

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DAO DE JING AND THE BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

Being an important oriental classic work, Dao De Jing has a profound impact on Chinese spirituality. It permeates every aspect of Chinese daily life, its culture, thought pattern, state of mind and of course the oriental philosophy. It also has immense influence in the West, especially in the field of philosophy. So far, Dao De Jing has over 200 versions in English, more than the books of Confucius. In the previous issue of ICS XI:1 2002, there have been a few papers discussing Dao De Jing, such as “The Dao of Rhetoric” by Steven C. Combs, “The Rhetorical Construction of the Discourse on the Dao in Dao De Jing” by Xiaosui Xiao and “The Water Metaphor in Dao De Jing” by Guo-Ming Chen. They either elaborate on “the Dao is not like the Christian God” (Xiaosui Xiao, 2002), “the wisdom of Lao Zi is complete different from that of Socrates”, or the delicate implications of Lao Zi’s metaphors. Their papers have inspired me to write this article from a different perspective – to explore the similarities of Dao De Jing and the Bible.

Another motive that stimulates me to write this paper is Samuel Huntington’s paper “The Clash of Civilizations” (1993), in which he made the hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be ideological or economic. The “dominating source of conflict will be cultural.” And “the Confucian-Islamic connection has emerged to challenge western interests, values and power.” Soon after its publication, Huntington’s theory was severely criticized by Chinese intellectuals as well as scholars in developing countries. Farhad Koley, a veteran Iranian diplomat, made the comment that “cultural differences have become factors for a number of people such as Huntington to develop the theory of confrontation and violence among civilizations.” A well-known Chinese writer remarked, “Huntington’s theory reveals kind of phobia under numerical superiority. The civilization conflict is an ill-omen of self-fulfilling.” (Li Zhenzhi, 1997) The instance is a good lesson, it shows that elaborating on the differences of different civilizations benefits nobody; instead it will deteriorate the

atmosphere of dialogue between different cultures and aggravate the awareness of anthropocentrism among numerous ethnic groups in the world.

However, when we engage in a constructive dialogue on the similarities of different civilizations, the air will be quite different – far more relaxing I would say. First, the more similarities we share, the more trust we will have in each other. Thus, I believe it is worthwhile to explore the commonalities of civilizations. It is based on the fact that the brains of all human beings are the same; therefore the same rational cognition is possessed by all people despite their race, education and religion. “Minimal moral concepts of truth and justice are found in all thick moralities and cannot be divorced from them.” (Huntington, 1997) All religions say: we should avoid murder, thieving, lying and adultery; and stress the virtues of humanity, charity and veracity. “We need to mention the similarities among these spiritual paths, it is often our similarities rather than our differences that lead to intercultural understanding.” (Samover, 2000) “In a word, the ideal man designed by humanistic tradition of various cultures is very much the same.” (Gao Yihong, 1999)

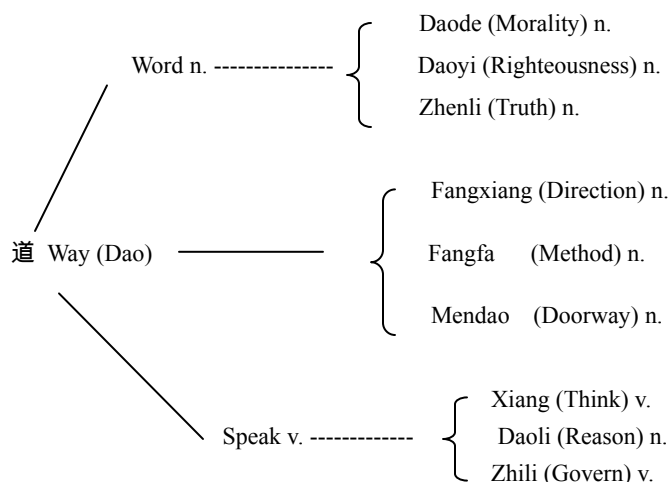
Second, the comparability of Dao De Jing and the Bible lies in that both dwell on ontology, cosmology and the Absolute Truth, which transcend all cultures. Some Chinese scholars shared this view. Lin Yutang, a famous writer, said, “Spiritually, Lao Zi and Jesus are brothers.” Xiao Bin, a specialist on Dao De Jing, remarked, “Lao Zi’s emphasis on the transcendence of Dao has marvelous similarities with that of Christian theologians’ on the transcendence of God.” (1997, p.69) Dr.Liang Yancheng, a Canadian based sinologist, commented, “Although the Bible is the cornerstone of western civilization, people should not forget it was manifested in the form of Asian wisdom. Therefore, it holds many common grounds with Dao De Jing.” However, many domestic scholars are not convinced, they argue that the two have nothing to do with each other, and that they even conflict with each other. In my view, this is not surprising. As part of the aftermath of narrow cultural practice in the past 50 years, today’s Chinese people are generally unfamiliar with both scriptures. Though the two classics may have contrastive differences in style, diction, mode of thinking and historic background, their spiritual resemblance is conspicuous – both focusing on the Absolute Truth. If we compare the Bible to be an epic, Dao De Jing with only 5,000 words is just like its epitome, which is exquisite and concise but retains the cream. The comparison of the two scriptures will devalue no one but make each shining more brilliantly in the other’s company.

