was nothing more than a tool that terrorize foolish men and women, and that heaven and hell does not really exist. However, the Catholic believes that there is heaven and hell, and that the criterion for judgment is whether one serves God. According to Yang, the Lord of Heaven is "a villain who invites people to fawn over him" and is not able to rule over all things in heaven and earth. On the other hand, if all those who serve God are wicked and go to heaven, while those who do not serve God are good but go to hell, would that confuse good and evil? According to Yang, confession in Buddhism means "don't do evil again" (不二过). It does not mean the removal of sins, while in Catholicism, it means the removal of sins by praying to Jesus or the Virgin Mary, and then would go to heaven. Yang Guangxian believed that, according to the Catholic saying, anyone who was a thief or a liar could go to heaven, and that heaven was in fact a "great sanctuary" for the evil. Yang Guangxian thought that the Catholicism had picked up the "spitefulness" of Buddhism, but instead said that the Buddha had fallen into hell and It was just full of jealousy and envy like a woman's talk.⁷¹ The editors of *Complete Collection in Four Treasuries* (《四库全书》) also argued that Catholicism's view of heaven and hell "is not much different from the theory of reincarnation, which is a small variation of the Buddhism, but the same as the original."⁷²

It can be found that anti-Catholics and literati were often critical of the Catholic theory of reward and punishment, mainly based on the difference between Catholicism and Chinese Religions. Catholicism was based on a monotheistic framework. However, when criticizing Buddhism and Taoism, the Catholicism borrowed the existing Buddhist terminology of heaven and hell to give the scholars an illusion that there are similarities between Catholicism and Buddhism.

For the Catholicism, its biggest rivals in Late Ming China were Buddhism, Taoism and folk religions. In the early Qing Dynasty, with the establishment of orthodox Confucianism,

71 Yang Guangxian, *Budeyi* (《不得已》), in *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian xubian*, book 3, p. 1112.

72 Ji Yun, *Sikuquanshu zongmu tiyao* (《四库全书总目提要》), p. 653.

Confucian conservatism regarded Buddhism and folk religions as “heretical” and “unorthodox”.⁷³ Therefore, to the Catholicism, its biggest rival was probably Confucianism. Conservatism. Confucian Catholics tried to reject Buddhism from the standpoint of Confucianism, but they were in fact equated by Confucianism with Buddhism and Taoism, especially in the theory of good and evil retribution. Influenced by indigenous Chinese religions and based on Catholic traditions, missionaries and Chinese believers often emphasize merits. For example, the biography of Xu Guangqi emphasizes the positive relationship between his piety and the fact that he had many descendants and his entry into Hanlin Academy.

Epilogue

After being questioned by ministers on the issue of the good and evil retribution, Ferdinand Verbiest responded with a book titled *Brief Explanations on the Remuneration of the Good and the Bad* (《善恶报略说》). In this book, Verbiest continued Ricci’s arguments. This book was in fact a revised version based on Ricci’s book *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Like Ricci, Verbiest believed that the fact that the good suffered and the bad were blessed in the present world mean that “the retribution of good and evil was not exclusive to the present world”. It was not enough to reward or punish in this world, but must be done afterlife.

Verbiest pointed out that man’s good and evil come from his free will, and that God does not make man only choose good but allow him free to choose good or evil. Then God will reward the good and punish the evil. The rewards and punishments of God are in the present, but mainly in the afterlife. If all of them are in the afterlife, it is not enough to encourage good and punish evil; If all of them are in the present world, then the blessings and calamities of the present world are not enough to reward the good and punish the bad. The blessing of the wicked in this world is because there is a little good done by the evil, and they will go to hell after death. The suffering of the good is because there is a little evil done by the good, after retribution in this world, he will ascend to heaven after death. However, Verbiest emphasized that the rewards for good and punishments of evil are probably not in this world. In other words, the happiness and calamities in this world is nothing to do with God’s rewards and punishments, because this world is not a place of reward and punishment. To man, this world is a place where God tries his heart to determine his virtue and conduct. This world where people dwell in is not the homeland of them. The blessings and misfortunes of this world are as nothing compared with the eternal blessings and misfortunes to come. Therefore, one should not ask God to reward or punish one in this world. Verbiest reminded those who believe in God that since they know that the blessings or calamities in this world are not enough to reward good or punish evil, they should not question why God does not reward good and punish evil in this world.

