



**A Critical Reflection of Christian Anthropocentrism and Ecological
Crisis from a Taoist Perspective: A Contribution to Christian-Taoist
Eco-Theology**

by

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ABSTRACT	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
NOTES ON USE OF BIBLICAL AND TAOIST TEXTS	III
GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS.....	IV
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THE DEMAND FOR A CHRISTIAN-TAOIST STUDY	2
1.2.1 Background	2
1.3 RESEARCH LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
1.3.1 Review of Christian-Taoist Studies.....	4
1.3.1.1 Classifications of Current Writings on Christian-Taoist Studies.....	4
1.3.1.1.1 Comparisons or Dialogues between Christianity and Chinese Culture or Religions.....	5
1.3.1.1.2 The Comparison or Dialogue between Christian and Taoist Spirituality.....	6
1.3.1.1.3 Christianity and Laozi or Zhuangzi's Thought	7
1.3.1.1.4 Dao and God or Dao and Jesus Christ.....	9
1.3.1.1.5 The History of Taoism and Resulting Problems for Christian-Taoist Studies	9
1.3.2 Review of Taoism and Ecology Studies.....	11
1.3.2.1 Classifications of the Current Writings on Taoist Ecology Studies.....	11
1.3.2.1.1 General Introduction to Chinese Ecological Thought	12
1.3.2.1.2 Taoist Complements to Western or Christian Ecological Thought	13
1.3.2.1.3 Studies of Individual Themes in Taoist Ecology	14
1.3.2.1.4 Suggestions for Christian-Taoist Study.....	16
1.3.3 Review of the Studies of the <i>Taiping Jing</i>	17
1.3.3.1 A Brief Introduction to the <i>Taiping Jing</i>	17

1.3.3.2 Current Literature on the Study of the <i>Taiping Jing</i>	18
1.4 PREPARATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN-TAOIST STUDY ON THE CONCEPTS OF HARMONY.....	22
1.4.1 Clarification of Terms.....	22
1.4.2 Justification of Concepts of Holistic Harmony as a Theme for Christian-Taoist Study.....	24
1.4.3 Purposes of Christian-Taoist Study of the Concepts of Holistic Harmony.....	26
1.5 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	26
1.6 METHODOLOGY AND PLAN OF A CHRISTIAN-TAOIST STUDY OF THE CONCEPTS OF HARMONY.....	27
1.6.1 Methodology of the Christian-Taoist Study of the Concepts of Harmony.....	27
1.6.2 Plan of the Christian-Taoist Study with the Concepts of Harmony.....	28
CHAPTER TWO: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE THESIS OF LYNN WHITE, JR.....	31
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	31
2.2 WHITE’S PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS.....	33
2.3 DEBATES ABOUT WHITE’S ARGUMENTS.....	36
2.4 WHITE’S CONTRIBUTION TO HOLISTIC HARMONY.....	46
2.5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	48
CHAPTER THREE: CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND ITS LIMITATIONS.....	50
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	50
3.2 A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIAN HARMONY.....	51
3.3 THE BIBLICAL QUEST OF STEWARDSHIP.....	55
3.4 THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF STEWARDSHIP.....	62
3.4.1 Catholic Perspectives.....	63
3.4.2 Martin Luther and John Calvin’s Perspectives.....	65
3.4.3 Other Theological Perspectives.....	67
3.5 THE LIMITATIONS OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.....	68
3.6 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	72

CHAPTER FOUR: TAIPING IN THE TAIPING JING	75
4.1 INTRODUCTION	75
4.2 THE BROAD CONCEPTUALIZATION OF <i>TAIPING</i>	76
4.3 ASPECTS OF <i>TAIPING</i> IN THE <i>TAIPING JING</i>	80
4.3.1 The States of the Absence of <i>Taiping</i>	82
4.3.2 The States of the Arrival of <i>Taiping</i>	84
4.4 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	89
CHAPTER FIVE: THE CESSATION OF CLINGING	91
5.1 INTRODUCTION	91
5.2 CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL COMPONENTS OF CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY AND TAOIST COSMOLOGY	92
5.2.1 The Fundamental Theories of Western/Christian Cosmology	94
5.2.2 The Fundamental Theories of Chinese and Taoist Cosmology.....	101
5.3 CHRISTIAN-TAOISM ENCOUNTERS ON THE CONCEPTS OF GOD VS. <i>DAO</i> AND THE CHOSEN PEOPLE VS. THE SEED PEOPLE	105
5.3.1 God vs. <i>Dao</i>	108
5.3.2 Chosen People vs. Seed People.....	112
5.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	117
CHAPTER SIX: RECONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY.....	119
6.1 INTRODUCTION	119
6.2 HUMAN CREATION VS. GOD’S CREATION.....	122
6.2.1 Divine Creativity and Individual Creativity in the Western/Christian Tradition	123
6.2.2 Divine Creativity and Individual Creativity in the Chinese/Taoist Tradition	125
6.2.3 Features of Divine and Natural Creativity in both Christianity and Taoism.....	127
6.2.4 The Past, Present and Future of Creativity.....	128

6.3 INTRODUCING THE THEORY OF THREEFOLD COOPERATION AND INTERACTION INTO CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY: LIFE, <i>ZIRAN</i> , <i>XIANGTONG</i> AND <i>ZHONGHE</i>	131
6.4 INTRODUCING THE THEORY OF THREEFOLD COOPERATION AND INTERACTION INTO CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY: <i>SABBATH</i> , <i>WUWEI</i> AND <i>ZHONGHE</i>	143
6.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	154
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION: CREATING A BETTER FUTURE FROM OUR HISTORY	157
7.1 INTRODUCTION	157
7.2 SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH	157
7.3 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH	159
7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	160
7.5 REFLECTION ON THE PRESENT ECOLOGICAL CRISIS	161
BIBLIOGRAPHY	163

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a Christian-Taoist study centred on the concepts of holistic harmony. This thesis argues that holistic harmony includes the harmonious relationship among God, Humanity and Earth. Such a harmonious relationship has been emphasised by Taoist tradition since ancient times and Taoism has been praised as the religion of natural harmony. Nevertheless, it has been found that it is less stressed in the Christian tradition. As many scholars and theologians have pointed out, Christian theology or cosmology is less concerned about nature; some have even claimed that Christianity should be held responsible for the modern ecological crisis. This thesis is intended to re-read Christian ecological concerns from a Taoist point of view to see how Christianity would benefit from Taoist traditions regarding ecological issues and further to integrate Christian cosmology and Taoist cosmology for a new cosmology for modern people.

This thesis has noticed the *Daode Jing* has been frequently selected as resource for Christian-Taoist study while the *Taiping Jing* is less discussed. However, in terms of ecological concerns, the *Taiping Jing* would be the best scripture to be discussed and referenced. Therefore, this thesis selects the *Taiping Jing* as the main encounter partner with the Christian tradition on ecological concerns. This thesis comprises five discussion chapters. The first provides a critical review of Lynn White's arguments on our modern ecological crisis. The second chapter provides a detailed and profound discussion of Christian anthropocentrism and the third chapter provides a comprehensive introduction of the Taoist concepts of *Taiping*. The fourth discussion chapter explores the roots of Christian and Taoist cosmology as well as the commencement of the Christian-Taoist encounter on the concepts of holistic harmony. The fifth discussion chapter contains three main parts. It starts with the study of the concepts of creativity in both the Chinese/Taoist and Western/Christian traditions in order to explore the similarities and dissimilarities of God/Tao's creativity and human creativity. On the basis of the study of creativity, the second and third parts of this chapter intend to retrieve the essence of creativity in order to ameliorate the modern ecological crisis through a specific ideology of the *Taiping Jing*, *Zhonghe*. Cobb's reinterpretation of Life and Moltmann's reinterpretation of Sabbath will be used as the vehicles for introducing the concepts of *Ziran* and *Wuwei*, insofar as they are part of *Zhonghe*, into Christian tradition.

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Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. —2 Corinthians 9:15

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NOTES ON USE OF BIBLICAL AND TAOIST TEXTS

1. All quotations and references from Biblical texts are taken from the Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*. London: Harper Collins, 1989.
2. All quotations and references from the Chinese texts of the *Taiping Jing* are taken from the Wang Ming 王明, *Taiping Jing Hejiao* 太平經合校. Beijing: Zhonghuaahuju, 1997.
3. All quotations and references from the English translations of the texts of the *Taiping Jing* from Chapter 35 to Chapter 49 are taken from Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2006.
4. All quotations and references from the English translations of the texts of the *Daode Jing* are taken from James Legge, The Tao Te Ching, in *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume 39 from the Internet Sacred Text Archive: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm>
5. The pinyin system of alphabetic transliteration from Chinese is used throughout the thesis, except in quotations of passages from works that adopt the Wade-Giles system.

GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS

- Chinese phonetics is shown using Pinyin Romanisation.
- Symbols of tones are not given.

Dao	the Way	道
Daojia	the philosophical Taoism	道家
Daojiao	the religious Taoism	道教
Datong	the Grand Union	大同
De	virtue	德
Di	earth	地
Huo	fire	火
Jin	metal	金
Minren	the common people	民人
Mu	wood	木
Nubi	the serfs	奴婢
Qi	pneuma, breath, energy, vital force	炁, 氣
Ren	humanity	人
Sanhexiangtion	threefold cooperation and interaction	三合相通
Shengren	the wise	聖人
Shui	water	水
Siji	the four seasons	四季
Taihe	the Great Harmony	太和
Taiping Dao		太平道
Taiping	the Great Peace	太平

Taipingqi	the air of Taiping	太平氣
Taipingzhijun	the emperor of Taiping	太平之君
Taiyang	the great Yang	太陽
Taiyin	the great Yin	太陰
Tian	heaven	天
Tu	soil	土
Weiwuwei	the action of inaction	為無為
Wu	non-being, non-existence, emptiness, void	無
Wufang	the five directions	五方
Wuwei	non-action, non-interference, non-intervention	無為
Wuxing	the five elements	五行
Xiangke	the conquest sequence	相剋
Xiangsheng	the generation sequence	相生
Xiangtong	reciprocal communication	相通
Xianren	the worthy	賢人
You	being, existence	有
Youwei	action	有為
Zhitaiping	the achievement of Taiping	致太平
Zhonghe	the Central Harmony	中和
Ziran	so of its own, spontaneous, spontaneity	自然
Yinyang		陰陽

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Developments in industry and science have brought about significant improvement in the material world. Modernity and advanced techniques have been pursued by human beings, in modern times most of all. Indeed, these developments have brought convenience to many of us. However, industry, science and modernity not only help to enhance the quality and convenience of human life; they also distort the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature, leading to the rise of a modern ecological crisis. The disharmony between humanity and nature has become of serious concern to modern society and the critical ecological issues have been studied from various standpoints. Although theology is a traditional subject, nevertheless, it may still be helpful in dealing with modern problems. Some religious scholars and Christian theologians have recently been working to combine ecological and theological study. The intention of conducting this type of study is to provide responses to ecological issues and solutions to the modern ecological crisis from a religio-theological perspective, attempting to encourage Christians, together with people of other religions, to rethink their own understanding and interpretation of the relationship between God, humanity and nature and the role of humanity in the present world and, further, to see if religions could benefit from or cooperate with each other in alleviating today's ecological crisis. Christianity has played an important role in human history: its religious attitude toward nature may be considered the main body of teaching for its followers when dealing with ecological issues. However, the

influence of Chinese philosophy and religions should be considered significant in human history, as well. Ecological concerns occupy the central parts of Chinese philosophies and religions. Harmony among the gods, humanity and nature is the ultimate goal of Chinese tradition; Taoism, above all. In other words, both Western and Chinese traditions show concern for our natural environment. The purpose of mentioning these ecological issues is to build up an ideal and harmonious state for both creatures and creation. Hence, a Christian-Taoist study of ecological issues might help us to review our understanding of them and of cosmology from both Christian and Taoist perspectives. On the basis of this review we could reconstruct our worldview and develop alternative ways to deal with our modern ecological crisis.

1.2 The Demand for a Christian-Taoist Study

1.2.1 Background

Peacekeeping is one of the most important issues for human beings to concern themselves with and work on at present. In order to maintain a peaceful and harmonious state for human society, Christianity has been devoting itself to promoting inter-religious or inter-cultural dialogue since the early 1900s. One of the aims of this is to understand other religions as well as to be understood, in order to learn more from one another. However, before 1960 the themes of dialogue were basically centred on core theological doctrines; in other words, the themes related more to God and humanity and less to nature or humanity's relations with nature. In the late 1960s, Christian tradition realized and started to consider the issues of and the relationship between, ecology and theology; since then a theological subject area, eco-

theology, has grown up. The idea of harmony between humanity and nature in Christianity and Western theology has also been extended. Christian theological themes are required to cover modern concerns and approach modern problems. Hence, Christian theology tends to review its theology, shift its tradition to a new dimension and seek external help. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim have noticed this tendency and constructively made the connection between worldviews and the present ecological crisis. Tucker and Grim believe that wide interfaith, interdisciplinary scholarly work is required to deal with the ecological crisis.¹ This revelation reminds us that concern over the relationship between humanity and the natural world seems long to have been trivialised in Christian theology.² However, the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature has become a significant concern in modern times: Ruth Page describes “A theology with a generalized triangular shape, which has God, humanity and the natural world at the three points and lines of relationship running from each point in both directions.”³ Page’s understanding of the theology clearly reveals the three crucial elements and the relationships between them.

Unlike Christianity, Taoism as a school of Chinese philosophy or as a representative of Chinese religion has considered the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature as one of its core concerns ever since it was founded. Undoubtedly, it has a rich context in terms of natural issues and maintaining the harmonious relationship

¹ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim, “Introduction: the Emerging Alliance of World Religions and Ecology,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 130, No. 4, Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change? Fall (2001): pp. 1-22.

² When it comes to Christian theology, the foci are always on such doctrines as God, Revelation and the Church while the relationship between humanity and nature is often neglected. For example, see Peter Crafts Hodgson and Robert Harlen King, *Christian Theology: an Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks* (London: SPCK, 1983).

³ Ruth Page, *God and the Web of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1996), p. xiv.

between humanity and nature. In addition to the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, the *Taiping Jing* 太平經 is also an outstanding Taoist text with regard to ecological issues.

The present research is encouraged by this religio-theological and cultural background and it is hoped that the detailed discussion in this research may help Christianity and Taoism to gain mutual understanding and benefit from each other on ecological issues, before taking the further step of helping to alleviate the current ecological crisis.

1.3 Research Literature Review

1.3.1 Review of Christian-Taoist Studies

1.3.1.1 Classifications of Current Writings on Christian-Taoist Studies

As Christian-Taoist study is not a newly established subject, it may be claimed that published articles and publications of this kind are available in general. However, the existing materials cannot be considered sufficient and comprehensive. The justification is that the foci are more on Taoist philosophical thought and less on Taoist religious concerns. Furthermore, quantity and depth in most works of Christian-Taoist study are rare and they are simplistic in general. The current writings on Christian-Taoist studies can be classified into four major groups. They are all comparisons or dialogues between: (1) Christianity and Chinese culture or religions; (2) Christian and Taoist spirituality; (3) Christianity and Laozi or Zhuangzi's thought; or (4) *Dao* and God or *Dao* and Jesus Christ. The available studies in these four groups are discussed below.

1.3.1.1.1 Comparisons or Dialogues between Christianity and Chinese Culture or Religions

Generally speaking, Chinese culture or religions can be broadly considered as anything which relates to Chinese thought. However, such a definition is too vague to be adopted in inter-religious or inter-cultural study. A better definition of Chinese culture or religions would be to narrow the reference down to the three main streams of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, or a compound of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. In the current works on Christianity and Chinese culture or religions, we find two main types. The first type shows Christianity and Chinese culture or religions providing a reciprocal response to one another. Julia Ching and Hans Küng's *Christianity and Chinese Religions*⁴ can be considered the best known example of this first type. In principle, the discussion in this book is seen from the perspective of inter-religious dialogue and comparison. First, Ching introduces Chinese religions; these include Chinese ancient religious traditions, *i.e.* pre-Confucian religions and Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Küng responds to points which Ching brings up from his Christian background. To some extent, this book is intended to integrate and complement the religious thoughts shared by the Christian tradition and Chinese tradition. The presentation of this book is no doubt a great contribution to the mutual understanding of both Christianity and Chinese culture or religions. The second type shows Christianity and Chinese culture or religions studying the same issues in a parallel way. Daniel L. Overmyer and Chi-tim Lai 黎志添's *Interpretations of Hope*

⁴ Julia Ching and Hans Küng, *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (London: SCM Press, 1993).

*in Chinese Religions and Christianity*⁵ can be considered as an example of the second type of study. There are also works by Chinese scholars, such as Guan-hu He 何光, Zhi-wei Xu 許志偉's *Rushidao Yu Jidujiao*⁶ 儒釋道與基督教 and Hui-xin Lu 盧蕙馨's *Zongjiao Shensheng*⁷ 宗教神聖. These works all focus on particular issues and present the perspectives of Christianity and Chinese culture and religions separately, to allow readers to have a general understanding of the interpretations of certain issues by each religion or tradition. This type of study is beneficial for building up a good primary foundation for further inter-religious or inter-cultural comparison or dialogue.

It can be seen that these scholarly works do not concentrate on any comparison or dialogue between Christianity and Taoist thought. However, according to the definition of Chinese culture or religions that was mentioned at the beginning of the section, we may still learn something of the Christian-Taoist content from the above works.

1.3.1.1.2 The Comparison or Dialogue between Christian and Taoist Spirituality

With regard to the spiritual perspective, Taoism is known as a philosophy or a religion which gives internal and spiritual features particular stress. The main works in the study of Christian and Taoist spirituality focus on the Christians' intentions of deepening their Christian faith or being better Christians through the assistance of

⁵ Daniel L. Overmyer and Chi-tim Lai, *Interpretations of Hope in Chinese Religions and Christianity* (Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 2002).

⁶ Guan-Hu He 何光滬 and Zhi-Wei Xu 許志偉, eds., *Rushidao Yu Jidi jiao* 儒釋道與基督教 (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2001).

⁷ Hui-Xin Lu 盧蕙馨, ed., *Zongjiao Shensheng: Xianxiang Yu Quanshi* 宗教神聖：現象與詮釋 (Taipei: Wunan 台北：五南：2003).

Taoist meditation. The Catholic sister, Chwen Jiuan A. Lee and Jesuit priest, Thomas G. Hand, share their personal experiences of being helped to reach a better form of religious belief by Eastern philosophy and practice in a book called *A Taste of Water*.⁸ Basically, this book provides an account of the way in which classical Taoist and Mahayana Buddhist studies can help Christians to reach a better and more advanced level of religious life and belief. The other book, called *Christ the Eternal Tao*,⁹ approaches Taoist spiritual thought from a different angle. This book introduces both Christian and Taoist spirituality. First, it provides an account of Christian spirituality for the better understanding of Christian followers and then it goes on to probe Laozi's teachings in order to find relationships between Christian and Taoist spirituality. This book helps not only Christian followers, but also Taoist followers to understand each other and rethink their practices. It also provides an alternative way for Christians to learn from Taoism. These works emphasise the e spiritual aspects, which are more related to religious meditation and less involved in the core themes of religions and modern ecological issues.

1.3.1.1.3 Christianity and Laozi or Zhuangzi's Thought

Concerning Christianity's relationship with Laozi or Zhuangzi's thought, this is a more philosophical than religious or theological question. Laozi and Zhuangzi's philosophical thought is the primary part of Taoist thought. This type of study would not engage in religious or theological themes at a deep level. The main contribution of such a study would be considered a 're-reading' of Taoist philosophy from the

⁸ Chwen Jiuan A. Lee and Thomas G. Hand, *A Taste of Water: Christianity through Taoist-Buddhist Eyes* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

⁹ Hieromonk Damascene, *Christ the Eternal Tao* (Platina, CA: Saint Herman Press, 1999).

Christian point of view. For example, Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, kept up a correspondence over a long period with the Chinese philosopher, John C. H. Wu, regarding Zhuangzi's thought.¹⁰ In addition, Christian missionary scholars also participated in Taoist study, for example in Michael Saso's *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang*¹¹ and James Legge's *The Texts of Taoism*.¹² It is indisputable that through the translations and interpretations of Merton, Saso and Legge, the Western world has gained greater understanding of Taoist philosophy. Furthermore, some non-English language works are available, including Jürgen Moltmann's "Laotse's Tao-Te-King mit Westlichen Augen Gelesen."¹³ All these works have been found helpful for further Christian-Taoist study.

It can be seen that such types of work adopt a mainly philosophical perspective rather than a religious or theological one. There is no doubt that they also provide a good understanding of Christian-Taoist study. The present research seeks to benefit from this philosophical knowledge and further engage in a religio-theological Christian-Taoist study.

¹⁰ See "The Thomas Merton Center and International Thomas Merton Society," *The Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University*, <http://www.mertoncenter.org/> (accessed 3 September 2010).

¹¹ Michael Saso, *The Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang* (Newhaven; London: Yale University Press, 1978).

¹² James Legge, trans., *The Texts of Taoism*, Vol.1, 2 (S.L.: Dover Publications, 1962).

¹³ Jürgen Moltmann, "Laotse's Tao-Te-King mit Westlichen Augen Gelesen," in *Mit dem Fremden Leben: Perspektiven einer Theologie der Konvivenz, Theo Sundermeier zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. D. Becker (Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2000), pp. 123-138.

1.3.1.1.4 *Dao* and God or *Dao* and Jesus Christ

With regard to *Dao* and God or *Dao* and Jesus Christ, this group of works assumes both the religious and philosophical perspectives. From the religious point of view, the works are mainly focused on comparison or dialogue between the concept of God in Christianity and the concept of *Dao* in religious Taoism. From the philosophical point of view, the works are mainly focused on the behaviour and religious life of the followers in each case. To an extent, they may also be understood as a mutual re-interpretation of the four *Gospels* or the *Daode Jing*. Examples which can be examined include *Christ and the Tao*, by the Korean theologian, Heup-Young Kim,¹⁴ Joseph Petulla's *The Tao Te Ching and the Christian Way*,¹⁵ and *The Tao of Jesus* by Joseph A. Loya *et al.*¹⁶ All these works centre on a comparison of or dialogue on the issue of *Dao* and God. Although the above works are more focused on the central concerns of both Christianity and Taoism, the discussion still remains on a general level.

1.3.1.1.5 The History of Taoism and Resulting Problems for Christian-Taoist Studies

In terms of the development of Taoism in the Chinese context, as indicated above, Taoism can be divided into two categories: Taoism as a philosophy and Taoism as a religion. Philosophical Taoism is called *Daojia* and religious Taoism is called

¹⁴ Heup-Young Kim, *Christ and the Tao* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 2003).

¹⁵ Joseph Petulla, *The Tao Te Ching and The Christian Way: a New English Version* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998).

¹⁶ Joseph A. Loya *et al.*, *The Tao of Jesus: an Experiment in Inter-Traditional Understanding* (New York, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998).

Daojiao. In the Chinese understanding, *Daojia* and *Daojiao* are two different systems. However, it is indisputable that the core principles of *Daojiao* are derived from *Daojia*. Generally speaking, *Daojia* means the school of philosophy which espouses the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi. Laozi's thought can be found in his concise but magnificent work the *Daode Jing*: this classic delivers the essential thought of Laozi in only five thousand words. Zhuangzi's thought can be found in a classic which is called the *Zhuangzi* or the *Nanhwa Jing* 南華經. In brief, Laozi and Zhuangzi are considered the central figures of philosophical Taoism and their philosophical thought is the main concern of Taoist philosophy.

Taoism as a religion was established towards the end of the Eastern Han dynasty 東漢 (25-220 C.E.), when religious Taoism had its own justification for coming into existence. At the time, China was under huge pressure as a ruined political state, menaced by attacks from neighbouring countries and a sequence of catastrophes over many years. Most of the Chinese people could not understand why they had to suffer such calamities and what they could hope for in the future. Taoism as a religion had to provide an explanation and a solution for this critical situation. Hence, religious Taoism developed its own salvational promises and acted as a salvific organisation to bring about redemption for everyone.¹⁷ This social background became an invisible power to encourage religious Taoism to develop its own core religious principles, such as the bureaucracy of deity and the pursuit of immortality. Because of this type

¹⁷ Fong-Mao Lee, "Jiujie Yu Dujie: Daojiao Yu Mingmo Minjianzongjiao De Moshi Xingge 救劫與度劫：道教與明末民間宗教的末世性格," in *Daojiao Yu Minjianzongjiao Yanjiu Lunji* 道教與民間宗教研究論集, ed. Chi-Tim Lai (Hong Kong: Xuefeng Wenhua : 學峰文化, 1999), p. 40; and Fong-Mao Lee, "Chuancheng Yu Duiyin: Liuchao Daojing Zhong 'Moshi' De Tichu Yu Yanbian 傳承與對應：六朝道經中『末世』說的提出與衍變," *Zhongguo Wenzhe Yanjiuji* 中國文哲研究集刊, 9(1996): pp. 91-92.

of religious development, religious Taoism is classified as a magico-shamanistic belief. In this point, one clear difference between Christianity and Taoism is revealed. Historically, Taoism as a religion underwent two critical periods of development, first during the Six dynasties 六朝 (222-589 C.E.) and second during the Jin 金 (C.E. 1115-1234) and Yuan 元 (1217-1368 C.E.) dynasties. During these two periods, Taoism as a religion experienced a burgeoning development of its religious thought and sects. Although the Taoist sects inherited the teaching which derived from *Daojia*, each sect also developed its own religious thought on the basis of the original teaching. This development, of course, to some extent caused each sect to diverge from the rest. This point can be demonstrated by the different religious scriptures used by each sect. This may indicate the difficulties of conducting Christian-Taoist study and may explain why there is a shortage of works on Christian-Taoist studies with a worldwide scope.

1.3.2 Review of Taoism and Ecology Studies

1.3.2.1 Classifications of the Current Writings on Taoist Ecology Studies

Taoism has long been understood as a type of philosophy or religion which contains significant concerns with nature and the relationship between humanity and nature.¹⁸ In other words, Taoism has a strongly emotional view of nature. For this reason, Taoism could be considered one of the best advocates of the study of religions and ecology. Although published articles and publications on this issue can be found in

¹⁸ See J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, eds., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), part 2.

the academic field, the existing materials cannot be deemed sufficient. The current writings on Taoism and ecology studies can be classified into four major groups. These are comparisons or dialogue between: (1) general introductions to Chinese ecological thought; (2) Taoist complements to Western or Christian ecological thought; (3) studies of individual themes in Taoist ecology; and (4) Taoism and Eco-feminism studies.¹⁹ However, the scope of this research does not extend to the fourth group. Thus, our studies will focus only on the first three groups which are discussed in turn in the following sections.

1.3.2.1.1 General Introduction to Chinese Ecological Thought

Such types of work usually cover several religious traditions; the purpose of involving different religions is to study diverse understandings of ecology from other angles. This method could provide a comprehensive religious background to ecology and help religions learn from and critique one another. Works which can be considered representative of this group include *Deep Ecology and World Religions*,²⁰ *The Retreat of the Elephants*²¹ and *Cosmos and Community*.²² *Deep Ecology and World Religions*

¹⁹ The Taoist perspectives of ecological issues in this research are mainly based on the *Taiping Jing*. Although the ecological foci of the *Taiping Jing* can be also discussed from an eco-feminist perspective, the essence of the ecological concerns of this Taoist scripture is not on the basis of eco-feminism. Therefore, this thesis will not put emphasis on this aspect. However, there are many publications available on Taoism and Eco-feminism studies. For example, Huey-li Li, "A Cross Cultural Critique of Ecofeminism," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1993), pp. 272-294; David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995); Sharon Rowe and James D. Sellmann, "An Uncommon Alliance: Ecofeminism and Classical Daoist Philosophy," *Environmental Ethics* 25, 2 (2003): pp. 129-148.

²⁰ David Barnhill and Roger Gottlieb, eds., *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2001).

²¹ Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: an Environmental History of China* (New Haven; CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

²² Livia Kohn, *Cosmos and Community: The Ethical Dimension of Daoism* (Cambridge, MA: Three Pines Press, 2004).

is a new collection of thirteen essays on the relationship between world religions and deep ecology. In examining how deep ecologists and the various religious traditions can both learn from and critique one another, the following traditions are considered: indigenous cultures, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Catholicism, Islam, Protestantism, Christian eco-feminism and New Age spirituality. *The Retreat of the Elephants* could be considered a historical study of the Chinese view of the relationships between humanity and the environment. Mark Elvin explores a wide variety of environmental phenomena and shows how different aspects of Chinese traditions, such as politics, economics, aesthetics and religious traditions, have contributed to environmental degradation in China. In *Cosmos and Community*, Livia Kohn discusses the ethical implications of the Taoist understanding of god, humanity and nature. Kohn elucidates the ideas of “humanity lives in perfect alignment with the forces of nature and the Cosmos”²³ and the relationship between community, nature, the Cosmos and human morality. At the same time, this work also contributes to the English translations of various Taoist texts.

1.3.2.1.2 Taoist Complements to Western or Christian Ecological Thought

One of the main characteristics of such types of work is that the authors, directly or indirectly, set out to adopt or incorporate Taoist thought into Western or Christian ecological thought. *The Tao of the West*²⁴ can be taken as an example. In this book, John James Clarke probes into the incorporation of certain fundamental Taoist theories and practices into Western traditions. The discussions cover the philosophical,

²³ *ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁴ John James Clarke, *The Tao of the West: Western Transformations of Taoist Thought* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2000).

religious, political, cosmological and ecological implications of Taoist principles. The other example is an article called “Daoism and Ecology”.²⁵ In this essay, James Miller studies how Taoist philosophical and religious insights intersect with current scientific research in such fields as evolution, ecology and the environment. Miller takes a further step, arguing that Taoism presents a sustainable alternative to the worldviews of monotheistic religions and secular humanism.

1.3.2.1.3 Studies of Individual Themes in Taoist Ecology

It can be stated that there is no shortage of materials in this category. The works are abundant, following various themes, such as nature, *Dao*, *De*, *Qi* and *Ziran*. Nevertheless, even more works can be found on the issues of nature, *Dao* and *De*.

Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland have edited a book called *Asian Perceptions of Nature*.²⁶ In which “Nature” is taken as the main theme of the discussions. However, in this book nature is defined as the environment. The discussions are concerned with the variety of ways in which Asian people perceive the relationship between human beings and the environment. The cross-cultural approach is the main contribution of this book. The discussions of nature include the different religions of Asia, *i.e.* Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto and indigenous traditions.

David Bennet and Kenneth K. Inada’s publications are examples of the theme of *Dao*. Bennet believes that terms such as ‘environmental sustainability’ and ‘conservation’

²⁵ James Miller, “Daoism and Ecology,” in *Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger Gottlieb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 220-235.

²⁶ Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland, eds., *Asian Perceptions of Nature: a Critical Approach* (Richmond, Surrey: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1995).

are not able to fully express the concerns for the ecological environment. He argues that newer terms, such as 'ecological sustainability' and 'renewable resources,' give greater value to environmental factors and are grounded in ecological principles. The meanings of these newer terms are closer to the essence of *Dao* and to deep ecology regarding nature and ecological issues. Bennet makes use of the Taoist notion of the state of nature as 'order' and further argues that four levels may be applied to the term *deep ecology*: (1) sources of inspiration; (2) the set of principles derived from the first level; (3) generalized hypotheses or strategic planning; and (4) action or tactical execution. Some other deep ecological concepts such as self-realisation and voluntary simplicity are also addressed in his works, *Ecological Sustainability, Deep Environmental Ethics and Tao*.²⁷ Kenneth K. Inada reflects on the work of a Chinese scholar, Wing-tsit Chan (1901-1994), in an article entitled "The Cosmological Basis of Chinese Ethical Discourse."²⁸ Inada explains how Chinese ethics are based on the cosmological and ecological principles implied in the concept of *Dao*. Inada considers Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist contributions to the Chinese understanding of *Dao*.

Ellen Marie Chen, Richard Van Houten and Weiming Tu have produced some works on the issues of *De*, *Ziran* and *Qi*. Chen argues that the term *De* has been wrongly interpreted as 'virtue' in an article entitled "The Meaning of Te in the Tao Te Ching".²⁹ She argues that *De* should not be understood as a conscious human quality,

²⁷ David Bennet, *Ecological Sustainability, Deep Environmental Ethics and Tao: a Preliminary Conjunction*, Fundamental Questions Paper No. 4. *Adelaide* (Australia: Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, 1990).

²⁸ Kenneth K. Inada, "The Cosmological Basis of Chinese Ethical Discourse," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 32, 1 (2005): pp. 35-46.