THE SUBTLE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE DAO AND LOGOS

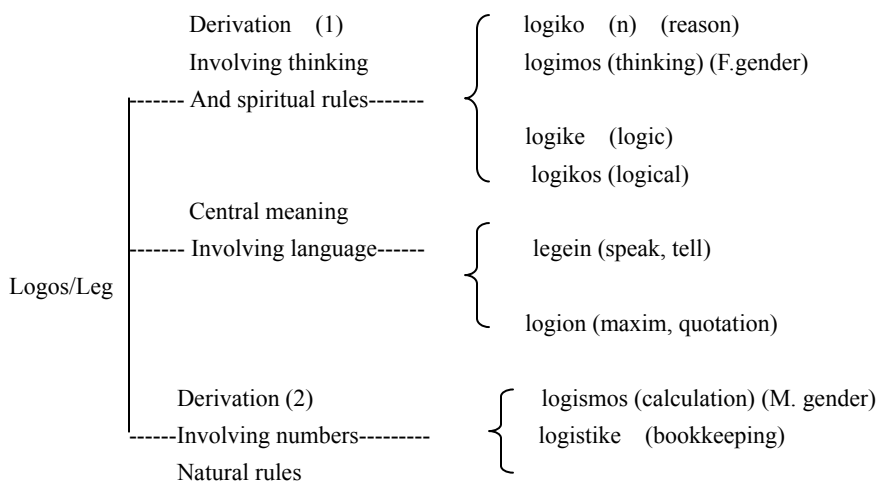
The Gospel according to John says, “In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the

Word (Logos) was with God, and the Word (Logos) was God.” The Greek word *Logos* is translated into Chinese as Dao. Prof. Xie Fuya, a noted scholar of East-West studies said, “To match the Chinese concept of Dao with the Logos in Gospel John, the translator must have got mysterious inspirations” (1997) because the meaning of “Dao” shares subtle similarities with *Logos* in almost every way. “Lao Zi’s Dao and Logos are twines in ideology of the East and the West, because they both represent the principle, reason and wisdom of the universe.”

First, let’s examine the radicals that make up the character “Dao” which is pictograph by nature and is “associated with divination in antiquity”. (Fishman J.A., 1999) The character “Dao” is composed of 3 parts (or circles) with one embracing another: The inner most core is “自” (Self), the 2nd ring is “首” (The Most High, beginning), the 3rd part is “辶”, which means foot, move and walk. By synthesizing the three parts together, we get the character “道”(Dao), which means word, speak and way. Let’s sum up the comprehensive meanings of “Dao”: 1) “The Word” dwells on “Himself”; 2) He is the Most High and beginning of all things; 3) He moves (lives) all the time. A classic Chinese book said, “The Dao is the living God.” In classic Chinese, “Dao” also has other extended meanings such as “guidance” and “follow”. It reveals the truth that the Dao is *the Way*, and He *guides* us, we must *follow* Him. The following is a diagram that shows the history of semantic extension of “Dao”:



Now, we will examine the Greek word *Logos*. In modern Greek, logos (λογος) is a polysemy. In daily language, it means: 1) Word (neutral), language (feminine gender); 2) Illustration, explanation (feminine gender); 3) Intellect (feminine gender), reason (male gender); 4) Ratio (neutral). The following is a diagram that shows the extended meanings of *Logos*, generated from the root “leg” (speech)



Heraclitus was the first Greek philosopher who put forward the conception of Logos. He happened to be born about the same time as Lao Zi (550 BC). According to Heraclitus, there is only *one* Logos and all things were made by Him and under his dominance. Logos is universal and everlasting. He is the perfect union of three aspects, namely:

- 1) The union of God and nature, so Logos is of both natural and divine nature;
- 2) The union of nature and reason, so Logos is the rules of both nature and reason;
- 3) The union of reason and divinity, so Logos is mystic, yet it can be known by reason.