73 Such as Xiong Cilv (熊賜履), see Thierry Meynard, “Discourse on Buddhism in the manuscript *Religione Sinica* (early Eighteenth century) by Charles Maigrot, MEP”, in *Fo Guang Journal of Buddhist Studies* 2 (2019): 143-220.

Verbiest also refuted Yang Guangxian's and Buddhism's views on good and evil retribution. He argued that if the sky (heaven's form, 形天) which Yang Guangxian reversing could reward and punish in this world, then why did the sky drop frost, hails, rain and snow onto the farmland without distinguishing it is belong to the good or the evil? Why is it that those who respect the sky are poor and sick all their lives, and what remedy is there from the sky? He who does not respect heaven and earth, but enjoys wealth and happiness, why does not sky punish him? ⁷⁴

Verbiest also refuted the theory of reincarnation. He argued that if the retribution for the evil is equal to that in this world, it should be paid in this world, not in the next life. It is only when the retribution is paid in this life that it can persuade the good and punish the evil. In addition, if a good person suffers in this life but becomes evil after reincarnation in the next life, then should he be rewarded or punished? If he is reward, then it is unreasonable; if it is punishment, then the good done in this life will not be rewarded. Verbiest believed that using the theory of reincarnation to deal with good and evil retribution not only failed to persuade people to do good and correct mistakes, but also prevented them from doing good. The reason is that, according to the theory of reincarnation, all poverty and suffering in this life is the retribution of the evil in the past lives, i.e., the punishment of past sins, and therefore, others should not have sympathy or mercy on him. Verbiest believed that this theory would also undermine the Confucian ethics. Verbiest argued that if the reincarnation of a wicked man into a beast is not a punishment, but a reward, because the beast can indulge his evil passions.

Verbiest's criticism of the concept of good and evil retribution in the prevalent book *Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution* during Ming and Qing dynasties' includes two main points, the first is that he opposes the book's idea of the retribution in present life; the second is that he believes the book's concept of good and evil is totally absurd. Verbiest thought that the book's and the Buddhist concept of retribution were not only unreasonable, but also a pretext, showing the fact that which Buddhist and Taoist believe in are not real Lords, who has no right to reward or punish.⁷⁵

Verbiest's *Brief Explanations on the Remuneration of the Good and the Bad* expounded the Catholic theory of God's reward of good and punishment of evil, and refuted those popular theories of retribution in Qing society. The Catholic concept of good and evil retribution is based on a monotheistic framework which holds that only God has the right to reward and punish, and that God's rewards or punishments are mainly based on the goodness or badness of man and his motives.

It can be found that the Catholic concept of good and evil retribution has both similarities and differences with the three religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Firstly, in terms of good and evil standards, the four religions share certain ethical concepts, such as the prohibition of killing. After Buddhism localization, it takes Confucian moral principles as the standard of

74 Ferdinand Verbiest, *Brief Explanations on the Remuneration of the Good and the Bad* (《善恶报略说》), p. 519.

75 Ferdinand Verbiest, *Brief Explanations on the Remuneration of the Good and the Bad* (《善恶报略说》), p. 528.

good and evil. However, Catholicism is a monotheistic religion, and its standards of good and evil are based first and foremost on the will of God. Obeying God is the most good; disobeying is the most bad. Thus, the first three of the Ten Commandments deal with the relationship between God and man, while the last seven deal with the relationship between everyone. Secondly, in the aspect of the time, subject and result of retribution, Confucian theory of retribution is on the present life without referring to the previous or next lives. Buddhism is three-life retribution; which is like Taoism. The retribution of Confucianism and Taoism is a kind of collective retribution; Buddhism also has the concept of collective retribution, but it is mainly an individual retribution. At the level of results, Confucianism's one-life retribution cannot better deal with the problems of the good suffering and the bad being blessed, and can only emphasize the happiness of Yan Hui. Thus, to some extent, Confucianism denies that good and evil must have retributed. Catholicism also uses heaven and hell as rewards and punishments. In addition, all four religions emphasize the role of the heart in doing good or evil.