²⁹ Ellen Marie Chen, "The Meaning of Te in the Tao Te Ching: an Examination of the Concept of Nature in Chinese Taoism," *Philosophy East and West* 23, 4 (October 1973): pp. 457-470.
Norman J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism: the Theme of Chaos (Hun-tun)* (Berkeley,

for it is actually more closely related to the concept of nature in Western philosophy. Houten analyses the use of the term *Ziran* in Pre-Han texts, such as the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi*, as well as in texts of the syncretistic Han period, in order to explore the original meaning of *Ziran* and its development.³⁰ Tu argues that there are three primary motifs of nature in Chinese traditions: wholeness, dynamism and continuity; and these themes are more important than the creation myth or the concept of a personal god. He finds the concept of *Qi* more compelling. He further argues that *Qi* is the continuous effort of self-cultivation that allows one to ultimately experience all three aspects of nature's being.³¹

1.3.2.1.4 Suggestions for Christian-Taoist Study

From the above literature review, it can be observed that Western or Christian traditions have been able to benefit from Taoist tradition on ecological issues. The listed works have to some extent built a bridge for and made good contributions to Taoist-Christian study. However, it can be found that the discussions mainly revolve around the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* or general Taoist philosophical and religious themes. In addition to the wisdom of the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, Taoist wisdom is contained in various Taoist texts, both philosophical and religious. Therefore, this research argues that having benefited from the philosophical thought of the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, Christian-Taoist study should adopt other Taoist texts, particularly religious texts, as references when studying specific issues, for example, the *Taijing*

Calif.: University of California Press, 1983).

³⁰ Richard van Houten, "Nature and Tzu-Jan in Early Chinese Philosophical Literature," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 15, 1 (1988): pp. 33-49.

³¹ Wei-ming Tu, "The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, pp. 67-78.

Jing's religious teaching on ecological concerns. Furthermore, it also has been found that friendly relations between Christianity and Taoism have been built up through discussions on some general religious and theological themes. This research urges that Christianity and Taoism together should take the further step of engaging in in-depth and practical themes such as the concept of holistic harmony. This research is intended to fill these gaps, as far as possible.

1.3.3 Review of the Studies of the *Taiping Jing*

1.3.3.1 A Brief Introduction to the *Taiping Jing*

The *Taiping Jing* is considered to be the first religious scripture in Taoism. It is also called *Taipingqinglingshu* 太平青 (清) 領書. It is a highly controversial religious scripture. The controversial issues range from its date and authorship to its forms, content and aims. The original version had one hundred and seventy sections. However, the sections of the original version that still remain number only fifty-seven.³² These sections can be found in the Taoist Canon. As has been mentioned, one of the controversial issues is the date. The date of the composition of the *Taiping Jing* is recognised by most Chinese scholars to date from the East Han dynasty, a chaotic period for China. The *Taiping Jing* was regarded as a salvational book of that disordered era, because of the thoughts and solutions that it conveys. The *Taiping Jing* states itself that it is an apocalyptic book; the content is revealed by heaven, but, like

³² A Chinese scholar, Ming Wang, tried to return the remaining *Taiping Jing* to its original version. He produced a book, *Taiping Jing Hejia*, which is considered the modern revised version of the *Taiping Jing*. It has one hundred and seventy sections which have been made up from other ancient Chinese books or Taoist scriptures. Wang's book has been recognised as the most complete reference work on the *Taiping Jing* which is used as a foundation by modern *Taiping Jing* researchers.

St John's *Revelation*, is incoherent. Such statements and diversity lead to suspicions about its authorship. Regarding the authorship of the one-hundred-and-seventy-section version of the *Taiping Jing*, generally speaking, it is considered that it was not written down by one person, in one place, or at one time. At the very beginning, the *Taiping Jing* may have had only a few sections, which were later augmented and edited by Taoist followers. These speculations suggest that the *Taiping Jing* was not produced by one person, but the authorship of the *Taiping Jing* is still not certain. On the basis of some other important Chinese books, such as *Houhanshu* 後漢書, *Shenxianzhuan* 神仙傳 and *Zhilin* 志林, the most probable persons to have written, added to and edited it were Yu Ji 于吉, Gong Chong 宮崇 and Xiang Kai 襄楷. The grounds for such a hypothesis are the incoherent content and inconsistency of the genres, as well as its many internal contradictions.

1.3.3.2 Current Literature on the Study of the *Taiping Jing*

Studies of the *Taiping Jing* can be found in both Eastern and Western scholarship. *Taiping Jing* studies began by Chinese academics. The existing body of work of Eastern scholars is massive and the issues which have been studied can also be considered as broad, mainly on the authorship, historical background, political aims and religious thought of the texts. Some recent works include ecological issues, but the quantity of publications in this area is scanty. In other words, Eastern scholars have provided rather abundant material in their studies of the *Taiping Jing*. Western scholars, too, have contributed greatly to the total: they are mainly concerned with the study of the translation of these scriptures, the issues of peasant rebellion and the ideology of the *Taiping Jing*.

In terms of Eastern scholarship, the studies can be classified into three main themes: (1) the versions and validity of the *Taiping Jing*; (2) the relevance of the *Taiping Jing* to the peasant rebellion or the *Taiping Dao*; and (3) the study of the *Taiping Jing* ideology or individual concepts in the *Taiping Jing*. With regard to the first theme, Ming Wang 王明's *Taiping Jing Hejiao* 太平經合校³³ can be considered as a great help to *Taiping Jing* scholars. According to other reliable sources, Wang not only restores and re-punctuates the complete version of the *Taiping Jing*, but also provides a brief introduction. On the basis of Wang's work, Jilin Yang 楊寄林's *Taiping Jing Jinzhu Jinyi* 太平經今注今譯³⁴ and Chi Luo 羅熾's *Taiping Jing Zhuyi* 太平經注譯³⁵ contribute further interpretations and commentaries on the *Taiping Jing* regarding its authorship, historical background and functions. These works contribute to the textual clarity and context of the *Taiping Jing*. However, they do not include much ideological exploration. Concerning the second theme, the first publication seems to be an article entitled "Zai Taipingqinglingshu Zhong Suo Biaoxian De Zhengzhi Jiaotiao 在太平青領書中所表現的農民的政治教條" The author, Zhenyu Lü 呂振羽, indicates that the *Taiping Jing* is the Holy Bible of the peasants and the *Taipingqinglingshu* is the doctrine of the *Taiping Dao*.³⁶ Kuan Yang 楊寬 and Yingning Chen 陳櫻寧 also agree with Lü's opinions in articles entitled "Lun Taiping Jing: Woguodiyibu Nongmin Geming De Liluzhuzuo 論太平經：我國第一部農民

³³ Ming Wang 王明, *Taiping Jing Hejiao* 太平經合校 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1997).

³⁴ Jilin Yang 楊寄林, *Taiping Jing Jinzhu Jinyi* 太平經今注今譯 (Shijiazhuang 石家莊: Hebei Renmin Chubanshe 河北人民出版社, 2002).

³⁵ Chi Luo 羅熾, *Taiping Jing Zhuyi* 太平經注譯 (Chongqing 重慶: Xinan Shifandaxue Chubanshe 西南師範大學出版社, 1996).

³⁶ See Zhenyu Lü 呂振羽, "Zai Tai Ping Qing Ling Shu Zhong Suo Biao Xian De Zheng Zhi Jiao Tiao 在太平青領書中所表現的農民的政治教條" in *Zhongguo Zhengzhi Sixiangshi* 中國政治思想史, Vol. 2 (Beijing: San Lian Shu Ju 三聯書局, 1955), pp. 343-346.

革命的理論著作”³⁷ and “Taiping Jing De Qianyin Yu Houguo 太平經的前因與后果。”³⁸ But some scholars, such as Sheng Rong 戎笙 and Jide Xiong 熊德基 hold different opinions: they argue that the *Taiping Jing* and the peasant rebellion or the *Taiping Dao* are not relevant to one another in their articles “Shilun Taiping Jing 試論太平經”³⁹ and “Taiping Jing De Zuoze He Sixiang Ji Qi Yu Huangjing He Tianshidao De Guanxi 太平經的作者和思想及其與黃巾和天師道的關係。”⁴⁰ Regarding the third theme, Ping Wang 王平’s *Taiping Jing Yanjiu* 太平經研究⁴¹ can be considered a good example. This publication puts the emphasis on the *Taiping Jing*’s philosophical and religious thought and complements the other works. It is also the most up to date and comprehensive Chinese publication on the *Taiping Jing*.

To represent Western scholarship, Barbara Hendrischke’s *The Scripture on Great Peace*⁴² provides some English translation as well as a historical and religious exploration. Barbara Kandel’s *Taiping Jing*⁴³ offers an ideological discussion along with a historical background. Other research such as Werner Eichhorn’s article, “T’ai-

³⁷ Kuan Yang 楊寬, “Lun Taiping Jing: Woguodiyibu Nongmin Geming De Liluzhuzuo 論太平經: 我國第一部農民革命的理論著作,” *Xueshu Yuekan* 學術月刊 9(1959): pp. 26-34.

³⁸ Yingning Chen 陳櫻寧, *Taiping Jing De Qianyin Yu Houguo 太平經的前因與后果*, *Chinese Taoist Association* 中國道教協會, 2008,

http://www.taoist.org.cn/webfront/webfront_viewContents.cgi?id=1367 (accessed 5 April 2009).

³⁹ Sheng Rong 戎笙, “Shilun Taiping Jing 試論太平經,” *Lishi Yanjiu* 歷史研究 11 (1959): pp. 47-59.

⁴⁰ Jide Xiong 熊德基, “Taiping Jing De Zuoze He Sixiang Ji Qi Yu Huangjing He Tianshidao De Guanxi 太平經的作者和思想及其與黃巾和天師道的關係,” *Lishi Yanjiu* 歷史研究 4 (1962): pp. 8-25.

⁴¹ Ping Wang 王平, *Taiping Jing Yanjiu* 太平經研究 (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe 文津出版社, 1995).

⁴² Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2006).

⁴³ Barbara Kandel, *Taiping Jing: The Origin and Transmission of the “Scripture on General Welfare”: The History of an Unofficial Text* (Hamburg: Gesellschaft Für Natur- Und Völkerkunde Ostasiens E. V., 1979).

ping and T'ai-ping Religion,"⁴⁴ Maxime Kaltenmark's article "The Ideology of the Tai-ping Ching,"⁴⁵ and Hendrischke's articles, "The Concept of Inherited Evil in the Taiping Jing"⁴⁶ and "The Taoist Utopia of Great Peace,"⁴⁷ involve conceptual and ideological discussions and discussions from a Western perspective to enrich the study of the *Taiping Jing*. Besides these, Timotteus Pokora's article, "On the Origin of the Notions T'ai-P'ing and Ta-t'ung in Chinese Philosophy"⁴⁸ and Joseph Needham's *Social Devolution and Revolution: Ta Thung and Thai Phing*⁴⁹ offer a comparative study of Confucian-Taoist ideologies and are helpful for understanding the connection between Confucian and Taoist thought on cosmic harmoniousness. Western and Eastern research on the *Taiping Jing* can be considered to complement each other, sketching in a complete background for the study of the *Taiping Jing*.

On ecological issues in the *Taiping Jing*, some Chinese scholars have published very limited works, such as Chi-tim Lai⁵⁰ and Xia Chen 陳霞.⁵¹ However, as far as the researcher is aware, there is still a shortage of works of this kind in the Western academic field. The present research hopes to function as a basic research reference

⁴⁴ Werner Eichhorn, "T'ai-ping and T'ai-ping Religion," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 5 (1957): pp. 113-140.

⁴⁵ Maxime Kaltenmark, "The Ideology of the T'ai-P'ing Ching," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese religion*, eds. A. Seidel and H. Welch (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978).

⁴⁶ Barbara Hendrischke, "The Concept of Inherited Evil in the Taiping Jing," *East Asian History* 2 (1991): pp. 1-30.

⁴⁷ Barbara Hendrischke, "The Taoist Utopia of Great Peace," *Oriens Extremus* 35 (1992): pp. 61-91.

⁴⁸ Timotteus Pokora, "On the Origin of the Notions T'ai-P'ing and Ta-T'ung in Chinese Philosophy," *Archiv Orientln* 29 (1969): pp. 448-454.

⁴⁹ Joseph Needham, "Social Devolution and Revolution: Ta Thung and Thai Phing," in *Revolution in History*, eds. R. Porter and M. Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁵⁰ Chi-Tim Lai, "The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the Scripture of Great Peace: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature," in *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, eds. N. J. Girardot, James Miller and Xiaogan Liu (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 95-111.

⁵¹ Xia Chen 陳霞, ed., *Daojiao Shengtai Sixiang Yanjiu* 道教生態思想研究 (Chengdu 成都: Shuba Shushe 蜀巴書社, 2010). This book does not specifically concentrate on the *Taiping Jing*, but the *Taiping Jing*'s ecological concerns have been discussed on many occasions. See pp. 193, 201, 249, 310, 471.

for Western scholars who engage in Christian-Taoist study or Taoist study on the ecological concerns of the *Taiping Jing*.

1.4 Preparation for the Christian-Taoist Study on the Concepts of Harmony

1.4.1 Clarification of Terms

Taoism

As Taoism was introduced earlier in this chapter, the statement below about Taoism is not so much a repetition as a clarification. Julia Ching states, “Taoism may be called a religion of salvation ... It seeks to guide its believers beyond this transitory life to a happy eternity.”⁵² The Taoist scholar, Fen-Mao Li 李豐楙, also asserts that Taoism is a religion with a particular emphasis on salvation.⁵³ In contrast to philosophical Taoism, religious Taoism treats of the pursuit of salvation and demonstrates the concrete state of harmony for believers. With this characteristic, it is accepted as an object comparable with Christianity. As noted above, religious Taoism is quite unlike the traditional philosophy of Taoism. That is to say, philosophical Taoism is simply the foundation of religious Taoism. As we know, Taoism as a whole is a part of Chinese culture, where in fact, both philosophical and religious Taoism are significant. Therefore, in this research the Taoist part mainly centres on the *Taiping Jing*. However, this does not mean that the philosophical thought of Taoism is excluded. “Religions resemble languages together with their correlative forms of life and are

⁵² Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, p. 149.

⁵³ Fong-Mao Li, “Moshi yu jidu dao jiao de Moshi zongjiao xingge 末世與濟渡-道教的末世宗教性格,” *Dangdai 當代* 175 March (2002): p. 11.

thus similar to cultures.”⁵⁴ Taoist philosophy might be considered a form of Chinese language as well as a type of Chinese religion. In a word, this research does not intend to limit itself to a particular type of Taoist thought; all related thought, philosophical and religious Taoism will be included. The sources of the definitions or thoughts will be clarified in the discussions.

Harmony

The description of harmony in the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Holy Bible is mainly related to interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, this research aims to discuss holistic harmony, and therefore, this thesis proposes another word: ‘peace’ as an alternative, to an extent, to harmony. The Holy Bible mentions peace in various situations, at different times and from diverse aspects. These repetitions imply the significance of peace, more or less, in the Christian tradition. Despite such a variety of descriptions of peace, two basic features may be discerned which define the references to it in both the *Old* and *New Testaments*. First, peace is commonly depicted as an indissoluble relationship between God and the human world. Second, the meaning of peace is more than the opposite and absence of war or armed conflict; it contains a further and deeper meaning which is a total order of salvation.⁵⁵ For this reason, this research considers harmony and peace to share similar conceptual elements in the Christian tradition.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), p. 16.

⁵⁵ Erwin Fahlbusch et al. eds., *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol.4, P-Sh (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: Leiden: William B. Eerdmans; Brill, 2006), p. 106.

⁵⁶ The researcher is aware that the definitions of ‘harmony’ and ‘peace’ are not the same in biblical

In terms of the development of Taoist thought on concepts of holistic harmony or the harmonious state, the research will engage in both philosophical and religious aspects. Nevertheless, philosophical Taoism provides only the abstract ideology of harmony, not a concrete portrayal of the state of harmony; hence, this research adopts the state of *Taiping* which is mentioned as the ultimate harmonious state in philosophical Taoism and, to an extent, the eschatological harmonious state in religious Taoism as specific manifestations of holistic harmony.

1.4.2 Justification of Concepts of Holistic Harmony as a Theme for Christian-Taoist Study

From a religio-cultural perspective, the concepts of holistic harmony occupy the core position of Chinese people's lives in both their political and religious aspects. It can even be stated that Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism offer a serious underpinning to the concepts of harmony. For Chinese people, a state of harmony has been always a pursuit. For Western society, concepts of harmony seem to be less emphasised. Nevertheless, the Holy Bible does contain ideas of harmony in describing the relationship between man and man, God and humanity and humanity and nature. From this point, it can be found that the state of harmony is a yearning in both Christian and Western traditions. Peter Hodgson well concludes the state of harmony from a Christian perspective and argues that there are three themes for Christian theology in the twentieth century: (1) Liberation, *i.e.* social justice; (2) dialogue, *i.e.* inter-religious dialogue; and (3) ecology, *i.e.* life.⁵⁷ In other words, Hodgson asserts

texts. However, due to the limited space of this thesis, this issue cannot be developed in the research.

⁵⁷ See Peter Crafts Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: a Constructive Christian Theology* (Louisville. KY:

that the harmonious state in Christianity is holistic and implies that these three themes together lead to unalloyed harmony. In regard to the religious aspect, one may say that the state of harmony is always an ultimate religious yearning on the part of the world's religions, though it can be presented in various forms. In Christianity, the last book of the Holy Bible, the Book of Revelation, indicates that the descent of the New Jerusalem is the eschatological consummation and it cannot be disputed that the New Jerusalem is the manifestation of the ultimate and perfect harmonious state of Christian theology. For Taoism as a religion, the state of harmony was always an unchangeable and irremovable desire and *Taiping* is the perfection of the Taoist harmonious state. This shows the significance of holistic harmony in religious Taoism. However, the existing materials regarding Christian-Taoist relations present an absence of the concepts of harmony in Christian and Taoist study, as noted in the literature review. However, although it has been observed that the concepts of holistic harmony exist in the Holy Bible, nevertheless, the Christian tradition gives them less emphasis. On the basis of this observation, this research reviews with Taoist assistance the concepts of holistic harmony in the Christian tradition, *i.e.* from the perspective of the *Taiping Jing*, in order for Christian tradition to benefit from Taoist concepts of holistic harmony, in particular the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. Such a study would help the study of eco-theology and help Christianity to strengthen its grasp of the concept of harmony between humanity and nature.

Westminster John Knox Press. 1994). The three themes occur throughout the book; the most intensive discussions on these three themes can be found in part 2.

1.4.3 Purposes of Christian-Taoist Study of the Concepts of Holistic Harmony

(1) The primary purpose of this research is to create a space for Christian-Taoist study by probing into the concepts of holistic harmony and further to review the Christian understanding of the state of harmony through the Taoist understanding of *Taiping* and also to contribute to eco-theology from a Taoist perspective.

(2) Furthermore, the discussion on Christian and Taoist concepts of holistic harmony will help us to rethink the relations between humanity, nature and God and link up traditional theological issues and modern ecological concerns to endow Christian theology and Taoist practice with contemporary meaning and value.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

This research is, then, a Christian-Taoist study of the concepts of holistic harmony. The discussion is based on the Taoist texts in the *Taiping Jing* and the theories of eco-theology. This research is mainly focused on two theologians, John B. Cobb and Jürgen Moltmann. Cobb's re-reading or reinterpretation of Life is found to be helpful in introducing the *Taiping Jing*'s concept of *Ziran* into the Christian tradition. Moltmann's understanding of *Sabbath* helps to discuss the *Taiping Jing*'s concept of *Wuwei* and to apply this concept to Christianity in light of the Christian tradition.

This research also benefits from ecology. However, the discussions in this research are not deeply involved in this area. Ecology is used as to help bring up the issues and support the demands of holistic harmony.

1.6 Methodology and Plan of a Christian-Taoist Study of the Concepts of Harmony

1.6.1 Methodology of the Christian-Taoist Study of the Concepts of Harmony

This research is thus a theoretical analysis of Christian and Taoist concepts of holistic harmony approached from a hermeneutic angle. Two perspectives - the cultural perspective and the philosophical perspective - and two major approaches - the comparative and dialogical approach and the religio-theological approach – are adopted. With these perspectives and approaches, ideas of holistic harmony in the Christian tradition can be reassessed as well as initiating inter-religious dialogue between Christianity and Taoism on the issues of the concepts of holistic harmony. This should help to broaden and deepen the discussion of the concepts of holistic harmony.

Cultural and philosophical perspectives provide the basis for this study. The purpose of adopting a philosophical point of view is to help us to understand the development of the concept of holistic harmony in Christianity and Taoism. The cultural point of view will help us to comprehend the similarities and dissimilarities between Christian and Taoist harmony. The cultural and philosophical perspectives, along with the comparative and dialectic and religious-theological approaches help to study the diverse understandings of Supreme beings, how their roles affect the manifestations of the harmonious state and the meanings of the concepts of holistic harmony. These two approaches will enable us to analyse and compare the natures and compatibility of Christian and Taoist harmony on the basis of Christian theology and Taoist religious

thought and in particular how harmonious states have been evoked in the Holy Bible and the *Taiping Jing*.

1.6.2 Plan of the Christian-Taoist Study with the Concepts of Harmony

Apart from the Introduction and Conclusion, the main body of this research is made up of five chapters, starting with Chapter Two. The details are as follows:

Chapter Two is a critical review of Lynn White's arguments on our modern ecological crisis. The ecological crisis is the concrete presentation of natural disharmony and it also implies a disharmonious relationship between nature and humanity, as well as nature and God. White can be regarded as the first Western scholar to make the connection between ecological crisis and Christianity and raise in the academic area the theological concerns of an ecological crisis, in the West in particular. Hence, his arguments require a critical review. In addition to this critical review, this chapter also aims to probe into the opinions of other Western scholars regarding the role of Christianity in this disharmonious state as the starting point and background of this research.

Chapter Three is a detailed discussion in some depth of Christian anthropocentrism. This chapter is an expansion of Chapter Two, intending to understand the content of Christian anthropocentrism and the weaknesses of this ideology. This chapter is aimed, on the one hand, at discovering the validity of the responsibility and guilt of Christian anthropocentrism regarding the modern ecological crisis and on the other hand, at rethinking Christian anthropocentrism and understanding its weaknesses. If we do so, we will learn how to reconstruct a new and appropriate modern Christian cosmology.

The discussions and analysis in this chapter are preparations for a further Christian-Taoist encounter on the concepts of holistic harmony in later discussions.

Chapter Four aims to present a comprehensive introduction of Taoist concepts of *Taiping*. *Taiping* is considered the expression of holistic harmony according to its religious ideology. This research intends to adopt the teaching of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing* as a reference and aid in reconstructing modern Christian cosmology. Therefore, the significance of this chapter lies in providing knowledge of the Taoist holistic harmony. This knowledge will be used for reference in the later Christian-Taoist encounter with the concepts of holistic harmony, in particular as regards ecological issues.

Chapter Five is a journey exploring the roots of Christian cosmology and Taoist cosmology as well as the beginnings of the Christian-Taoist encounter on the concepts of holistic harmony. The chapter falls into two main sections. The first section engages the cultural and philosophical influences on the formats of Christian cosmology and Taoist cosmology. For Christianity, this is considered an addition to and further analysis of the discussion of Christian anthropocentrism. For Taoism, this is the discovery of the features of Taoist cosmology, since Taoist cosmology is considered the encounter partner of Christian cosmology. The second section attempts to re-read the images of God and man in Christianity from a Taoist *Dao* and human perspective on the basis of *Yinyang* theory. This chapter aims at underlining the less stressed points of Christian interpretations of *Imago Dei* and man as the foundation of a further Christian-Taoist encounter on the concepts of holistic harmony and also the basis of a reconstruction of modern Christian cosmology.

Chapter Six is the main discussion and contribution chapter of this research. There are three main parts to this chapter. It starts with a study of the concepts of creativity in both Chinese/Taoist and Western/Christian traditions, in order to explore the similarities and dissimilarities of God/*Dao*'s creativity and human creativity. The justification for such study is that the modern ecological crisis has possibly been brought into human society by human creation rather than God/*Dao*'s creation; therefore, we should understand what creativity is and what elements of creativity have been left out in modern times. On the basis of this study of creativity, the second and third parts of the chapter seek to retrieve the essence of creativity in order to ameliorate the modern ecological crisis through a specific ideology of the *Taiping Jing, Zhonghe*. Cobb's reinterpretation of Life and Moltmann's reinterpretation of *Sabbath* will be used as the vehicles for introducing the concepts of *Ziran* and *Wuwei* into Christian tradition as far as *Zhonghe*.

In the conclusion, a summary will be provided of this Christian-Taoist study of the concepts of holistic harmony and the attempt will be evaluated it by considering its limitations and suggesting ideas to overcome them in future works of Christian-Taoist study.

CHAPTER TWO: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE THESIS OF LYNN

WHITE, JR.⁵⁸

2.1 Introduction

It would not be harsh to claim that the Western world never seriously considered the disharmonious relationship between humanity and nature before 1967. This does not mean that no one had ever been concerned about the ecological environment, but ecological environment issues had never been able to attract proper attention in the Western world. In his book *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*,⁵⁹ H. Paul Santmire reviews the ecological themes of some of the major Christian thinkers in Western history. Santmire begins with the Church fathers such as Irenaeus (130-200 C.E) and then goes through a collection of significant and influential philosophers and theologians such as St. Augustine (354-430 C.E.) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1212-1274 C.E.) all the way up to modern theologians such as Karl Barth (1886-1968). His study tells us that ecological issues were not neglected in the Western and Christian traditions. However, it would be fair to state that the above theologians and philosophers were unable to shape the way that religious ethics understands environmental problems, until a five-page article was published in the journal *Science* in 1967, called “The Historical Roots of Our

⁵⁸ The modern ecological crisis to which White refers may not be the exactly the same as our modern crisis. However, the essence of this chapter is not to identify what White’s modern ecological crisis is and what our modern crisis is, but to put in place the religious concerns of the modern ecological crisis. Therefore, the types of modern crisis are not discussed in this chapter.

⁵⁹ H. Paul. Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: the Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). Besides this, Max Weber, Robert Forbes and Ernst Benz had also earlier suggested general causal links between Christianity and the birth of Western science and technology.

Ecologic Crisis.”⁶⁰ The author, historian Lynn White, Jr., discusses the Christian relation to ecological crisis. White’s arguments are based on his thorough knowledge of the development of medieval technology in the Western world, as well as a sharp observation of the modern ecological crisis. Hence, he attempts to connect Christian tradition to the modern ecological crisis. With such an innovation, of course, the arguments of his article became rather controversial among scholars and Christian theologians. Many scholars and Christian theologians challenged him by doubting his indictment of the fundamental teaching of Christianity for our ecological crisis. Was he right to declare that the problems of modern ecological crisis grew from these fundamentals? Undoubtedly these challenges and debates helped to develop the academic fields of environmental ethics and of religious responsibilities for the ecological crisis. Warwick Fox footnotes White’s article as follows:

“For his heretical indictment of Western Christianity ... White’s paper has probably generated more controversy than any other paper ... in the history of environmental thought. Moreover, this straightforward but erudite paper is still compulsory reading for anyone interested in ecophilosophy or the development of science and technology.”⁶¹

White’s article “would prove to be a watershed in religious thought regarding the environment.”⁶² For this reason, this research will conduct a critical review of the arguments in White’s essay and take this review further as preparation for the later Christian-Taoist dialogue on the concept of holistic harmony.

⁶⁰ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155: 3767 (10 March 1967): pp. 1203-1207.

⁶¹ Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), p. 6.

⁶² Richard Randolph and Jeremy Yunt, “Introduction: Beyond Lynn White, Jr.,” *Counterbalance*, <http://www.counterbalance.org/enviro/intro-frame.html> (accessed 5 April 2010).

2.2 White's Perceptions of the Roots of the Ecological Crisis

White's main and also most controversial, argument is that he firmly attributes the responsibility for the modern ecological crisis to Christianity. He suggests that we should rethink the implications of our cultural and religious traditions. Hence, White claims that "Unless we think about fundamentals, our specific measures may produce new backlashes more serious than those they are designed to remedy."⁶³ White, in fact, argues that the problematic aspects actually lie in Western culture and religious traditions. The strongly argued claim made by White is that the historical roots of the ecological crisis lie within Christianity. However, White aims his target only at 'Westernized Christianity,' which is understood as a combination of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. "Human ecology", White states, "is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny - that is, by religion."⁶⁴ He proclaims that "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt."⁶⁵ White is, of course, capable of supporting his argument. He makes this statement out of his understanding of the development of technology and science⁶⁶ as well as his interpretation of Western Christianity. Regarding the development of technology, White considers the motivation of scientists to be their belief that they are "to think God's thoughts after him."⁶⁷ Concerning the interpretation of Western Christianity, White focuses in particular on the preaching of *Genesis* 1:26-28. Hence, White asserts that "All forms

⁶³ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", p. 1204.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1205.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1206.

⁶⁶ See Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford: University Press, 1962); and Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology* (University of California Press, 1978).

⁶⁷ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", p. 1206.

of life modify their contexts.”⁶⁸ In other words, White believes that all creatures are intended to perfect their life and implies that mankind has simply done this more than others. He believes that the development of technology is the cause of modern ecological crisis. White maintains that the development of technology is one of the methods that human beings have adopted in order to perfect their lives. The development of technology in Western society has been long considered an indicator of world leadership. White further analyses the causes of ecological crisis and observes that Western technological and scientific advances have since medieval times been the support of the human capacity to destroy and exploit nature, while science and technology are understood as the products of human creativity out of Western culture, and Christian attitudes and doctrines are considered the roots of Western culture. Thus, White attempts to probe into Christian attitudes and doctrines as the roots of this human behaviour.

White criticises Western Christianity from two main perspectives. First of all is its ‘disenchantment’ of nature: White writes in his article that “In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit ... By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.”⁶⁹ Here, White is telling his readers that Christian Monotheism is the basis of the human exploitation of nature. Second, White believes that the messages revealed in *Genesis* 1:26-28 should also bear responsibility for the modern ecological crisis, because *Genesis* 1:26 says “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” and in verse 28, God tells Adam to

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1203.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1205.

‘subdue’ the earth and to ‘rule’ over the fish, birds and animals. Hence, White further condemns Christianity for being “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.”⁷⁰ In conclusion, White believes that Western Christianity has taught its adherents and Westerners that humanity and nature are two different objects. Mankind is not a part of nature and *vice versa*. Accordingly, Western Christianity has “not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.”⁷¹ Hence, White attributes all the blame to Western Christianity for being arrogant toward nature, because this religion takes nature as having no reason for existence except to serve mankind.⁷²

In the conclusion of his essay, White suggests a solution for modern ecological crisis.

He believes that this solution should build on spirituality:

“What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.”⁷³

However, White considers that an Eastern religion would be unworkable in the

Western context. He argues,

“The beatniks ... show a sound instinct in their affinity for Zen Buddhism, which conceives of the man-nature relationship as very nearly the mirror image of the Christian view. Zen, however, is as deeply conditioned by Asian history as Christianity is by the experience of the West and I am dubious of its viability among us.”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 1207.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 1206.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

Thus, White looks for a Christian source for a solution to the ecological crisis by suggesting St. Francis of Assisi. He describes Francis as “the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ,”⁷⁵ as it is known that St. Francis intended to dismiss the ideology of human dominion over nature and to conceptualise the democracy of all God’s creatures.⁷⁶

White appreciates St. Francis’ view of nature, stating,

“His view of nature and of man rested on a unique sort of panpsychism of all things animate and inanimate, designed for the glorification of their transcendent Creator, who, in the ultimate gesture of cosmic humility, assumed flesh, lay helpless in a manger and hung dying on a scaffold.”⁷⁷

Given White’s understanding and interpretation of St. Francis of Assisi, he concludes his essay by calling St. Francis “the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ”⁷⁸ and suggesting him “as a patron saint for ecologists.”⁷⁹ In other words, White believes that retrieving the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi is the solution for the modern ecological crisis, in Western societies in particular.

2.3 Debates about White’s Arguments

White’s arguments about the modern ecological crisis inevitably invite debate, not least because he targets the religious doctrines of Western Christianity for their disregard of the environment. However, his accusations cannot be considered totally

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ See Paschal Robinson, “St. Francis of Assisi,” *New Advent*, 1909, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06221a.htm> (accessed 3 September 2010).

⁷⁷ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, p. 1207.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1206.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1207.

convincing, but rather fragile in certain respects, such as: (1) the ambiguous historical timetable; (2) the weak support for the arguments; and (3) the superficial understanding of Christian theology. Among them, the ambiguous historical timetable is the most incomprehensible error in White's arguments that the cause of our ecological crisis lies in 'Western' Christianity. White specifically blames Western Christianity for encouraging the developments of science and technology, but not Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In his eyes, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is basically exonerated as a non-technological religion, because Eastern Orthodox Christianity's interpretation of Christian teaching focuses more on spiritual enlightenment and less on the discipline of will. Besides, Eastern Orthodox churches tend to avoid mechanical devices such as pipe organs and clocks or other mechanical instruments for fear of contaminating the sacred space.⁸⁰ White later adds:

"Men commit their lives to what they consider good. Because Western Christianity developed strong moral approval of technological innovation, more men of talent in the West put more resources, energy and imagination into the advancement of technology than was the case among Greek Christians, or indeed in any other society, including the Chinese. The result was an unprecedented technological dynamism."⁸¹

Thus, White, on the basis of this knowledge, describes how a Greek churchman was amazed by the technology on display when visiting Italy in the middle of the fifteenth century. White attempts to trace the origins of this technological division back to the seventh century C.E., specifically with the development of new techniques of

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1206; and Lynn White, Jr., "Continuing the Conversation," in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Ian G. Barbour (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1973), pp. 55-65, esp. p. 59. Also see Sergeĭ Nikolaevich Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), pp. 135-136.