Ancient Greeks regarded Logos as the core value of their culture, through which their national identity is displayed. When Christianity was first introduced in Greek, Yehovah God in the Old Testament was translated as “Logos”; thus Logos becomes the historic key link of Hebraism and Hellenism. And on the union of these two Hs, the Western Civilization was born.

Through the above semantic analysis, we can see that the Dao and Logos truly have many similarities: they both mean “speech, word and reason”. Both the Dao and Logos are self-possessed, and all things are made by them. However, what we discussed above is rather sketchy and superficial, we will select verses from both Scriptures for further comparison:

HIS NAME IS YEHOVAH - In the Old Testament, the God of Israel has many names, such as Elohim, Shaddai and Jehovah. These names reveal different personalities of the Almighty. Elohim means the Trinity God, the Creator. For example, “In the beginning, God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) Shaddai first appeared in Genesis, Chapter 17,

God said, “I am (El Shaddai) the Almighty, obey Me and live as you should.” It is a rare coincidence that the ancient Chinese called their Supreme Lord “Shangdi”; its pronunciation is quite similar to “Shaddai” and they both mean the Most High.

In the original, Yehovah is pronounced “Yahweh”. When Moses asked God what his name is, God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM...Yehovah, the God of your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Exodus 3:14-15) “Yehovah is the righteous, loving and holy God. Know therefore that Yehovah is the faithful God who for a thousand generations keeps His promises and constantly loves those who love him and who obey his commands.”

In Chapter 14 of Dao De Jing, the name Yehovah is mystically explained even though Lao Zi had never touched the Bible. The Three-in-One is entitled “Yi-Xi-Wei”. It says, “Yi is that the eye gazes but see it not, Xi is that the ear listens but cannot hear it, Wei is that the hand feels for it but can’t get hold of it. The three (*Yixiwei*), because they cannot be further scrutinized, merged into one. Above Him there is no more light, beneath Him there is no darkness. His infinity is beyond description. He is called shapeless shapes, forms without form. Possessing the Way, you can ride the things that are now and understand the Beginning of the universe. This is called the essence of the Way.”

To sum up the main idea of Chapter 14 of Dao De Jing, we can see that Dao (Yi-Xi-Wei) is shapeless, invisible and infinitive. He is the source of light; if one can ride in the Dao, all things present and past are clear to him. By comparison, we can see that this “Dao” in many ways is like Yehovah in the Bible, who is “invisible” and “live[s] in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.” (1 Timothy 1:6, 6:15) “...We can see and understand only a little about God now, as if we were peering at His reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see Him in his completeness, face to face. Now all that I know is hazy and blurred, but then I will see everything clearly.” (1 Corinthians 13:12)

S/HE IS OUR PARENT - In Dao De Jing, “Dao” – the Creator – is frequently called “the Mother of all things”. (1:2) “The world has a beginning, that which was the beginning of all things may be spoken of as the Mother of all things.” (52:1) However, it is interesting that the Dao is occasionally called Father. “Since ancient times till now, His name is always there, so that everybody can see He is the Father of all things. How do I know he is the Father? From the Way.” (21:4) In comparison, Yehovah is usually called Father in the Bible. For example, “O, Yehovah God of our father Israel, praise Your name for ever and ever.” (1 Chronicles 29:10) “He will be called everlasting Father.” (Isaiah 9:6) But occasionally Yehovah is compared to the Mother: “O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; but I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its Mother.” (Psalms 131:2)

From a transcendent view, calling the Creator father or mother is only a cultural preference, in the ultimate it is the same: God is our parent who gives us life. In theology, God is Spirit, who has no gender. The difference is due to the fact that human language is limited while God

is limitless. When we use the limited language to describe God, we are restrained by its inadequacies. As we know, the Chinese culture is of maternal nature, which favors softness and obedience, while the Western culture is of paternal nature, which advocates toughness and adventure.

