Summary

In late Ming and early Qing, there were so many Western missionaries who came to China to do their missionary works. They brought not only a new religion, but also modern sciences, technologies, philosophies, and new surveying instruments. Someone said that they greatly influenced the whole sphere of learning in the Qing dynasty later, especially in philology and textual criticism. But the problem is how can we prove that these subjects were influenced by Western learning? Was it true when we said that these subjects were greatly influenced by Western learning as we know they were all Chinese traditional learning?

The purpose of this thesis is to reveal the relationship between Western learning and Confucianism.

Chapter one begins by examining the overall background in this period. The Jesuit Missionary came to recognise the Confucianism and preached through academic ways. They brought some Western learning which gave a great impact to the contemporary society.

Chapter two elucidates the influence of Western learning on methodology. Some scholars like Xu Guangqi, Fang Yizhi, and Huang Zongxi agreed that the Western methodology was good. Although Wang Fuzhi and Gu Yanwu did not agree with the new learning, they obviously commended the methodology of Fang Yizhi and Li Lu, which were from Western. On the other hand, I have traced the relationship between Gu Yanwu and missionaries and find that there was no distinct evidence to show Gu’s philology was from Jesuits, even though I find a few possibilities.
In chapter three, I have discovered that the range of Confucianism was expanded through Xu Guangqi. He was a devout Christian and very closed to missionaries. He introduced new knowledge such as geometry, astronomy, water conservancy and cannons. Most of them were given highly attention and became parts of Confucianism in the Qing dynasty.

Chapter four comprises two parts, verse one dealing with the idea of a personal-god, which was one of the most important ideas of Christianity but was overlooked by Ming Confucianists. When Matteo Ricci rose the issue of “God (天主) equal to Shang Di (上帝)”, it stirred up great debate immediately. Verse two discusses the ideas of human nature. From Song to Ming, most of the Chinese Confucian scholars believed that there were two kinds of human natures. But in the Qing, most of the scholars shifted to believe the monism of human nature. Li (理) was explained as texture, and sin as lacking goodness. They emphasised moral goodness rather than natural goodness. I find that it was Ricci who firstly gave this idea according to the theory of Augustine, the great theologian in Western in the 4th and 5th centuries.

In the last chapter, I summarise all findings and compare it with the whole trend of thought. The conclusion is that the Western learning have actually influenced on Confucianism, but the influence was limited and was not a primary factor in the changes of Qing Confucianism.