⁸¹ Lynn White, Jr., "Continuing the Conversation", p. 60.

ploughing.⁸² However, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, the Great Schism was finalized in 1054 C.E.⁸³ That is to say, the historical point in time of the origins of the two Christian churches in White's account does appear to be dubious. Moreover, he later emphasises the differences between the Western and Eastern churches, implying that the differences had fully emerged by the thirteenth century. In other words, White believes that the differences between Western and Eastern churches were to be noticed after two centuries.⁸⁴ White's observation seems to be somewhat unreliable, due to the fact that differences between the Western and Eastern churches had probably been perceptible before the Great Schism occurred.

However, White as a historian could have been supposed to have a good knowledge of the significant historical time points. These errors may lead to challenges to White's comprehension of the historical facts and make it difficult for readers, including Western Christian readers, to understand and to be persuaded by his assertions that the modern ecological crisis is due to Western Christianity. Western Christians would not accept White's charges solely because of something present in Western Christianity and specifically lacking in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, *i.e.* mechanical instruments. However, White puts himself in an embarrassing position by his concise analysis of a complex problem. His analysis, in fact, implies that the development of technology itself is a distinguishable factor, rather than the Judeo-

⁸² Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", p. 1205.

⁸³ See "Great Schism," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 702-703.

⁸⁴ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", p.1204.

Christian teachings about rule over nature.⁸⁵ Hence, William E. Gibson further argues that the roots of the modern ecological crisis do not lie in the biblical tradition, but rather in the technology of modern science itself, as demanded by industry. Gibson believes that the development of modern technology, on the one hand, includes the biblical wisdom regarding the eco-environment and, on the other, distorts the relationship between humanity and other creatures and non-creatures. In other words, Gibson argues that Christianity may not be the main cause of the modern ecological crisis or rather that the development of modern technology itself may be the main cause. This development makes human beings the cruel destroyers of nature rather than its protectors and carers.⁸⁶ In summary, all White's arguments combined with the rather dubious historical timetable makes his article appear unduly laden with *non sequiturs* and allow doubt to creep in as to the actual role of religion in the modern ecological crisis.

Furthermore, our criticism of White's essay can be based on the weak justifications for his arguments. However, the most serious problem with White's essay is presented in his superficial grasp of Christian theology in general. These two points may be discussed as one. White asserts that the human understanding of ecology "is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny - that is by religion." He continues to ask "what did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment?"⁸⁷ White offers the answer that it begins with an outline of the Judaeo-Christian concept

⁸⁵ Dean R. Hoge, "Judeo-Christian Values and the Ecological Crisis," in *The Place of the Person in Social Life*, eds. Paul Peachey, John Kromkowski and George F. McLean (Washington, D. C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991), p. 271.

⁸⁶ William E. Gibson, "Eco-Justice, New Perspective for a Time of Turning," in *For Creation's Sake: Preaching, Ecology and Justice*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1985), p. 19.

⁸⁷ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", p.1205.

of the Creation, which he compares with the Graeco-Roman concept of a world without a beginning. He claims, “Like Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had had a beginning. Indeed, the idea of a beginning was impossible in the framework of their cyclical notion of time.”⁸⁸ White’s intention in mentioning this point would have been to illustrate that the Judaeo-Christian concept of a world with a beginning is to an extent associated with the Western exploitation of nature. Therefore, he adds, “God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes.”⁸⁹ However, White’s premises seem to be unsafe, as many Greek myths clearly mention a beginning to the visible world. These myths, to an extent, undermine White’s presentation of the concept as peculiarly belonging to the Judaeo-Christian tradition.”

⁹⁰ Above critique implies that White does not in fact have enough background knowledge of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Again, White further stresses the anthropocentric nature of religious teaching as the unique factor in both Jewish and Christian theology, in which human beings are made according to the *Imago Dei*. White draws the conclusion from his understanding of both Jewish and Christian theology that, “Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.”⁹¹ To an extent, this statement may not simply be claimed as clearly untrue. However, White does not set out any powerful evidence to support

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ See R. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 27-35.

⁹¹ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, p. 1205.

it. Ian McHarg has proposed a similar claim: “Judaism and Christianity have long been concerned with justice and compassion for the acts of man to man, but they have traditionally assumed nature to be a mere backdrop for the human play.”⁹² White gains no support from McHarg, but instead leaves a space for challenges and criticisms. One of the challenging questions would be, “Has Christianity ever *insisted* on the exploitation of nature?”, since being in harmony with nature is also a tenet of faith.⁹³ However, more serious criticism may come from his selective adoption of the biblical background. In his book, *Earth in the Balance*, the former US Vice President, Albert Gore, argues that White, in fact, does not count among his biblical references the creation stories of *Genesis*, where nature is depicted positively.⁹⁴ Therefore, the ambiguity of White’s arguments has been observed. On the one hand, White considers *Genesis* 1:28 as the biblical foundation of his arguments. On the other, he ignores the other biblical descriptions of nature to the contrary. All of the above loopholes can make his arguments rather fragile.

In addition, White also overlooks some other possible causes of the development of Western technology and the modern ecological crisis. When discussing the development of Western technology, White either accidentally misses or deliberately excludes the importance of the historical background. According to historical sources, it can be found that Western Europe was in a more stable situation than Eastern Europe in pre-medieval as well as medieval times; Eastern Europe was facing

⁹² Ian McHarg, “The Place of Nature in the City of Man,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 352, Urban Revival: Goals and Standards, March (1964): p. 4.

⁹³ On this point, the researcher believes that the presentation of the modern ecological crisis implies to an extent that Christianity does provide support for humanity’s exploiting nature for its own benefit.

⁹⁴ See Albert Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (New York: Rodale Books, 2006), pp. 243-248.

invasions by foreign armies, such as the Tartars. Hence, Western European nations had more stable conditions in which to develop their technology and science; this factor is less related to religion but more related to the social situation.⁹⁵ In discussing the causes of the modern ecological crisis, White also leaves out some critical points, such as the influence of Greek philosophy on Western Christianity, the development of industry, economic development and the influence of capitalism. Western Christianity is understood to be strongly influenced by Aristotle's philosophy and rationalism.⁹⁶ In other words, one can infer that Greek philosophy also bears the guilt for modern ecological crisis, while White does not consider this point in his article.

However, the modern ecological crisis has been seen as a derivative of industrial development and wealth, as Gibson mentions. That is to say, people who are rich demand more from their environment and can harm the environment more. From the standpoint of economic development, there are more developed countries in the West⁹⁷ and this implies that the Western nations are wealthier than any other nations on earth. Although the ecological crisis is a global crisis, the damage of nature is largely found in these developed countries. However, this may even be less related to their world views or religious beliefs. In other words, if non-Judeo-Christian nations were as wealthy, the serious damage to nature would be also found in those areas. In fact, nowadays science, technology and lifestyles cannot be monopolised by one particular nation or nations: they are borrowed from nation to nation. However, the

⁹⁵ See John Boardman et al. ed., *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Peter Heather, *Empires and Barbarians: the Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹⁶ This point will be discussed in Chapter Five.

⁹⁷ International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: a Survey by the Staff of the International Monetary Fund* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2011), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/01/pdf/text.pdf> (accessed 4 May 2011).

views about God, man and nature may often be left behind.⁹⁸ As Jean Mayer, a food scientist, states,

“It might be bad in China with 700 million poor people, but 700 million rich Chinese would wreck China in no time ... It's the rich who wreck the environment, occupy more space, consume more of each natural resource, disturb ecology more, litter the landscape ... and create more pollution.”⁹⁹

Concluding the above points, it can be found that White's essay contains many doubts and questions which lead his essay to be considered an unconvincing article in terms of attributing all responsibility for modern ecological crisis to the Western Christian tradition. Lewis W. Moncrief concludes: “Thus, all White can defensibly argue is that the West developed modern science and technology *first*. This says nothing about the origin or existence of a particular ethic toward our environment.”¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, White's arguments should not be abandoned totally. On the contrary, some empirical studies can be found supporting White's theories. This chapter will briefly report three examples. First, Russell H. Welgel conducted a survey in a New England town and found that young and more educated citizens are conscious of environmental issues. They are in a higher social class but less religious or influenced by church involvement and belief in the Holy Bible.¹⁰¹ Second, Carl M. Hand and Kent D. van Liere carried out a mail survey in Washington State.¹⁰² They asked

⁹⁸ Hoge also mentions similar ideas. See also Dean R. Hoge, “Judeo-Christian Values and the Ecological Crisis”, p. 271.

⁹⁹ Lewis W. Moncrief, “The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis,” in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Russell H. Welgel, “Ideological and Demographic Correlates of Proecology Behavior,” *Journal of Social Psychology* 103 (1977): pp. 39-47.

¹⁰² Carl M. Hand and Kent D. van Liere, “Religion, Mastery-Over-Nature and Environmental Concern,” *Social Forces* 63 (1984): pp. 555-570.

various questions about pollution control, population control and conservation in the survey. It revealed that non-Christians identifying themselves as ‘no belief in God’, ‘agnostic’ or ‘atheist’, are more supportive of environmental protection than all the Christian believers were. Hand and van Liere discovered that the least supportive Christian groups are Baptists, Mormons and conservative Christian sects. In all the groups, people who frequently attend church activities are more associated with a stewardship or anthropocentric viewpoint than those who do so less frequently. Third, Douglas Lee Ekberg and T. Jean Blocker made a survey of the Tulsa, Oklahoma area. In this survey, they asked about four different environmental concerns.¹⁰³ It was found that non-Judeo-Christians have more environmental concerns than Judeo-Christians. This survey tells us that the non-religious people care more about our environmental issues, while biblical tradition believers are less concerned about the environment. The strongest concern about environmental issues was found in a group of people who were well educated and young, none of whom were religious believers.

In summary, although the above cases are small-scale empirical studies in different parts of America and may not be convincing enough to prove that all non-Christians always have more environmental concerns than Christians, the studies, to an extent, would still be good points of reference. Some common points are found in the above empirical cases: (1) non-Christians have more environmental concerns than Christians; (2) Christians are affected by the stewardship or anthropocentric viewpoint; and (3) well-educated and young people who have no religious background care more about

¹⁰³ Douglas Lee Eckberg and T. Jean Blocker, “Varieties of Religious Involvement and Environmental Concerns: Testing the Lynn White Thesis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (4) (1989): pp. 509-517.

environmental issues than others do. In brief, it may be stated that people who are less influenced by Christian teaching have been found in certain cases to be more concerned about ecological issues.

In addition to the above empirical studies, many scholars support White's point of view on reviewing religious tradition in order to discover its influence on human behaviours and attitudes. Among them, Holmes Rolston, III states: "The Bible is not a book of science and therefore not of ecology. It does, however, sketch a vision of human ecology and contemporary readers encounter claims about how to value nature."¹⁰⁴ Cobb and Moltmann, in fact, agree to some extent with White. They consider that the technology of modern science is the cause of the modern ecological crisis. Cobb believes that the attitudes of modern philosophy and theology have caused today's ecological crisis, for they consider nature as merely material, without moral goodness and spirit in itself.¹⁰⁵ In other words, Cobb infers the conclusion from his perception that the technology of modern science has been developed under such an umbrella; thus, it is not surprising that it is the cause of the crisis. Moltmann says, "Modern industrial society has brought the organism of the earth out of balance and is heading towards the universal *ecological death*"¹⁰⁶ and he believes that the problem lies in the misinterpretation of *Imago Dei*.¹⁰⁷ Religious faith, indeed, is an important factor and principle of human values, as well as capable of guiding human attitudes to nature. Hence, it has its significance and is worthy of detailed reflection and this also may require a reinterpretation of traditional religious teachings.

¹⁰⁴ Holmes Rolston, III, "The Bible and Ecology," *Interpretation* 50 (1996): p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ See John B. Cobb, *Is It Too Late? : a Theology of Ecology* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Bruce, 1972).

¹⁰⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, "The Ecological Crisis: Peace with Nature," *The Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* Vol. IX, 1 (1988): p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 5-18.

2.4 White's Contribution to Holistic Harmony

Although White's arguments are questionable and controversial, his contribution to the issue of ecology and religion is still notable. As Elspeth Whitney observes:

“Paradoxically, although many ecotheologians argued vociferously against White, they could use his thesis to reinforce the view that environmentalism was at bottom a religious and ethical movement. Like White, they believed that religious values were the most effective antidote.”¹⁰⁸

At the beginning of his article, White justifies his motivation for writing “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” by the fact that he cannot tolerate the way in which human beings treat and exploit rabbits. Hence, he intends to criticise the fundamentals that human beings follow and to try to discover an alternative solution to the ecological crisis which he has observed.¹⁰⁹ Based on his description of his motivation, White's contribution could be seen in two ways: as questions and as answers.

First of all, White questions what the historical roots of the modern ecological crisis are. By asking this question, he successfully makes us aware of the connection between religions and the ecological environment. “Every culture, whether it is overtly religious or not, is shaped primarily by its religion,”¹¹⁰ White adds. For this reason, also, White points out that the problem of the modern ecological crisis lies in Western Christianity. Through it is not perfectly convincing, we still can take this opportunity to review Western Christian teaching on the relationship between

¹⁰⁸ Elspeth Whitney, “White, Lynn-Thesis of,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, eds. Bron Taylor and Jeffrey Kaplan (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), p. 1736.

¹⁰⁹ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, p. 1203.

¹¹⁰ Lynn White, Jr., “Continuing the Conversation”, p. 57.

humanity and nature and look at ways of extending the limits of Christian religious teaching. Second, White wants to answer his own question by arguing that the concepts of Christian anthropocentrism and Christian cosmology¹¹¹ are the main causes of the modern ecological crisis and suggesting St. Francis of Assisi “as a patron saint for ecologists” to be the solution. Although these two concepts are proved to be only partial causes of the modern ecological crisis (see the previous section) and his solution is not perfect, either, White has set up a new milestone for religions and ecology, encouraging modern Christian and non-Christian theologians or scholars to rethink what theology can do in this crisis and how religions can help to develop not only human harmony but also natural harmony, or ‘holistic harmony.’

Furthermore, White’s contribution can be considered to involve a further aspect. Speaking from an inter-religious dialogue perspective, White unexpectedly opens a door for Christianity and Taoism on the dialogue of the concept of holistic harmony, in particular the importance of natural harmony, even though he does not seem to believe that Eastern religions could provide an answer for or be complementary to the weakness of Western Christian. However, the argument itself attracts an Eastern viewpoint to the discussion, regarding, in particular, the different perceptions of the role of humanity and cosmologies in harmonious states in Western Christianity and Chinese Taoism. To this Kim responds, stating that Korean Christianity encounters Western Christian theology with East Asian religions and this leads to the fusion of a

¹¹¹ Willis Jenkins, “After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37: 2 (2009): p. 283.

new world view, “the-anthropoid-comic vision.”¹¹² Kim implies that Christianity would benefit from East Asian religions in regard to ecological concerns.

2.5 Summary, Conclusion and Implications

In summary, White is trying to persuade his readers that the causes of the modern ecological crisis arise from three main notions in Western Christian tradition, namely, (1) the linear concept of time; (2) Christian anthropocentrism and (3) the destruction of animism. White’s analyses undoubtedly contribute to some extent to Christian theology and ecology. However, in the counter arguments we find that White’s indictments of Western Christianity are not totally convincing. Such controversy stimulates the existence of various discussions and awakens modern ecological concerns.

‘Ecological crisis’ is in itself an intricate issue. If we view this issue from a single perspective, it is a tangible environmental crisis. This could be cared for by modern environmental groups, for many environmental organisations have engaged in various areas of environmental protection. If we view this issue from a dual perspective, it is a relationship between human beings and nature. This could be taken care of by human moral and ethical concerns for nature. If we view this issue from a holistic perspective, it is a disharmonious relationship between God, humanity and nature. Such a disharmonious relationship cannot be improved quickly and simply. It needs critical reflection on fundamental human values, in particular the values which lie deep within cultural and religious traditions, and are integral to their historical background.

¹¹² Heup-Young Kim, “Life, Ecology and Theo-Tao: Towards a Life Theology of Theanthropocosmic Tao,” *Madang* Vol. 11 June (2009): pp. 81-82.

This research does not wish either to defend Lynn White or heavily criticise his knowledge of Western Christianity or theology. The purpose of reviewing White's best-known article as the first chapter in the discussion of this research is to sketch in the background colouring of the Western view of natural harmony or disharmony. Of course, as has been shown by the discussions in this chapter, the causes of the modern ecological crisis are various and complex. This research is not naively aimed at solving this complex problem, but rather seeks to contribute to a possible mitigations of the crisis through cultural and religious approaches. After all, "Our cultural and spiritual heritages can reinforce our economic interests."¹¹³ Economic development is, no doubt, a modern concern and trend. White's arguments, along with other scholars' criticisms of White, can provide great help for the following discussions on the concepts of holistic harmony in Christianity and Taoism. Furthermore, it can help to examine whether Taoist understandings of harmony can be borrowed to complement the limits of the Christian understanding of harmony.

¹¹³ Gro Harlem Bruntland and the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our Common Future: World Commission on Environment and Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 1.

CHAPTER THREE: CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND ITS LIMITATIONS

3.1 Introduction

As White's arguments have been discussed and studied in Chapter Two, this chapter concentrates on exploring further Christian anthropocentrism and its limitations, if any. This chapter also aims to provide a comprehensive enough background to Christian anthropocentrism for the Christian-Taoist encounter in later chapters. It may be stated that the biblical descriptions of harmony and peace relate mainly to humanity and that these descriptions may imply, to some extent, imply that human beings are the most important creatures in the world, being created according to the *Imago Dei*, "That is, he has personality and as such he is unique in the creation."¹¹⁴ This notion confers on humanity huge privileges including superiority. There is no doubt and no problem either, in stating that human beings are always considered having the main roles, even perhaps being inferior only to the Supreme Being in Christianity, since the promise of salvation is implicitly for human beings. Hence, anthropocentrism does not seem to be a problem for Christianity. Indirectly, however, this implies that nature exists to serve mankind's desires. If this is the case, then, why do people these days feel uncomfortable about their natural environment?¹¹⁵ Regarding Christian anthropocentrism, the starkest ideology in Christianity must be

¹¹⁴ See Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), p. 50.

¹¹⁵ For example Thomas Berry, the former director of the Riverdale Center for Religious Research, has raised the question, "Is the human a viable species on an endangered planet?" See Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, "Series Foreword" to *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, p. xiii.

stewardship. Therefore, this chapter probes into this issue in more detail. The theological theory of stewardship is not alien to Christianity: the creation story indicates to its readers how much God loves the *Imago Dei*. The connotation is that we, as humans, have power over the other creatures and non-creatures in the world. However, if we look with insight at the power of stewardship with which human beings are endowed, we see that this power not only presents the love of God, but also contains the implication that human beings should be responsible for their behaviour. Nevertheless, Christian tradition seems all along to have been putting the focus on God's love towards human beings and failing to remind them that God is also merciful to the rest of the world that includes creatures and non-creatures. Hence, this chapter focuses on three aspects of the theme: (1) biblical interpretations; (2) the theological understanding of stewardship, including the further step of discussion; and (3) the problems and criticisms of Christian stewardship. Before it does so, a brief account of the biblical descriptions of harmony may be useful, since the discussions demand background knowledge.

3.2 A Brief Account of Christian Harmony

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *shalom* is translated into English as 'peace'. *Shalom* has many meanings: the most common seem to be 'completeness', 'wholeness' and 'peace'.¹¹⁶ Thus, *shalom* means not only the absence of war, but also social and personal well-being in the widest possible sense.¹¹⁷ From biblical verses, it

¹¹⁶ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version* (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), s.v. "shalom."

¹¹⁷ See M. Rodríguez, "Peace," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Catholic University of America, Vol. XI (Palatine, Ill.: J. Heraty, 1981), p. 37.

can be found that *shalom* refers to the prosperous and harmonious state of a whole person, individual or collective, as well as a good relationship between persons or groups.¹¹⁸ In prophetic texts, peace is conceived as a kind of earthly bliss. In these texts, peace appears as a spiritual good which is considered to be the gift of God.¹¹⁹ For the Prophets, peace covers not only all the meanings mentioned above, but often contains the meaning of ‘salvation,’ and this sense is related to the messianic kingdom. Therefore, being in a peaceful state becomes one of the most distinguishing features of their thought.¹²⁰

The Greek word for peace, *eirēnē*, can be understood as ‘rest’, or as reconciliation with God.¹²¹ In the New Testament, the meaning of peace is more comprehensive because it conflates the meanings of *shalom* and *eirēnē*. Here two aspects of peace can be discussed. First, peace involves eschatological salvation, which includes the termination of divine wrath and the establishment of right relationships among human beings. Second, it involves the serenity and tranquillity of the soul. This point brings in the human relationship with God and full human triumph over evil. God is the creator and dispenser of this peace and Jesus Christ is the medium or channel.¹²² Furthermore, according to the biblical descriptions, the flourishing condition of the early Church is also described as peace.¹²³ It also can be found that Jesus uses the

¹¹⁸ Gen. 15:15, Num. 6:26, 1 Sam. 25:6, 2 Sam. 11:7, Ps. 72, Jer. 6:14; 8:11, Isa. 40-48, Ezek. 36-39. Also see Geoffrey Parrinder, “Peace,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol.11 (New York: London: Macmillan; Collier Macmillan, 1987), p. 221.

¹¹⁹ See Gerhard Kittel ed., *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol.2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.; London: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 400-420.

¹²⁰ Isa. 54:10, Ezek. 34:25; 37:26, Isa. 8:23-9:6; 11:6; 65:25, Jer. 6:14; 29:11. Also see M. Rodríguez, “Peace”, p. 37.

¹²¹ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version* (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), s.v. “*eirēnē*.”

¹²² M. Rodríguez, “Peace”, p. 38.

¹²³ Acts 9:31.

word *peace* on many occasions. He often sends away those whom He has cured with the words, “Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace.”¹²⁴ When Jesus blesses those who actively overcome evil with good, He says, “Blessed are the peacemakers ...”¹²⁵ Regarding other uses of *peace*, Jesus also says “My peace I give to you ...”¹²⁶ St. Paul’s writings develop the understanding of *peace* in two ways: peace is the symbol of the new relationship between Creator and creature and it is a mark of reconciliation with others, in particular between Jews and Gentiles.¹²⁷

The Christian understanding of peace accords not only with the biblical interpretations, but also with the teachings of the Church. The Church teaches Christians that peace, on the one hand, as a calming effect on the soul, and, on the other, is a just order.¹²⁸ This understanding has led both to doctrines of a just war and to judgements on social change.¹²⁹ Augustine of Hippo supports the above teaching. He distinguishes strictly between the worldly and the transcendent spheres. Augustine says that, in the earthly world, a just war can be accepted as an approach which leads to peace, but in the transcendent sphere, God alone will fulfil the eschatological expectation of peace. In other words, Augustine implies that peace is the purpose of wars; wars lead to a harmonious state between nation and nation. He says,

“peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience...peace between men is an ordered agreement of mind with mind...the peace of the Heavenly City is as perfectly ordered and perfectly harmonious

¹²⁴ Luke 7:50; 8:48.

¹²⁵ Matt. 5:9.

¹²⁶ John 14:27.

¹²⁷ Eph. 2:13-14. See Geoffrey Parrinder, “Peace”, p. 222.

¹²⁸ Geoffrey Parrinder, “Peace”, p. 222.

¹²⁹ See C. G. Fenwick, “Peace, International,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, pp.38-39.

fellowship in the enjoyment of God...the peace of the whole universe is the tranquility of order..."¹³⁰

Augustine's interpretations of peace include the peace of mortal man, God, the Heavenly City and the whole universe. However, it can be found that his interpretations of peace are mostly focused on humanity and God. In addition to the above biblical verses and theological interpretations of peace, see also the verses in *Genesis*, in particular those about the *Garden of Eden* and the verses in Isaiah about new heavens and a new earth.¹³¹ Nonetheless, it could be claimed that such a type of peace is less stressed in the Christian tradition.

Although this section does not provide a comprehensive study of the concepts and usage of *peace* in the Christian tradition, it can be concluded that the main concerns of Christianity in terms of the issues of peace are centred on human beings or God. The above descriptions of peace may be considered the most common and main biblical expressions of peace. However, it is also clear that peace does not apply only to God, humanity or the relationship between the two, but also to the relationship between human beings and nature. Although the meaning of peace and harmony are not exactly the same, to an extent these two concepts can still be considered compatible and indeed, mutually requisite. Hence, if Christianity had historically been seen as a religion which laid more stress on the harmonious relationship between human and human or between humans and God, now it can be seen that it has the potential to develop the Christian understanding of harmony in a holistic way, which takes in a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature.

¹³⁰ Augustine. *City of God*, Book XIX (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 870

¹³¹ Isa. 65:17-25.

3.3 The Biblical Quest of Stewardship

Before starting the biblical quest for the meaning of *stewardship*, we should grasp the concept of *Imago Dei*. As noted above, the *Imago Dei* has personality and is unique in creation, but is not limited to these two characteristics. In *Genesis*, apart from the fundamental verse in 1:26, a further reference can be found in 5:1 “he made them in the likeness of God” and a final statement in 9:6 “for in his own image God made humankind.”¹³² Although these verses are simple and the definition of what this ‘likeness’ denotes is not clear, these verses express the belief that humankind is, in some ways, similar to God. In the book *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth provides an account of the anthropological and theological interpretations of *Imago Dei* from Ambrose, Athanasius and Augustine. The image is interpreted as the soul, rationality and the triune faculties of the soul, *memoria, intellectus, amor*.¹³³ An Old Testament scholar, David J. A. Clines, has grouped the major interpretations of the image into four types: it (1) is a spiritual quality of humanity, (2) consists in humanity’s rule over his fellow-creatures, (3) is the term for the immediate relationship between God and humanity and (4) consists in humanity’s form, which is similar to God’s.¹³⁴ However, the image of God presents that humanity is

¹³² In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is held to be the image of God. The relevant verses can be found in Hebrews 1:3 “He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being”, in Colossians 1:15 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 “to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” However, it can be found that the interpretation of the image of God here is different from that in the Old Testament.

¹³³ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), p. 192.

¹³⁴ David J. A. Clines, *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, c1998), p. 450.

a copy of God; in other words, it must, to some extent, be unlike God.¹³⁵ St. Irenaeus offers support to this view, claiming that the likeness is a divine gift from God added to basic human nature. God adds the moral qualities of Himself to humanity, but their goodness is spoiled by man's Fall.¹³⁶ Therefore, *Imago Dei* cannot be considered as good as God. Nevertheless, this point seems to have had less attention and emphasis. The significance of *Imago Dei* is revealed by the above biblical and theological interpretations, which explain why humanity is qualified to be a steward of God.¹³⁷

The term *stewardship* derives from the word *steward*. The responsibilities of a steward are classically over a household on behalf of his master.¹³⁸ In other words, the common understanding of the meaning of stewardship is the responsibility and power given to someone to maintain and use the property owned by his master. In Christianity, stewardship, according to several biblical verses, is the mandate to care for, cultivate, govern and improve the earth "on behalf of God."¹³⁹ From a biblical perspective, *Genesis* is the book to consider as the biblical root of the theological concept of stewardship. White's arguments are also understood as being made on the basis of this book. Therefore, reading and re-reading the relevant verses in this book is

¹³⁵ N. W. Porteous, *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible II* (Abingdon Press, New York/Nashville 1964), p. 684.

¹³⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 522.

¹³⁷ It cannot be disputed that "the image of God" is an open-ended term, with such varied interpretations that one cannot discern which of them is correct. This section is not aimed to provide a detailed study of the term but to introduce the interpretations which may be associated with the concept of stewardship. For an overview study of "the image of God", see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian theology*, pp. 517-536.

¹³⁸ Colin Archibald Russell, *The Earth, Humanity and God: the Templeton Lectures, Cambridge 1993* (London: UCL Press, 1994), p. 147.

¹³⁹ See Mary Evelyn Jegen and Bruno Manno, eds., *The Earth Is the Lord's: Essays on Stewardship* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

a pre-requisite of the present research. *Genesis* 1 records the story of Creation: God finished the creation of the world within six days and blessed the seventh day. The work which God performed in the first five days does not involve the notion of stewardship. However, *Genesis* says both man and woman were created in the sixth day and on the same day God also created all the animals. The critical difference between humanity and all the animals lies in the appearance of humanity representing the climax of Creation. Why then is man so different? The answer to this question is the fact that immediately after man was created, God blessed man, according to the verses,

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”¹⁴⁰

Why then is humanity blessed by God while other animals are not? *Genesis* answers, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”¹⁴¹ Hence, it can be seen that humanity and God have a particular and intimate relationship. From the above verses, some clues can also be found in terms of stewardship. In fact, they imply four points: (1) humanity is the climax of Creation and (2) God Himself built up the relationship with humanity; (3) humanity is the representative of God in the earthly world and (4) humanity is most

¹⁴⁰ Gen. 1:28-30.

¹⁴¹ Gen. 1:27.

precious creation in the world; human beings are more important than the other parts of creation.¹⁴² Gerhard von Rad explains,

“Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed upon earth in God’s image as God’s sovereign emblem. He is really only God’s representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God’s claim to dominion over the earth ... Thus man’s creation has a retroactive significance for all nonhuman creatures; it gives them a new relation to God. The creature, in addition to having been created by God, receives through man a responsibility to God; in any case, because of man’s dominion it receives once again the dignity belonging to a special domain of God’s sovereignty.”¹⁴³

In other words, humanity is God’s representative in the early world; thus, humanity is entitled to dominate the world since it is the mission of humanity and a fulfilment of God’s sovereignty. Since humanity is endowed with such a power by God, the crucial passages should be looked at closely and carefully. In *Genesis* 1:28, God tells Adam to ‘subdue’ the earth and to have ‘dominion’ over its animals, on earth, in the sky or under the sea. However, both *subdue* and *dominion* are English words. Some may wonder if the translations of these verbs from the Hebrew original into English admit any inaccuracy and would find it helpful to read the Hebrew origins of these two words. These two words are translated from the Hebrew *kabash* and *radah*.¹⁴⁴ It has been found that the Hebrew words *kabash* and *radah* have a stronger sense than their English translations. *Kabash* contains the meaning of ‘to tread down’ or ‘bring into

¹⁴² Luis Gutheinz 谷寒松, *Shenxue Zhong De Renxue: Tiandiren Heyi* 神學中的人學: 天地人合一 (Taipei 台北: Guangqi Chubanshe 光啟出版社, 1991), pp. 179-184.

¹⁴³ Gerhard von Rad, Rev. John H. Marks trans., *Genesis* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 60.

¹⁴⁴ Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: a History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison, Wis.; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 90.

bondage,¹⁴⁵ and “conveys the image of a conqueror placing his foot on the neck of the conquered; in one passage the word even means ‘rape’.”¹⁴⁶ Regarding *radah*, this verb means ‘to tread down’ or ‘to prevail over’ and conveys the image of treading grapes underfoot.¹⁴⁷ These words express superiority in the strongest terms.¹⁴⁸ In other words, the English translations of these two Hebrew words are not inflated.

Embarrassingly, another vision of the creation story arises in the next chapter. As is well-known, there are two literal traditions in *Genesis*: one is the ‘Priestly’ or P tradition and the other is the ‘Jahweh’ or J tradition. From the standpoint of literary style, *Genesis* 1:1 to 2:4a seem to come from the P tradition; the other creation story, from the J tradition, begins at *Genesis* 2, verse 4b. In the second story there is no indication of the six-day creation and no mention of humanity being created according to *Imago Dei*, either. Rather, there is a description of God putting Adam into the Garden of Eden and asking this man “to till it and keep it.”¹⁴⁹ Here the Hebrew verbs are *abad* and *shamar*. The former is often translated as ‘till’ or ‘work’ or ‘serve;’¹⁵⁰ the latter is variously translated as ‘keep’ or ‘beware’ or ‘preserve.’¹⁵¹ This story,

¹⁴⁵ James Strong, *a Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version*, s.v. “kabash.”

¹⁴⁶ Peter de Vos and Loren Wilkinson, *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1991), p. 287.

¹⁴⁷ James Strong, *a Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version*, s.v. “radah.”

¹⁴⁸ Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 209.

¹⁴⁹ Gen. 2: 15.

