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Duplicitous Thieves: Ouyi Zhixu's Criticism of Jesuit Missionaries in Late Imperial China

Beverley Foulks

Harvard University (Ph.D. Candidate)

Abstract

This paper analyzes the anti-Christian writings of Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655) – who is recognized as one of the four great Buddhist masters of the Ming dynasty – that form his *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy* (*Pixie ji* 闢邪集). I argue that Ouyi's polemical strategy differs from that of Zhuhong and other Buddhist writers in several respects, the most important being that Ouyi bases his arguments strictly on secular and Confucian grounds in order to preclude anyone criticizing his essays as defensive or vitriolic. Ouyi identifies what he perceives to be a clear difference between Confucianism and Christianity: while the former locates morality and ethical responsibility within the individual, the latter portrays God as creating human nature and atoning for human sins through Jesus Christ. Ouyi not only amplifies this difference between Confucianism and Christianity, he also seeks to defend Buddhism against Jesuit criticism. I contend that Ouyi's anti-Christian writings play an important role for him as a Buddhist, enabling him to redress his attacks on Buddhism in his youth.

Keywords:

Ouyi Zhixu, Ming Dynasty, Christianity, Polemics, Repentance

狡辯的小偷： 蕩益智旭在帝制中國晚期對基督徒的批評

Beverly Foulks

哈佛大學東亞語言與文化學系博士候選人

提要

此篇文章分析被視為明朝四大佛教導師之一的蕩益智旭在《闢邪集》中反基督教的文章。我認為在許多層面，蕩益論證的方式不同於雲棲株宏及其他佛教作者；最重要的是蕩益侷限在世俗及儒學上建立其論證，以防止任何人批評他的著作為辯護性或過於刻薄的。蕩益認為他所認知的儒學與基督教的清楚分野在於前者確立個人的道德及倫理責任，而後者則描寫創造人類及透過耶穌為人類之惡贖罪的上帝。蕩益不僅僅詳述儒學及基督教的差異，他也針對基督徒的批評試圖為佛教作辯護。我認為反基督教的著作對身為佛教徒的蕩益而言扮演一重要的角色，也使其能補償其年輕時對佛教的攻擊。

關鍵字：蕩益智旭、明朝、基督教、論證法、懺悔

Introduction

In the late sixteenth century after a two-century hiatus, Jesuit missionaries re-established the presence of Christianity in China.¹ Although missionaries had tried to enter China as early as 1552, Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) were the first to successfully establish a mission in China in 1583.² Initially they wore Buddhist monastic robes in the hopes that this would prove as successful in China as it originally was in Japan, but Ricci soon realized the disadvantage of this approach as classically educated Chinese elites began looking down on them, while others mistook them as representing a kind of Buddhist sect. Thereafter Ricci advocated aligning the Jesuits with Confucian literati and sought for Christianity “to complement Confucianism (*buru* 補儒) and replace Buddhism (*yifo* 易佛).”³ In 1603 Ricci wrote *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義), in which he explicitly attacked Buddhism, challenging Buddhist notions of emptiness, criticizing

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- 1 There is evidence of Nestorian Christianity having been transmitted to the Tang dynasty (618-907) capital of Chang'an in 635 C.E. by Aluoben 阿羅本, an envoy of the East Syrian Church, however it suffered in the wake of Emperor Wuzong's (r. 841-846) persecution of foreign religions in 845, and it seems to have disappeared until just before Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), when Central Asian Nestorians settled in northern China. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church sent Franciscan and Dominican missionaries such as Giovanni da Montecorvino who arrived in 1294. As Standaert notes, the absence of any polemical literature by Buddhists suggests that Christianity was limited to the non-Chinese population of Yuan China. The fall of the Yuan restricted further proselytization by Nestorians and Roman Catholic missionaries, who lost their main resources of financial and political support when the Mongols were expelled and commercial routes cut off at the end of the fourteenth century. While some Christian missionaries were active under the reign of the Mongols during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), all Christians were expelled in 1369 at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Around 1623 or 1624, a stele was discovered that dates to 781, contains inscriptions in Chinese and Syriac, and recounts the history of Christianity in China from 635 to 781 C.E. The stele was known by late Ming Christians such as Su Guangqi (1562-1633). For a study of the stele see Paul Pelliot, *L'Inscription Nestorienne de Si-Ngan-Fou*, ed. with supplements by Antonino Forte (1996). Standaert discusses Nestorian Christianity in the Tang dynasty in his *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume one : 635-1800* (2001a, 1-42).
- 2 Standaert identifies this as the first of three periods of missionary activity between ca. 1580 and ca. 1800: the Jesuit presence under the Portuguese Padroado (ca. 1580-1631), followed by the addition of Spanish Dominicans and Franciscans (1631-1684), and finally Augustinians from 1680 afterwards. See Standaert (2001a, 296).
- 3 This phrase was coined by Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562-1633), one of the foremost Chinese converts to Christianity. See Criveller (1997, 353).

the Buddha as arrogant, and accusing Buddhism of stealing ideas such as heaven and hell from Christianity (Ricci 1985).

Ricci promoted a method of “accommodation” or “adaptation” that sought to follow the etiquette of Confucian literati and officials, to propagate and evangelize “from the top down,” to use European science and technology to indirectly attract educated Chinese, and to express openness to and tolerance of Chinese values.⁴ This “Ricci method” rejected Buddhism and Taoism outright, but it tolerated basic features of ancestor worship and the veneration of Confucius by declaring them “civil rites,” thus it was sanctioned by the court. Christian missionaries were permitted to propagate Christianity until the Pope condemned such rites in 1704, which led to increased regulation of Jesuit missionaries and eventually a proscription of Christianity in 1724.⁵

Previous scholarship has largely addressed factors contributing to the “success” and “failure” of Christian missionaries in late imperial China. Jacques Gernet attributes the failure of Christian missionaries in the seventeenth century to the Chinese inability to understand essential concepts of Christianity because of cultural and linguistic factors (Gernet 1985). Paul Cohen, who discusses a later wave of missionary activity in China during the nineteenth century, argues that it was challenges posed to the status of local Confucian gentry that made them mobilize against the missionaries (Cohen 1963, 77-119). Erik Zürcher presents several possible reasons to explain the success of Buddhism and failure of Christianity in late imperial China, including xenophobia and conservatism, Sinocentrism, intellectual incompatibility, and finally his own view that Buddhism’s “spontaneous diffusion” differed from Christianity’s “guided propagation” (Zürcher 1990, 11-42; 1993, 9-18).