HE IS LOVE - The whole Bible shows God's love for human beings. Here are some quotations from it on love: "For God so loves the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) "Love comes from God. Love is patient, love is kind, love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." (1 Corinthians 13:4-6) "All men will know that you are My disciple if you love one another." (John 13:35) "Give thanks to Yehovah for He is good; His love endures forever." (Psalms 107:1)

Similarly, in many places Dao De Jing also talked about the selfless love of Dao. "All things are born of the Dao but he never glorifies himself. He nurtures them with LOVE, but makes no claim to be master over them." (34:4) Similar description is seen in Chapter 51. It says, "The Dao gave birth to all things and reared them with virtue. Therefore of the ten thousand things, there is not one that does not worship the Dao and do homage to his power." "Rear them but not lay claim to them, be chief among them but not manage them, his LOVE is truly unfathomable." Lao Zi Says, "I have three treasures with me: the first is LOVE, the second is frugality; the third is compete with no one." (67:2) Interestingly enough, when someone asked Jesus, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus replied, "LOVE the Lord your God and LOVE your neighbor as yourself." Lao Zi did the same as Jesus; he regards love as the most important among the three treasures. No wonder Lin Yutang said, "Spiritually, Lao Zi and Jesus are brothers." (2000)

THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JESUS AND THE SAGE

Briefly speaking, the Bible talks about two events – Yehovah and Jesus Christ. Yehovah is the dominant figure in the Old Testament, while Jesus is the most prominent person in the New Testament, because he is "the Word became flesh." Coincidentally, Dao De Jing mainly discusses the Dao and the Sage. However, the Sage in Dao De Jing is a somewhat mysterious character. For thousands of years, people have different ideas about him. Some believed the Sage was a nameless historic figure, others thought he was only an imaginary model under Lao Zi's pen, still others asserted that it was impossible for such a perfect person to live in this world. No one had ever linked this Sage in Dao De Jing with Christ in the Bible. When papers on this historic link first appeared in recent years, there was a strong reaction, especially among Chinese intellectuals. Most of them gave a snort of contempt at such a bold imagination. Their first response is: how could a Chinese Sage have something to do with a Western God?

Surely, their puzzlement is understandable. Unless you have made a careful study and comparison of both Scriptures, you cannot convince yourself of the conclusion.

In Dao De Jing, over thirty places mentioned the Sage, his remark and action. He is seen here and there beginning from chapter 2 to 81, which is the last chapter. If you join all his remarks and actions in a logical way and compare them with those of Jesus, you will find that they are ingeniously matched. The Sage in Dao De Jing is the reincarnation of Dao. The following are my findings:

A HUMBLE BEGINNING - Dao De Jing said the Sage came into the world not as a distinguished person but as an ordinary man, so his real identity is unknown to the world. “The Sage has no pretty form (he wears coarse tunic) but his inner self is full of treasure.” (70:6). “The Sage is righteous but he does not hurt people with his righteousness” (58). He does not show off himself, therefore he is seen wherever; he is not self-opinionated, therefore he is distinctive; he does not seek his own glory, therefore he succeeds.” (22:5)

COMMENTARY - *Jesus was born in a carpenter's home, just an ordinary man without handsome looks. Yet God is with him. He is sinless. Once a woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees who intended to stone her to death. But Jesus said to them “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” At this, people left one by one. Jesus didn't condemn the woman but said to her, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus said, “I have come down from Heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me.” (John 6:38) “I do not accept praise from men.” (Jonh5:41) But Jesus gave glory to God for everything he did, in the end, he accomplished his mission on earth.*

GREAT MISSION - “He possesses the Great Dao, wherever he goes, people of the whole world turn to him; when people have returned to him, they will enjoy security, peace and ease, instead of injury on each other.” (35) “The sage acts selflessly, giving wordless teaching. As the Sage does not act on his own, he never fails.” (64:8) “The Sage never stores up anything for himself, all he did are for the multitude, he knows, the more he gives, the more he will get.” (81) “The way of Sage is all for the multitude, rather than vie with them. Since The Sage does not contends, no one under heaven can contend with him.” (66)

COMMENTARY - *Wherever Jesus goes, people come to him to hear his teaching and Jesus cured many of them who suffered various diseases. He never failed to help the needy. He said,*

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)
Really Jesus never contends with the world; he said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:28)

THE SAVIOR AND KING - “The Sage has been so good at saving the multitude that no one is left out.” (27:6) “He summoned those whom the world had forsaken. He learns what the world think stupid and delivers us out of our transgression.” (64) “He knows his glory, yet resigns himself to humility; he knows his innocence, yet he is reconciled to be with the sinners. He strives for honor and guards against evil; he strives for justice and guards against evil; he is the means through which the world gets to know the Word.” (28) As “he humbled himself to the end and never dealt with the great, so he achieved greatness.” (63) “He who suffers for the country can be the Lord; he who takes upon himself the evils of the country can be the King among those that dwell under heaven.” (78:3)