¹⁵⁰ James Strong, *a Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version*, s.v. “abad.”

¹⁵¹ James Strong, *a Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version*, s.v. “shamar.”

suggests that Adam is commissioned to be a gardener to nurture and preserve the garden, rather than to rule over it.¹⁵²

However, for the greater part of his lifetime Adam stayed outside the *Garden of Eden*. Adam and his wife, Eve, were expelled from it due to their disobedience. “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.”¹⁵³ God also cursed the ground and told Adam “thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.”¹⁵⁴ These verses again declare that humanity since then would need to work hard for a living and Adam’s task remained to till the ground, but no longer to cultivate and preserve the garden.

After reading through the two creation stories, the significant difference over stewardship between the first and the second is clear. Literally speaking, humanity would have lost its power to subdue and dominate the earthly world after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden. The biblical evidence is that God told Adam only to till the ground: in other words, all that human beings can do to the earth is to till it. Nevertheless, after the flood, *Genesis* records that God blessed Noah and his sons with the words “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.”¹⁵⁵ This implies that human beings still have dominion over the other parts of creation. However, the questions have been raised whether human beings have

¹⁵² Loren Wilkinson, *Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources*, p. 209. Also see Richard H. Hiers, “Ecology, Biblical Theology and Methodology: Biblical Perspectives on the Environment,” *Zygon*, 19(1984): pp. 43-59.

¹⁵³ Gen. 3:22.

¹⁵⁴ Gen. 3:18.

¹⁵⁵ Gen. 9:1-2.

exactly the same power in relation to nature as before they left the Garden of Eden and are human beings as good as when Adam was created?

In addition to the verses in *Genesis* which have been quoted above, a good number of verses can still be found in the Holy Bible in support of stewardship. These verses are found not only in some of the parables of Jesus but also in the Old Testament. Biblical teaching about care for the land is abundant in the Old Testament.¹⁵⁶ In biblical usage, the task of a steward is not only to preserve the property but also to ensure profit from it for his master and ultimately for God. Jesus proposes the faithful steward as a model for the responsible Christian.¹⁵⁷ The Apostles are chosen as stewards of the divine mysteries,¹⁵⁸ and every Christian is a steward of the mysteries of God.¹⁵⁹ The ultimate meaning of stewardship is to express the belief that humanity is not the owner but only the custodian of God's creative products in this world. Human beings are expected to use them and reproduce with them the fruits of eternal life.¹⁶⁰ Some theologians, such as Gabriel Fackre and Robert L. Shinn, argue that according to the Holy Bible, human beings are indeed to be stewards of the earth, just as God told Adam to be a steward of the garden.¹⁶¹ However, this does not mean that Fackre and Shinn totally agree with the traditional Christian perspective of human dominance over nature. For instance, Fackre argues that humanity and God are fundamentally

¹⁵⁶ See Lev. 25:23-24, Ezek. 34:2-4; 10; 17-18, Isa. 24:4, Jer. 2:7, besides Gen. 1:26.

¹⁵⁷ Luke 12:42-48; 19:12-27; 20:9-18.

¹⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 4:1-2.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Pet. 4:10.

¹⁶⁰ John A. Hardon, "Stewardship," in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (London: Hale, 1981), p.520.

¹⁶¹ See Gabriel Fackre, "Ecology and Theology" in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, pp. 116-131; and Robert L. Shinn, "Science and Ethical Decision: Some New Issues," in *Earth Might Be Fair*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 123-145.

different, therefore, to be a steward does not mean that humanity is authorised to rule over nature according to its own inclinations.¹⁶²

3.4 The Theological Interpretations of Stewardship

It is beyond dispute that theology is dynamic; it moves with the development of human society and the human mind. While the biblical verses are constant, the theological interpretations change according to different theologians and maybe to world tendencies. One biblical issue may attract various theological interpretations from different theologians. On the issue of Christian anthropocentrism, theologians have also provided various options. Robert Cummings Neville states that theology has the power to promote an inquiry into truth.¹⁶³ In other words, theological interpretations of stewardship may influence human thought and activities. Therefore, theologians bear certain responsibilities when trying to interpret and convert anthropocentric biblical concepts into theological ideologies. The theological interpretations of this concept seem to be as follows.

¹⁶² Gabriel Fackre, "Ecology and Theology", p. 123.

¹⁶³ See Robert Cummings Neville, "On the Complexity of Theological Literacy," in *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Rodney L. Petersen and Nancy M. Rourke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 39-54.

3.4.1 Catholic Perspectives

The Catholic theologian, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)¹⁶⁴ may be considered a leading recent representative of anthropocentric and progressive theology. Teilhard adopts Darwin's basic framework into his theology: he believes that the evolution of creation tends toward hominisation. This hominisation is a process of his *orthogenesis* and the final goal of *orthogenesis* is *Omega*. In his book, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard argues for his beliefs that humanity is the highest form of the evolution of life in the universe and is competent to deduce from science, bring nature to a more conscious and humanly beneficent state and merge this with Christian theology.¹⁶⁵ In other words, it is humanity's destiny and responsibility to reorder nature in order to "think out again the instinctive impulses of nature so as to perfect them."¹⁶⁶ Teilhard believes that science, technology and research together construct and integrate the whole "sphere of human thought," which he calls the "noosphere"¹⁶⁷ and which influences the subsequent evolution of all life on earth. He says,

"how can we fail to discern in the simultaneous rise of Society, the Machine and Thought, the threefold tide that is bearing us upwards, the essential and primordial process of Life itself — I mean the infolding of Cosmic matter upon itself, whereby ever-increasing unity,

¹⁶⁴ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was controversial in his time; his theological thought was not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. However, in modern times, his theological views have been widely accepted and considered some of the most creative thinking of theology. See Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, Vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980).

¹⁶⁵ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Bernard Wall trans., *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: William Collins. Sons, 1959), pp. 332-334.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 283. Also see Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Man's Place in Nature: The Human Zoological Group* (London: Collins, 1966), p. 79.

¹⁶⁷ See Georgy S. Levit, "The Biosphere and the Noosphere Theories of V. I. Vernadsky and P. Teilhard de Chardin: a Methodological Essay." *Archives Internationales D'Histoire des Sciences*, Volume 50, Issue 144 (2000), pp. 160-176.

accompanied by ever-heightened awareness, is achieved by ever more complicated structural arrangements?”¹⁶⁸

That is to say, Teilhard agrees that human life is changing the face of nature but he praises this change. Teilhard views all the changes of nature caused by humanity from an optimistic perspective. He also believes that all the change is helpful and will certainly lead humanity and the world to the *Omega* point. Hence, Teilhard confidently asserts that, “the eventual biological success of Man on Earth is not merely a probability but a certainty.”¹⁶⁹ To sum up, Teilhard tells his readers that the development of human society, along with the inventions of science and technology, will bring about the consummation of humanity and the world. In other words, Teilhard indicates that science and Christianity are married and this marriage is a positive force for the development of humanity and the world.

A little later, Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) considered the issue of ‘ecological concern’ stating,

“We must also mention a greater realization of the limits of available resources and of the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development, rather than sacrificing them to certain demagogic ideas about the latter.”¹⁷⁰

This statement gives a clear clue that the Pope is urging us to rethink our views about nature and our ways of treating it. Human beings should consider having a new

¹⁶⁸ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man* (London: Collins, 1964), p. 231.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁷⁰ John Paul II, “Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul John Paul II to the Bishops, Priests, Religious Families, Son and Daughters of the Church and All People of Good Will For the Twentieth Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*”, reprinted in *Catholic Social Thought: the Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 411.

attitude as well as a moral and just attitude towards nature. Nature should be cared for, protected and respected in a righteous way. By doing so, human beings can benefit from nature and also fulfil their power of right action within human society.¹⁷¹ In other words, Teilhard and Pope John Paul II hold similar opinions on the issue of humanity and nature. They both believe that a healthy relationship between nature and humanity can bring about the promised consummation of God's kingdom and that humanity is entitled to the rule and be in charge of the health of nature and creation. As has been seen, Teilhard positively believes that whatever human beings do to nature is on the basis of God's will, while Pope John Paul II considers that concerning ourselves with nature appropriately is a way of exercising righteousness in human society and that subsequent human generations will benefit from this righteousness. Although the thought of Teilhard and Pope John Paul II regarding stewardship may not be considered a fundamental Catholic view of stewardship, they undoubtedly provide influential ideas for the Catholic perspective on stewardship.¹⁷²

3.4.2 Martin Luther and John Calvin's Perspectives

In addition to the Roman Catholic points of view on Christian stewardship, the views of the reformers, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) are also influential, for they both played most important roles in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Since Luther and Calvin do not believe that human beings can be

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 412-414.

¹⁷² Other Catholic theologians who also provided their opinions on the issues of nature or stewardship are Karl Rahner, Hans Küng and Thomas Berry. See Karl Rahner, C. Ernst, trans., *Theology Investigations*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 13 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975); Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?* (London: Collins, 1980); Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: in Search of a New World Ethics* (London: SCM, 1991); and Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990).

saved through their own efforts, in their theology, salvation is considered a grace from God rather than a human achievement. When it comes to the issue of nature, they also view it from a salvational perspective. John Calvin wrote in 1554, “The earth was given to man, with this condition, that he should occupy himself in its cultivation ... Let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses.”¹⁷³ He adds that natural creation is the “theatre of God’s glory.”¹⁷⁴ These statements seem to express a concern for nature. Calvin himself explains his interpretation of dominion as meaning a responsible care and keeping rather than neglecting, injuring, abusing, or ruining the Earth.¹⁷⁵ In other words, Calvin considers nature as a gift which God gave to humanity and it is the duty of humanity to take care of it, as nature is a part of God’s salvific plan; that is to say, Calvin might be a conservationist. However, Calvin portrays God as one whose will rules over inner and outer historical events, rather than the eternal source of being. The evidence for this can be found in both the doctrine of providence and of election.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, Calvin’s theology presents the salvation of humanity primarily in the form of God’s descent to earth in the person of Jesus. Such preaching of human salvation provides little, or perhaps no, space for nature: salvation is only the human experience of *sola gratia*.¹⁷⁷ In sum, nature *per se* is little cared for in Calvin’s theology.

¹⁷³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: 1948), p. 125.

¹⁷⁴ Cited in H. Paul. Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: the Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology*, p. 128.

¹⁷⁵ Calvin B. DeWitt, “Responsible Praxis in the Ecological Economy: Contributions of Science and Theology” (paper presented at *Proceedings of the Abraham Kuyper Consultation*, Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J., February 2 2002), p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ L. Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: a Christian Interpretation of History* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 176.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

Luther, in contrast, views nature as a dwelling which God created for human beings. He says that “night and day alternate for the purpose of refreshing our bodies by rest. The sun shines that work may be done.”¹⁷⁸ Luther believes that before the fall of humankind, creation was attractive and good.¹⁷⁹ However, he believes that natural creation is the “concatenation of hostile energies” because God cursed it when the fall of humanity occurred.¹⁸⁰ Luther diminishes nature by describing it as “standing under the ‘left hand of God,’ the wrathful, alien hand of God.”¹⁸¹ In addition, Luther also believes that humankind “soars high above the earth.”¹⁸² He explains that, before the fall humankind needed no knowledge to rule over the animals.¹⁸³ That is to say, Luther believes that humanity has from the beginning been superior to all other creatures. In brief, Luther holds an anthropocentric view of nature in his theology: this implies that nature is not emphasised. Therefore, it is found that both Calvin and Luther push nature to the sidelines of their theological thought.

3.4.3 Other Theological Perspectives

Among other scholars and theologians who have interpreted Christian stewardship, some hold different views from the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, while others are aimed at responding to White. Francis Schaeffer is an American Evangelical Christian theologian who states, “The Christian is called upon to exhibit this dominion, but exhibit it rightly; treating the thing as having value in itself,

¹⁷⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁷⁹ M. Luther, G. V. Schlick trans., J. Pelikan ed., *Luther's Works*, Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis (Saint Louis, Concordia, 1988), p. 39.

¹⁸⁰ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁸¹ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁸² *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 67.

exercising dominion without being destructive.”¹⁸⁴ Schaeffer is saying that appropriate Christian stewardship is not to exploit nature but to rule nature properly and to consider that all of creation has its own inner value. Jeremy Cohen, in contradiction, claims that interpretations of the biblical passages as containing a licence for human beings to develop and exploit nature are quite modern and certainly originate no earlier than the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁵ In other words, Cohen contests that the mainstream of modern theology has tacitly agreed on the idea that humans have dominion over nature and are licensed to take advantage of it.

In the above discussions, the different interpretations and understanding of nature and Christian anthropocentrism have been studied. In conclusion, it may be stated that the mainstream thought is that humanity holds the power to rule over or utilise nature. The position and value of nature is to be inferior to human beings. This finding seems nowadays to be somewhat alarming.

3.5 The Limitations of Christian Stewardship

Is the concept of stewardship, then, problematic and has it reached its limits? This question is seen as applying to both Christians and non-Christians. The answer can only be equivocal. From the above discussions, it appears that stewardship has a strong biblical foundation and a good number of theological interpretations to support it. Thus, because it is no doubt a Christian theological theory and has been believed and practised in Christendom, it may not be considered problematic. Hence, it would

¹⁸⁴ Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: the Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1970), p. 72.

¹⁸⁵ See Jeremy Cohen, *Be Fruitful and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: the Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

be better to probe its limitations, if there are any, instead of setting out to criticise it as a concept. However, the perfection of stewardship is more questionable and has been questioned by Christian scholars. Conceptually speaking, as has noted above in this chapter, humanity and nature are seen to be on an unequal footing. Nature is understood as having been created in order to allow human life to be accomplished. However, this concept seems to be paradoxical. God creates human beings and other creatures and non-creatures and puts them all on the earth, which implies that every single element in His creation has its own value and none should be sacrificed in order to perfect the others. In other words, the theological interpretation of Christian anthropocentrism would have divulged its limitations: for instance, from a stewardship point of view; it can be found to entail less concern for respecting nature but more ideas of utilising it. Moreover, because human beings regard themselves as the legitimate dominators of nature, nature becomes inferior to humanity. Thus, nature has little value unless it can be used by human beings, as has been believed in the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. Tyler Miller summarises two features of such Christian anthropocentrism as: (1) the image of the separation between humanity and nature; and (2) prioritising the rights of humanity over nature, but not emphasising its responsibilities.¹⁸⁶

Therefore, Michael S. Northcott argues that the concept of stewardship itself is highly problematic. The reason is that the notion implies that human beings are capable of maintaining and controlling nature. However, as can be found in modern ecological problems, human beings in fact fail to preserve and rule over many aspects of the

¹⁸⁶ Tyler Miller, *Living in the Environment* (California: Wardsworth, 1987), p. 454.

natural environment, such as climate and ecosystems.¹⁸⁷ Laurence Osborn also argues that stewardship may not be a helpful notion for either humanity or nature, because of the idea of a steward caring for his master's property.¹⁸⁸ In fact, what Northcott and Osborn are telling us is that the limitations and problems of stewardship lie in the ideology of human beings if they consider themselves superior to all other creatures and non-creatures and thus capable of managing nature in the way they think best. However, as Northcott has argued, human beings have no power and not enough knowledge to control all aspects of nature. Arne Naess agrees with Northcott: "We know too little about what happens in nature to take up the task."¹⁸⁹ Therefore, the limitations of stewardship have been found which are, to an extent, presented in the concise definition that stewardship consists of "utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation."¹⁹⁰ The reason is that this definition does not seem to consider human competence as a requirement of this mission. Briefly speaking, Northcott, Osborn and Naess view this definition as unconvincing, giving no guarantee that human beings can be good carers, managers or guardians of nature. In other words, Christian stewardship states the power of humanity over nature, but does not examine whether humanity can do this and whether every single human being is qualified to be a good steward. Elizabeth Dodson Gray points out that the concept of stewardship itself is a type of myth. It implies a hierarchical system in the Christian tradition. Gray states that human beings

¹⁸⁷ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 129.

¹⁸⁸ See Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in Theology and the Christian Life* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), esp. chapter 5.

¹⁸⁹ Arne Naess, David Rothenberg trans., *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 187.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Bugg, "Stewardship," in *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Holman: Tennessee, 1991), pp. 1303-1304.

are falsely exercising the power of stewardship. This fault comes from our turning the right of dominion into the power of domination over nature.¹⁹¹

In addition to these criticisms of *stewardship* from Western Christian theologians and scholars, Eastern Orthodox theologians have different understandings of the issues in the relationship between humanity and nature. They prefer to consider human beings mediators rather than stewards. Among them, Philip Sherrard regards human beings as the mediators between Heaven and earth as well as between God and creation. Only through humanity can the world be perfected and accomplish its missions.¹⁹² Sherrard further argues that modern technology is the main cause of the ecological crisis and the separation between God and humanity. He claims that modern technology not only de-sanctifies nature but also de-humanizes humanity.¹⁹³ In other words, Sherrard considers that both the desanctification of nature and the dehumanisation of humanity imply that human beings not only act as destroyers but also as victims of the disharmonious relationship between humanity and nature. Moreover, Sherrard's understanding that human beings are mediators between God and creation may equally be challenged. That is, although Sherrard criticises human beings as destroyers of nature and victims of damaged nature, the human position is, according to his logic, still superior to that of nature: Sherrard implies that in front of God nature can be perfected only through humanity.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Elizabeth Dodson Gray, "A Critique of Dominion Theology," in *For Creation's Sake: Preaching, Ecology and Justice*, p. 79.

¹⁹² Philip Sherrard, *The Rape of Man and Nature: an Enquiry into the Origins and Consequences of Modern Science* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1987), p. 40.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁹⁴ In terms of this point, also see Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, p. 132.

3.6 Summary, Conclusion and Implications

From the biblical quest, it can be found that the concept of *stewardship* emerges as a concrete biblical theory of Christian anthropocentrism and perfectly presents the Christian cosmology and worldview. In Christian theological understanding, such a theory would not be a problem, since God created humanity in a different way from the other parts of creation and Jesus Christ was crucified because of the sins which humanity committed. In other words, for Christians the notion that the earthly world was created for human beings to dwell in, use and manage is not far from correct. Hence, theologians often treat the issue of the salvation of humanity as the main concern and central part of their theology. The importance of nature and other created things is naturally or carelessly left out of core theological thinking. Theology is dynamic and perhaps teleological. Thus, the theological interpretations of biblical verses may, to an extent, be explained in the relationship to other purposes or according to the interpreters' interests, instead of focusing on the original meanings in the Holy Bible. In other words, theologians may select some biblical verses deliberately to justify certain controversial stances. As has been found, the theory of stewardship is explicated mainly according to the P tradition, which very much stresses the preciousness and particularity of humanity. However, this tradition unexpectedly, if not deliberately, downplays the role of nature. Hence arises the tension between humanity and nature. Yet, in the history of Christianity, it has been found that, in medieval times, Greek philosophy was pulled out of its own religious context and made to serve Christianity as a means to doctrinal expression, understood

as *Ancilla theologiae*.¹⁹⁵ In modern times, to follow the precedent of historical events, humanity has tended to devalue the merits of nature and consider it the appendage of humanity for certain purposes. However, these phenomena may not need to be followed in the twenty-first century. Some different voices among modern Christian theologians imply that they at least have noticed the significance of nature. Daniel Maguire has worried: “If current trends continue, we will not.”¹⁹⁶ Thomas Berry suggests that the Western world needs a new cosmology, cultural coding and motivating energy to overcome this deprivation.¹⁹⁷ That is to say, modern Christian theology has realised that nature has never been put at the centre of traditional Christian theology and is aware of the consequences of this attitude and further intends to retrieve the concept of the importance of nature and concern itself more seriously with the issues of our ecological environment than it has in the past.

At the same time, if Christianity is to be judged as anthropocentric, then is there any religion in the world that is not? Religion as a type of human activity involves both the physical and the spiritual; that is to say, every religion is and should be anthropocentric, owing to human beings taking the main dynamic roles in such an activity. This research would not be able to refute White’s view that Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion in the world, nor demonstrate that any religion is not anthropocentric. Rather, this research maintains that all religions in the world may be considered anthropocentric but some religions are less so than others, or are anthropocentric in a different way on the basis of the religious doctrines they possess

¹⁹⁵ Aloysius Pieris, “Western Models of Inculturation: Applicable in Asia?” in *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), p. 52.

¹⁹⁶ Daniel Maguire, *The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity: Reclaiming the Revolution* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 13.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, pp. 216-223.

– Taoism is an example. Western scholars, such as David L. Hall and Lisa Raphals, offer different arguments about this issue. Hall argues, "... the nonanthropocentrism of Taoist ethics [is] appealing and suggestive of some novel strategies for handling their encounters with their ambience,"¹⁹⁸ while Raphals believes that anthropocentrism is inevitable. She argues that Taoism is anthropocentric, but nevertheless, that this Chinese religion presents its anthropocentrism in a different way, *i.e.* as non-heroic redemptive action.¹⁹⁹ In brief, they both agree that Taoism would to some extent be a helpful encounter partner for extending the limits of Christian anthropocentrism. Since the middle of the twentieth century, abundant materials on the topics of ecology and theology have been found on the bookshelves. Many modern theologians have engaged in this area and made a significant contribution to modern ecological issues. This is by explaining that Christianity for a few decades has actually been seeking a new direction in which to treat nature. Christian theology is changing its face by adjusting the explications of its traditional doctrines. Additionally, it would be helpful if Christianity helped itself by calling in Taoist perceptions of its ecological attitudes and present crisis to its aid, since Taoism is known as a religion which is friendly to nature; it would be one of the best references and a Taoist perspective of *Tai ping* would be an ideal dialogue partner in reviewing Christian theological considerations of the relationship between humanity and nature.

¹⁹⁸ David L. Hall, "On Seeking a Change of Environment: a Quasi-Taoist Proposal," *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 37, No. 2, Environmental Ethics April (1987): p. 171.

¹⁹⁹ Lisa Raphals, "Metic Intelligence or Responsible Non-Action? Further Reflections on the Zhuangzi, Daode jing and Neiye," in *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, pp. 305-314.

CHAPTER FOUR: *TAIPING IN THE TAIPING JING*²⁰⁰

4.1 Introduction

The central idea of Chinese civilization is known to be ‘Harmony’. This is not only the understanding from the Chinese perspective, but also the opinion the West. In his book, *Creating a Just Future*, Moltmann identifies the importance and role of harmony in Chinese tradition, commenting, “Taoism is the religion of natural harmony; Confucianism is the religion of social harmony.”²⁰¹ In other words, Moltmann’s understanding corresponds to the Chinese perception of harmony; it also implies that modern Christian theology is aware of the other aspects of harmony and may need to rethink the traditional concepts of Christian harmony by taking other traditions or religions as a reference. The present chapter seeks to make a comprehensive study of the Taoist concept of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing*, which this research argues is an ideology of holistic harmony. According to the *Taiping Jing*, *Taiping* involves harmonious relationships between human and human, humans and god and humans and nature; nevertheless, this ideology exists not only exist in Taoism, but is also mentioned in Confucianism. Therefore, the discussion of the

²⁰⁰ This chapter is intended to provide the concept of *Taiping* found in the *Taiping Jing*. However, the *Taiping Jing* is composed of 170 chapters: owing to the limitations of space, this chapter will particularly focus on two sections only out of these 170 chapters. The two sections are “On Digging Up Soil and Publishing Books” and “Threefold Cooperation and Interaction.”

²⁰¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Creating a Just Future: the Politics of Peace and the Ethics of Creation in a Threatened World* (London: SCM Press, 1989), pp. 88-89. In fact, Moltmann states that “Taoism is the religion of natural harmony; Confucianism is the religion of social harmony; and Buddhism whether Amitabha or Zen, is the religion of inner spiritual harmony.” This statement suggests that Moltmann has had his own experiences with these three traditions and considers them to represent Chinese culture as a whole; in this case they should be covered in the discussion of the concepts of harmony. However, the main focus of the present research is on the notion of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing*. For this reason, the Buddhist understanding of harmony is intentionally left out.

concepts of *Taiping* in this chapter will also involve Confucian interpretations to a certain extent. But still, the rise of the ideology of *Taiping* dates back to a pre-Confucian period. For this reason, the notions of *Taiping* existing before the Confucian period will also be briefly mentioned.

4.2 The Broad Conceptualization of *Taiping*

As noted above, the ideas of *Taiping* are the legacy of both pre-Confucian and Confucian thinking, so many Taoist scholars have contributed to discussing them. A Japanese scholar, Junichi Mishima 間嶋潤一,²⁰² refers to the *Chart of Being in Accord with Good Fortune* 瑞應圖 in the *River Chart* 河圖 and the *Writ of Luo* 洛書 as well as the *Mozi* 墨子 in order to find out the meaning of *Taiping*. In light of his findings, Mishima considers that *Taiping* has two layers of meaning. The first layer is that *Taiping* is, on the one hand, presented as the divine-right theory of kingship and the second layer is that *Taiping*, implies that a sage king is capable of inviting the arrival of *Taiping*.²⁰³ Mishima further claims that later on this concept is linked to the *Five Virtues Cycle* 五德終始說.²⁰⁴ In the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, a passage also describes *Taiping* as the ideal state of the world. It states, “Antiquity was an age of Utmost Potency. Merchants prospered in their markets ... winds and rains were not

²⁰² Juichi Mishima 間嶋潤一, “Taihei To Katorakuyu 太平と河圖洛書,” *Tōhō shūkyō* 東方宗教, Vol. 80, 11(1992): pp.1-14.

²⁰³ See Di Mo and Ian Johnston, *The Mozi: a Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 191-193. The passage is “A red bird, holding in its beak the imperial jade, alighted on the Zhou altar at Qi [Shan] and proclaimed Heaven had decreed that King Wen of Zhou should overthrow Yin and take possession of the state. Tai Dian came back, the (Yellow) River brought forth the chart and the I and brought forth Cheng-huang.”

²⁰⁴ The theory of the Five Virtues Cycle is an advanced development of the theory of the five phases; it is used as Chinese political theory for explaining the collapse and rise of dynasties. Also see Aihe Wang, “Wuxing: Cosmology in Historical Transforming,” in *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 75-128.

destructive; grasses and trees did not die prematurely.”²⁰⁵ It can be found that the harmonious state described in the passage includes a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. Again, the *Huainanzi* also claims that, “The rulers of the age had the mind that desires to benefit the world; thus the people could enjoy their ease.”²⁰⁶ Here, states of political and social harmony are also demonstrated. In other words, the concept of harmony in the *Huainanzi* is holistic. Although the term *Taiping* is never mentioned in the above texts, the descriptions present a harmonious state which is relatively close to the state of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing*. In addition to these ancient Chinese texts, there are still other sources of the concepts of *Taiping*, such as the *Comprehensive Discussions in the Discourses in the White Tiger Hall* 白虎通,²⁰⁷ the *Balanced Inquiries* 論衡²⁰⁸ and the *Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals and the Biography of Gongyang* 春秋公羊傳解詁.²⁰⁹ In summary, the concepts of the ideal world, on the basis of the above works, present a sense of a nation dominated by a government with a sage king, who holds the mandate of heaven

²⁰⁵ An Liu, John S. Major *et al.* trans., *The Huainanzi: a Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 104-105. The complete passage is as follows, “Antiquity was an age of Utmost Potency. Merchants prospered in their markets; farmers rejoiced in their work; grandees rested secure in their posts; and scholar-recluses practiced their Way. At this time, winds and rains were not destructive; grasses and trees did not die prematurely; the Nine Tripods doubled the flavour [of offerings]; pearls and jade were lustrous; the Luo River gave forth the ‘Crimson Writing’; the Yellow River gave forth the ‘Green Chart.’”

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 105. The complete passage is as follows, “Thus Xu You, Fang Hui, Shan Juan and Pi Yi all attained their Way. Why was this? The rulers of the age had the mind that desires to benefit the world; thus the people could enjoy their ease. The talent of the four masters did not make them able to be wholly good, just like [people] of the current age. Yet no one [today] can match their brilliance, because they encountered the ear of Tang and Yu.”

²⁰⁷ See De Bary and William Theodore, *Sources of East Asian Tradition: Premodern Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 187-188.

²⁰⁸ See Timoteus Pokora and Michael Loewe, “Lun heng 論衡,” in *Early Chinese Texts: a Bibliographical Guide*, ed., Michael Loewe (University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 309-312; and Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 292-304.

²⁰⁹ See Anne Cheng, “Ch’un ch’iu, Kung yang, Ku liang and Tso chuan” in *Early Chinese Texts. A Bibliographical Guide*, pp. 67-76; and Michael Nylan, *The Five Confucian Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 253-307.

and governs his people by his virtue. Through the governance of this sage king, everyone is in their due position, the country is prosperous and the people live in safety.

In fact, this summary is found to be very similar to the Confucian understanding of *Datong*.²¹⁰ The concepts of *Datong* in the *Book of Rites* 禮記 are discussed from two standpoints: the political vision and the social system. In terms of political vision, it focuses on the talents, virtue, ability and sincerity of the governors. In other words, the harmonious state can be brought about by good and just governors; in addition, an advanced concept is also implied, which is the notion of the public servant. From a social system perspective, *Datong* is a concept in which everyone treats all parents and children with equal affection, so that no one of any age is ignored and all may live in a safe environment. Following from this equal affection, crimes become unnecessary and have no place in society. All the above elements together build up the ideal society. One point that may be worth mentioning is that in the discourse of *Datong*, the role of the emperors is absent. However, this is not to say that the sage king is not functional in the state of *Datong*. The verse, “when the Grand course was

²¹⁰ See James Legge trans., “The Li Ki,” in *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Muller, Vol. 27, bk. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), pp. 364-366. The passage of *Datong* is as follows, “When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue and ability; their words were sincere and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work and females had their homes. (They accumulated) articles (of value) disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. (They laboured) with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it (only) with a view to their own advantage. In this way (selfish) schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers and rebellious traitors did not show themselves and hence the outer doors remained open and were not shut. This was (the period of) what we call the Grand Union.”

pursued,”²¹¹ can be regarded as the premise of achieving *Datong*. This implies that the sage king would be following the route of the great *Dao*, so that government and society operate in the appropriate way and contribute to the social situation of unimpaired goodness. The descriptions of *Datong* express an ideal political status of Confucian yearning which has been delivered to the Chinese people since Confucianism became the major teaching of the state. From cultural and traditional perspectives, Taoism may have taken advantage of what had been developed by Confucianism and amended it in line with Taoist religious thought.

In conclusion, it has been found that the concepts of harmony or the harmonious state in Chinese tradition are holistic. Although Confucian teaching does not greatly stress natural harmony, there can be found within it the idea of a safe environment for humanity. The remit of such a safe environment includes not only political and social safety, but also freedom from the abuse and shortage of natural resources.²¹² Other Chinese texts also express the fact that the harmonious state is not only considered to entail a harmonious relationship between human beings, but also between humanity and nature. All these understandings of harmony would be considered the prototype of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing*.

²¹¹ Undoubtedly, James Legge’s translation of the *Book of Rites* provides great help for Westerners in terms of understanding Chinese culture. However, Legge translates the Chinese term; 大道 as the “Grand course,” a translation which may be not close to the original language in the Chinese context. This research suggests that the “great Tao” would be the proper translation of 大道.

²¹² This idea can be found in two sentences in particular: “(They accumulated) articles (of value) disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification.”

4.3 Aspects of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing*

The previous section has revealed the origin of the concepts of *Taiping* and the descriptions of the state of *Taiping* outside the *Taiping Jing*. This section picks this up and further probes into the aspects of *Taiping* in the *Taiping Jing*, which can be considered the main concerns of the Taoist scripture. Certainly, these concerns did not arise spontaneously, but resulted from the chaotic situations in this particular period of Chinese history.²¹³ An outstanding passage of the historical background occurs in the

Taiping Jing:

“If a loyal and faithful official were to reprimand his superior and the lord did not listen but instead tried to harm him ... The worthy and learned would hide in fear ... the true doctrine (dao) would nowhere be seen ... Depravity and evil would spread widely ... Heaven-sent calamities would become universal, fighting would break out at the six ends of the world, disasters would occur one after the other, everywhere.”²¹⁴

²¹³ The yearning for *Taiping* probably resulted from three factors: (1) the chaos in the political situation; (2) the continuous attacks of natural disasters; and (3) the Buddhist influence. These three causes may be elaborated as follows: during the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, both the internal and external political situations had become corrupt and precarious. The internal crisis was that the power of the government had been taken by eunuchs and relatives of emperors on their mother's side; these changes led directly to the “Disasters of Partisan Prohibitions” 黨錮之禍 and the “Yellow Turban Rebellings” 黃巾之亂. In the meantime, neighbouring nations did not curtail their ambition to expand their territory. The barbarians brought the external threat represented by renewed attacks on the northern frontiers. The Han dynasty, whose power had been nominal for several decades, now collapsed completely and the power of the government passed to the generals, who took control of the provinces and the great families, whom they supported and the Houhanshu. See Witold A. Rodzinski, *History of China*, Vol.1 (Oxford: Pergamon, 1979), pp. 72-75. However, the corrupt political circumstances were not the only ruinous occurrence; the continuous attacks of natural disasters also destroyed the authority of the Eastern Han dynasty. 293 natural disasters occurred in the entire Eastern Han dynasty. For the Buddhist influence, see Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美, *Rikuchō Dōkyōshi Kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990), p 404; E. Zürcher, “Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *T'oung Pao* LXVIII (1982): pp. 2-22.