Nicolas Standaert has recently challenged such approaches and instead proposed a paradigm of “interaction” to describe the encounter between Jesuit missionaries and Chinese

4 “Accommodation” was the name adopted by twentieth-century theologians to describe the missionary method in the seventeenth century that was mainly developed by Alessandro Valignano SJ (1539-1606). He urged missionaries to adapt to the external aspects of culture (i.e. customs and manners) to better spread Christianity, but he rejected any alteration of the orthodox faith. Matteo Ricci considered Valignano the “father of the China mission” and creatively applied this method to the Chinese context. See Standaert (2001a, 310-311, 680-682).

5 Some consider the “Rites Controversy” to be one of the main reasons for the “failure” of Christianity in China at that time. The controversy centered on three issues: whether the terms “Heaven” (*tianshang* 天上) and “Most High” (*shangdi* 上帝) in the Chinese classics could refer to the Christian God, whether Christians should forbid ceremonies in honor of Confucius and the cult of ancestor worship, and finally whether Christians were permitted to contribute to festivals in honor of non-Christian deities. As Standaert notes, this was only one factor influencing Christianity at that time, others included the role of emperors, anti-Christian movements, the constitution of Christian communities in China and changes in the Catholic Church in Europe. See Standaert (2001a, 680-688).

literati in late imperial China (Standaert 2001b, 88-90). Noting the difficulties of evaluating success or failure in paradigms of either “impact-response” or “action-reaction,” and criticizing “essentialist” approaches that overlook dimensions of time, space, social status, and classification of disciplines, Standaert advocates a more descriptive and phenomenological approach to cultural transmission. His own research focuses on the interaction between Jesuits missionaries and Chinese figures such as Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1562-1627), whom he considers an example of “Neo-Confucian-Christian Orthodoxy.”⁶

Although there have been several studies of the interchange between Confucian literati and Christian missionaries, the reaction of Buddhists to such missionaries has not yet been fully explored.⁷ The few studies have focused mainly on the *Collected Essays Rebutting Heterodoxy* (*Poxie ji* 破邪集) by Xu Changzhi 徐昌治 (1582-1672), particularly the response of the Buddhist monk Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 (1535-1615) in his *Heaven Discussed* (*Tianshuo* 天說), written in 1610. The anti-Christian writings of Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655), forming his *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy* (*Pixie ji* 闢邪集), whose preface dates to 1643, have received relatively little attention.⁸ Some scholars have criticized both collections as mainly expressing Buddhist opposition to Christianity, not representing mainstream thought, and thereby being of secondary importance (Standaert 2001a, 512). However, I disagree with this characterization of Ouyi Zhixu's work.

In this paper, I argue that Ouyi Zhixu's polemical strategy differs from that of Zhuhong and other Buddhist writers in several respects, the most important being that Ouyi seeks to base his arguments strictly on secular and Confucian grounds to forestall anyone dismissing his work as antagonistic. Although Zhuhong presents himself as defending Chinese culture and occasionally cites from Confucian texts, he also draws from Buddhist cosmology and scriptures such as the *Sūtra of Brahma's Net*. By contrast, Ouyi writes under his given name Zhong Zhengzhi 鍾振之 and portrays himself as a Confucian appealing to a Confucian audience, and he often quotes Chinese classics but never cites Buddhist sūtras. The bulk of his discussion centers on the moral and ethical implications of Christianity for Chinese society; when he does

6 Standaert refers to Yang, together with Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562-1633) and Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565-1630), as the Three Pillars of the Church who exemplify such “Neo-Confucian-Christian Orthodoxy.” See Standaert (1988, 215-216).

7 Exceptions include Kern (1992), Criveller (1997, 375-418), Lancashire (1968-69, 82-103), Ōchō Enichi 横超慧日 (1949, 1-20), (1950, 18-38), and Zhang Weihua 張維華 (1942, 19-24).

8 His *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy* (*Pixie ji* 闢邪集) (Zhixu 1989a) includes an introduction to the engraved edition, a first essay entitled *Preliminary Investigation into the Study of Heaven* (*Tianxue chuzheng* 天學初徵), a second essay entitled *Further Investigation into the Study of Heaven* (*Tianxue zaizheng* 天學再徵), an appendix and a postscript. It is contained within *The Collected Works of Great Master Ouyi* (*Ouyi dashi quanji* 藕益大師全集) (Zhixu 1989b, 19:11771-11818). Ouyi Zhixu's writing is discussed in the scholarship of Kern and Criveller cited above, and Charles Jones is currently working on an English translation of Ouyi Zhixu's anti-Christian writings.

discuss Buddhism, he often suggests that its religious claims should be considered equally viable as⁹ – if not superior to – Christian ones.¹⁰

I also claim that Ouyi's anti-Christian writings play an important role for him as a Buddhist, for they enable him to redress his attacks on Buddhism in his youth. Ouyi explicitly connects the two projects in the narrative frame of the first essay, but we also see evidence of his emotional investment in sections of the essays when Ouyi discusses similarities between Buddhism and Christianity. In the first essay, his passionate defense of Buddhism is precipitated by similarities in Jesuit notions of repentance, which could signal Ouyi's sensitivity to his own karma and regret for his previous criticism of Buddhism. In order to appreciate the complexity of Ouyi's social location as both Confucian and Buddhist, let us first briefly examine his autobiography.

Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655)

Ouyi Zhixu is considered one of the four great masters of the Ming dynasty by later Buddhists, alongside Yunqi Zhuhong, Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623), and Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543-1604).¹¹ Although he had no official lineage, he is typically regarded as an exemplary exponent of Tiantai Buddhism.¹² Ouyi spent most of his life moving from place to place in the Jiangnan 江南 area. In his autobiography he relates how he engaged in Confucian studies and wrote tracts attacking Buddhism in his youth but burned these writings after reading Zhuhong's work. He states that he had a great realization at the age of nineteen, while writing a commentary on the twelfth chapter of the *Analects*, where Confucius argues that if one restrains oneself (*keji* 克己) and returns to ritual (*fuli* 复禮), “the whole world will submit to

9 For example, Ouyi defends the Buddhist universe as equally plausible as the Jesuits' heaven and hell. See Zhixu (1989a, 19:11781, lines 7-8).