COMMENTARY - *Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:17)* Jesus, “being in very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He was obedient to death – even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name.” (Phil. 2:6-9) Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesized that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation, but for people all over the world. It is sarcastic that when the Romans crucified Jesus, the charge against him was he acknowledged he was the King of Israel “God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

SIMILARITIES IN RHETORIC LANGUAGE

As rhetoric means, analogies, metaphors and similes are widely used in literal writings, and Dao De Jing abounds in them. According to Bednar and Hine (1982), these language devices serve as a linguistic tool for expression, a powerful means of conveying, relating, transmitting and elaborating an intended meaning. They “stretch literal expressions by supplying language with flexibility, expressibility, and a method by which to expand.” (Billow, 1997, p.81) Lao Zi seemed to have a special fondness to use analogies in describing the Dao and the Sage, which, often than not, leave the reader in mist. But why does Lao Zi employ this unique rhetorical means? Scholars have different views. Mr. Xiaosui Xiao believes, “Lao Zi

chooses analogies when he encounters difficulty in describing a man of the Dao.” (ICS XI-1 2002, p.143) But this contradicts Lao Zi’s intention. Lao Zi says, “My words are easy to understand and very easy to put into practice, yet no one under heaven understands them, no one puts them into practice. But my words have an ancestor, my deeds have a Lord. And it is precisely because men do not understand this that they are unable to understand me.” (70) In my view, analogies at least provide us some insight into the mystery of the Dao, pointing to its simplicity and unfathomableness.

1. God is the light In the Bible, light is a fundamental symbol of God, because it is like God in many ways: it is holy, pure, bright and full of glory. “God is the light, in Him there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5) Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) He continued, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” (John 12:35, 36)

Lao Zi also compares the Dao to the light. Dao is the light, “Above him there is no more light, beneath him there is no darkness.” (Ch. 14) “Only by the light of the Dao, can we return from darkness to light; you are thereby preserved from all harm. This means inherit eternity.” (52) Only “when you accept the light, can you know the essence of your life and reach the sameness with Dao.” (56) Here, Lao Zi vividly used the analogy of light to delineate the Dao, which in many ways are almost the same as the Bible did in describing God and Jesus. However, Mr. Xiaosui Xiao (2002, p.145) said, “In the Bible the holy light is dazzling and often can not be tolerant by the human eye, but the Dao in terms of light is rather dim.” (Ch.4, 41, 56, 58) In my opinion, this discrepancy in degree is not essential; it is only a cultural preference. Nurtured and raised in a culture deeply influenced by maternal virtue, Chinese usually favor to describe good things in terms of the female and softness; however, the Western culture is of paternal nature, which prefers to delineate good things in terms of masculine and hardness. Therefore, their difference in degree is unimportant; the key point is that both agree, “God is the light”.

2. The Dao is like water The water analogue holds an especially important place in Dao De Jing because it is the “root metaphor” through which a whole set of concept schemes

about Dao are introduced. “The archetypal metaphor of Dao is based on water and the original imagery of Dao hangs on the spring from which the river of life originates.” (Sarah Allen, 2001) Lao Zi said, “The highest good (Dao) is like that of water, because it benefits all things and doesn’t compete with them. It dwells in places that all disdain. That is why it is near to Dao.” (8) A Chinese proverb says, “Man goes to high place but water flows to low place.” This shows the worldly people abominate the nature of water, but strikes what Dao De Jing says, “Reversion is the action of Dao.” (40) “There is nothing softer and weaker than water and yet there is nothing better for attacking hard and strong things.” (78) Truly, water is the softest thing, however, it is also very powerful. In a deluge, almost nothing can stop its way. But, if you strike a still water, it will give way; water is so flexible that you simply have no way to attack it. Just like water, the Dao is almighty; however, its strength is realized through its weakness.