²¹⁴ Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, pp. 235-236: “If a loyal and faithful official were to reprimand his superior and the lord did not listen but instead tried to harm him, the official would turn frightened and tongue-tied, as if he were dumb. Nothing would get through [to the lord], as if he were behind doors closed in all six directions. The worthy and learned would hide in fear. The loyal and the faithful would shut themselves in and the true doctrine (dao) would nowhere be seen. Then, even if the lord were wise and worthy, he would have

This background foreshadows the urgent need for the world to be in a *Taiping* state, as well as implying the causes of disharmony. According to the linguistic form of the Tao, issues can always be perceived from more than one perspective. Therefore, it is not possible to deal with the issues of both harmony and disharmony in a single action. The state of harmony is relative to the state of disharmony and *vice versa*. Hence, the *Taiping Jing* is intended to serve as a comparison of these two contrasts and a reminder for human beings to be aware of their current situation.

Taiping is an ideal and perfect state for humanity; from the Western perspective, probably a Chinese utopia. What then is *Taiping*? Ching's statement, "Taoism may be called a religion of salvation," may be euphemistic, but this statement may also reveal that Ching has noticed the main function of Taoism. In fact, Taoism is a salvific religion, as the *Taiping Jing* shows. The *Taiping Jing* considers the salvation to human beings its main responsibility and this is why the *Taiping Jing* urges the approach of the state of *Taiping*. In other words, *Taiping* contains the meaning of salvation. However, the way the *Taiping Jing* stresses salvation is unlike the traditional Christian way. The difference may be found in the way that the absence and arrival of *Taiping*. Below, the study will discuss these two aspects and further consider the roles of Heaven, humanity and earth in both states.

no way to hear about things. He would thus turn deaf and blind. He would have no means to observe unusual and strange occurrences. Increasingly, they would be shrouded in darkness, the lord deaf and the official dumb. If this misfortune were not checked, the official would be in the dark and the lord blind. Depravity and evil would spread widely. Should the official be dumb and the lord deaf the world would not reach them. Good and evil would not be distinguished. Heaven-sent calamities would become universal, fighting would break out at the six ends of the world, disasters would occur one after the other, everywhere. How can one not pay attention to this?"

4.3.1 The States of the Absence of *Taiping*²¹⁵

What then are the disharmonious states in Taoism? The *Spirit Spells of the Abyss* 太上

洞淵神咒經²¹⁶ expresses them thus:

“Listen well, all of you, the Tao declares, I will now tell you of things that are destined to transpire at the end of the kalpa. 3000 years after Fu Hsi, a great flood will overwhelm the people and half of them will perish ... Wind and rain will not arrive in due season, the five grains will not ripen anymore and evil will grow in the hearts of men ... Pestilential emanations will spread everywhere under Heaven and ninety different kinds of disease will wipe out all evildoers.”²¹⁷

This passage exposes three types of stress raised by the absence of *Taiping*, namely: (1) the occurrence of natural disasters; (2) bad grain harvests; and (3) the evil behaviours of human beings. These three stresses imply that *Dao* cannot act as it is supposed to, agriculture cannot be cultivated fully and human beings do not behave properly. In other words, it expresses that Heaven, earth and humanity are in a disharmonious relationship and detached from one another. From a contemporary perspective, all the above descriptions can apply to the modern ecological crisis. However, from the above passage one can notice only the consequences of the absence of *Taiping*; regarding the causes of these consequences, the *Taiping Jing*

²¹⁵ The various descriptions of the absence of *Taiping* can be found throughout the *Taiping Jing*. All these descriptions include social disharmony, political disharmony and natural disharmony. However, in order to fit the purposes of the research, this section is intended only to focus the main descriptions of natural disharmony in the *Taiping Jing* as references for the later Christian-Taoist encounter on ecological issues.

²¹⁶ See Jiuyu Ren 任繼愈 ed., *Zongjiao Da Cidian* 宗教大詞典 (Shanghai 上海: Shanghai chubanshe 上海辭書出版社, 1998), p. 787; Xitai Qing 卿希泰 ed., *Zhongguo Daojiao* 中國道教, Vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai zhishichubanshe 上海知識出版社, 1994), pp. 134-135; Fuchen Hu 胡孚琛 ed., *Zhonghua Daojiao Da Cidian* 中華道教大辭典 (Beijing: Zhongguoshehuikexuechubanshe 中國社會科學出版社 1995 年版), p. 278.

²¹⁷ English translation cited in Anna Seidel, “Taoist Messianism,” *Numen*, Vol. 31, Fasc. 2. December (1984): p. 169.

would be the Taoist scripture most eligible and appropriate to seek answers from. The *Taiping Jing*, of course, contains depictions of the absence of *Taiping*, as well. Here are some passages which may be seen as representative accounts of the disharmonious states in the *Taiping Jing*. The depictions of disharmony in these passages are found to resemble the descriptions in the *Spirit Spells of the Abyss*. Nevertheless, the passages supply the omissions in the *Spirit Spells of the Abyss*. The words in the representative passages give the causes of the disharmony of the world in an unequivocal way. They say that “nowadays we have large houses and big grave mounds.”²¹⁸ Furthermore, “we dig up mountains and hills to get metal and stone. We burn tiles and push columns into the ground”²¹⁹ and also “dig out drains and ditches at random.”²²⁰ All these witness that human beings who “carelessly dig up earth’s body create sores.”²²¹ These careless behaviours are the cause that “sometimes obstruction occurs: what should be in motion is not.”²²² A further result is that “the king’s reign is inept and earth suffers greatly”²²³ which leads to the anger of heaven and earth. Thus, “heaven and earth are both unhappy. This is why it is difficult for the pure qi of great harmony to arrive.”²²⁴ Again, other passages in the *Taiping Jing* say, “foolish people endlessly violate prohibitions set up by heaven and earth and thus bring disorder to upright qi and cause disaster and harm.”²²⁵ Because of the continuous violations, the “qi of great peace will not arrive at the proper time.”²²⁶ If the *Qi* of great peace cannot

²¹⁸ Barbara Hendrichske, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, p. 263.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

²²⁰ *ibid.*

²²¹ *ibid.*

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *ibid.*

²²⁴ *ibid.*

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 268.

²²⁶ *ibid.*

arrive at the proper time, this is a sign that human beings are ignoring the teachings of heaven and earth.²²⁷ Then, “heaven and earth will become angry, withdraw their love and refuse to feed him. So if heaven and earth make the year disastrous nothing will grow well.”²²⁸

The above passages list the improper activities which human beings have engaged in to harm heaven and earth and the reactions from heaven and earth to human beings. Thus, heaven, earth and humanity cannot stay in the harmonious relationship that they had in ancient times and this is the main cause of the absence of *Taiping*. To sum up, disharmony can be understood as occurring because of improper or bad behaviours and activities on the part of human beings. Moreover, all these behaviours and activities not only affect human beings, but also interfere with the conditions of heaven and earth. So heaven and earth are angry at such interference; in fact, the interference can be understood as opposing everything in the world. Furthermore, heaven and earth are moved to adopt punitive action to humanity by using the retribution of natural disasters. In other words, the main causes of the disharmonious state may be attributed to reckless and anthropocentric human behaviours. All these improper activities result from the lack of communication and rapport between humanity and nature.

4.3.2 The States of the Arrival of *Taiping*

Having explored the state of *Taiping's* absence, what changes with the arrival of *Taiping*? It is not difficult to find descriptions of this in the *Taiping Jing*, either,

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ *ibid.*

because the central idea of this Taoist scripture is expressed simply by its title. Traces of *Taiping* are found throughout the whole *Taiping Jing*. In fact, the concepts of *Taiping* are repeated and expressed in many ways. The incarnations of *Taiping* are in various forms, such as *Taipingqi*, *Taipingzhijun* and *Zhitaiping*. Here is a selected passage that could be considered the most typical portrayal of *Taiping*:

“When Taiping arrives ... all things are placed in the suitable positions, people have nothing to complain of ... the emperor saunters around, Yin and Yang are pleased, the air of evil retreats from the world. Robbery and theft are discontinued ... barbarians hang back in fear, all things are flourishing, the whole world full of joy.”²²⁹

This shortened passage tells us that there are in general three agents which are concerned in the state of *Taiping*: heaven, humanity and the earth. In Christian words, the state of *Taiping* reconciles God, man and Creation. In terms of the aspect of heaven, “Yin and Yang are pleased” is evidence that the world is following *Dao*. This means that there is not a single thing in the whole world that acts against the teaching of *Dao*. With regard to the aspect of earth, the verse, “all things are flourishing,” indicates that plants and grains are growing properly, so human beings do not need to worry about the threat of famine. Concerning the aspect of humanity, “people have nothing to complain of,” the “emperor saunters around,” “robbery and theft are discontinued,” and “barbarians hang back in fear” allude to people’s deep longing for the ideal harmonious state of human society.

Since the depictions of the states of *Taiping* have been imputed to the human consciousness and projected into the human subconscious, the *Taiping Jing* goes

²²⁹ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 192.

further to explain the methods of approaching the state of *Taiping*. A section in the *Taiping Jing*, the *Threefold Cooperation and Interaction*, may be considered the main text explaining the agreed ways to approach the state of *Taiping*. In fact, this section expresses the core idea of the *Taiping Jing* and is identical to the *Taiping Jing*'s cosmology, which is cooperation between Heaven, earth and humanity. Three passages from the *Threefold Cooperation and Interaction* section can be considered clear descriptions of the approach of the state of *Taiping*, as follows:

“‘Great’ is ‘big.’ It means to achieve big things, as heaven does, which is big in all respects. Nothing is bigger than heaven. ‘Peace’ means that a reign is completely balanced so that all activities are kept in order, without further jealousy and selfishness. ‘Peace’ resembles the way in which earth remains below us. It is in charge of keeping balance.”²³⁰

It can be seen that the passage implies that human beings should follow Heaven's teaching, which equates to the teaching of the *Dao*. In following this, all things remain in balance and in their proper order. With this, the world is in a state of *Taiping*. In other words, in order to reach the state of *Taiping*, all things should follow the *Dao*'s teaching without disobedience.

In other passages it can be found that *Qi* is one of the important elements of the achievement of *Taiping*, such as the passages below:

“‘Qi’ means heaven's qi enjoys creating life beneath heaven and earth's qi likes to nourish what is above earth. It is the model for qi to be active below heaven and above earth. When Yin and Yang get together, they create harmony. When we include the harmonious intercourse between these two there are three qi that nourish all beings

²³⁰ Barbara Hendrichske, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, p. 310.

and objects. No more damage will occur once these three qi love and pervade each other.”²³¹

and

“When qi of the primordial, of what is as it is and of great harmony [between Yin and Yang] interact with each other, combine their energy and are of the same mind they are for a while indistinct and not yet in any shape. When these three qi congeal into form, they bring forth heaven and earth ...Whenever three parties interact, dao can come about. When three beings in agreement stay with each other forever, combining their efforts and being of the same mind, they fulfill one joint task, achieving one common objective.”²³²

In fact, the role of *Qi* is not only one of the elements of the state of *Taiping*, but a sign of the arrival of *Taiping* and a cardinal cause of this state. As noted in the section on the states of the absence of *Taiping*, if the *Qi* of great peace cannot come at the proper time, then the state of *Taiping* cannot be achieved. Thus, the *Qi* of great peace first comes to promote the achievement of *Taiping* and then dwells in all things to maintain the state of *Taiping*. However, this *Qi* appears only when the earthly environment and situation are appropriate and ready for it to emerge. What, then, is the role of *Qi*? The *Taiping Jing* considers that *Qi* is the vehicle which the *Dao* used to produce all things. In other words, all things are derived from *Qi* according the teaching of the *Dao*. In fact, *Qi* and *Dao* have the same figure and nature, but are presented in different forms. The *Taiping Jing* intends to combine the concepts of *Dao* and *Qi* together in order to enhance the root of *Taiping*. The *Taiping Jing* says that “Heaven, earth and humanity are from the same qi,”²³³ which means that the three

²³¹ See *ibid.*, p. 410: “‘Great’ is ‘big,’ ‘peace’ is ‘upright,’ ‘qi’ nurtures by making harmony pervasive. Rule through these three and great peace, harmony, and great uprightness will prevail. Then might we say that qi of great peace has arrived.”

²³² *ibid.*, p.311.

²³³ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p.236.

of them spring from the same root; this also implies that the three should be considered a whole and they are all derivatives of *Dao*.

In other words, *Qi* and *Dao* are the different forms and names of the Supreme Being in Taoism. Zhong-Yu Wong claims that there are three different types of understanding of god in ancient Chinese society. They are the ‘god of genie, 神靈之神’, the ‘god of mystery’ 神妙之神 and the ‘god of soul’ 精神之神. The differences between them are the forms in which they present themselves. The god of genie may derive from the original concept of god in prehistoric religion, Animism, both family gods and natural gods, are its derivatives and are personal gods. The concept of the god of mystery is easy to understand. It is the character of a personal god which is believed to be mysterious and unpredictable. For human beings, it is an unusual feature, so it is designated a type of god. Soul is the essential element of every creature and is believed to be controlled by a certain god. Hence, the god of soul is considered a form of god in the understanding of god held by the people of ancient China.²³⁴ This also implies that, although Taoism does not have a formal doctrine of the trinity as Christianity has, it has a similar understanding of the forms of god; this triadic ideology is perfectly enacted in Taoist cosmology. In other words, the arrival of *Taiping* can also be considered the harmonious relationship between the different forms of *Dao*.

²³⁴ Zongyu Wang 王宗昱, “Taiping Jing Zhong De Renshenzhongzhishen 太平經中的人身中之神,” *Zhongguo Wenhua Yuekan* 中國文化月刊 159 (1993): p. 71. Also see Dainian Zhang 張岱年, *Zhongguo Gudian Zhexue Fanchou Yaolun* 中國古典哲學範疇要論 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehua Chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 1989), pp. 93-100.

4.4 Summary, Conclusion and Implications

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that the notion of *Taiping* can be simply interpreted as that everything should stand in its own proper position in the world and there is all things are securely connected when there are no contradictions between them, with the result that all things can develop themselves in a balanced and harmonious way. On the one hand, the Taoist harmony is natural harmony, as in Moltmann's perception. However, on the other hand, it also can be found that Taoist harmony is not natural harmony alone, but also a type of social harmony, because the state of *Taiping* can be seen to involve good emperors, a good public and good human behaviours and attitudes toward nature, *i.e.* the earth; thus it can be conceded that the situation of society is also one of the concerns of the state of *Taiping*. In other words, it may be concluded that Taoism believes that there is no harmony without natural harmony and that natural harmony, in fact, is the basis of authentic and holistic harmony. In the Taoist sense, the human dwelling is composed of heaven and earth and human beings are embedded in this spatial entity: namely, humanity and nature coexist. Hence, it follows that in Taoism humanity may not hold stewardship, or at least may hold a different kind of stewardship of nature from that found in Christianity: in terms of the hierarchy, humanity is equal to all other creations. In fact, according to Taoist understanding, humanity does not need to hold the stewardship of nature, because all things are created according to an order and this order maintains all things so that they remain stably in their proper and perfect positions. No single thing needs to be interfered with or dominated by another. This sense actually comes from Laozi's idea of *wuwei*: the *Taiping Jing* also promotes and practises this "do nothing" approach. If all things fully obey the course of nature, then the state of *Taiping* is

achieved. In terms of the roles of human beings, *Taiping* is a situation when all men are in their due position and maintain a just and balanced lifestyle. Each person fulfils his/her responsibilities and obligations to society and to nature; namely, human beings behave in a proper, if not perfect way. In other words, ethics is not only applied to inter-personal relationships, but also to the relationship between humanity and nature. The above elements when all reconciled together accomplish *Taiping*.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CESSATION OF CLINGING

5.1 Introduction

Christian stewardship and Taoist *Taiping* have been introduced and discussed in Chapters Three and Four. This chapter suggests that Christians should stop clinging to the human advantages over nature, retrieve the proper attitudes to creation and treat nature with respect. Thus, this chapter examines Christian cosmology from a Taoist perspective and takes a further step to propose a Christian-Taoist cosmology to modern humanity. This new cosmology is capable to some extent of compensating for the limitations of Christian stewardship. Since the causes of these limitations have been suggested to lie in the Christian understanding of the Creation, thus, approaching the cosmological issues from a Taoist perspective is taken as the method for the discussions in this chapter. Religions and cultural traditions being closely related, this chapter will, first of all, probe into the components of both Western/Christian cosmology and Chinese/Taoist cosmology. This section will particularly stress Western and Chinese cultural and philosophical factors, *i.e.* teleology, the mechanistic universe, *Yinyang* and *Wuxing*. The reasons are that the cultural and philosophical essence of both Christian cosmology and Taoist cosmology should be ascertained so that its problematic aspects can be tackled properly. Equipped with an understanding and knowledge of both Western and Chinese culture along with the philosophical influences on Christian cosmology and Taoist cosmology, the following section will focus on religious and theological factors by creating an encounter between Christianity and Taoism over the concepts of God/*Dao* and humanity. The reason is

that, as has been noted, the tension between humanity and nature in Christianity comes from human interpretations of God and humanity. The aim of this Christian-Taoist encounter is to gain an inspiration for a rethinking of Christian cosmology from the Taoist understanding of the *Dao* and the human perspective.

5.2 Cultural and Philosophical²³⁵ Components of Christian Cosmology and Taoist Cosmology

First of all, cultural and religious traditions together build up civilizations – or human beings on the basis of their civilization build and develop human societies. In other words, culture and religion dominate both the corporeal and spiritual aspects of humanity. Culture “denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embedded in the symbols and forms of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life.”²³⁶ In short, a culture means a ‘way of life.’ Religion functions in as complex a way as culture does, to provide “basic interpretive stories of who we are, what nature is, where we have come from and where we are going. This comprises the worldview of a society.”²³⁷ Religion also may be regarded as “the beliefs and patterns of behaviour”²³⁸ suggesting “how we should treat other humans and how we should relate to nature.”²³⁹ Thus, religions generate “worldviews and

²³⁵ This chapter considers philosophical thought as an aspect of culture. Thus, in this chapter culture and philosophy are considered a unity.

²³⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Harper Collins Publications, 1993) p. 89.

²³⁷ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, “Series Foreword,” in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans*, eds. Dieter T. Hessel and Radford Ruether Rosemary (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. xvi.

²³⁸ William A. Haviland, *Cultural Anthropology* (Chicago, Holt: Rinehart and Winston Inc.), p. 551.

²³⁹ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, “Series Foreword”, p. xvi.

ethics which underlie the fundamental attitudes and values of different cultures and societies.²⁴⁰ In other words, culture and religion provide ways of life for humanity. At the same time, “religion as the inner realization of the highest truth can never be opposed to culture.”²⁴¹ Thus, culture and religion cannot be separated from human life. Philosophy plays a significant role in both Western and Eastern cultures, while theology speaks for religious traditions and Taoist religious theories speak for Taoist tradition. Hence, if one is intended to rethink religious cosmology, the factors of culture, philosophy, religion and theology can never be absent.

The above accounts for the significant influence of cultural and ancient philosophic tradition on both Chinese and Western people. Although Christianity and Taoism have their own religious or theological ideologies, they are still inevitably affected by and cannot be detached from the soil which nurtures them. Taoism in its own historical development splits into many sects, each of which develops its own interpretations of the doctrines of Taoism and also has different religious foci.²⁴² Even so, it may be said that all the Taoist core interpretations are identical in terms of the understanding of cosmology. Taoist cosmology is influenced by two main factors: the legacies of ancient Chinese philosophy, the *Wuxing* system and the *Yinyang* system.²⁴³ In the Chinese philosophical tradition, these are crucial theories, which can probably

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁴¹ S. Abid Hussain, *The National Culture of India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust India, 1978), p. 3.

²⁴² See Livia Kohn, *Daoism Handbook* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000).

²⁴³ Many ancient Chinese philosophers and scientists have discussed and explored cosmological matters, such as 王充 張衡. *Yinyang* and *Wuxing* are not the only two theories which Chinese people apply to cosmology. There are also other theories, such as the covered bowl theory 蓋天說, the round heaven theory 渾天說 and the infinite heaven theory 宣夜說. However, Taoist cosmology is not influenced much by these theories. See Xiaoyuan Jiang 江曉原, *Tainxue Waishi* 天學外史 (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe 上海人民出版社, 1999); and Wenguang Zheng 鄭文光 and Zezong Xi 席澤宗, *Zhongguo Lishi shang De Yuzhou lun* 中國歷史上的宇宙理論, (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe 人民出版社, 1975).

be considered the most influential of all Chinese philosophical thinking. Their widespread influence touches almost all Chinese philosophical schools to some extent.²⁴⁴ These two systems also play the very important roles in Taoist cosmology. It would not be an exaggeration to state that if Taoist harmony can be considered holistic the credit should be given to these two theories, due to the useful and creditable parts that they play in Taoist cosmology. As regards Christian cosmology, it certainly inherits some ideas from ancient Greek philosophy. In fact, many ancient Greek as well as modern philosophers and scientists are interested in the exploration of cosmology. Among Western philosophical theories, teleology and the mechanical universe are often considered the critical components of the concepts of Western cosmology.²⁴⁵ The fundamental cultural and philosophical theories of Western/Christian cosmology are discussed below.

5.2.1 The Fundamental Theories of Western/Christian Cosmology

Western cosmology has developed over a long history. Briefly speaking, the geocentric and teleological cosmology of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) dominated much of the Western intellectual world for over two millennia from the ancient Greeks and through the Middle Ages.²⁴⁶ However, far from being respected, Aristotelian

²⁴⁴ See Peng Yoke Ho, *Li, Qi and Qhu: an Introduction to Science and Civilization in China* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2000), esp. chapters 2 and 3.

²⁴⁵ There is no doubt that cosmology is a significant and influential subject. It is not only of interest to Renaissance philosophers and scientists but also of concern to modern philosophers and scientists, such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831 C.E.) and Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941 C.E.). See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945). However, the mechanistic view which developed on the basis of atomic theory now plays a crucial role in Western and Christian perspectives on cosmology. This chapter will mainly focus on the influence of the mechanistic universe on cosmology as it is the main cultural and philosophical factor shaping Christian cosmology.

²⁴⁶ See Monte Ransome Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 247-286.

cosmology was challenged by the theory of impetus in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁴⁷ Finally, in the seventeenth century Galileo Galilei (1564-1642 C.E.) destroyed the Aristotelian cosmology, which then lost its dominion over Western cosmology. Although the development of natural science has demonstrated the inaccuracy of Aristotle's geocentric cosmology, Aristotle's teleological cosmology is the foundation of Western cosmology and Christian cosmology and still contributes greatly towards it. There is no doubt that Aristotle's teleological cosmology occupies a significant position in terms of the conceptualization of Western cosmology. Aristotle's perspective of teleological cosmology is derived from his philosophical idea of teleology. In the philosophy of the West, teleology has been pursued by many philosophers. As a concept it was advocated by Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 B.C.E.) and reflected on by Plato (424/423-348/347 B.C.E.) prior to Aristotle.²⁴⁸ After this, teleological ideas were explored by many Western philosophers.²⁴⁹ However, this chapter is not intended to probe into the different perceptions or manipulation of teleology by these philosophers. The focus is on Aristotle's teleology only in so far as it relates to his teleological cosmology.

What then is Aristotle's teleology? Concisely speaking, teleology means that everything in the Cosmos holds its own final causes, that is to say, that some design and purpose analogous to that found in human actions are inherent also in the rest of nature. Regarding humanity, for example, Aristotle views the ultimate end of human

²⁴⁷ See Helen S. Lang, *Aristotle's Physics and Its Medieval Varieties* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 168-171.

²⁴⁸ See J. D. Logan, "The Aristotelian Teleology," *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 6, No. 4 July (1897): pp. 386-400.

²⁴⁹ Such as Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109 C.E.), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 C.E.), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831 C.E.) *etc.*

beings in term of the Greek term, *eudaimonia* or ‘happiness,’ which refers to something which is “complete in itself,” “all-sufficient,” and “forming the one end of all things.”²⁵⁰ Thus, Aristotle seems to believe that the purpose of the existence of humanity is to pursue happiness. If this example is extended to matters of the Cosmos, Aristotle believes that the Cosmos or nature also has purposes. Hence, he explains the forms of causality as four in number: (1) the material cause, or that from which something is composed; (2) the efficient cause, or the agent which made something comes into being; (3) the formal cause, or the characteristics which make it what it is; and (4) the final cause, or the purpose for which it exists. Here, each step in the series is for the sake of the next and the final step or cause implies that Aristotle’s system is teleological. It refers to the end or final goal of a process, that toward which one aims, to be a fully functioning individual or group.²⁵¹ Although Aristotle does not believe that conscious purposes exist in nature, he is convinced that processes in nature aim toward an end or goal and that “nature does nothing in vain.”²⁵² This type of cosmology was widely accepted by Western society as well as by Christianity, probably because it tends to supports the existence of God and this point is identical to that of Christian theology.

However, in the sixteenth century a new perception of cosmology arose, the mechanistic cosmology, which was initiated by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543 C.E.), Bernardino Telesio (1508-1588 C.E.) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 C.E.).

²⁵⁰ Aristotle, Robert Williams, trans., *The Nicomachean Ethics* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1869), p. 15.

²⁵¹ C. E. Scott, “Forms of Causality in Psychology,” in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 133.

²⁵² Edward Grant, “Aristotle,” in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, eds. Wentzel van Huyssteen *et al.*, Vol. 1 (New York; London: Macmillan Reference, 2003), p. 28.

With Isaac Newton (1642-1727 C.E.), the mechanistic cosmology became the mainstream concept of Western cosmology.²⁵³ The concept of mechanistic cosmology is developed from mechanism and mechanism is founded on atomism.²⁵⁴ Therefore, the feature of mechanism is to ignore all qualitative differences in natural phenomena while emphasising their quantitative differences. In other words, in this system nothing is different from anything else; the components of all corporeal beings are essentially homogeneous. Furthermore, in the world nothing is governed by an internal principle but always determined by mechanical laws. In other words, the Cosmos is understood as no more than mass and motion. Hence, quantity and motion are the two observable differences between corporeal beings. In summary, the mechanistic universe reduces all creatures to machines or artifacts. They work as parts of the world but lack any intrinsic relationship to each other. They work according to an order which is imposed from outside.²⁵⁵ In this type of cosmology, it may be concluded that there is no room for either ethics or respect between creatures, apart from humanity. Francis Bacon (1561-1626 C.E.) proudly points to “Nature with all of her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave.”²⁵⁶ Bacon is certainly not alone: the Cartesian idea of the self and the Kantian turn to the subject also urge humanity and nature to end in divorce.²⁵⁷ R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943 C.E.), who reviews the concepts of the Cosmos or nature from ancient Greek to modern times,

²⁵³ Norriss Hetherington, “Cosmology,” in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, Vol. 1 (New York; London: Macmillan Reference, 2003) pp. 170-171.

²⁵⁴ Joshua C. Gregory, *A Short History of Atomism* (London: A. and C. Black, Ltd., 1981).

²⁵⁵ See “Mechanism,” *New Advent*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10100a.htm> (accessed 10 May 2010); and “Cosmology,” *New Advent*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04413a.htm> (accessed 13 May 2010).

²⁵⁶ Francis Bacon, *The Masculine Birth of Time*, quoted in Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Losing and Finding Creation in the Christian Tradition”, in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans*, p. 10.

²⁵⁷ See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*.

offers a good outline of this mechanistic cosmology. He considers the concept of mechanistic cosmology to be a product of the Renaissance. Thus, he summarises the Renaissance²⁵⁸ view of nature as

“is devoid both of intelligence and of life...and indeed incapable of moving itself at all. The movements which it exhibits...are imposed upon it from without, and their regularity is due to ‘laws of nature’ likewise imposed from without...the natural world is a machine: a machine in the literal and proper sense of the word, an arrangement of bodily parts designed and put together and set going for a definite purpose by an intelligent mind outside itself.”²⁵⁹

In fact, mechanistic cosmology is also devoid of spiritual meaning. The Cosmos or nature is to be understood only by reductionist methodologies.²⁶⁰ It is clear that this type of cosmology differs from earlier Greek cosmology. Although the Aristotelian cosmology is teleological, nature is basically considered an organic unity. However, mechanistic cosmology completely denies this character. The conceptual shift implies that a new age of Western cosmology had arrived, completely abandoning the ancient Greek understanding of cosmology. It also means that scientific development had brought humanity to a new era with new concerns. Collingwood is right; with this, nature was entirely separated from humanity and God. The concept of the dualism of humanity and nature as well as God and nature is now widespread. Furthermore, the idea that nature is lifeless and valueless is also believed and manipulated, especially in scientific and industrial areas.²⁶¹ The mechanistic interpretations of cosmology

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 4. “Renaissance” according to R. G. Collingwood means the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁶⁰ See David Noble, *A World without Women: the Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

²⁶¹ See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); and Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature: the Greening of Science and God* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

encourage Western people to observe the boundary between nature and humanity. Nature and humanity belong to two different categories. Nature is nothing but material for human beings to use and to exploit in order to satisfy their needs or desires.

E. D. Klemke clearly expresses this sense of the discontinuity between the isolated scientific subject and the valueless universe:

“From the standpoint of present evidence, evaluational components such as meaning or purpose are not to be found in the universe as objective aspects of it...Rather, we ‘impose’ such values upon the universe ... An objective meaning — that is, one which is inherent within the universe or dependent upon external agencies — would, frankly, leave me cold. It would not be mine ... I, for one, am glad that the universe has no meaning, for thereby is man all the more glorious. I willingly accept the fact that external meaning is non-existent ... for this leaves me free to forge my own meanings.”²⁶²

This implies that because nature is devoid of intelligence, of life and of spiritual meaning, it can freely be exploited by humanity; human beings concentrate on and take advantage of this view to satisfy their greed and build up their own image, which purports to be the *Imago Dei*. It can be found that this conclusion is consonant with the limitations of Christian Anthropocentrism. In other words, the deepest roots of the modern ecological crisis may be stated to lie in the unique cosmology that arose within the middle or bourgeois class at the birth of the early modern Western world, for it is the people in these classes who press for the development of industry and technology.²⁶³ Therefore, God’s words in *Genesis* should not be blamed as the roots of

²⁶² E. D. Klemke, “Living without Appeal,” in *The Meaning of Life*, ed. E. D. Klemke (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 169-172.

²⁶³ Elisabeth M. Ferrero and Joe Holland, *The Earth Charter: a Study Book of Reflection for Action*, p. 20,

guilt for the modern ecological crisis, because the ancient Hebrew peoples never produced great ecological destruction.²⁶⁴ However, honestly and grievously, the deepest and earliest roots of the modern ecological crisis are in fact found within human nature. As Wendell Berry states, our ecological crisis is a crisis of character, not a political or social crisis.²⁶⁵ James Nash agrees with Berry in believing that the roots of the ecological crisis do not lie in theological belief but in human character.²⁶⁶

Although it seems evident that Christianity should not be accused of creating the roots of the modern ecological crisis, it is clear that the mechanistic cosmology was and still is tolerated by Christian theology,²⁶⁷ since the Church has historically shown its position on certain issues of scientific development.²⁶⁸ Moreover, religions should take the responsibility for guiding their adherents and cultivating their ability to shape good moral values and ethics toward all things in the Cosmos, not merely interpersonal relationships. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim conclude that “Religions, thus, need to be reexamined in light of the current environmental crisis.”²⁶⁹ In term of cosmology, Christianity would require a reformation. Berry considers that

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/invent/images/uploads/A%20Study%20Book%20of%20Reflection%20for%20Action.pdf> (accessed 13 May 2010).

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

²⁶⁵ See Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1996), esp. chapter 2.

²⁶⁶ James Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), p. 89.

²⁶⁷ Willis Jenkins, “After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems”, pp. 283-284.

²⁶⁸ Giordano Bruno (1548-1600 C.E.) and Galileo Galilei may be taken as examples. Bruno was burned in 1600 as a heretic because of his belief in the Copernican system. Galilei was under house arrest until he died, for the same reasons as Bruno. See Paul-Henri Michel, Robert Edwin Witton Maddison trans., *The cosmology of Giordano Bruno* (Paris: Hermann; London: Methuen, 1973); and J. J. O’Connor and E. F. Robertson, “Galileo’s Conflict with the Church,” *The MacTutor History of Mathematics Archive*, <http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history/Mathematicians/Galileo.html> (accessed 1 June 2010). These examples imply that science and technology could not have been developed without the historical approval of the Church.