10 For example, Ouyi suggests that the Christian notions of God and Jesus do not compare to the three bodies of the Buddha (*sanshen* 三身; Skt. *trikāya*), namely the *dharmakāya* (*fashen* 法身), the *sambhogakāya* (*baoshen* 報身) and the *nirmānakāya* (*yingshen* 應身). He views God as roughly equivalent to the first body of the *dharma* – for which he uses the alternative term “true body” (*zhenshen* 真身) – and Jesus as analogous to the last body of Buddhas that manifest in the world, such as the historical Śākyamuni, but he says that Christianity lacks the myriad transformation or “bliss bodies” of Bodhisattvas. See Zhixu (1989a, 19:11779, lines 4-6); he also argues that honoring the Buddha is superior to worshipping God because it does not demand exclusive allegiance. See *ibid.* (19:11781, line 1).

11 For a study of Ouyi's life and thought, see Shengyan (1975).

12 The foremost issue in previous scholarship on Ouyi has been determining whether or not he should be categorized within the Tiantai tradition. Shengyan argues that Ouyi's teachings primarily reflect Chan concerns (see *ibid.*) For a succinct summary of the debate, see Ch'en Ying-shan 陳英善 (1996, 8:227-256).

benevolence” (*tianxia gui ren* 天下歸仁). He says that for several days he neither slept nor drank, but instead had “a great insight” (*dawu* 大悟) about the teachings of Confucius and Yan Hui. Ouyi later describes engaging in Buddhist meditation and at the age of twenty-four having an experience in which “his body, mind and the outer world suddenly all disappeared. He then knew that from beginningless time, this body perishes in the very spot it is born. It is only a shadow manifested by entrenched delusion. Instant to instant, thought-moment to thought-moment, it does not abide. It certainly is not born of a mother or father.” (Zhixu 1989b, 16:10223, lines 1-3) Here Ouyi recounts his realization that his body is the result of karma and arises because of karmic causes and conditions. While one might assume that this Buddhist understanding of karma would supplant the previous Confucian notion of individual ritual propriety as the basis of virtue in the world, instead we find that Ouyi draws from the latter idea when responding to the Jesuits. His acceptance of karma might explain the vehemence with which he criticizes Christian notions of atonement; nevertheless he couches his critique in Confucian terms.

Unless we recognize the complexity of Ouyi's personal and religious identity, we cannot fully appreciate his stance towards Christianity in his *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy*. First, in the narrative frame at the beginning of his first essay, he writes that an unnamed “guest” (*ke* 客) approached him because he heard of Zhong Zhenzhi's earlier attack on Buddhism, and he wondered whether Christianity might be the means for further refuting Buddhism and renewing Confucianism (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11775, line 9-10¹³). In fact, Ouyi himself expresses a clear sense of regret for his earlier condemnation of Buddhism in texts prior to 1643 (the year in which he wrote his *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy*); even after he burns his anti-Buddhist tracts, he continues to fear the karmic retribution for such acts.¹⁴ By depicting his interlocutor as a Confucian appealing to Ouyi as a Buddhist critic, Ouyi connects his previous attack on Buddhism with his current critique of Christianity. We will later examine further evidence to suggest that he saw his anti-Christian writing as a means of rectifying his previous criticism.

Secondly, Ouyi's acknowledgment of the centrality of ritual explains some of his misgivings

13 Ouyi remarks that some Confucians see Christianity as an “opportunity to again illuminate the sagely path from obscurity.” (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11776, line 1)

14 His sense of regret over refuting Buddhism not only appears in his repentance texts, but also in many of his vow texts contained in the *Lingfeng zonglun* 靈峰宗論, such as the *Vow-Text Before Dizang's Pagoda at Jiuhua[shan]* (*Jiuhua dizang taqian yuanwen* 九華地藏塔前願文) in his *Collected Works* (Zhixu 1989c, 16:10324, lines 3-4) and his *Vow-Text on Repentance [before] Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Monastic Officials* (*Fo pusa shangzuo chan yuanwen* 佛菩薩上座懺願文), (Ibid., 16:10361, lines 7-8), where he regrets “the sin of slandering the Three Jewels” (*bang sanbao zui* 謗三寶罪) and his *Repentance Text Binding the Great Compassionate Altar at Zutang* (*Zutang jie dabeitan chanwen* 祖堂結大悲壇懺文) (Ibid., 16:10370, line 7), where he laments that “in his youth he [created] the karma of slandering the Three Jewels” (*Zhixu shaonian bang sanbao ye* 智旭少年謗三寶業).

about the implications of Christian theology for morality and ethics. Just as Confucius suggests that benevolence comes from individual self-cultivation, Ouyi repeatedly emphasizes the importance of people cultivating themselves,¹⁵ insisting that neither good nor evil can originate in some outside force. Ouyi repeatedly criticizes the notion that a Christian God who is omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient would nevertheless create evil beings (Ibid., 19:11777, lines 3-4; 11792, lines 6-7; 11802, lines 7-9), create evil obstacles for the virtuous path (Ibid., 19:11778, lines 2-3¹⁶), or create Lucifer and allow him to lead people astray (Ibid., 19:11777, lines 6-7 and line 9).

Finally, his realization of the Buddhist truth of impermanence and recognition that his body was not born from his parents explains Ouyi's consternation over Jesuit assertions that God has neither beginning nor end, while humans have a beginning but no end. For Ouyi, not only are such claims nonsensical, but they also have ethical implications. If humans receive their nature from an external source, they can absolve themselves of ethical responsibility; moreover, since Jesuits disavow reincarnation, they further curtail the ability of humans to morally better themselves and render them entirely dependent on God or Jesus to absolve them of their wrongdoings.

Thus we can see how episodes in Ouyi's life may have shaped his understanding and ultimate rejection of Christianity. Not only does Ouyi feel called to defend Buddhism in the face of Christian criticism, but he remains committed to the notion that humans should be responsible for their moral actions. Christian notions of a creator God, a Christ who atones for human sins, and a human soul that is indebted to God for its beginning and beholden to God at its end do not accord with Ouyi's ethics.