In addition, the Catholicism emphasizes “doing good intentionally”, and advocates that the benefits after death are so real that one can do good and remove evil for the benefit of the soul after death. This is very similar to the Buddhist (e.g., the Gongzhuge) and Confucian (e.g., the 顏茂猷) teachings of the late Ming persuasion goodness movement, but in terms of “benefit”, it is very similar to the Buddhist (e.g., the Gongzhuge) and Confucian (e.g., 顏茂猷) teachings of the late Ming persuasion movement. The three religions in the persuasion movement are slightly different from each other. The so-called “interests” of the Catholic Church are more related to the interests of the souls behind, and therefore have a strong unworldly dimension. Therefore, in terms of the realistic role of good and evil retribution, Catholicism is in fact consistent with Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism in the late Ming persuasion movement. It advocates the use of good and evil retribution to persuade good and punish evil.

The biggest difference between Catholicism and the Chinese religion of good and evil retribution should be the retributor. On the theoretical aspect, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism advocate that good and evil retribution is a kind of inevitability, or law of cause and effect, or heavenly law, or a kind of inclination. The role played by supernatural spirits is not obvious and is even irrelevant, that is, “there is no way for calamities and blessings to originate from man alone”. Therefore, the Confucian concept of retribution is a kind of humanism, which is human-centered and emphasizes the active role of human beings in the retribution. Thus, it has a worldly flavor. Catholicism, on the other hand, advocates that only God can reward good and punish evil, which is a God-centered concept of retribution. All merits as well as possible rewards, need to be based on grace. Under the influence of the doctrine of original sin, man is essentially powerless to do good, unless saved by an external supernatural power. Therefore, fundamentally, the difference between Catholicism and the Chinese religions lies in the difference between other-discipline and self-discipline, or the difference between the unworldly and the worldly, or the difference between everyone who is a saint and everyone who is a sinner. However, the Catholic

Church also emphasizes the positive role of repentance and good works in salvation, which has even evolved into indulgence and other forms of reparation. Thus, while Catholicism was to some extent similar to the native Chinese religions in the theory of rewards and punishments, the new elements it introduced were further enriched the religious thoughts since late Ming dynasty, and also promoted the dialogues between Sino and western religions. One of the most important influences was that the entry of Catholicism in the late Ming Dynasty encouraged some scholars to think about the religiosity of Confucianism to strengthen the role of Confucianism in moral educations and cultivation.

中文标题：

明末清初中西有关善恶报应论的对话

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提要：善恶报应论是明末清初天主教与本土宗教对话的关键问题之一。在一神论的框架下，天主教主张超自然的天主赏善罚恶，因而有了更为逻辑严密的神学论证。它与中国本土宗教就善与恶的标准、谁有赏罚的权力、赏罚的结果等问题进行了交流与对话。本文首先分析儒家的天人感应理论，其次阐述了佛道两教的因果报应理论。然后论述了明末清初天主教的赏善罚恶论，以及中国本土宗教对天主教赏善罚恶论的回应。最后，本文总结了天主教与儒释道在善恶报应论上的异同。在有意为善方面，天主教与儒释道有一些共同之处。然而，在善与恶的标准、报应的主体和个人在报应中的作用等方面则存在着明显的差异，这就造成了天主教与中国反教者之间的冲突。天主教赏善罚恶论的引入，无疑进一步丰富了晚明以来中国的宗教思想。

关键词：感应、报应、赏罚、天主教