²⁶⁹ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, “The Nature of the Environmental Crisis,” *Center for the Study of World Religions*, http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/resources/print/ecology_foreword.html (accessed 9 June 2010).

Western people have become autistic in their interactions with the natural world. He further states that human beings have lost their ability to value the life and beauty of nature because we are locked in our own egocentric perspectives and short-sighted needs.²⁷⁰ From a Chinese cultural and philosophical point of view, the problems of Christian cosmology are not derived from the concept of a teleological cosmology. Chinese people also consider that according to philosophic Taoism the Cosmos has a purpose.²⁷¹ However, the mechanistic cosmology delivers an idea of separation to Western people which encourages Westerners to view every being as separate and to break the connection in the Cosmos between one thing and another, and furthermore to devalue nature. The most noticeable characteristic tendency of such ideology is that it puts a great distance between humanity and nature. The ideas of separation and devaluation are not appreciated by either the Chinese or the Taoist tradition; to tell the truth, these activities are entirely opposed to the stance of Chinese cosmology.

5.2.2 The Fundamental Theories of Chinese and Taoist Cosmology

Chinese cosmology is understood as a “correlative cosmology” and the *Wuxing* system forms an integral part of it.²⁷² The *Wuxing* are *Mu*, *i.e.* wood, *Huo*, *i.e.* fire, *Tu*, *i.e.* soil, *Jin*, *i.e.* metal and *Shui*, *i.e.* water. Everything in the world is organized into one of five columns according to these five elements. The phases are ordered in two ways: *Xiangsheng*, *i.e.* the generation sequence and *Xiangke*, *i.e.* the conquest

²⁷⁰ See Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*.

²⁷¹ Taoism emphasizes the need for all sentient beings and all men to return to the primordial or to rejoin with the Oneness of the Universe by way of self cultivation and self-realization. All adherents should understand and be in tune with the ultimate truth

²⁷² A. C. Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, National University of Singapore, 1986), pp. 42-66, 70-92; and A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), pp. 340-356.

sequence. These two ways weave a delicate web of the Cosmos.²⁷³ Somewhat later, this type of cosmological thought was enriched by the concepts of *Wufang*, i.e. the five directions and *Siji*, i.e. the four seasons. In other words, since ancient times *Wuxing* and *Wufang* and *Siji* have been closely connected.²⁷⁴ Shortly after, Chinese cosmological thought transformed itself into an integrated ideology.²⁷⁵ Since then, the changes in the natural environment and the occurrence of natural disasters have been accommodated within the understanding of the Cosmos by different generations of Chinese.²⁷⁶ In other words, the people of ancient China considered natural phenomena as part of the Cosmos.²⁷⁷ This also means that Chinese cosmology contains not only creation but also natural climatic changes. Over time, the concept of *Wuxing* was also enriched and developed by other Chinese philosophers within this basic framework.²⁷⁸ However, the *Wuxing* system, as noted, is only part of the system influenced by Taoist cosmology. The concept of *Yinyang* is the other part. The concept of *Yinyang* has existed since before the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.E.). *Yin* and *yang*

²⁷³ See Christopher Cullen, "Wuxing," in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio, Vol. II (Richmond: Curzon, 2008), pp. 1068-1069.

²⁷⁴ Ancient Chinese people understood the Cosmos as divided into five categories. See Ping Wang, *Taiping Jing Yanjiu*, p. 114.

²⁷⁵ Isabelle Robinet, "Sanwu," *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. II, pp. 853-854. Also see Zhongguo Daojiao Xiehui 中國道教協會 and Suzhou Daojiao Xiehui 蘇州道教協會, *Daojiao Da Cidian* 道教大辭典 (Beijing: Huaxia Chubanshe 華夏出版社), p. 212. Taoist cosmology includes not only the relationship between humanity and nature, but also the course of the seasons and the use of directions; thus, such cosmology integrated all the visible and invisible parts of nature.

²⁷⁶ The Chinese people worked out the monsoon system long ago, having discovered that the seasonal reversing wind comes from a different direction in different seasons.

²⁷⁷ Ping Wang, *Taiping Jing Yanjiu*, p. 114.

²⁷⁸ Until the Western Zhou period, Chinese cosmology had linked space, time and material things together. The Chinese philosophers, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 and Yang Xiong 揚雄 also contributed to the content of Chinese cosmology with the idea of the ten aspects of Heaven 天有十端 and the concept of Supreme Mystery 太玄. Other ancient Chinese works, such as the *Guanzi* 管子, the Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor 黃帝內經 the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the *Book of Change* 周易 also discuss the issue of the Cosmos. The *Guanzi* links the relationship between the four seasons and Wu Xing as the theory of its cosmology. *The Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor* takes the concept of *Wuxing* as the frame of its cosmology. The *Huainanzi* constructs its cosmological structure with directions. The theory of the eight trigrams is the foundation of the cosmology in the *Book of Change*.

are not actual things, but were at first described as a pair of attributes of a whole which are opposite or complementary to one another. The notions of *Yinyang* are applied to various complementary entities and phenomena, such as female-male, dark-light, night-day, low-high, earth-heaven, passive-active.²⁷⁹ However, this categorisation is relative; for example, a minister is *Yin* in relation to his ruler, but *Yang* in relation to his subordinates. Moreover, *Yin* and *Yang* are not absolute, but mutually transformable. The *Yin* of winter can be transformed into the *Yang* of summer and *vice versa*. The mutual transformation of *Yin* and *Yang* present a ceaseless continuum, contraction and expansion.²⁸⁰ One thing to note is that these qualities are mutually interdependent. That is to say, good has no meaning without a conception of evil. Like the notion of *Wuxing*, the concept of *Yinyang* is also used to distinguish and classify all things in the world. In a word, all things in the world are on this principle grouped into either the *Yin* or the *Yang* category. Philosophical Taoism also absorbs this *Yinyang* concept, the discourse of the Taoist understanding of *Yinyang* can be traced back to the texts of the *Daode Jing*. Laozi states that “All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come) and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have emerged).”²⁸¹ It can be found that Laozi’s thought is influenced by the concept of *Yinyang*, but Laozi’s idea of *Yinyang* is nevertheless more than simply a way of classifying all things into their right

²⁷⁹ A. C. Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, p. 223: Graham contrasts these strategies of *Yin* and *Yang* in the following chain of oppositions:

<i>Yang</i>	<i>Yin</i>	<i>Yang</i>	<i>Yin</i>
Something	Nothing	Before	Behind
Doing	Something	Doing	Nothing Moving Still
Knowledge	Ignorance	Big	Small
Male	Female	Strong	Weak
Full	Empty	Hard	Soft
Above	Below	Straight	Bent

²⁸⁰ Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein, “Yin and Yang,” *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. II, pp. 1164-1166.

²⁸¹ The *Daode Jing*, chapter 42.

categories, Laozi had realised the importance of the interaction between things and the causes of the state of harmony. The *Taiping Jing* absorbs Laozi's idea of *Yinyang* and concludes that there are five types of relationship between *Yin* and *Yang*: (1) interdependent,²⁸² (2) growth-decline,²⁸³ (3) transformable,²⁸⁴ (4) cooperative,²⁸⁵ and (5) master-servant.²⁸⁶ Although these five types of relationship differ from each other and some may even be opposed to each other, they are all based on harmonious communication.

In summary, the above discussion suggests that the concepts of *Wuxing* and *Yinyang* are similar; their main meaning and function is to classify all things in the world into categories in order to maintain a harmonious relationship between them all. *Wuxing* and *Yinyang* work together to provide Chinese people with a firm ideology to believe that all things are and must be mutually related. Humanity, thus, cannot live without having a harmonious relationship with other parts of the Cosmos. Nevertheless, the theories of *Wuxing* and *Yinyang* are still not the same; the concept, the production sequence and the conquest sequence of *Wuxing* explain the mutual relation between things, while the theory of *Yinyang* emphasises the complementary relationship between two things.²⁸⁷ The principles of *Wuxing* and *Yinyang* are applied to both the macro-Cosmos and the micro-Cosmos. This means that though the macro-Cosmos and the micro-Cosmos are two different systems, they still have a tunnel between them in order to build up their reciprocal communication. That is to say, the Cosmos

²⁸² See Jilin Yang, , *Taiping Jing Jinzhu Jinyi*, pp.81, 94, 336, 520, 1231, 1540-1541.

²⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 106, 326, 1600.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 153, 1505.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 902, 1728, 1744.

²⁸⁷ Wing-Tsit Chan, trans. and comp., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, London: Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969), p. 244.

according to Chinese understanding has an order which is followed by humanity. Kohn expresses this natural design correctly, stating that “humanity lives in perfect alignment with the forces of nature and the Cosmos.”²⁸⁸ Thus, from this explication of the systems of *Wuxing* and *Yinyang* we can infer that Chinese cosmology is teleological, correlative and organic.

5.3 Christian-Taoism Encounters on the Concepts of God vs. *Dao* and the Chosen People vs. the Seed People

Apparently, the concepts of *Wuxing* and *Yinyan* do not exist in Christianity, but this does not necessarily mean that Western people or Christians can neither understand nor transform these two notions in their traditions. Because *Wuxing* and *Yinyang* are similar concepts and also because the concept of *Yinyang* would be more understandable for Westerners than the concept of *Wuxing*, the discussion below focuses mainly on the concept and application of *Yinyang*. The concept of *Yin* and *Yang* were probably introduced into the Western world in the late nineteenth century, if not earlier, when James Legge translated the *Daode Jing* into English.

Talking about the universe on the basis of *Yinyang* theory, American physicist, Fritjof Capra describes the Chinese understanding of universe as “that all manifestations of reality are generated by the dynamic interplay between two polar forces which are called the yin and the yang.”²⁸⁹ Capra further states that “yin and yang have recently become quite popular in the West, but they are rarely used in our culture in the

²⁸⁸ Livia Kohn, *Cosmos and Community: The Ethical Dimension of Daoism*, p. 57.

²⁸⁹ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (London: Flamingo, 1983), p. 9.

Chinese sense.”²⁹⁰ Capra’s knowledge of *Yinyang* is mainly from Manfred Porkert’s book, *The theoretical foundations of Chinese medicine*.²⁹¹ Capra calls this book one of the best interpretations of the concept of *Yinyang*. Both Capra and Porkert consider that *Yin* harmonises with all that is contractive, responsive and conservative, whereas *Yang* implies all that expansive, aggressive and demanding. Basically, their understanding of *Yinyang* is correct; the main difference between their understanding and what was outlined in the previous section lies only in the perspective. It can be found that Capra and Porkert approach the concept of *Yinyang* from a dynamic perspective. Thus, Capra, again, provides critical suggestions by claiming that the Western world is unhealthy because it focuses too much on the aspect of *Yang*: Western tradition is more focused on rational knowledge than intuitive wisdom and puts less emphasis on cooperative modes. Western people are more interested in making use of natural resources than protecting nature.

Hence, in Capra’s perception the Western world is more masculine than feminine. However, to his mind the Chinese world is not healthy either; it merely opposes Western symptoms. Chinese tradition is focused more on intuitive wisdom than rational knowledge and puts less emphasis on the sense of competition. Chinese people are more interested in preserving nature than using up natural resources. The Chinese world is more feminine than masculine.²⁹² Here Capra’s criticism is perhaps half correct and half incorrect. It may be incorrect to claim that the Chinese world is feminine – it may not be as feminine as Capra supposed. But it is true that, as Kim

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁹¹ Manfred Porkert, *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine - Systems of Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: M.I.T. Press, 1974), p. 9.

²⁹² Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, pp. 21-22.

also states, “the *Yang* Christianity which developed in the soil of the anthropomorphic Greek culture and flourished for two millennia seems to have arrived at its limit and a paradigm shift toward the *Yin* Christianity is in progress.”²⁹³ Bede Griffiths provides us with a thought-provoking view on the Western world, echoing Kim’s verdict. He states,

“This may sound very paradoxical and unreal, but for centuries now the western world has been following the path of *Yang*, of the masculine, active, aggressive, rational, scientific mind and has brought the world near destruction. It is time now to recover the path of *Yin*, of the feminine, passive, patient, intuitive and poetic mind. This is the path which the *Tao Te Ching* sets before us.”²⁹⁴

This statement tells us that Griffiths also believes that Western world is *Yang*, maybe to the extent that it brings about destruction. Therefore he suggests *Yin* as its solution. Finally, Griffiths suggests the *Daode Jing* as the old wisdom, but a new solution for our modern ecological crisis. The *Daode Jing*, as it is known, not only focuses on *Yin* but also values *Yang*. This is to say, in this Taoist wisdom *Yin* and *Yang* are balanced, because the *Xici* 繫辭 says that “Alternation of the yin and yang is called the dao 一陰一陽之謂道,”²⁹⁵ while Taoist *Dao* and the Christian God are basically one. In other words, the *Dao* and God are almighty. On this basis, Capra’s criticism of the Chinese world seems to be not entirely convincing, because Chinese wisdom is not only restricted in the *Yin* aspect, but seeks a balanced interaction of *Yin* and *Yang*. Nevertheless, the Taoist *Dao* is usually understood as two-sided, while the Christian

²⁹³ Heup-Young Kim, “Life, Ecology and Theo-Tao: Towards a Life Theology of Theanthropocosmic Tao”, p. 78.

²⁹⁴ Bede Griffiths, *Universal Wisdom: a Journey through the Sacred Wisdom of the World* (San Francisco: Harper Sanfrancisco, 1994), pp. 27-28.

²⁹⁵ Quoted from Bo Mou, *History of Chinese Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 72.

God may be commonly understood from one angle only.²⁹⁶ This main difference between the understanding of *Dao* and the understanding of God may be one of the cruxes in causing the modern ecological crisis. Still, the *Daode Jing* also discusses the role of humanity as the Holy Bible does. Nevertheless, the stresses on humanity today are rather different from those treated in the Holy Bible. Therefore, this chapter proposes Chinese and Taoist alternatives with reference to the reflection of the Christian understanding of God and humanity.

5.3.1 God vs. *Dao*

As analysed and discussed in previous chapters, the major problematic aspect of Christian theology on ecological issues lies in the anthropocentric ideas of Christianity. The basis of this unhealthy thought seems to be the concept of the *Imago Dei*. In the beginning, the purpose of saying that God created humanity according to His image was initially to make it clear that humanity is different from other created things and has a divine mission to accomplish. However, the *Yang* interpretations of this concept result in a disharmonious relationship between humanity and nature, *i.e.* the modern ecological crisis.²⁹⁷ In Christianity, God is understood as a personal God which means that the image of this almighty one is a person, or, to be more precise, three Persons in one. On the one hand, this God is just like a person who can speak, act and can be pleased, sad and angry.²⁹⁸ However, God is of course not a human being. On the other hand, Western theology tells us that “God is not simply more of

²⁹⁶ Moltmann has provided his own view on this point; he takes *Sabbath* as an example. This issue will be discussed in Chapter Six.

²⁹⁷ Moltmann also discusses this issue. See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: an Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), chapter 9.

²⁹⁸ In the Old Testament in particular.

what we are. There is an essential discontinuity ...”²⁹⁹ Catholics and Protestants believe that God is infinite, limitless, all-perfect, all-powerful, unchanging, nonmaterial, all-knowing and perfectly simple.³⁰⁰ Similarly, Judaism speaks of God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and eternal.³⁰¹ The Islamic theologian Mohammad Zia Ullah states that “God is infinite, pervasive and man finite and limited to a locality. Man cannot comprehend God as he can other things ... God is without limits ...” He goes on, “How can a limitless, infinite being be contained in the mind of a limited being like man?”³⁰² The question is answered, according to the Holy Bible, God speaks to human being through His revelation so that humanity will understand Him. However, “How do we incorporate natural features into our representation of a nonnatural entity?”³⁰³ Sigmund Freud (1856-1939 C.E.) states that the concepts of God are projections of one’s father.³⁰⁴ Other scholars report a positive correlation between self-esteem and loving images of God and suggest a relationship between loneliness and the concept of a “wrathful God.”³⁰⁵ To sum up, it can be found that both the Abrahamic religious tradition and the psychology of religion interpret God as an extension of humanity. If this is the case, then the notion of

²⁹⁹ G. J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: a New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Gr and Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 64.

³⁰⁰ Christian understanding of the nature of God is on the basis of the biblical descriptions; therefore both Catholic and Protestant perceptions of God would necessarily be identical. Also see G. D. Smith, ed., *The Teaching of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Co.: 1955) and Madeleine Gray, *The Protestant Reformation: belief, practice and tradition* (Brighton : Sussex Academic Press, 2003)

³⁰¹ K. Kohler, *Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered* (New York: Macmillan Co.: 1918), p. 505.

³⁰² M. Z. Ullah, *Islamic Concept of God* (London: Kegan Paul International: 1984), p. 19.

³⁰³ Justin L. Barrett and Frank C. Keil, “Conceptualizing a Nonnatural Entity: Anthropomorphism in God Concepts,” *Cognitive Psychology* 31 (3) (1996): p. 220.

³⁰⁴ S. Freud, J. Strachey, trans., *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Norton: 1961) (Original work published 1927), p. 20.

³⁰⁵ See P. L. Benson and B. Spilka, “Gods Image as a Function of Self-esteem and Locus of Control,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12 (3) (1973): pp. 297-310; and R. Schwab and K. U. Petersen, “Religiousness: Its Relation to Loneliness, Neuroticism and Subjective Well-being,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29 (3) (1990): pp. 335-345.

Christian anthropocentrism is understandable. However, it also betrays the limits of the ‘personal God’ ideology, since the Christian God is not only a humanized God but also a spiritualized God.³⁰⁶ That is to say, the modern Christian understanding of God stresses the ‘personal’ aspect more, while somewhat neglecting the ‘spiritual’ aspect.³⁰⁷ This must be one of the many causes of modern ecological crisis.³⁰⁸ In sum, in Christian theology the *Yin* aspect of a personal God has been downplayed.

From the Taoist *Yingyang* perspective, the Christian understanding of God is mainly from the *Yang* aspect, with the *Yin* aspect reduced to the least. The Abrahamic religions have considered God as personal, a point which undoubtedly cannot be and does not need to be changed by Taoism, because a personal God includes, in fact, the features of an impersonal God. The reason is simply, as Christianity always states, ‘God is almighty.’ If God is indeed almighty then He should not and cannot be restricted to a certain form. Yet the *Dao* in philosophic Taoism is not understood as a personal God, but as an impersonal being.³⁰⁹ However, this does not denote that the Taoist *Dao* stresses the *Yin* aspect. As noted above, *Dao* contains both *Yin* and *Yang* and because of this nature the *Dao* “means both the source of being (logos) and the way of becoming (praxis).”³¹⁰ In the *Taiping Jing*, “God is identical to heaven, so heaven is called god and has divinity.”³¹¹ Furthermore, the gods in the *Taiping Jing*

³⁰⁶ Moltmann discusses this point from a trinitarian perspective but the present research is not much engaged with this perspective. See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: an Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, chapter 4. D with

³⁰⁷ In terms of the difficulties of suggesting God as a person, also see Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: an Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 208.

³⁰⁸ Also see Jürgen Moltmann, “The Ecological Crisis: Peace with Nature”, pp. 9-18.

³⁰⁹ Fumitaka Matsuoka and Eleazar S. Fernandez, eds., *Realizing the America of Our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2003), p. 47.

³¹⁰ Heup-Young Kim, “Life, Ecology and Theo-Tao: Towards a Life Theology of Theanthropocosmic Tao”, p. 83.

³¹¹ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 221.

are personal gods, for instance, “spiritlike men ... without bodily form ... who bend qi ... Men of great spirit are in charge of heaven, the perfected are responsible for order on earth, transcendents must regulate the four seasons and men of great dao the five phases.”³¹² But at the same time the *Taiping Jing* also says, “God is imageless and eternal.”³¹³ In other words, a Taoist not only experiences personal gods as concrete models, but also worships impersonal gods as wielders of the invisible and intangible divine law that dwells in the Cosmos. Kim also notices this feature of Taoist *Yinyang* theory and coins the term “Theo-Tao” as the alternative to the Christian traditional understanding of a personal God.³¹⁴ Kim wants to remind Christians that God does not have only a single face. Kim implies that human beings should not understand God only from the one angle which they happen to prefer.

However, Christian theology views dualism as the complete opposition of two entities, e.g. good and evil, God and Satan. According to this understanding, two opposite entities hold moral values and are completely detached, the appearance of one implying the disappearance of the other. In other words, the two opposite entities can be nothing more than hostile to each other in a zero sum game. Taoist dualism gives more emphasis to a relationship of balance, neither *Yin* nor *Yang* holding moral value. That is to say, they are not in an ‘either-or’ condition but in a ‘both-and’ as well as an

³¹² Barbara Hendrichske, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, p. 207.

³¹³ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 439. The statements about gods in the *Taiping Jing* seem to contradict each other. One of the reasons for this contradiction is that the *Taiping Jing* is written by more than one author, thus these statements may have been written by different people. However, no-one could identify evidence for this point. Hence, this research suggests that contradictions could be accounted for on the basis of the Taoist *Yinyang* theory and this explanation would be the best one.

³¹⁴ See Heup Young Kim, *Christ and the Tao* and Heup-Young Kim, “Life, Ecology and Theo-Tao: Towards a Life Theology of Theanthropocosmic Tao”.

integrated condition.³¹⁵ Therefore, a Taoist not only understands the *Tao* from a human perspective, but also from the *Tao*'s perspective. This would explain why Taoism does not particularly insist that humanity is the *Imago Dei*, but stresses instead universal value and holistic harmony.

5.3.2 Chosen People vs. Seed People³¹⁶

Chosenness or the concept of chosen people referred initially to the belief that the Jews are a people chosen to be in a covenant with God since the time of Abraham. *Deuteronomy 7:6* states, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your god; the Lord your god has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.” Later on, the Christians believed that they were the Chosen people instead because the “...Jews ... disbelieved that God raised Jesus...” Thus the Christians replaced Jews as inheritors of the blessings that God had promised his people.³¹⁷ However, even if Jews or Christians are a people holy to God, this does not entail that the chosen people are superior to others. *Deuteronomy 7:7* states, “It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples.” The essence of being Chosen people is that they are in a unique relationship with God. The Chosen people understand themselves as “[playing] a unique role in the moral economy of

³¹⁵ In terms of this point see also Heup-Young Kim, “Life, Ecology and Theo-Tao: Towards a Life Theology of Theanthropocosmic Tao”, pp. 79-82.

³¹⁶ This section is intended to discuss both Christian and Taoist ideas of humanity according to *Yinyang* theory. The concepts of chosen people and seed people are used as examples of Christian and Taoist understanding of humanity, but, due to limitations of space, these two concepts will not be discussed in detail in this section.

³¹⁷ Robert J. Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Based on the New American Bible*, (Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 1042.

global salvation.”³¹⁸ The covenant is about partnership with God through the acceptance of a structure of law and it is because of their obedience that they become God’s elect, saved and privileged.³¹⁹ This is to say,

“To be a member of covenanted community, then, is to bind ourselves to be partners with God in creating a certain kind of world for ourselves and our progeny. The *mitzvot* are the means for bringing this about. Their formulation in the terminology of law is our tradition’s attempt to lend a dimension of authority, a binding or structuring quality that flows directly out of the assumptions of biblical theology and anthropology.”³²⁰

This implies that the chosen people and God are not merely partners but intimately attached. The chosen people are the witnesses and servants of God.³²¹ In addition to the partnership, God wants His chosen people to be like Him, thus chosen people are separated from the world in order to be holy.³²² In other words, *Imitatio Dei* is the fundamental aim of the chosen people. Of course, the chosen people not only receive privilege but also responsibility from God. God says “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”³²³ Even so, however, this does not denote that chosen people would certainly lose their special status if they behaved badly. In other words, in Christianity chosen people can be stated as the people who always reserve their salvation from God. In brief, the chosen people (1) are elected by God; (2) have an intimate and unique relationship or partnership with God; (3) will never be abandoned by God; and (4) will always be in God’s salvific plan. Although the concept of chosenness contains aspects of both *Ying*

³¹⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 48.

³¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 49.

³²⁰ Neil Gillman, *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1992), p. 47.

³²¹ See Isa. 43:10

³²² See Lev. 19:2; 20:26

³²³ Amos 3:2

and *Yang*, most of the features present the *Yang* aspect of the concept of chosen people.

The *Taiping Jing* proposes a notion of seed people, which resembles to some extent the concept of chosen people. Nevertheless, Taoism always follows *Yinyang* theory, hence, the difference between Christianity and Taoism is evident here too.

From the *Taiping Jing*'s perspective, if a Taoist becomes a member of the seed people this person is guaranteed eternal life which is a type of salvation in Taoism. This being so, how can a Taoist become one of the seed people? First of all, the viewpoint of the *Taiping Jing* on humanity needs to be understood. Unlike the Holy Bible, the *Taiping Jing*, instead of ranking all creation, ranks human beings on the basis of its hierarchy. This is discriminatory. However, the *Taiping Jing* provides this "human hierarchy" with its own religious ideas. The election of seed people is also on the basis of this hierarchy. The *Taiping Jing* says that *Shengren*, *i.e.* the wise, *Xianren*, *i.e.* the worthy, *Minren*, *i.e.* the common people and *Nubi*, *i.e.* the serfs are the earthly figures who are juxtaposed with the heavenly figures, *i.e.* the gods. The *Taiping Jing* states,

"The wise must look after Yin and Yang and the worthy have the task of putting texts and writings in order and receiving everything that is put in words. The common people are in charge of looking after plants, trees and the five crops of grains. Serfs are responsible for overseeing goods and commodities."³²⁴

³²⁴ Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, p. 207.

On the basis of the descriptions in the *Taiping Jing*, the *wise* and the *worthy* are considered the ideal characters in earthly human society and the core of the seed people.³²⁵ Hence, the *wise* and the *worthy* are chosen by the Taoist gods because of their just behaviour from the very first. One may ask, how about the people in the two other ranks? Are they not Taoists? Can they be seed people? If they cannot obtain salvation, then should they be Taoists? In fact, the *Taiping Jing* has considered this point and thus there is another way of becoming one of the seed people. It says that “Heaven and earth are chaotic and poor, man and matter are corrupted. Only men who do good deeds can avoid this and become seed people.”³²⁶ Again, it adds “Serfs obey their masters, learn and do good to become the common people. The common people keep learning good to become the worthy. The worthy keep learning good to become the wise.”³²⁷ That is to say, if a person does not belong to the *wise* or the *worthy* rank he can do good deeds and cultivate himself by religious Taoist teaching in order to reach a higher level of morality, so that he too can be a member of the seed people. In sum, according to the *Taiping Jing*, seed people are (1) either elected by gods or self-cultivated; and (2) not assured of salvation if they act less morally or not morally. Additionally, gods are not partial to seed people, seed people can be abandoned if they are no longer qualified to be seed people. A contradiction can be found here between the descriptions of the *Taiping Jing* and the summary of the descriptions. All the descriptions of seed people in the *Taiping Jing* seem to be presented from the *Yang* aspect. What is the reason for this?

³²⁵ See Christine Mollier, “zhongmin,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. II, pp. 1285-1286.

³²⁶ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 1.

³²⁷ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 222.

To answer the above question, let us borrow a Judeo-Christian perspective as a comparison. The concept of chosen people, as discussed above, is viewed from the *Yang* aspect, the reason being that the image of the chosen people is designed as a band of God's elect, which implies that the chosen people are endorsed by God. This endorsement directly and indirectly points out the chosen people as the 'people of people.' They are closely related to God, hence they are viewed to an extent as nearly perfect human beings. However, the *Taping Jing* views human beings from an imperfect perspective, a claim supported by the fact that human beings can promote themselves to a higher rank and can qualify as seed people. This answers the question above. The *Taping Jing* is, in fact, intended to throw light on both the bright and dark sides of humanity, so it starts its concern with seed people with the weakness of humanity. To sum up, the Judeo-Christian tradition considers the image of chosen people from a superior perspective, while the Taoist tradition views the image of chosen people from an inferior perspective. These perspectives actually project contrasting images of humanity. Hence, it can be found that the image of humanity in Judeo-Christian tradition is more arrogant than the image of humanity in Taoist tradition.³²⁸ In Taoism, humanity humbly dwells in nature while in Christianity it rules over nature with human pride, since salvation has little to do with nature, according to Judeo-Christian theological interpretations. In conclusion, it can be found that the chosen people are supposed to be as good as God in their actions, yet the concept of *Imitatio Dei* seems to involve little concern about the relationship between humanity and nature while the concept of seed people largely considers the harmonious

³²⁸ This finding, in fact, echoes Raphals' argument mentioned in the conclusion of Chapter Three.

relationship between humanity and nature as of equal importance to the harmonious relationship between humans or between humanity and gods.

5.4 Summary and Conclusion

From the discussions in this chapter, the forms and content of both Christian cosmology and Taoist cosmology can be read. The interesting point which may be worth noting is that the current form and content of Taoist cosmology are shaped according to ancient Chinese philosophical theories and its own religious doctrines. Therefore, it is closely related to moral and spiritual aspects of human life. Unlike Taoism, Christian cosmology is clearly found to be influenced by Western philosophical theories, scientific development and Christianity itself selects its supportive theories from Western philosophy and merges with its own theological interpretations to formulate what is called Western or Christian cosmology. Thus, Christian cosmology contains the physical factor of the Cosmos and theological concerns of humanity. In other words, the essence of Christian cosmology is more complicated and utilitarian than the Taoist cosmology, because Christian cosmology explains not only the occurrence of the Creation, but also the justification of human desires.

However, Christianity is not considered to have the idea of a balanced world. The Christian understanding of the ideal world would be a purely good and purely spiritual one. In other words, Christian harmony is not understood as a balanced state between two poles but as the absolute good of a single pole. Christianity has long considered issues from a single perspective; hence, the theological interpretations of religious

themes are often explained from a single angle. From the Taoist *Yinyang* perspective, however, Christianity would be able to rethink the concepts of *Imago Dei* and *Imitatio Dei* from two sides. This way of thinking would help to surmount the limits of what is called ‘centric’ ideology.

CHAPTER SIX: RECONSTRUCTING CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

This chapter pursues the discussions in light of the findings in previous chapters, in order to seek possible solutions for the modern ecological crisis. Since Christianity has realized the limitations of its traditional cosmology and Taoism has revealed the merits of its philosophical and religious cosmology, it is possible to reconstruct a cosmology which benefits from these merits. It may be said that the significant difference between Taoist cosmology and Christian cosmology lies in the construction of its cosmological perceptions. As discovered in the earlier discussions, Taoism considers the Cosmos as an organic whole while Christianity views the Cosmos as a mechanistic system. These distinct cosmological views result in different relationships in the two systems between humanity and God and also between humanity and nature. However, does the biblical tradition possess a mechanistic view of Creation? Or is it humanity itself responsible for supplying the mechanistic framework? To address this question, the first section of this chapter looks at the nature and meaning of the God's Creation according to Christian doctrine and then at the creation of humanity in human society, in the hope of identifying the origins of today's ecological crisis and reflect human limitations and arrogance. Following this, the second and third sections propose to introduce into Christianity the theory of the "threefold cooperation and interaction" of the *Taiping Jing*, in particular the concept of *Zhonghe*, in order to assist us to rethink or reinterpret the meaning and nature of the Creation and further to counter Christian eco-theology by Taoist eco-theology.

Northcott has divided the approaches to the study of Christian eco-theology into three, namely *humanocentric*, *theocentric* and *ecocentric*.³²⁹ As noted above, traditional Christian views of cosmology are considered *humanocentric*, and the *humanocentric* approach has been examined not only as a traditional but also as an imperfect way to perceive nature.³³⁰ This statement connotes that *theocentric* and *ecocentric* approaches are to be seen as better ways in terms of humanity's understanding of and attitudes to nature. This research agrees with Northcott and takes two representatives, Moltmann and Cobb, as exemplary partners in the Christian-Taoist encounter; the concept of holistic harmony between God, humanity and nature will be particularly stressed. To Northcott, Moltmann takes a *theocentric* approach and Cobb takes an *ecocentric* approach, but their eco-theological thinking is in some ways similar.³³¹ However, the two hold entirely opposite ideas about what Taoism can contribute to alleviating the ecological crisis. Moltmann says,

“The Chinese book of wisdom is very close to the Jewish and Christian book of wisdom, and very remote from it. The closer it comes to us, the more we recognize the differences. The more we perceive the differences, the better we understand it. Common to both wisdoms is the mysterious nature with which we seek to find a harmony through the way we live.”³³²

Moltmann's position is that he believes that Taoist wisdom could help to awaken Christian concern over this ecological crisis, whilst Cobb says, “At first glance Taoism seems to have the advantages of the primitive consciousness without its

³²⁹ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, pp. 125-160.

³³⁰ Michael S. Northcott, in fact, severely criticises the humanocentric approach. See *ibid.*, pp. 125-141.

³³¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 141-160.