What's in a Name? Ouyi's Confucian and Buddhist Self

Having explored biographical events that may have influenced Ouyi's stance towards Christianity, we can now turn our attention to rhetorical elements of Ouyi's writings. One of the most interesting features of Ouyi's collection is the significance of the various figures that appear in the introduction and appendix to his *Collected Essays Refuting Heterodoxy*. The

15 In his first essay Ouyi specifically states that benevolence (*ren* 仁) is from the self. See *ibid.* (19:11777, line 1). In both essays, Ouyi emphasizes that self-cultivation is fundamental. See *ibid.* (19:11780, line 3-4; 19:11794, line 4-5; 19:11807, line 7; 19:11808, line 2).

16 In this passage, Ouyi specifically responds to João da Rocha and Xu Guangqi's text where they describe three enemies that can tempt one from the virtuous path: the physical body (*roushen* 肉身), worldly customs (*shisu* 世俗), and demons (*mogui* 魔鬼) who can tempt humans with their desire for fame or fortune, by means of mantic arts, etc. Ouyi questions why God would create such obstacles in the first place.

introduction is said to be written by a Buddhist monk named Dalang 大朗 who notes that the author Zhong Zhengzhi 鍾振之 sent his essays to the Chan Master Jiming 際明禪師 for review; the appendix contains an exchange of letters between Zhong Zhengzhi and the Chan Master Jiming (Ibid., 19:11773, line 5). In fact, each of these names actually refers to Ouyi himself: his surname is Zhong, his given name (*ming* 名) is Jiming, his style name (*zi* 字) is Zhenzhi, and his alternative style name (*hao* 號) is Dalang.

Admittedly it was common for Chinese writers to use different honorific titles, style names, and studio names in various contexts, but it is significant that Ouyi uses every name for himself except for his monastic one (Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭).¹⁷ These names were used during his childhood, his young adulthood (typically “style names” were bestowed among young men), and his lay life before he took tonsure at the age of twenty-three. His use of such names underscores the fact that he is appealing to an audience educated in the Chinese classics. Many readers would presumably not recognize that the “Chan master Jiming” actually refers to Ouyi himself.

Ouyi's use of several of his own names in a single work is, to my knowledge, also unique. Although Chinese writers would choose between their various names and often invent an interlocutor, here Ouyi not only creates an anonymous interlocutor but also includes multiple self-personas. He jokingly acknowledges this in the appendix, where Zhong Zhenzhi points out that both he and Jiming were born on the same day, had the same teachers, and same ambitions as a youth (Ibid., 19:11813, line 3). Ouyi fashions an encounter between his Confucian and Buddhist self, the former being a classically educated literati and the latter an ordained Buddhist monk. Ouyi never “stopped” being a Confucian when he became a Buddhist; instead his religious identity was a complex amalgamation of various traditions, exemplifying the syncretism and unification of the Three Teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一) that was especially popular in late imperial China. Ouyi continued commenting on the Chinese classics even after becoming a Buddhist monk,¹⁸ and as we have seen above, he considered his insight into the Confucian teachings to be significant enough that he included it in his autobiography, which he wrote when he was fifty-three. Nevertheless,

17 As Shengyan notes, Zhixu 智旭 was his formal monastic name (*faming* 法名) and Ouyi 藕益 was a name that Ouyi gave himself, which means “beneficial lotus.” See Shengyan (1975, 144).

18 He comments on the four Confucian classics in *Ouyi's Interpretation of the Four Books* (*Sishu Ouyi jie* 四書藕益解), in his *Collected Works* (Zhixu 1989a, 19:12345-12568), and he interprets the *Yijing* in *Chan Interpretation of the Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi chanjie* 周易禪解), in his *Collected Works* (Zhixu 1989a, 20:12569-13168). In the preface of the latter work that is written in 1641, two years prior to his *Collection [of Essays] Refuting Heterodoxy*, Ouyi acknowledges that he is recognized as Buddhist but also thoroughly understands Confucianism (*tongru* 通儒). See *ibid.* (20:12569, line 9). He says that his commentary seeks “to enter Confucianism by using Buddhism (literally *chan* 禪) and to persuade Confucians to know Buddhism.” (Ibid. 20:12572, lines 1-2).

Ouyi continues harbouring anxiety over having denounced Buddhism in his youth, which he explicitly references at the beginning of his first essay. By using his pre-Buddhist name Zhong Zhengzhi, in some sense he can return to his Confucian past when he denounced Buddhism and rectify his mistake by defending both Confucianism and Buddhism against Christianity.

Ouyi goes to great lengths to characterize himself as quintessentially Confucian at the beginning of his first essay. He describes himself reading one of the Confucian classics, the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*), while living in Suzhou, which was the heart of literati scholastic activity in the late Ming dynasty.¹⁹ Ouyi explicitly states that his essays are secular and Confucian²⁰ and often uses the phrase “we Confucians” (*wuru* 吾儒) in the course of his essays (Ibid., 19:11776, line 7; 11780, line 2; 11783, line 3; 11792, line 8; 11807, line 6; 11811, line 6). Finally, his essays abound with references to Confucian classics but mention no Buddhist sūtras. The only Buddhist opinions, expressed by Jiming in the introduction and appendix, are that Jesuit missionaries could be Bodhisattvas in disguise meant to inspire (*jiyang* 激揚) Buddhism (Ibid., 19:11772, lines 3-4) and that such challenges might further strengthen Buddhism.²¹ By insisting that his criticism rests on Confucian rather than Buddhist grounds, Ouyi seeks to preclude any dismissal of his work as sheer invective.

Nevertheless, by inserting the voices of Jiming and Dalang in the introduction and appendix, Ouyi embeds his overt Confucian critique within an implicit Buddhist framework. He thereby alludes to his commitment to Buddhism that underlies his refutation of Christianity. Although he meticulously avoids any reference to Buddhist sūtras in the course of his essays, we occasionally see Ouyi’s loyalties rise to the surface. In such instances, Ouyi engages in bitter and pointed diatribes against Christianity, culminating in accusations of theft.

19 He specifically writes that he is in Zhenze 震澤 county (present-day Wujiang 吳江 in Jiangsu 江蘇), which was part of Suzhou Fu 蘇州府 during Ouyi’s time. See “CHGIS, Version 4” Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute, January 2007. As Evelyn Rawski notes, Suzhou replaced Nanjing as the central metropolis in the Jiangnan region during the late Ming dynasty. See Rawski (1985, 25).