Water metaphor also plays an important role in the Bible in which God is considered to be “the spring of living water”. (Jeremiah 2:13) The Almighty proclaims “ALL you who are thirsty, come to waters.” (Isaiah 55:1) It is believed, “Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) In the New Testament, Jesus claims that he is “the spring of living water”. He said, “If a man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14) Although Jesus is the holy water, he “dwells in places that all disdain” as he always stays with the sick, the poor and sinners. Once, the Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciple, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus responded, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matt. 9:13) The most sarcastic drama is his distressed death on the cross, which was widely believed to be a humiliation and disdained by almost everyone. However, by “dwelling in the disdained place”, Jesus changed the world with his example. “He was crushed for our iniquities... and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)

3. Be like children In Dao De Jing, Lao Zi frequently compared the followers of Dao as infants or children for their purity, innocence and obedience as they are unaffected by the contaminated society and its culture. Lao Zi inquired, “Who can change our mind and make it soft like that of a little child?” (10) “I alone am like a child that has not yet given sign; like an infant that has not yet smiled” (20) He desires “The everlasting virtue (of Dao) recovers (us) to the state of infancy”, (28) and vividly delineates “those who are fraught with the power of Dao

may be likened to that of an infant.” (55) Lao Zi says, “when the Sage is in the world, his breath purifies the heart of the world; all the time the common people strain their eyes and ears (on him), the Sage regards them all as infants.” (49) So we can say that in the kingdom of Dao, there is no position for “adults”, only children. All must become children before entering the Dao.

In comparison, the Bible records similar words of Jesus. Once people brought babies to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” (Luke 18:15-17) He also said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.” (Matt. 11:25) It is marvelous that the analogy of children in the New Testament is so well matched with that in Dao De Jing that was written nearly five centuries before Jesus was born.

Other Analogies - Besides light, water and children, other similar analogies are also found in both scriptures such as bread, gate and debts waiver.

1) The Bread of Life The Word is considered to be our daily food and Jesus compared himself to the “Bread”. He said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world... the Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” (John 6:51, 63) Here, Jesus who is the “the Word became flesh” turns into bread; those who have it will have eternal life. Similarly, the Dao is seen as the food of life in Dao De Jing. In Chapter 20, it says, “All men are wreathed in smiles as though feasting after the Great Sacrifice... I alone seem to have lost everything. But wherein I most am different from men is that I prize no sustenance that comes not from the Mother’s breast.” Here, Lao Zi humbles himself to be a child on Mother’s breast; he feeds on the Dao just like a sucking child.

2) The Gate The Gate is considered the key to enter a house. It is metaphorically compared to the only passage to the kingdom of heaven. “This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.” (Psalm 118:20) Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved.” (John 10:9) So “entering His gate with thanksgiving.”

(Psalm100:4) In contrast, “Dao is the doorway to all secrets.” (1) “The doorway of Motherhood is the origin of all things under heaven.” (6) To enter the gate of Dao, Lao Zi advised people “to block the passage of senses and shut the door of knowledge” (52) just “live in the Dao” (62) and you are “free from labor and trouble”. (52) What Lao Zi said is quite compatible with the Bible.

3) Debts Waiver We all owe something to the Creator. In this sense, he is our debtor. Therefore it is only natural to ask Him to “forgive us our debts”. (Matt. 6:12) Jesus gave an analogy concerning debts in Luke Chapter 7, he says, “Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Jesus used the analogy to show that he “has the authority to forgive sins.” (Matt. 9:6) Interestingly, Dao De Jing describes the Sage in a similar way. “The Sage repaid injuries with good deeds. As solving enmity by mediation can hardly eliminate discounts, it is not considered a perfect way. Therefore, the sage behaves like a holder of the left-hand tally, who stays where he is and does not go round making claims on people.” (79) The Sage who is also the debtor has the right to make all people pay their debts, but he is so kind to renounce his claim. He is really the “Grand Almoner”. So, in many ways, the Sage is like Jesus, who acts as the debts waiver

To sum up, it is quite obvious that we cannot use our intellectual wisdom to approach the Dao, because our learning is often “counteracting to the Dao”. (40) That is why Lao Zi advised people to “banish wisdom, discard knowledge”. (19) Only when your heart is pure and humble, can you get access to the Dao. The Bible holds the same stand, “If any one of you think he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness.’” (1Cor. 3:19)

CONCLUSION

From the above comparative study, we can see clearly that there do exist many similarities between Dao De Jing and the Bible, and these similarities can be the common terrain for true spiritual communication between the East and the West. Nowadays, in the surge of economic globalization, the spiritual edifices both in the East and West are crumbling; peoples in either hemisphere are encountering the so-called “identity crisis” and spiritual poverty. Therefore, many oriental and occidental scholars go to the other side to look the

answer of life, believing that “the grass beyond is always greener.” Their spiritual odysseys have promoted the cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding. The study of the commonalities of East-West cultures will not only deepen our understanding of the essence of different cultures and their developmental rules, but also their modes of thinking, thus promoting world progress and peace.

It is hoped that this paper would draw the attention of more scholars to do research in this respect and facilitate the spiritual communication between the East and the West.

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