³³² Jürgen Moltmann, Margaret Kohl, trans., *Science and Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 193. “The Chinese book of wisdom” which Moltmann mentions here, refers to the *Tao De Ching*. See Chapter XII: Tao – the Chinese Mystery of the World Lao Tsu's Tao Te Ching Read with Western Eyes.

liabilities,”³³³ while noting that Taoism is not the mainstream school in Chinese tradition and has also failed to save Chinese society from ecological crisis. When there is a conflict between “the aesthetic and passive preferences of the Chinese and their economic needs, the latter were generally determinative”³³⁴ Hence, Cobb doubts what Taoism can do in the crisis. He goes on, “If we adopted the Taoist attitude today, the results would more likely be continued deterioration of our resources rather than effective conservation.”³³⁵ Cobb is correct in regarding economic needs as the priority of the present Chinese government. However, the pursuit of economic development is a global trend, not a uniquely Chinese phenomenon. Moreover, that Taoism has failed to prevent the occurrence of ecological crisis in Chinese society may be due to the fact that it has played a part in Chinese history in many epochs, not that it has failed to instil its values and teachings.³³⁶ Therefore, it seems fair to infer that Cobb does not have a good grasp of the development of Chinese culture, nor a proper knowledge of Taoist doctrine and teaching, in terms of the harmonious relationship between heaven, earth and humanity. Yet, interestingly, the way that Cobb develops his own definition of “Life” is fairly close to the teaching of Taoism to treat all things respectfully and to behave humanely. Cobb expresses God by the term “Life,” a usage which approaches the concept of *Ziran*, so far as the ideology of *Zhonghe*. At the same time, Moltmann emphasizes the meaning of *Sabbath*, which he interprets as ‘effortless behaviour’; this understanding corresponds to the concept of *Wuwei* so far as the ideology of *Zhonghe*.

³³³ John B. Cobb, *Is It Too Late? : a Theology of Ecology*, p. 45.

³³⁴ *ibid.*

³³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 46.

³³⁶ Yijie Tang, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture* (Peking: University of Peking; Washington, D.C: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991), pp. 67-80. Tang introduces the origin and characteristics of Taoism in this book. The characteristics of Taoism may explain why Taoism is considered more a subculture than mainstream in Chinese traditional thought.

Hence, Cobb and Moltmann's reinterpretations of Life and *Sabbath* could be valid stepping-stones in introducing Taoist holistic harmony to Christianity via the reappearance of the creativity of God in the Creation, effectively helping to reconstruct a new Christian cosmology.

6.2 Human Creation vs. God's Creation

On the basis of the findings of previous chapters, it can be stated that the roots of the modern ecological crisis over the disharmonious relationship between humanity and nature derive from the human attachment to *Imago Dei* and its understanding of the Creation. Thus, this section asks how such superiority can reflect upon and think again about the Creation and its own creations. What then are the Creation and human creations³³⁷ and how are the Creation and human creations created? This research suggests that the creative outcomes should be looked at from two perspectives: first, that of the Creation and second, that of humanity's creations, such as science and technology. In terms of the issues of the Creation, this too can be discussed from two angles: first, the original nature of the Creation and second the traditional Christian interpretation of the Creation. In other words, something must have gone wrong within the development of human creation; or with the original nature of the Creation; or in the Christian traditional interpretation of the Creation, for modern humanity to be experiencing an ecological crisis. As commonly defined, a creation is the concrete result of the fulfilment of creativity. Hence, we should probe the essence of the creativity of both God and humanity. Literally, creation means something which is or

³³⁷ In this research the word, Creation with a capital "C" means the creation of God; creation without a capital "C" means the creation of humanity.

has been brought into being and can be seen and experienced, whilst creativity is the ability to bring something into being even if it is invisible. There are two types of creativity in both Western/Christian and Chinese/Taoist traditions, which are introduced below: first, divine creativity; and second, individual creativity.

6.2.1 Divine Creativity and Individual Creativity in the Western/Christian Tradition

Ancient Western tradition understands creativity as a divine force. Originally, creativity in the Western cultural tradition was the unique to God or to the gods; human beings did not have the potential to create something from nothing; they were simply the followers of God or the gods.³³⁸ Two supportive findings are provided by the biblical and Greek philosophical traditions. The outstanding example in the Holy Bible is the description of the Creation. Mark A. Runco and Robert S. Albert suggest that “the earliest Western conception of creativity was the Biblical story of creation given in *Genesis*.”³³⁹ The biblical tradition tells us that God created the world *ex nihilo* which implies that God used His creativity to bring the Creation into being and nothing of this creation pre-existed His handiwork. In the Greek philosophical tradition, Plato once said that they [men] “do not make new things but merely imitate.”³⁴⁰ However, instead having the concept of ‘the Creation of God,’ Greek

³³⁸ See Daniel Joseph Boorstin, *The Creators: a History of Heroes of the Imagination* (New York: Random House, 1992), esp. prologue and book one.

³³⁹ Mark A. Runco and Robert S. Albert, “Creativity Research: a Historical View,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, eds. James C. Kaufman and Robert J. Sternberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 5.

³⁴⁰ Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: an Essay in Aesthetics* (The Hague; Boston: Nijhoff; Hingham, MA: distribution for the U.S. and Canada, Kluwer Boston, 1980), p. 244.

culture believed in ‘gods of invention’ – the Muses,³⁴¹ such creativity having also a divine origin. There is no doubt that the concept of divinely inspired creativity was the main understanding in the history of Western thought for a long period; it can be found, for instance, that almost all of the themes of Western medieval art derive from stories in the Holy Bible.³⁴² However, in modern times, this understanding of creativity has given way to what is called individual creativity, an idea which existed in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition as well. However, in those days this ability was limited to poets alone. Concisely speaking, individual creativity directly means the creativity on the part of humanity, which indicates that human beings have the ability to create. Although humanity may still not be able to create things *ex nihilo* as God did, we are capable of creating new things out of our previous knowledge in order to satisfy our needs.³⁴³ This modern concept of creativity arose in the Renaissance,³⁴⁴ when human beings began to be aware that they themselves had the ability to create new things as well as following in God’s steps. This awareness convinced human beings that human creativity would enhance man’s power over nature, giving him a better life. However, this thought did not spread until the Enlightenment.³⁴⁵ Michael Mumford concludes that “over the course of the last decade, however, we seem to have reached a general agreement that creativity

³⁴¹ See Władysław Tatarkiewicz, “Creativity: History of the Concept,” *Dialectics and Humanism* 4(1977): pp. 48-63; and Robert Weiner, *Creativity and Beyond: Cultures, Values, and Change* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

³⁴² Weihua Niu and Robert J. Sternberg, “The Philosophical Roots of Western and Eastern Conceptions of Creativity,” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 26 (1-2) (2006): p. 22.

³⁴³ See R. S. Albert and M. A. Runco, “A History of Research on Creativity,” in *Handbook of Creativity*, ed. R. J. Sternberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 16-31; and J. Szczepanski, “Individuality and Creativity,” *Dialectics and Humanism*, 5 (1978): pp. 15-23.

³⁴⁴ This finding is found to be supportive of Cohen’s point about stewardship and Collingwood’s perception of Renaissance cosmology.

³⁴⁵ Mark A. Runco and Robert S. Albert, “Creativity Research: a Historical View”, p. 6.

involves the production of novel, useful products.”³⁴⁶ In sum, the features of Western individual creativity include “novelty and originality, [imagination] and [goodness].”³⁴⁷

6.2.2 Divine Creativity and Individual Creativity in the Chinese/Taoist Tradition

Since it is clear that in Western thought both God and humanity possess creativity, we should also look into the concept and understanding of creativity in Taoism. Taoism does not tell the same story of Creation as Christianity does; Joseph Boorstin argues that “the idea of the creation of something ex nihilo (from nothing) had no place in a universe of the yin and yang.”³⁴⁸ Does the *Dao*, in fact, possess divine creativity? John H. Berthrong states that the ancient concept among the Chinese was similar to the current Western concept of divine creativity.³⁴⁹ Weihua Niu and Robert J. Sternberg add that both Eastern and Western concepts of creativity have their own philosophical and religious roots. In other words, Taoism also believes that the creativity of the *Dao* is divine. Nevertheless, Niu and Sternberg consider that ‘natural creativity’ in the Chinese and Taoist traditions is a more appropriate term in its context than ‘divine creativity’.³⁵⁰ But does Taoism also have the concept of individual creativity? From the themes and content of ancient Chinese art and literature, it can be found that ancient Chinese philosophers do not often focus directly on individual creativity.

³⁴⁶ M. D. Mumford, “Where Have We Been, Where Are We Going? Taking Stock in Creativity Research,” *Creativity Research Journal* 15 (2003): p. 110.

³⁴⁷ Weihua Niu & Robert J. Sternberg, “The Philosophical Roots of Western and Eastern Conceptions of Creativity”, p. 24.

³⁴⁸ Daniel Joseph Boorstin, *The Creators: a History of Heroes of the Imagination*, p. 17.

³⁴⁹ See John H. Berthrong, *Concerning Creativity: a Comparison of Chu Hsi, Whitehead and Neville* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 111-142.

³⁵⁰ See Weihua Niu & Robert J. Sternberg, “The Philosophical Roots of Western and Eastern Conceptions of Creativity”, pp. 26-27.

However, this does not mean that individual creativity is not important or less valued in the Chinese/Taoist tradition. One possible explanation for this is that in the Chinese and Taoist understanding, natural creativity and individual creativity are in fact closely similar; thus Chinese people have no reason to separate these two in their minds.³⁵¹ Zhongying Cheng adds that many Chinese literati, regardless of their philosophical school, are considered to achieve as a lifetime goal the perfection of one's humanity and this perfection cannot leave out the achievement of great levels of creativity.³⁵² What does Taoism see as the greatest levels of creativity? There are two answers to this question. One type says, in Chung-Yuan Chang's account, that according to an ancient perception human beings can achieve high creativity through the "invisible ground of sympathy". That is to say, if human beings can set themselves free from all their previous knowledge and allow themselves to enter a state where things are formless and further merge themselves with other things,³⁵³ they can fulfil the highest stage of creativity perceived by these people. The other answer, from a modern perspective, is that we should first notice that the modern Chinese or Taoist understanding of creativity is not only influenced by the ancient Chinese or Taoist view of creativity but also by Western ideology and interpretations of creativity.³⁵⁴ Therefore, the achievement of the great levels of creativity in modern times is an

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁵² See Zhongying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 5. Cheng provides a chart entitled 'Chinese Philosophy and Western Philosophy: Contrast in Development and Possible Integration', in which he mentions two points as the basic orientations of Chinese philosophy, namely, (1) Harmonizing human experience with human thinking and (2) Nonreductive naturalism.

³⁵³ See Chung-Yuan Chang, *Creativity and Taoism: a Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art and Poetry* (London: Singing Dragon, 2011), pp. 47-80.

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*

integration of tradition and modernity; the characters include “originality, imagination, intelligence, individualism and goodness.”³⁵⁵

6.2.3 Features of Divine and Natural Creativity in both Christianity and Taoism

Having discovered the meaning and features of individual creativity in both Western and Chinese cultural traditions, we should also look into the meaning and features of divine and natural creativity in both Christianity and Taoism, in order to gain a holistic understanding of creativity which applies to ancient and modern perceptions as well as philosophical and religious interpretations. Moreover, a holistic understanding of creativity would also be helpful in terms of finding the causes of our modern ecological crisis. As noted above, in Christianity the Creation is created by God *ex nihilo*. Again, *Genesis* tells us that “God saw everything that he had made and indeed, it was very good.”³⁵⁶ In other words, God considers the Creation is perfect, due to the faultlessness of His creativity. In brief, it can be stated that there are three main features of God’s creation, as Robert Weiner points out: (1) God is the creator of everything; (2) new things are brought into being by God from the void or nothingness; and (3) the creation of God “represents all goodness, including moral goodness.”³⁵⁷ These three features clearly express that, through God’s creativity the Creation was created in perfection. In terms of the creation of *Dao* in Taoism, the prominent verses can be found in Chapter 42 of the *Daode Jing*. The *Taiping Jing* for

³⁵⁵ Weihua Niu & Robert J. Sternberg, “The Philosophical Roots of Western and Eastern Conceptions of Creativity”, p. 34.

³⁵⁶ Gen. 1:31.

³⁵⁷ Robert Weiner, *Creativity and Beyond: Cultures, Values, and Change*, pp. 25-26. In fact, Weiner points out six features in total, the other three features being (1) the power of the word to create; (2) the idea that humans are made in the image of God, the creator; and (3) the notion that humans are blessed with the commandment to be fruitful and multiply.

its part states that the world is created through *Qi*. Thus all things are created by the *Dao/Qi*. Concisely speaking, the features of the creation of *Dao/Qi* are identical to the points which Weiner has noted. Since, as we have seen, the Creation in Christianity and all things in Taoism are created in perfection by God and the *Dao/Qi* through their divine and natural creativity, we should next compare the features of individual and divine/natural creativity, because these two types of creativity can produce the creative outcomes of humanity and divinity. This comparison will also provide us with help in diagnosing any misinterpretation and misconception of the Creation in the Christian tradition, and possibly also a path to reinterpreting and reconceptualising the meaning and nature of the Creation.

6.2.4 The Past, Present and Future of Creativity

How in fact does the concept of creativity travel from its early origins to modern times in both the Christian and Taoist traditions? What elements have been inherited or modified and how may it change in the future? As noted, creativity nowadays focuses mainly on novelty, originality, imagination, the good and goodness, whereas the most important feature of the ancient foci of creativity was perfection. This signifies that the Creation of God and the creation of all things from *Dao/Qi* possess moral goodness and thus can be called perfect. Niu and Sternberg present an analysis to demonstrate the elements of ancient and modern creativity in both Western and Chinese cultures. They find that modern Westerners stress more the features of novelty and usefulness but ignore the importance of moral goodness. In contrast, modern Chinese people consider that creativity has three features: novelty, moral

goodness and usefulness.³⁵⁸ At the beginning of this section, we commented that the traditional Christian interpretation of the Creation would also need to be reviewed. Niu and Sternberg's findings in fact provide a vantage point for reviewing the traditional Christian interpretation of the Creation. We have found that the modern concept of creativity lacks the dimension of moral goodness; a logical speculation on the problem raised by this is that while modern people look on Creation as the product of God for humanity they neglect the defining feature of God's creativity in the Creation: moral perfection. This view is supported by the rise of the morally neutral mechanistic view of the Cosmos. Additionally, Niu and Sternberg argue that in the Chinese cultural tradition creativity is viewed as having social and moral values while in the Western cultural tradition it is defined more by its special individual characteristics.³⁵⁹ This conclusion, in fact, is found to be supported by the fact that Taoist attitudes toward nature could help in revising the traditional Christian view of nature and position of humanity within Creation.

Having learnt the concepts of creativity in both Western and Chinese cultural traditions from ancient times to the modern period, it is plain that the Western cultural tradition along with the Christian tradition leaves the element of the moral goodness out of creativity. Thus, when Western scientists claim to be thinking "God's thoughts after him," it is only true in part because scientists do not have the same creativity as God, let alone His moral perfection. In contrast, Chinese tradition, together with Taoist tradition, has left room for moral goodness since ancient times. However, Niu

³⁵⁸ See the table provided in Weihua Niu and Robert J. Sternberg, "The Philosophical Roots of Western and Eastern Conceptions of Creativity", p. 19.

³⁵⁹ Weihua Niu and R. J. Sternberg, "Contemporary Studies on the Concept of Creativity: the East and the West," *Journal of Creative Behavior* 36 (2002), pp. 269-288.

and Sternberg's analysis overlooks one element which needs to be added to Chinese/Taoist creativity, a crucial one. From the Taoist perspective, Niu and Sternberg's analysis presents an incomplete account of creativity on the part of *Dao*. The paramount feature of the *Dao* is that it is the cosmic order. The cosmic order is the fundamental support of Taoist harmony and humanity is supposed to maintain this cosmic order. This is the problematic aspect of human creation; now that it has been identified, how it can be improved in our times and for our future? Again, how Taoism could help to extend the limited ecological concern of the Christian tradition? It is acknowledged that modern people cannot retrieve an ancient lifestyle and no ancient lifestyle would be helpful for solving our modern problems effectively. Hence, Cobb asks "If the continuation of our present direction leads to horror, if the return to a primitive consciousness is impossible ... where shall we turn?"³⁶⁰ Moltmann also questions, "A world in which human beings are no longer dependent on nature, but where nature is dependent on human beings..."³⁶¹ Where it is moving to now? Where are we moving to?"³⁶² The findings of previous chapters have alerted us to humanity's greater stress on the exploitation of Creation than on its intrinsic value. Therefore, this research suggests that the people of human beings our own time must carefully reconsider what the real meaning of life is. What should human beings do in order to sustain the life of the creation and their own?

A universal principle, from the moral and ethical perspective, for tackling the modern ecological crisis would be to retrieve the goodness of the creation and the moral

³⁶⁰ John B. Cobb, *Is It Too Late? : a Theology of Ecology*, p. 48.

³⁶¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, p. 1.

³⁶² *ibid.*, p. 8.

values of humans as created beings. However, what steps should we take? This research offers three approaches which could also answer the above questions. First, we should allow the holistic creativity of God to return to Creation; second, we should enrich the concept of Western individual creativity with moral goodness; and third, we should enable the Taoist ‘way’ to work within Christian ideology. Primarily, the *Yinyang* point of view should be applied in order to hasten the understanding of creation and creativity in the Christian tradition. That is to say, creation and creativity can be understood as having two opposed attributes, dominant and recessive, but human beings should value both of these and let them work together to sustain creation. Furthermore, the mutual operations of the two should be considered the invisible *Dao* which humanity should spontaneously follow.

6.3 Introducing the Theory of Threefold Cooperation and Interaction into Christian Cosmology: Life, *Ziran*, *Xiangtong* and *Zhonghe*

Now that we have identified the problematic aspect and recognised the merits of the Chinese/Taoist concepts of creativity, this section takes a further step in integrating Taoist merits in Christian thinking to supplement the limitations of Christian anthropocentrism. However, can Taoism be of use in today’s ecological crisis? Roger T. Ames answers,

“Taoism’s concreteness returns us to our own particularity as the beginning point of the natural order. We cannot play the theoretician and derive an environmental ethic by appeal to universal principles, but must apply ourselves to the aesthetic task of cultivating an

environmental ethos in our own place and time and recommending this project to others by our participation in the environment.”³⁶³

Moltmann adds, “Ancient sages’ exploration of the relationship between heaven, earth and humans seems to indicate a new way of development for the modern world. It is a way in which the Earth and humans co-exist and grow together in harmony,”³⁶⁴ in an Inter-faith Dialogue with Weiming Tu, Moltmann not only answers the opening question, but also opens a gateway to a Christian-Taoist encounter which might offer a solution to the modern ecological predicament.³⁶⁵ According to section 5.2, on the differences between the essence of human creativity and that of God’s creativity, it cannot be denied that human beings should take the responsibility for dealing with its ecological crisis and transcending the limits of our creativity to preserve the environment. Therefore, this section, aligned with Moltmann’s insight, seeks to introduce the core teaching of the *Taiping Jing* into Christianity and benefit from so doing in order to correct the faultiness of the Christian anthropocentrism which is condemned by White. In Chapters Three and Four, above, the concept of *Taiping* and the theories of *Waxing* and *Pinang* were introduced. *Taiping* was seen to be a holistic presentation of harmony and both theories explain the importance of balance and the mutual dependence of all things. Here we suggested a sophisticated Taoist teaching from the theory of *Sanhexiangtion*, i.e., the threefold cooperation and interaction of the *Taiping Jing* with Christianity to formulate a possible approach to alleviating the

³⁶³ Roger T. Ames, “Taoism and the Nature of Nature,” *Environmental Ethics* 8 (1986): p. 348.

³⁶⁴ Beijing Forum 2010: Inter-faith Dialogue between Jürgen Moltmann and Weiming Tu, http://pkunews.pku.edu.cn/xwzh/2010-11/08/content_187188.htm. Also available from <http://tuweiming.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Tu-Moltmann-En.pdf> (accessed 18 July 2011).

³⁶⁵ Although the Inter-faith Dialogue between Moltmann and Tu mainly focused on Confucianism and Christianity, the concept of a harmony between heaven, earth and humans is not exclusive to Confucianism, but is also important in Taoism. The *Taiping Jing* can be considered a prominent Taoist scripture in presenting the relationship between heaven, earth and humanity.

present ecological crisis. This sophisticated teaching undoubtedly contains various utopian ideas of religious and philosophical Taoism. However, in this section, we selected only the most relevant and feasible concept, *Zhonghe*, to demonstrate how and in what Christianity can benefit and learn from Taoism how to release the tension between itself and nature. This research takes *Zhonghe* to be the most applicable and relevant concept. Thus in the remainder of this section, the sub-concepts of *Zhonghe* will also be applied as means for extending the limitations of Christian anthropocentrism.

This raises the question, what does *Zhonghe* mean? In Tu's interpretation, "*Zhong*" means "Centrality," a "state of mind wherein one is absolutely unperturbed by outside force." Tu further explains that when the *Zhong* in human beings unites with Heaven and Earth then it is "an actual human achievement"³⁶⁶ of which "*He*," *i.e.*, harmony, is the outcome; Lai summarises *Zhonghe* as "a way, a condition and a factor that may potentially contribute to the formation of harmonious relationships between Heaven, Earth and humanity."³⁶⁷ Therefore, it can be stated that the concept of *Zhonghe* is analogous to some extent with the notion of divine/natural creativity. Nevertheless, *Zhonghe* still possesses its uniqueness; the concept of *Zhonghe* "argues for the view that it is the great responsibility of humankind to maintain harmonious communication with Heaven and Earth in order to bring about cosmic harmony and social peace."³⁶⁸ Where then should *Zhonghe* function? Before we deal with this question, we should first learn the definition of 'threefold' in the *Taiping Jing*. To

³⁶⁶ Weiming Tu, *Centrality and Commonality: an Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 20.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*

³⁶⁸ Chi-Tim Lai, "The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the Scripture of Great Peace: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature", p. 96.

start with, the *Taiping Jing* inherits the central Taoist ideologies of *Wuxing* and *Yinyang*, but this scripture also has its own innovation, which is the theory of *Sanhexiangtion*. Instead of following *Yinyang* theory, to confer on all things two attributions, the *Taiping Jing* groups all things into three categories: *Tian*, *i.e.*, Heaven, *Di*, *i.e.*, Earth and *Ren*, *i.e.*, Humanity.³⁶⁹ This threefold classification provides a subtle coverage of all things and delineates the detailed responsibility of these three groups, notably human responsibility.³⁷⁰ With particular historical backgrounds and social strata in mind, the *Taiping Jing* further develops this ideology with the concepts of *Taiyin*, *i.e.*, the great *Yin*, *Taiyang*, *i.e.*, the great *Yang* and *Zhonghe*.³⁷¹ This implies that *Zhonghe* itself is one of the essential attributes of Taoist cosmology. However, *Zhonghe* is not an essential attribute only; it is also a bridge between humanity and nature, as Tu defines it. Where does this bridge lead? The *Taiping Jing* answers “Then they can achieve one common objective, build one family and form one body,”³⁷² and “Heaven makes them depend on each other. None of the three must be amiss.”³⁷³ In other words, if the harmony between *Tian*, *Di* and *Ren* is brought about, the era of

³⁶⁹ In fact, the idea of the unity of Heaven, Earth and Humanity derives from Confucian thinker of the late Zhou Xunzi 荀子, who stated that “Heaven has its seasons, earth its resources and humans their government. This is how people are able to form a triad with Heaven and earth.” See Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan and Burton Watson, comps., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 148.

³⁷⁰ This point is discussed later in this section along with Cobb’s perception of human responsibility for alleviating the ecological crisis.

³⁷¹ Max Kaltenmark, “The Ideology of the T’ai-p’ing ching,” in *Facets of Taoism*, p. 26. Also see Livia Kohn, “sanyi,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Vol. II, pp. 854-856.

³⁷² Barbara Hendrischke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, p. 312.

³⁷³ *ibid.*

Taihe, i.e., the Great Harmony 太和 which is the equivalent of *Taiping*, will arise; cosmic harmony and social peace will reign.³⁷⁴

Since this bridge functions logically, it can be borrowed from Taoism and applied to Christianity. How could a bridge between humanity and nature in Christianity be built up? An environmentalist³⁷⁵, George Perkins Marsh, suggests that modern man would resolve the ecological crisis, if he could

“... become a co-worker with nature in the reconstruction of the damaged fabric which the negligence and wantonness of former lodgers has rendered untenable. He must aid her in reclothing the mountain slopes with forests and vegetable mould, thereby restoring the fountains which she provided to water them; in checking the devastating fury of torrents and bringing back the surface drainage to its primitive narrow channels.”³⁷⁶

Marsh's suggestion is a good vehicle for explicating the concept of *Zhonghe* to Christianity. The core principle of the *Taiping Jing* is to encourage human beings to unite with *Tian* and *Di* and thus become co-workers with nature as a realistic approach for modern people to reach union with *Tian* and *Di*. However, do Christians agree with Marsh's opinion? Bearing in mind Cobb's perception of the ecological crisis, his vote would probably be in favour of Marsh's proposal. How could Cobb support Marsh? To answer this question we should turn for help to Cobb's awareness of human responsibility for the environment. Cobb believes that to be co-workers with nature requires human beings to take responsibility. Hence, he proposes a *Yang*

³⁷⁴ Chi-Tim Lai, “The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the Scripture of Great Peace: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature”, p. 96.

³⁷⁵ See John H. Lienhard, “No. 595: George Perkins Marsh,” *Engines of Our Ingenuity*, <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi595.htm> (accessed 18 August 2011).

³⁷⁶ George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), p. 35.

suggestion, stating that modern people need to make “active efforts to save our environment based on adequate scientific information and technological skill.”³⁷⁷ In other words, Cobb is intent on telling us that a new cosmology must be constructed on the basis of these two human-generated assistants. This betrays Cobb’s unreconstructed belief in what may be called the creative outcome of human creativity. Although this clearly indicates that humanity has responsibility for nature, are not these two assistants accused by White and Cobb himself of causing the ecological crisis? Indeed they are, but Cobb is not self-contradictory. With Henry Nelson Wieman, he believes in the value of the human creative outcomes, science and technology, so long as they are used in ideal ways to bring about creative good. Wieman explains,

“We shall try to demonstrate that there is a creative process working in our midst which transforms the human mind ... We shall then show how transformation by this process is always in the direction of greater good. The human good thus created includes goods, satisfaction of human wants, richness of quality and power of man to control the course of events.”³⁷⁸

Cobb’s suggestion may be helpful in terms of complementing the deficient elements in human creativity and does not disturb the modern attachment to the development of science and technology. It cannot be denied that creative good is very often neglected by modern man’s creative outcomes.

However, it is still not entirely convincing that science and technology can resolve the modern ecological crisis. On this point, the concept of *Zhonghe* can help Cobb by

³⁷⁷ John B. Cobb, *Is It Too Late? : a Theology of Ecology*, p. 46.

³⁷⁸ Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 17.

suggesting as a principle the concept of *Xiangtong*, i.e., reciprocal communication. The *Taiping Jing* preaches that “Heaven commands all beings in their confusion to interact as groups of three, combine their energy and be of the same mind.”³⁷⁹ This statement makes it clear that in the beginning the harmonious state was brought out by the union of three groups. Hence, humanity should understand and interact with the other two groups, *Tain* and *Di*, so that humanity can gain the right to be a co-worker with nature; then all things would reach the harmonious state. But the *Taiping Jing* warns, “Should one of [these] be grief-stricken and not play its role, all three risk destruction.”³⁸⁰ In other words, if human beings, instead of learning and trying to communicate with Heaven and Earth, merely exploit and destroy them, we must face the consequences of our barbarity and pay for our cruelty. However, it must be admitted that such concepts are downplayed, if not neglected, in Christianity; while in the *Taiping Jing* it is a core practice for bringing about the state of harmony. But how can Taoist assistance help human beings to communicate and work together with nature? Nicholas Rescher states, “For objective communication to be possible, both sender and receiver must focus their discussion on a common object of concern.”³⁸¹ Marsh says that nature and humanity have a common object of concern. In their reciprocal communication, nature and humanity are both senders and receivers. Rescher further explains that sender and receiver must have a “commonality of communicative process.”³⁸² Do humanity and nature in fact have communicative commonality? Thus challenged, Taoism is confident, since all things are produced by the *Dao* and the *Dao*

³⁷⁹ Barbara Hendrichke, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping Jing and the Beginnings of Daoism*, p. 312.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*

³⁸¹ Nicholas Rescher, *Communicative Pragmatism and Other Philosophical Essays on Language* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p. 26.

³⁸² *ibid.*

Itself is the communicative commonality between thing and thing. As regards Christianity, we turn to Cobb's reinterpretations of life and of Life for answer. Cobb, like Wieman, calls created goods "life" and the creative good "Life" with a capital initial.³⁸³ For Cobb, "created goods are living things with all their feelings, thoughts and valuings and all the artifacts, communities and institutions they have created" while "creative good is ... Life that is to be trusted and served."³⁸⁴ It seems to be the case that Cobb's Life presents the *Ying* aspect of God to complement the *Yang* aspect of his suggestion. The neurophysiologist, John Zachary Young supports Cobb's point, explaining that "the knowledge we have allows us to understand the aims of our lives and yet recognise our weaknesses and imperfections. It suggests that we can continue to try to improve on them and gives us the faith to do so."³⁸⁵ However, Young does not solely support Cobb by admiring human knowledge, but also praises what Paul Tillich calls "the depth of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation."³⁸⁶ What does "the depth" mean? Tillich answers "the depth is what the word God means."³⁸⁷ Young responds that "this is what I mean by the experience of the central part of life."³⁸⁸ In other words, human knowledge, in Young's eyes, equates to the experience of "the central part of life", which in Tillich's eyes contains "the depth" of our being, of our ultimate concern. In sum, for both Tillich and Young, human knowledge should not only cover "created goods," but

³⁸³ Cobb's vision of Life is very much influenced by Alfred North Whitehead, but they do not use quite the same language. See Alfred North Whitehead, David Ray Griffin, Donald W. Sherburne, eds., *Process and Reality: an Essay in Cosmology* (Corrected edition, New York: Free Press, 1978) (Original edition, 1929, London and New York: Macmillan).

³⁸⁴ Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Liberation of Life: from the Cell to the Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 180.

³⁸⁵ John Zachary Young, *Programs of the Brain: Based on the Gifford Lectures, 1975-7* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 259.

³⁸⁶ Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1948), p. 57.

³⁸⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸⁸ John Zachary Young, *Programs of the Brain: Based on the Gifford Lectures, 1975-7*, p. 259.

should also contain “creative good.” In other words, they both believe that human beings could communicate with nature through creative good. Hence, in light of Cobb’s thinking, we would presume that adequate scientific information and technological skill would mean the integration of Life and life, entailing the fusion of creation and creativity.

The presentations of creation and life are concrete and visible and not to be questioned. The present section deals next with the presentation of the invisible, focusing not on the physical presentations of life but on its meaning and essence of Life. What does Life mean to humanity? To this, Cobb replies that “Life as the central religious symbol is God.”³⁸⁹ In this sense, Cobb’s Life is identical with Tillich’s “the depth” and Young’s “the central part of life.” Although God has many names, Cobb believes that Life is the most proper one.³⁹⁰ Cobb further explains that “God includes the world and the world includes God. God perfects the world and the world perfects God ... Whereas no world can exist without God, God can exist without this world.”³⁹¹ In other words, Cobb tells us that the Creation cannot exist without God and life has no meaning without Life. This conclusion echoes the *Taiping Jing*, which says “All things in Heaven and Earth are attributed as *yin* and *yang*, the interaction between *yin* and *yang* enables them to give birth to and nourish one another.”³⁹² This is to say, *Dao* does not belong to *Yin* or *Yang*, but generates them both. Hence, *Dao* can exist without *Yin* and *Yang*, but *Yin* and *Yang* have no meaning without *Dao*.

³⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

³⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 197.

³⁹² Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 221, slightly modified from Lai Chi-Tim’s translation. See Chi-Tim Lai, “The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the Scripture of Great Peace: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature”, p. 97.

Furthermore, the Creation, life and the attributions of *Yinyang* are visible and concrete, while God, Life and the *Dao* are invisible and abstract, yet crucial. From this point of view, we would argue that the Creation and life belong to the *Yang* attribution, while God and Life belong to the *Yin* aspect. From the same point of view, Cobb's reinterpretation and integration of life and Life are identical to the Taoist cosmology. Needham summarises it as an organismic process in which all things interact with and are transformed by *Yin* and *Yang*.³⁹³ From the perspective of the *Taiping Jing*, this organismic process is exactly the meaning of *Zhonghe*.