20 Specifically Jiming describes Zhong Zhengzhi as “upholding the investigation of principle (*lixue* 理學) and the worldly path (*shidao* 世道) of discipline (*gangwei* 綱維).” See his *Collected Works* (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11772, lines 5-6).

21 Ouyi writes, “If a knife is not sharpened, it is not quick; if a bell is not struck, it does not sound.” (Ibid. 19:11814, lines 3-4). This phrase recalls Ouyi’s discussion of the hexagram for “minor obstacles” (*xiaoxu* 小畜) in his *Zhouyi chanjie* 周易禪解, where Ouyi writes, “Only if bells are struck do they sound; only if knives are sharpened do they become quick.” (Ibid. 20:12689, line 7). In his commentary, Ouyi suggests if one encounters an obstacle but does not become fearful or resentful it can serve as a means for cultivating virtue.

Ouyi's Critique of Christianity

In their analysis of writings against Christian missionaries, scholars have debated what constitutes the most fundamental objection. Gernet suggests that cosmology is the greatest incompatibility between the two, especially the Christian notion of “a creator God” (Gernet 1985, 39-40). Rule admits that theism is an obvious point of attack, but he argues that notions of Christian revelation, such as the Incarnation and eternal punishment and reward, supersede such cosmological considerations (Rule 2001, 65-66). In the case of Ouyi Zhixu, he certainly addresses issues of theism and revelation, but he shows greater concern for theodicy and ethics. Ouyi repeatedly insists that morality rests with humans – that they are responsible for cultivating themselves.²² Thus Ouyi criticizes the notion that God would create humans to be both good and evil, allow Lucifer to tempt humankind, and promote an atonement theory that he thinks absolves humans of their ethical responsibility.

Ouyi directs his critique towards the “Study of Heaven” (*tianxue* 天學) and the “Teachings of the Lord of Heaven” (*tianzhujiao* 天主教) of Jesuit missionaries (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11711, lines 7-8). He criticizes the Jesuits for borrowing from Confucianism in name and attacking Buddhism as false (Ibid., 19:11711, line 7²³), and thereby posing a serious threat to Buddhism.²⁴ Although he recognizes previous anti-Christian works that he felt should have silenced Jesuits forever,²⁵ Ouyi says that he was prompted to write against Christianity because of Matteo Ricci's growing number of disciples and the abundance of heterodox customs (*xiefeng* 邪風) during his time (Ibid., 19:11771, line 10²⁶). His first essay specifically challenges a Jesuit pamphlet by João da Rocha (1566-1623) and Xu Guangqi 徐光啓 (1562-1633) entitled *General Explanation of the Images of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shengxiang lüeshuo* 天

22 In this respect, Ouyi raises objections similar to those of Jacques Gernet, who accuses Matteo Ricci of distorting Confucian morality by arguing that the principle of morality lies within God. See Gernet (1985, 56).

23 In his first essay, Ouyi specifically accuses Jesuit missionaries of “openly rejecting Buddhism but secretly stealing its chaff; feigning to respect Confucius but truly disrupting his teaching.” See Zhixu (1989a, 19:11776, line 3).

24 Ouyi relates his fear that Jesuit missionaries will marginalize Buddhism, such that it will become heresy (*waidao* 外道). See *ibid.* (19:11771, line 6).

25 He specifically cites Xu Dashou's 許大受 *Assisting the Sagely Court in the Refutation [of Heterodoxy]* (*Shengchao zuopi* 聖朝佐闢), a text written in 1623 that criticizes the work of Giulio Aleni. For a discussion of the work and a hypothesis regarding its limited circulation, see Dudink (1993, 94-140).

26 One could argue that Ouyi's concern was not entirely unfounded. As Nicolas Standaert notes, there was gradual growth of Chinese Christians until around 1630 when there was a sharp increase, which could have been due to the increase of Jesuit missionaries in the 1620s, the arrival of Friars, and the Jesuit shift of focus from elite to commoners. See Standaert (2001a, 383).

主聖像略說)²⁷; his second essay addresses João Soerio's (1572-1607) *Brief Account of the Sagely Teachings of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shengjiao yueyan* 天主聖教約言)²⁸ and Giulio Aleni's *Recorded Scholarly Discussions from Fuzhou* (*Sanshan lunxue* 三山論學記),²⁹ and it also contests Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*.

Ouyi structures his polemic in order to foreground his objections to the moral implications of Christianity, but he becomes most vehement when addressing Christian confessional practices that too closely resemble Buddhist repentance practices. Ouyi moves back and forth between such arguments, allowing him to vary his emotional tone and thereby appeal to a diverse audience. He can interest Confucian literati who would be more concerned with the ethical and social implications of Christian theology, yet he can also arouse indignation or sympathy for Buddhists by pointing out instances where he contends Jesuits explicitly criticize and reject Buddhism but secretly appropriate various practices. His polemic seeks to amplify the differences between Christianity and Confucianism and assert the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity. In this, he and his opponents had much in common. Christian missionaries often inflated the differences between themselves and Buddhists when confronted with such resemblances (Standaert 2001b, 112), although Matteo Ricci and others occasionally resorted to accusations of theft. We see Ouyi making similar allegations when he feels threatened by similarities between Buddhism and Christianity.

27 João da Rocha's Chinese name was Luo Ruwang 羅如望. He arrived in China in 1598 and baptized one of the most important Chinese converts, Xu Guangqi, in 1603. This text is one fascicle (*juan* 卷) in length long; it was written in either 1600 or 1601 and later carved in 1609. A facsimile of the text is available online at: <http://archives.catholic.org.hk/books/dtj.12/index.htm> (accessed April 26, 2008). Gianni Criveller discusses João da Rocha and the text in *Preaching Christ in Late Ming China*, 130-136.

28 João Soerio's Chinese name was Su Ruwang 蘇如望. This text is contained in *Remarks on the Sagely Teachings of the Lord of Heaven* (*Tianzhu shengjiao yueyan* 天主聖教約言). (2002, 2:253-280). The text contains two parts, the first addressing religious truths that one can grasp by natural reason, the second offering short commentaries on the Ten Commandments. Some scholars suggest that it was a catechism meant for aspiring believers. See Criveller (1997, 138-139).