However, are God and Life actually the same? According to the Christian theology, God is purposive, loving being, but Cobb does not address all the fundamental features of Life. Cobb, in fact, has prepared himself to answer this question. He says that "Life is purposeful", neither "the sheer blind 'ongoingness' of things"³⁹⁴ nor with only "one goal for the course of evolution on our planet."³⁹⁵ Cobb explains that "Life is not only purposeful in itself, but it is the source of all the derivative purposes in living things"³⁹⁶ and "Life has achieved rich value in dolphins as well as in human beings."³⁹⁷ In other words, animals are not subordinate to us, but are all different forms of Life. Cobb further explains that Life does not see all the entities as the same, for each entity in each moment has a specific purpose. The purpose of Life is to let each entity to achieve a certain optimum value in itself. Hence, he argues, "Life is the

³⁹³ Joseph Needham and Ling Wang, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 291.

³⁹⁴ Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Liberation of Life: from the Cell to the Community*, p. 197.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 196.

³⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 197.

supreme instance of love.”³⁹⁸ If this is so, the preciousness is within both humanity and the rest of Creation. Cobb’s explanation of Life invites the Taoist consonance. From another perspective, in the *Taiping Jing*, *Ziran* is also considered a means for communication between humanity and nature. Although nature cannot directly communicate with humanity in words, a law in nature works to allow states of harmony to occur.³⁹⁹ This feature of *Ziran*, in fact, is identical to Cobb’s statement that “Life is the supreme instance of love.” In other words, to an extent the roles of Life and *Ziran* are equivalent. However, Life can still benefit from *Ziran*, for in Taoism *Ziran* is a mediator of the communication between humanity and nature, although Cobb does not seem to point out this feature of Life. How can humanity communicate through *Ziran*? The *Taiping Jing* urges human beings to behave according to the principle of *Ziran*. If they did so, humanity and nature would be able to respond to each other so that communication could take place. Furthermore, *Ziran* not only suggests itself as the will of the *Dao*, but also as the principle of heaven’s judgment of human beings. Only when *Ziran* fulfils itself in various forms of being can the communication between humanity and nature be considered valid.⁴⁰⁰ In sum, the potential solution for the ecological crisis is to enable *Ziran*/Life to work freely among all the parts of Creation. On the basis of what the *Taiping Jing* tells us, it can work in this way because *Zhonghe* is generated from the *Tao* alone; human beings have no power to produce it. Nevertheless, this does not mean that humanity bears no responsibility for *Zhonghe*. According to the *Taiping Jing*, Heaven, Earth and humanity take different responsibilities in maintaining the state of harmony. That is to

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 198.

³⁹⁹ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 154.

⁴⁰⁰ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 218.

say, humanity has certain missions to carry out in order to maintain and preserve *Zhonghe* and enable it to function appropriately.

It may be asked how *Zhonghe* can function appropriately in a Christian environment. As noted above, the resolving of the ecological crisis requires humans to take responsibility, but what responsibility should and could we take? Albert Schweitzer suggests that “Ethics is the infinitely extended responsibility toward all life,”⁴⁰¹ adding that human beings should have “*Reverence for Life*”⁴⁰² Charles Birch also proclaims “the appropriate attitude toward life is respect.”⁴⁰³ Although Schweitzer and Birch’s concepts of life are not quite the same as Cobb’s, both of them still express agreement with Cobb. A common point can be found in Schweitzer, Birch and Cobb’s ideas of life and Life which is the invisible but crucial part of the Creation, and it is also the element needed for human creativity. According to Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, one of the foundations of respect is fairness/reciprocity.⁴⁰⁴ That is to say, humanity should not impose its dominion on nature: we should allow all things to return to their own original nature. In conclusion, Cobb’s reinterpretation of Life successfully builds a platform for communication between humanity and nature. The Taoist ideology of *Zhonghe* by this means is also effectively introduced into Christianity. However, Cobb’s reinterpretation of Life cannot properly explain how humanity can be

⁴⁰¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1949), p. 241.

⁴⁰² See Albert Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life* (New York: Irvington, 1993), pp. 108-117.

⁴⁰³ Charles Birch, “Christian Obligation for the Liberation of Nature” in *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches in Ecological Theology*, eds. Charles Birch, William Eaken and Jay B. McDaniel (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 60.

⁴⁰⁴ Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, “When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize,” *Social Justice Research* Vol. 20, No. 1, March (2007), p. 104.

responsible to nature. To tackle this limitation in Cobb, we must turn for assistance to Moltmann's reinterpretation of *Sabbath*.

6.4 Introducing the Theory of Threefold Cooperation and Interaction into Christian Cosmology: *Sabbath*, *Wuwei* and *Zhonghe*

“Is transformation of industrial societies or the ecological reintegration of human civilization into the nature of earth's organism still possible?”⁴⁰⁵ According to the conclusion of the Christian-Taoist encounter in the previous section, the answer seems to be positive. We have attempted to integrate the concept of Life with the concepts of *Ziran* and *Xiangtong*, insofar as the ideology of *Zhonghe* allows, and the outcome product appears to be fruitful. This implies that Taoist thought may be helpful in terms of supplementing the limitations of Christian anthropocentrism. However, it also has been observed that no integration of the concepts of Life and *Xiangtong* can suggest how humanity might discharge its responsibilities to nature. In other words, the Christian-Taoist encounter in terms of resolving the ecological crisis is not yet comprehensive. A possible answer suggests itself: *Ziran* and *Wuwei* have been recognised as two core concepts of Taoism and “*Wuwei* is the methodological principle to actualize *Ziran*.”⁴⁰⁶ Following the reconciling of *Ziran* with *Zhonghe*, above, this section studies how to make *Wuwei* compatible with *Zhonghe* and fuse this concept with the concept of *Sabbath* to formulate a philosophy of human responsibility and action towards nature.

⁴⁰⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, “Reconciliation with Nature,” *Word & World* 11/2 (1991), p. 117.

⁴⁰⁶ See Xiaogan Liu, “Non-Action and the Environment Today: a Conceptual and Applied Study of Laozi's Philosophy,” in *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, p. 316.

Moltmann argues that “The best creation wisdom is to be found in the Jewish theology and practice of Sabbath. In abandoning the Sabbath, the Gentile Christian Churches have lost this means of access and we generally overlook it altogether”.⁴⁰⁷ In other words, Moltmann wants to remind us that modern people have forgotten the wisdom which God revealed to humanity. Therefore, by reviewing and integrating these two concepts, modern people might regain the best creation wisdom and, further, might sustain the Creation by human creation. Beyond this point, there are still extra two reasons for this Christian-Taoist integration. The first is that human beings should fulfil their responsibility to nature. The second is that we should respond to White’s perception of the roots of the modern ecological crisis and develop his suggestion for relieving man’s plight. We took White’s point that, “by destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects,” as well as his reference to St. Francis of Assisi at the outset of this research. This research basically agrees with White’s proposal that man should be friendly to nature. Nevertheless, White himself makes his argument and proposal ambiguous by exposing Francis as “clearly heretical.”⁴⁰⁸ In other words, it can be found that White’s proposal is not yet complete and mature. Moltmann argues that “Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving and therefore revolutionising and transforming the present.”⁴⁰⁹ Moltmann, again, wants to tell his readers that the ecological crisis is a contemporary problem and it is the world where we live that must be saved, rather than looking forward a new world to replace it. Moltmann explains that the biblical verse in the *Book of Revelation*: “See, I am

⁴⁰⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: an Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, p. xiii.

⁴⁰⁸ Lynn White, Jr., “*The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*”, p. 1206.

⁴⁰⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *A Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 16.

making all things new”⁴¹⁰ does not indicate that God will create another world for humanity; instead this must refer to “the fundamental alteration of the existing one”.

⁴¹¹ This research agrees with Moltmann and argues that the Christian-Taoist integration of the concepts of *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* might be a solution, since it deals with this confusion and provides a well-developed alternative to a fundamental alteration of the existing creation and also an answer in the present ecological crisis.

Bearing in mind the potential advantage and aid of the integration of *Wuwei* and *Sabbath*, we should explore in some depth this Christian-Taoist integration. However, questions may be raised by both Christians and Taoists. First of all, a Christian may ask: what does *Wuwei* mean and a Taoist may ask: what is the meaning of *Sabbath*? Further, both of them may ask: how can the integration of *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* be applied to Christian tradition and how can it be used to alleviate the ecological crisis? First of all, literally, *Wu* means ‘no’ as well as ‘there is not’ and *Wei* means ‘action.’ So, *Wuwei* is translated into the English ‘non-action’ or ‘taking no action’. According to the fourth commandment of the *Decalogue*: “But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work – you , your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.”⁴¹² From this point of view, both *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* clearly mean ‘doing nothing.’ In other words, on the Sabbath nature is not disturbed by humanity and can restore its rhythms. This also points to the primary meaning of the rest of creation. However, the origin of *Sabbath* is debatable. Victor Hamilton believes there is a connection between the

⁴¹⁰ Rev. 21:5.

⁴¹¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, p. 52.

⁴¹² Exod. 20:10.

Hebrew word for “rest” and the Mesopotamian word for “full moon.”⁴¹³ Gnana Robinson also argues that *Sabbath* was associated before the fall of the Davidic kingdom with the day of the royal full moon and the celebrations on the fifteenth day of the month.⁴¹⁴ However, the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* explains that “*šabbāt* derives from the vb. *šāḇat* in the specialised meaning ‘celebrate,’ in the OT the noun *šabbāt* refers consistently to the weekly day of rest that is independent of the lunar phases and has no reference to the day of the full moon.”⁴¹⁵ In conclusion, although scholars hold different opinions about *Sabbath*, they commonly agree that the word *Sabbath* contains the meaning of ‘rest’.

Nevertheless, as well as this superficial meaning, *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* both contain a further significance. Picking up the basic interpretation of *Wuwei*, Taoists would remind Christian followers to recall the principle of the *Yinyang* theory. That is to say, we should look at the concept of *Wuwei* from two directions at once. *You* is opposite to *Wu* and means ‘there is;’ thus *Wuwei* means the opposite of *Youwei*. If human beings are supposed to act as *Wuwei*, who then should act as *Youwei*? From a Taoist perspective, the *Dao* should act as *Youwei* and humanity should act as *Wuwei*. *Genesis* has told us that God created humanity and the remainder of the creation in the beginning; later on, He empowered humanity to rule over the remainder of the creation. On the same basis as this story in *Genesis*, the *Dao*’s acting as *Youwei* is logical. Nevertheless, the story of Creation is not only a way of showing what God did

⁴¹³ Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1990), p. 142.

⁴¹⁴ Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988).

⁴¹⁵ G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., Douglas W. Stott, trans., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. XIV (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2004), p. 389.

for humanity, but also reveals what God did for Himself, to reveal that “God’s sovereign purpose is what the world is becoming.”⁴¹⁶ In other words, the *Dao* presents its *Youwei* by not only creating, but also reigning. If the *Dao* acts itself as *Youwei*, then humanity is supposed to act as *Youwei* since we are the *Imago Dei*. However, both the *Daode Jing* and the *Taiping Jing* tell us that humanity should act as *Wuwei*. So how should humanity act? Are Taoism and Christianity incompatible? Certainly not. As noted, *Wuwei* is one of the core concepts of Taoism and this Chinese religion impresses us by its passive and non-interfering character. However, this passive lifestyle does not impress and is not accepted by people today. Thus, *Wuwei* should not only be understood as taking no action. From the content of the *Daode Jing*, Laozi himself does not literally promote inaction⁴¹⁷ either, and it would be slovenly to interpret the Taoist concept of *Wuwei* on a literal level only.

The appropriate interpretation of *Wuwei* may be that, as Xiaogan Liu argues, *Wuwei* means “actions as without action.”⁴¹⁸ Needham claims that *Wuwei* as “Refraining from activity contrary to Nature.”⁴¹⁹ In other words, Liu and Needham believe that human beings should act in a way that allows nature to develop as itself without human interference. From Laozi, Liu and Needham’s perceptions of *Wuwei*, we can infer that *Wuwei* is actually the presentation of *Youwei*. Nevertheless, human *Youwei* means not acting according to human promptings, but on the basis of God’s will. *Isaiah* tells us that “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your

⁴¹⁶ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 69.

⁴¹⁷ See the *Daode Jing*, chapter 17 as well as chapters 2, 9, 77.

⁴¹⁸ Xiaogan Liu, “Non-Action and the Environment Today: a Conceptual and Applied Study of Laozi’s Philosophy”, p. 316.

⁴¹⁹ Joseph Needham and Ling Wang, *Science and Civilisation in China*, p. 68.

ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”⁴²⁰ These biblical verses echo and provide the *explication de texte* of the essence of *Wuwei*. That is to say, in these terms Christianity can comprehend the advanced meaning of the Taoist concept of *Wuwei*. Richard H. Lowery states that “... Sabbath is portrayed as a fundamental principle of the universe, the climax of the world’s creation at the beginning of time.”⁴²¹ In other words, *Sabbath* is the product of an activity, as a day designed by God in which He Himself and humanity can celebrate the rest of the Creation.⁴²² *Genesis* further tells us that the Sabbath is not only the final day in a sequence of seven days, but is the “crown of history;” “[without] the Sabbath quiet, history becomes the self-destruction of humanity.”⁴²³ In other words, humanity must comply with the demand to keep the Sabbath because it is God’s design for nature and a command for all human beings. To sum up, the Christian *Sabbath* does not mean a day for the cessation of all activities, but rather an imitation of God’s action, behaving according to God’s will as the chosen people are supposed to do.

If we translate this Christian sense into the Taoist context, then the purpose of *Wuwei* may to an extent be understood as the purpose of the Sabbath. *Wuwei*, in fact, is the human being’s highest response to nature. Laozi tells us “Therefore the sages got their knowledge without travelling; gave their (right) names to things without seeing them; and accomplished their ends without any purpose of doing so.”⁴²⁴ In other words, the sages were actually doing nothing, but have nevertheless, they gained all due knowledge and attained all due goals through this non-action. This consequence is

⁴²⁰ Isa. 55: 8-9.

⁴²¹ Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), p. 79.

⁴²² See Gen. 2:1-4.

⁴²³ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: an Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, p. 139.

⁴²⁴ The *Daode Jing*, chapter 47.

exactly what is advocated by Laozi – “gaining the world by doing nothing.”⁴²⁵ Put another way, the fulfilment of *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* is a state of perfect equilibrium. At the same time, this also means that human behaviours are united with the providence of the *Tao*/God. Therefore, in light of Laozi’s teaching, *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* can be concluded as “doing nothing and with nothing left undone 無為而無不為.”⁴²⁶ James A. Sanders adds,

“The bible read as a paradigm of the verbs of God’s activity permit us to conjugate in our own contexts the verbs of God’s continuing activity and how we may pursue in our time the integrity of truth. That is God’s oneness both ontologically and ethically.”⁴²⁷

In other words, the way for humanity to continue God’s activity is to fulfil *Wuwei* and *Sabbath* and this is the climax of the creation of the *Dao*/God. This implies that the Creation is not yet complete; it is in fact still an open system.⁴²⁸ So, humanity is entitled to continue and perfect Creation, that is to say, humanity plays a role in this creative activity and can do so only through cooperation with God’s *Youwei*. Without this, the transformation of God’s *Yuwei* to humanity’s *Youwei*, or rather *Wuwei*, this creation cannot be consummated.

Given the meaning of *Sabbath* and the practice of both God and humanity on the Sabbath, it is more than a “seventh day festival”. In fact it connotes a way in which life is to be understood and lived every day. However, in the above discussion we saw that *Wuwei* means to act, but not to act against the natural law. The *Encyclopedia of*

⁴²⁵ See The *Daode Jing*, chapters 48 and 57. Also see Xiaogan Liu, “On the Special Meaning of Ch’u in the Tao-te-ching,” *Hanxue Yanjiu* 漢學研究 IX, No. I (2000): pp. 23-32.

⁴²⁶ The *Daode Jing*, chapters 37 and 48.

⁴²⁷ James A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 73.

⁴²⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, esp. chapter 3.

Taoism interprets *Wuwei* well: “to do things the natural way, by not interfering with the patterns, rhythms and structures of nature, without imposing one’s own intentions upon the organization of the world.”⁴²⁹ The *Taiping Jing* agrees with this definition to a great extent, but does not fully accept that “... in order to be in consonance with the Tao in nature one must withdraw from active involvement in social and political affairs and learn how to preserve and nourish nature and human life.”⁴³⁰ Instead, the *Taiping Jing* states that “The will of Heaven calls for the concrete mission of giving life to and nourishing all the ten thousand beings”⁴³¹. The above Taoist context rather advocates clearly and strongly that human beings should act in order to maintain and nourish nature. But rest was found to be the significant feature of *Sabbath* in the above discussions. It is time to take a closer look at the meaning of rest. In fact, rest contains the concepts of “finished”, and the “blessing” and “hallowing” of creation. It seems that the holistic meaning of the Creation is revealed to humanity through these concepts, in order for to teach them that they themselves are fundamentally created as an integral part of creation and to care for creation is the vocation of humanity.⁴³² From this perspective, *Genesis* is supportive of the *Taiping Jing*, to further justify the precept that human action is and should be *Youwei*, according to God’s will. In addition, it can be seen that such human *Youwei* is in line with the principles of Life and of God’s creativity. If human beings could allow the nature of Life and of God’s creativity to work inside them, then they would be able to act according to God’s will.

⁴²⁹ Livia Kohn, “wuwei,” *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, Volume II, p. 1067.

⁴³⁰ Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Ecological Themes in Taoism and Confucianism,” in eds. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim, *Worldviews and Ecology* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1993), p. 152.

⁴³¹ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 515. Slightly modified from Lai Chi-Tim’s translation, see Chi-Tim Lai, “The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the Scripture of Great Peace: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature”, p. 98.

⁴³² Claus Westerman, *Genesis 1-11: a Commentary* (London: SPCK. 1984), p. 98.

In this case, *Youwei* of human beings would not only be an inherent part of them but would also be a continuation of God's *Youwei*.

Having explored the meanings of *Wuwei* and *Sabbath*, we should now ask what Christianity can learn from the concept of *Wuwei* insofar as overlaps *Zhonghe* and how it can cooperate with Moltmann's interpretation of *Sabbath*? Moltmann, concluding the story of the Creation states,

“Human beings are the last to be created. In so far they are the apex of created things. But they are not the ‘crown of creation’. It is the Sabbath with which God crowns the creation which he beholds as very good”.⁴³³

What Moltmann means is that the Creation is sacred because the seventh day is sanctified by God. In other words, *Sabbath* is created as a symbol of the full completion of Creation. Moltmann explains that the order of this sanctification should be, first, *Sabbath* and then in turn the people and the land of Israel.⁴³⁴ In other words, the *Sabbath* is not related to the moon, but associated with holiness. The sanctification of *Sabbath* involves not only the creation, but also God, Himself and the *Imago Dei*. Moltmann further reminds us that, according to *Leviticus 25:11*, *Sabbath* is also extended to the earth.⁴³⁵ Therefore, *Sabbath* is not only for God and for the apex of creation, but for all Creation.

However, the concept of sanctification does not seem to draw the attention of either Taoism or the *Taiping Jing*. Instead, Taoism focuses more on the concept of harmony

⁴³³ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: an Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, p. 187.

⁴³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 285.

⁴³⁵ *ibid.*

from a holistic perspective, as does the *Taiping Jing*, whereas traditional Christianity has been shown to lay more stress on the concepts of sanctification than of holistic harmony. However, the concepts of sanctification and of holistic harmony do not in fact conflict. Moltmann notes this point and wants to call Christian attention to the importance of this harmony. He asserts that “People who are in harmony with God and themselves are holy and happy.”⁴³⁶ However, Moltmann may still require assistance from Taoism. In earlier discussion, *Wuwei* in the *Taiping Jing* not only calls on humanity to obey the *Dao*’s rules, but also urges us to reveal the *Dao*’s characteristics, so as to bring into being the state of harmony. What then is *Dao*’s characteristic? The *Taiping Jing* says,

“*Dao* is heaven. It is yang and is in charge of giving birth. *De* is the earth. It is yin and is in charge of nurturing ... When a *Dao* that flourishes is in charge of giving birth, all things come to life. When a *de* that flourishes is in charge of nourishing, all creatures and citizens are nurtured and there are no grudges.”⁴³⁷

In other words, human beings should practise *De*, which means that human beings should be virtuous. Who are the virtuous and how can the *De* be practised? The *Taiping Jing* does not provide a clear answer to these questions. However, Laozi did answer them in the Era of Warring States (403-221 C.E.). A sage is a person who is virtuous and promises,

“I will do nothing (of purpose) and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it and the

⁴³⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life* (London: SCM, 1997), p. 48.

⁴³⁷ Ming Wang, *Taiping Jing Hejiao*, p. 218.

people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity.”⁴³⁸

This makes it clear that a sage should discipline himself not to interfere with people and also to let people achieve perfection by themselves. Moltmann claims that “God never appears mightier than in the act of his self-limitation.”⁴³⁹ This indicates that God does not act to interfere and disturb His creation. On the one hand, then, according to the statement of the *Taiping Jing*, we find that *Dao* and *De* are inseparable. Thus, we may say that one of *Dao*’s characteristics is *De*. On the other hand, in Moltmann’s statement, we find the God acts to limit Himself. Thus, we may say that one of God’s characteristics is self-limitation. Although these two points seem not to be relevant to each other, these two points can be seen as designed for humanity and, if we have some insight into the meanings and practices of *De* and self-limitation, would be the most important of human characteristics. In other words, Moltmann implies that as the *Imago Dei*, human beings should practise self-limitation as God does. In doing so, modern man would be able to behave as holistic *Imago Dei* and the holiness of God and the Creation would be accomplished. Nevertheless, Moltmann believes that the modern meaning of sanctification should be to re-discover the Spirit of life and respect for life. He protests against any human manipulation of nature or destruction of the earth.⁴⁴⁰ That is to say, in Moltmann’s eyes, harmony is a relationship not between God and humanity or within human society, but rather, as the authentic and holistic harmony, exists between God, humanity and nature. In other words, human beings must manifest the same characteristic as God in their care for creation and to

⁴³⁸ The *Daode Jing*, chapter 57. Also see Julia Ching, “Who Were the Ancient Sages?” in *Sages and Filial Sons Mythology and Archaeology in Ancient China*, eds. Julia Ching and R. W. L. Guisso (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1991), pp. 1-22.

⁴³⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, p. 64.

⁴⁴⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, pp. 48-49.

reach a point of balance between utilitarianism and sustainability. When this characteristic is manifested, the tension between themselves and the natural environment is reduced and humanity and nature share and experience its fulfilment, which is harmony.⁴⁴¹ This is exactly the purpose and achievement of the *Tian, Di* and *Ren* structures, as well as the concept of *Zhonghe* of the *Taiping Jing*. In conclusion, this is what Taoism called *Weiwuwei*, the action of inaction.

6.5 Summary and Conclusion

From the above discussions, we may conclude that the modern ecological crisis is less related to the Holy Bible itself than to the way that human beings interpret or manipulate the biblical verses. This seems to imply that Christian teaching is different from biblical teaching. However, this cannot be true since “Christianity is the religion of the ‘Word’ of God”⁴⁴² and the Christians are “People of the Book.”⁴⁴³ That is to say, Christianity cannot teach its adherents to disobey the Word of God. In contradiction, White accuses Christianity of being the origin of the modern ecological crisis and many Western scholars and theologians echo him. In other words, the Christian church has failed in its history to discover the balance between the Word of God and the behaviour of humanity. In section 5.2, we saw the main cause of the modern ecological crisis to lie in the change in the concept of creativity. We cannot and should not stop humanity from creating but must bring the nature and essence of

⁴⁴¹ Malcom Jeeves, “The nature of persons and the emergence of kenotic behaviour,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 66-89.

⁴⁴² “Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 108,” *The Holy See*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_PP.HTM (accessed 13 September 2010).

⁴⁴³ David Jeffrey, *People of the Book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996), p. xiv.

creativity back to our modern society. Cobb and Moltmann engage in finding ways to improve the human record with their interpretations of Life and *Sabbath*. From their arguments we find that Christianity is in fact the religion of the Word of God, but Christians have sometimes failed in history to be People of the Book. Nevertheless, with Taoist assistance, the integration of Cobb's Life and *Zhonghe* might help humanity to reflect and retrieve the lost harmony between itself and God. The integration of Moltmann's *Sabbath* and *Zhonghe* is equally able to regain the lost balance between God, Earth and Humanity. In other words, the *Taiping Jing* can help Cobb and Moltmann to extend the limitations of Christian doctrine in light of biblical teaching. That is to say, Christians can be People of the Book as God commands them to be, so long as they fulfil *Zhonghe*. This fulfilment would also remedy the gaps in White's incomplete proposal.

Eugene Odum asserts that "To survive, an organism does not compete with its environment as it might with another organism, but it must adapt to or modify its environment and its community in a cooperative manner."⁴⁴⁴ Odum's statement echoes Weiner's observations of the Creation. In other words, in order for Christians to be People of the Book and for modern humans to fulfil the characteristics of the *Imago Dei*, humanity should change its attitude to nature. For centuries, incorrect and inappropriate attitudes may not have been noticed or were deliberately ignored by modern humanity, because of the eschatological standpoint of the material world. However, we should be fully awaked to a modern Eschatology and the importance of

⁴⁴⁴ Eugene Odum, "Great Ideas in Ecology for the 1990s," *Bioscience* 42 (1992): pp. 542. Also see S. J. Gould, "Darwinism and the expansion of evolutionary theory," *Science* 216 (1982): pp. 380-387; and P. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution* (London: Heinmann, 1902).

sustainability, as Cobb, Moltmann and the *Taiping Jing* argue: eschatology does not mean abandoning the present world and getting a new world in its place but receiving and sustaining the present world as a balanced and harmonious environment for all creatures according to God/the *Dao*'s will. The old wisdom is the modern guidance to holistic harmony, as the *Pater Noster* states: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ "Catechism of the Catholic Church: Part Four: Christian prayer—Section Two: The Lord's Prayer 'Our Father!'" *The Holy See*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p4s2.htm#SECTION%20TWO%20THE%20LORDS%20PRAYER%20OUR%20FATHER!» (accessed 2 September 2011).

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION: CREATING A BETTER FUTURE FROM OUR HISTORY

7.1 Introduction

Modern humanity is in the middle of human history as well as in the midst of an ecological crisis. This research has provided a retrospective study of the ontological causes of the modern ecological crisis and also suggested possible Christian-Taoist solutions to it. The developments of human society are not based on nothingness, but rely on a review of and reflection on history. From reviewing our history we may know better what sort of future we need and how we should work for it.

7.2 Summary and Significant Findings of the Research

This research began its first discussion chapter with an old and controversial article in the hope of bringing attention to the seriousness of today's ecological crisis. In 1967 White warned Christianity that the human destruction of nature is much more serious than we had thought. From White's indictment and the following discussions and debates by scholars, we have shown that the causes of ecological crisis do not derive from a single root. However, the main problematic issue of Christianity in terms of this crisis have been shown to lie in the interpretation of Christian stewardship or anthropocentrism.

Following these findings, in Chapter Two, this research went on to propose an insight into Christian stewardship or anthropocentrism. In Chapter Three, the primary

concept of harmony or peace was studied in order to provide some background knowledge for the discussions of stewardship or anthropocentrism. It was found that the biblical basis of the human domination over nature lies in the theological concept of the *Imago Dei* in *Genesis*. Additionally, from theologians' understanding and explanations of the position of nature and human attitudes toward it, the limitations of Christian stewardship or anthropocentrism were revealed: Christianity does contain the concept of harmony, but this concept is mainly applied to interpersonal relationships or that between man and God. It was further found that Christianity did not give much weight to the harmonious relationship between humanity and nature, but focused too exclusively on the importance and uniqueness of humanity.

Having studied the Christian understanding of nature, this research suggests Taoism as a fruitful encounter partner. In Chapter Four, a comprehensive study of the *Taiping Jing*'s ecological concerns revealed the situations if *Taiping* prevailed and if it were absent. It also described the proper attitudes for humanity to take to nature. From the discoveries of the *Taiping Jing*'s ecological consciousness, Christians, it was shown, could learn the Taoist attitudes toward nature and the highest pursuit of Taoism, which is harmony. All these discoveries would benefit Christianity in terms of raising its ecological awareness. The study of this chapter was a preparation and stepping stone to the later encounter between Christianity and Taoism regarding the ecological crisis.

In Chapter Five, a deeper exploration of the causes of modern ecological crisis was given. The exploration of Greek philosophy accounted for the origins of the mechanistic view of the universe which may be considered the seed of the ecological

crisis. Further, the products of Western philosophers and of scientists revealed the underlying motives of the development and changes in creativity which led to our unethical and immoral attitudes toward nature. After exploring the limitations and faultiness of Christian understanding of nature, this research argued that Christianity should be open-minded and invite Taoist ecological wisdom for assistance. Therefore, this chapter provided a primary Christian-Taoist encounter on the core religious issues as a foundation for a further Christian-Taoist encounter in the following chapter.

Following the argument of the previous chapters, Chapter Six engaged in a discussion in more depth on the causes of and solutions for the modern ecological crisis. This chapter contained the main contribution of this research. It validated a Christian-Taoist encounter and integrated the Taoist concept of *Zhonghe* with the Christian concepts of God and *Sabbath*. This integration highlighted the less emphasised concept in Christianity of being harmonious with nature, as well as reflecting traditional Christian thinking on the Creation. The outcome product of the Christian-Taoist encounter in this chapter brought an alternative view of modern human attitudes to nature, as well as a new aspect of cosmology.

7.3 Contributions and Limitations of this Research

This research does not claim that Taoism is a perfect religion and its religious teaching is faultless. This Chinese religion does not differ from other religions in admitting shortcomings. It still needs critiques and reinterpretation if it is to help modern humanity to improve its way of life. However, we have beyond question found the Taoist ecological wisdom and this is what Christianity can benefit from.

The main contribution of this research is to fill the gap in Christian-Taoist study on the ecological crisis. The secondary contribution of this research is to introduce the Taoist concepts of *Ziran* and *Wuwei* into the Western/Christian tradition from an alternative angle and fuse them with the concepts of Life and *Sabbath*, in order to help Westerners to deepen their appreciation of the Taoist ecological stance.

There are two main limitations of this research. The first one is the paucity of interdisciplinary applications. As we know, the resolution of the ecological crisis should not and cannot be provided from a single perspective. However, this research is unable, for reasons of space, to include other aspects, such as politics, economics and environmental science, etc. The second one is the rarity of profound Christian-Taoist dialogue on ecological issues. The Christian-Taoist encounter in the present study focused only on the concept of *Zhonghe* in Taoism and the concepts of the *Imago Dei* and *Sabbath* in Christianity. Furthermore, this research is still on a theoretical level; practical aspects have not yet been discussed. Equally, due to limitations of space, the merits of Christian stewardship or anthropocentrism were not discussed either. However, this research would invite readers to give deep consideration both stewardship and anthropocentrism *per se*. Is either bad enough to be abandoned?⁴⁴⁶

7.4 Recommendations for Future Research

It is not disputable that the modern ecological crisis should be dealt with from multiple perspectives and needs interdisciplinary cooperation. Therefore, this research

⁴⁴⁶ Cobb, in fact, agrees with anthropocentrism, to an extent. See John Cobb, "Protestant Theology and Deep Ecology," in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, pp. 213-228.

would like to encourage three aspects for researchers to consider in their future study. First, concerning ecological issues from a Christian-Taoist standpoint, this research provides a primary study in the concepts of *He* and sacredness. For a further study this research suggests that researchers might engage in an advanced and in-depth comparative study of these two concepts in order to seek a subtler Christian-Taoist resolution for the ecological crisis. Second, this research would encourage researchers to engage in various inter-religious studies on ecological issues and to devote themselves to ways of resolving the present ecological crisis, *e.g.* Buddhist-Christian study, Hindu-Christian study or Christian-Muslim study *etc.* Third, ecological issues may need input from other subjects, such as bioscience and economics. Therefore, this research suggests that religious study could profitably integrate the knowledge of science and social science in order to develop better suggestions for the ecological crisis.

7.5 Reflection on the Present Ecological Crisis

The development of human creation on the basis of the human mind has changed and is still changing the face of Creation. Maguire has warned us with a horrible but not exaggerated statement. White has reminded us of the ecological issues with a serious and thought-provoking essay. Although it is not fair to attribute all the faults to Christianity, the total population of Christians in the world is approximately 2,039 million, which is about 32% of the world's population.⁴⁴⁷ Hence, Christianity should bear more responsibility than other religions in terms of reminding people to act

⁴⁴⁷ B. A. Robinson, "Religions of the World," *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm> (accessed 10 November 2011).

ethically and morally and alleviating the ecological crisis. Of course, this does not imply that other religions bear no responsibility. Indeed, it is the moment that Christians, or to be more precise, all human beings should seriously and carefully reflect on and amend their incorrect and out of date beliefs regarding nature. This research would suggest, according to the findings of this study, that the application of morality and ethics should be extended from human society to the whole of Creation and to make as its final point Mahatma Gandhi's meaningful comment on the ecological crisis: "The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁸ "Quotes," *United States Environmental Protection Agency*, <http://www.epa.gov/region2/library/quotes.htm> (accessed 10 April 2011).

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