29 Giulio Aleni's Chinese name was Ai Rulue 艾儒略. This work is available in the seventh volume of the series *An Expository Collection of the Christian Philosophical Works between the End of the Ming Dynasty and the Beginning of the Qing Dynasty in China* (*Mingmo qingchu yesuhui sixiang wen huibian* 明末清初耶穌會思想文彙編). 2000. The introduction to this text notes that the title comes from conversations between Giulio Aleni and high officials in Fuzhou.

Repentance

Unless we recognize Ouyi's discomfort with the similarity of Christian notions of confession and Buddhist practices of repentance, we cannot account for his emotionally charged response after reading the text by da Rocha and Xu, which prompted him to write his first essay. This Jesuit text first explains how God created the universe, narrates the story of Lucifer,³⁰ describes the two paths of good and evil, and then relates how God descended to atone for the sins of all people so that they can rise to heaven. It concludes by exhorting people who have sinned to follow the teaching of Jesus and recite his scriptures, so that they might be pardoned by God: "It is important now to regret and transform [oneself]; one need only be true, and God will naturally pardon sins and bestow happiness." (da Rocha and Xu, 6) In summary, the Jesuit text argues that through repentance, one can have one's sins pardoned by God. In the narrative frame of his first essay, Ouyi recounts reading the text and immediately rejecting it, and he accuses the Jesuits of stealing from Buddhism. (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11776, lines 2-3)

Only at the conclusion of his first essay does Ouyi elaborate on what he feels Christians have taken from Buddhism, all of which relate to repentance. His essay reaches its climax in this objection, which contains a string of similarities between Christian confession and Buddhist repentance. His use of "you" (*ru* 汝), addressing the Jesuits directly, suggests a heightened emotional intensity, which ultimately culminates in an accusation of theft. Ouyi writes:

You also say that at the last moment before death, if one listens to the teachings of the Lord of Heaven and also reforms and regrets, then one is transformed; thus it superficially resembles the ten moments of recollection (*shinian* 十念) of [Amitābha] Buddha.³¹ If you speak the truth, then the Buddhists also speak the truth. You speak of the importance of relying on the Ten Commandments; the Buddhists also speak of the importance of relying on the Ten Precepts. You speak of truthfully performing [confession] with one's mind and body; the Buddhists also speak of truthfully performing [repentance] with one's mind and body.³² You speak of the importance of true mind, true intention, pained regret, and powerful elimination [of sins], such that afterwards one dare not again commit them; the Buddha also speaks of the importance

30 The text says, "God allowed him to tempt the hearts of people in this world so that could people could increase their merit and decrease their mistakes, and bad people could change themselves and cultivate goodness." See the facsimile of the text on <http://archives.catholic.org.hk/books/dtj.12/index.htm>, p. 3.

31 The "ten moments of recollection" are mentioned in the *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra* (*Foshuo wuliangshou jing* 佛說無量壽經), T 360, 272c6.

32 Ouyi omits the second part of the sentence in da Rocha and Xu's text, which reads "Only then can one say with assurance that one has reformed one's mistakes (*gaiguo* 改過) and repented one's sins (*huizui* 悔罪)." See the facsimile of the text on <http://archives.catholic.org.hk/books/dtj.12/index.htm>, p. 7. This suggests that these phrases refer to performing (*zuo* 做) confession or repentance.

of a true mind, true intention, pained regret and powerful elimination [of sins], such that afterwards one dare not to commit them. All this is stolen from the Buddha's teachings, and yet you deny it! (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11781, lines 9; 11782, line 5)

Here we see Ouyi's opposition to what he considers too strong a resemblance between Christian and Buddhist notions of regret (*hui* 悔).³³ If we consider Ouyi's Buddhist writings on repentance, we find that the Jesuit depiction of God eliminating sins does bear striking resemblance to the role that Ouyi attributes to the Bodhisattva Dizang 地藏 (Skt. Kṣitigarbha). In his autobiography Ouyi writes that he first aroused the aspiration to attain enlightenment (*faxin* 發心; Skt. *bodhicitta*) after hearing the original vow of Dizang to save all sentient beings, even those who are relegated to hell.³⁴ In his repentance text on Dizang, he portrays Dizang as a savior of the penitent, and he associates the Bodhisattva with the particular trait of regret and shame (*cankui* 慚愧).³⁵ Finally, Ouyi himself is said to have performed twenty-five repentance rituals from between the ages of thirty-two and forty-eight, suggesting that it was an important religious practice in his own life.³⁶

Although this is not the final objection in his essay, it is clearly its climax; the three rebuttals that follow merely provide a dénouement, as Ouyi suggests that Jesuits have no grounds for criticizing Buddhists or Taoists for their almsgiving, vegetarianism or merit-making, since Jesuits themselves encourage offerings and worship before images (Ibid., 19:11782, line 9; 11783, line 2). Ouyi also claims that honoring the Lord of Heaven should be no different from honoring the Buddha or Laozi (Ibid., 19:11783, line 6). In his concluding statement, Ouyi returns to his passionate accusation above, yet this time he presents it as a settled conclusion: "Thus I say that you openly criticize the Buddha but secretly steal from him. You feign to respect Confucius but are truly the one who destroys him." (Ibid., 19:11783, line 8)

33 Although Ouyi misinterprets the Jesuit text (which explicitly urges practitioners to reform and repent immediately, arguing that it is impossible at the end of one's life), Ouyi clearly takes issue with its emphasis on confession and regret, which he believes too closely resembles Buddhist repentance practices.

34 Ouyi likely heard a recitation of the *Sūtra on the Original Vows of the Bodhisattva Dizang* (*Dizang pusa benyuan jing* 地藏菩薩本願經), T 412, 777c-790a.

35 Ouyi writes, "I single-mindedly worship the *Bodhisattva-mahāsattva* Dizang who is endowed with ample shame (*cankui* 慚愧), *samādhi* and *prajñā*." See his *Rite of Vows and Repentance in Praise of the Bodhisattva Dizang* (*Zanli dizang pusa chan yuan wen* 讚禮地藏菩薩懺願文) in his *Collected Works* (Zhixu 1989a, 19:12315, lines 2-3).

36 For a list of the repentance practices that Ouyi performed in this period, see Shengyan (1975, 194-195). Of these practices, the most common were the "Great Compassion Repentance" (*Dabei chan* 大悲懺) associated with the Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音 (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) that was developed by Siming Zhili 四明知禮 (960-1028) in the Song dynasty (see T 1950) and Ouyi's own "*Rituals of the Divination Sūtra*" (*Zhancha jing xingfa* 占察經行法) that focuses on the *Bodhisattva* Dizang.

Theodicy

While his Buddhist concerns relate to repentance practices, Ouyi's Confucian arguments address issues of theodicy and ethics. He objects to the way Jesuits invest God with qualities of love, hatred, and the power to punish, he criticizes the notion that God would create humans to be both good and evil, and finally he questions why God would allow Lucifer to tempt humans towards evil. In his first objection, Ouyi states that the Chinese notion of creation is the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極), which is essentially the principle of *yin* and *yang*. Good and evil result from an excess of *yin* and *yang*, but it is humans that are responsible for regulating these forces, and therefore “benevolence (*ren* 仁) comes from the self.” (Ibid., 19:11776, line 10; 11777, line 1³⁷) Ouyi insists that morality should be located within humans rather than in an external force.

In his second objection, Ouyi criticizes the Jesuit claim that one's nature is bestowed by God. He says that this would imply that one's nature could be taken away, which contradicts the Jesuit claim that it has a beginning but no end (Zhixu 1989a, 19:11798, line 10; 11799, line 3). Secondly, in response to the claim that God created humans to be inclined toward good and that they bear responsibility for any wrongdoing, Ouyi questions why God would not create people to be entirely good. Exploring a counter-argument of Jesuits – that just as parents cannot be accountable for their children's misbehavior, God cannot be accountable for human wrongdoing – Ouyi criticizes the analogy since parents do not create the disposition (*xinxing* 心性) of their children, and he again asks why God did not bestow a solely good disposition on human beings (Ibid., 19:11803, lines 1-2). Ouyi insists that one cannot attribute one's disposition to an external source, for that would locate the source of morality outside oneself; instead, it must come from within.

Thirdly, Ouyi questions the justice of a God who creates evil beings³⁸ instead of entirely good ones (Ibid., 19:11778, lines 3-4). Ouyi asks why God would empower Lucifer knowing that he would rebel, or why God would allow Lucifer to remain in the world to lead people astray, if God has the power to prevent this. Ouyi summarizes the classic dilemma of theodicy as he writes, “As for God's creation of Lucifer, why was he given such great power and ability? If [God] did not know that [Lucifer] would give rise to pride and yet bestowed it, then [God] is not wise (*zhi* 智). If [God] knew that [Lucifer] would give rise to pride and yet bestowed it, he is not benevolent (*ren* 仁). Neither benevolent nor wise, yet he is called Lord of Heaven? (*tianzhu* 天主)” (Ibid., 19:11777, lines 5-8) For Ouyi, these three characteristics of God as omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent appear inconsistent when considered in light of evil.

37 This citation is actually a quotation from Confucius' *Analects* 12:1.

38 Ouyi includes both spirits (*shen* 神) and humans (*ren* 人). See Zhixu (1989a, 19:11777, lines 3-4).

Atonement

Ouyi also criticizes Jesuit presentations of atonement (*shuzui* 贖罪), which he considers extremely problematic. Ouyi asks first, if God is supremely powerful and compassionate, why did he not directly pardon people's sins instead of using his body to atone for them? (Ibid., 19:11779, lines 7-9) Second, if God can use his body to atone for people's sins, why did he not cause them not to sin in the first place? (Ibid., 19:11779 lines 9-10) Third, if he has atoned for the sins of all time, then why are there those who sin (*zaozui* 造罪) and still fall into hell? (Ibid., 19:11780, line 1) Finally, and perhaps more importantly, Ouyi sees possible antinomian implications of atonement. Ouyi notes how Confucians say that even sages cannot hide the evil of their children, but instead that each person must assume responsibility for their own self-cultivation. Ouyi writes, "But now, if God is already able to atone for people's sins, then people can do as they please and become evil, and always expect God to mercifully pardon them." (Ibid., 19:11780, lines 4-5) Ouyi argues that atonement can lead to moral recklessness on the part of humans.

Insincerity

Ouyi warns Confucians to be circumspect before aligning with the Jesuit cause, arguing that Jesuit missionaries have contravened the Confucian notion of "sincerity" (*cheng* 誠). (Ibid., 19:11791, lines 1-2; 11799, lines 5-6; 11807, lines 6-9; 11807, line 10; 11808, line 2) Ouyi vests sincerity with cosmological significance³⁹ superior to the Jesuit God, as he declares "sincerity" to be "the end and the beginning of all things." (Ibid., 19:11799, lines 5-6; 11807, lines 6-7) We have seen how Ouyi points to Jesuit theft of Buddhist practices as evidence of their untrustworthiness in his first essay; in his second essay, Ouyi argues that the Jesuits have misunderstood essential notions in Confucianism. Ouyi specifically challenges their understanding of "heaven" (*tian* 天) in response to Matteo Ricci's claim that the "Lord of Heaven" (*tianzhu* 天主) is that which is called *shangdi* 上帝 in the classics (Ibid., 19:11789, line 3⁴⁰).

Ouyi argues against the exclusivity implicit in Jesuit discussions of God as the sole "Lord of Heaven."⁴¹ Deconstructing metaphors of God as a single "head," "ruler," or "lord," Ouyi

39 He writes that "sincerity is the way of Heaven" and that it is "truly the primal source of Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things." See *ibid.* (19:11791, lines 2-3).

40 Jacques Gernet raises a similar criticism that Christian missionaries who appealed to the Confucian *tian* did not understand that there were fundamental contradictions between the two. See his *China and the Christian Impact*, especially Chapter 5: "Chinese Heaven, Christian God."

41 Ouyi battled against exclusivism in his own religious life. He particularly criticized the

argues that simply because one head has one body, one cannot conclude that there are not other heads on other bodies (Ibid., 19:11786, line 10; 11788, line 1), nor does a single head of a household imply that no other households exist, or a single ruler imply that no other countries exist, and finally, a single heaven does not imply there are no other heavens (Ibid., 19:11787, lines 3-7). He instead argues that “heaven” has multiple meanings in Chinese thought.

Ouyi lists the three definitions of “heaven”: (1) the sky above that is limitless and filled with stars; (2) the heaven that handles all the affairs of the world, advocating good and penalizing bad – that which is called the “Most High” (*shangdi* 上帝) in Confucian texts such as the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Yijing*, and the *Shujing*; and (3) one’s original nature of spiritual luminescence (*lingming* 靈明) that neither begins nor ends, that neither arises nor ceases (Ibid., 19:11789, lines 4-10). Ouyi emphasizes that under the second definition the “Most High” (*shangdi* 上帝) governs the world but does not create it. Thus Ouyi insists, “If they erroneously take him to be a ruler who creates people and things, then they are gravely mistaken.” (Ibid., 19:11789, line 9) Although Ouyi could have concluded his argument at this point, instead we see an extended discussion of what Confucians consider to be the source of Heaven, Earth, and all things, suggesting that Matteo Ricci has struck a nerve.

Ouyi describes a variety of terms that the Chinese have used to describe the third notion of “heaven” as one’s inherent nature: “fate” (*ming* 命), “the middle” (*zhong* 中), “change” (*yi* 易), “innate knowing” (*liangzhi* 良知), “solitude” (*du* 獨), “awe” (*wei* 畏), “the mind” (*xin* 心), “oneself” (*ji* 己), and finally “sincerity” (*cheng* 誠). Of all the terms, it is this last definition of “sincerity” that serves as the lynchpin in Ouyi’s polemic, for it enables him to simultaneously supplant the Jesuit “Lord of Heaven” with Confucian “sincerity” and also denounce Jesuits for their insincerity.

Not only does he accuse Jesuits of being duplicitous in their equating God with *shangdi*, but he again claims that Jesuits have been deceitful in their rejection of Buddhism. Instead of defending the truth of Buddhist claims, which would be a dubious project in the eyes of many Confucian readers, Ouyi again suggests that they are just as possible as – if not superior to – Christian claims.⁴² He then characterizes the Jesuit missionaries as insincere and undeserving of the literati’s respect. Ouyi describes the advent of Jesuit missionaries in China, crossing the water into Guangzhou where they then searched for support for Christianity from the books of the Three Teachings (*sanjiao* 三教), namely Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Again addressing his denunciation to the Jesuits directly as “you” (*ru* 汝), Ouyi writes:

You drew from Buddhism and added [this] to Confucianism, fabricating and tweaking to create this heterodox religion, believing you can delude the world and deceive people, eating away and destroying the basis of our country’s fortunes! You say that

sectarianism of Buddhist schools in his day and instead advocated an “integration of different schools” (*zhuzong ronghe* 諸宗融合). See Shengyan (1975, 83).

42 Ouyi acknowledges auspicious signs surrounding both the birth of the Buddha and Jesus in *ibid.* (19:11804, line 9; 11805, line 1); he suggests that Buddhists are superior to Christians insofar as they do not claim that the Buddha was more than human. See *ibid.* (19:11805, line 2).

you have eliminated licentiousness by not marrying, and yet you use absurd talk of holy water to entice these foolish men and women, while secretly you engage in corrupt and base acts. Thus the people of Guangdong and Fujian annually trade with the Philippines, assisting you by each year adding a ship delivering treasures for you to trade with. For this reason, you do not expect the smallest donation from those with whom you trade; in fact, you give them exotic things. People therefore say that you are upright (*lian zhe* 廉潔) and have no ulterior motives. You surpass those Buddhists and Taoists in persuading people to donate; even the gentry (*jin shen* 縉紳) and the literati (*dashi* 達士) are deceived by you, considering you respectful and humble (*gong que* 恭慤), honest and modest (*lian tui* 廉退), and dignified in the manner of great Confucians. (Ibid., 19:11806, line 4; 11807, line 1)

Ouyi accuses Jesuit missionaries of being dishonest and insincere, of stealing from Buddhism and twisting ideas from Confucianism. Although they appear upright, Ouyi insists they are corrupt, using holy water to dupe the common people and trade to sway the elite. Ouyi considers the Jesuits a serious cultural threat, and his tirade can be considered the climax of his essay, since the remaining passages simply restate previous arguments.⁴³ Ouyi reiterates his claim that “sincerity” (*cheng* 誠), not God, is the beginning and end of all things (Ibid., 19:11807, line 6). Sincerity entails self-cultivation; when one has developed oneself fully, one can transform others (Ibid., 19:11807, lines 7-9). Recalling the third definition of “heaven” as “spiritual luminescence” and “sincerity,” Ouyi concludes, “Truly this is the root of transformation of things, it is not the ‘Lord of Heaven.’” (Ibid., 19:11808, line 2)

Conclusion

We have seen how Ouyi appeals to a Confucian audience in his refutation of Christianity, criticizing its ethical implications and characterizing Jesuits as being insincere. Ouyi identifies what he perceives to be a clear difference between Confucianism and Christianity: while the former locates morality and ethical responsibility within the individual, the latter views God as creating human nature and atoning for human sins through Jesus Christ. Ouyi amplifies this difference between Confucianism and Christianity in his writings, and he also vehemently defends Buddhism against Jesuit criticism. Ouyi objects to what he perceives to be similarities between Christianity and Buddhism, particularly the practice of repentance. In Ouyi’s opinion, it is too similar to be a coincidence, and we see Ouyi delivering impassioned *ad hominem* attacks accusing Jesuits of duplicitous thievery.

Nicolas Standaert has described the cultural interaction between the Chinese literati and the Jesuit missionaries in late imperial China using the metaphor of textile. He states, “The metaphor of textile allows us to look at what happens to specific fibers, but also to look at

43 Kern argues that this section was in fact the original ending of Ouyi’s work, and that Ouyi only added the remaining material after reading Soeiro’s essay. See Kern (1974, 263, note 197).

the usage, function, form, and meaning of the textile as a whole.” (Standaert 2001b, 104) He describes the various threads of culture, theology, and science that can be woven to create a new fabric, with some existing fibers (Confucianism) reinforced and others (Buddhism) rejected wholesale. If we consider this metaphor in light of Ouyi's anti-Christian essays, we see an instance in which Christian missionaries were not viewed as contributing to the fabric of Chinese culture. Ouyi portrays such Jesuit missionaries as threatening the fabric of Chinese culture and religion altogether. He unravels the moral dangers underlying their theology, suggesting that atonement and absolution of sins can lead to antinomianism. In instances where Christian practices bear too strong a resemblance to those of Buddhism, Ouyi claims that certain threads were stolen from Buddhism and re-presented in Christian terms. Instead of viewing Jesuit missionaries as weavers at a shared loom, he likens them to parasites eating through the fabric of China.

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