

**I CANNOT DO OTHERWISE (BUDEYI)**  
By Yang Guangxian

**Introduction**

Beginning in late sixteenth century, Portuguese merchants began coming to trade in southern China, bringing Jesuit priests along with them. Jesuits, notably the Italian Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), aimed to convert members of the scholar-official elite who, they hoped, would then assist in spreading their religion among the people. While welcomed by the late Ming and early Qing emperors for their expertise in areas such as astronomy, calendar-making, cannon and other firearms, and mathematics, the Jesuits made relatively few converts. By the late seventeenth century, Christianity faced growing opposition among the officials and from the imperial government.

The following document concerning Christianity was written by the scholar and official Yang Guangxian (1597-1669) and is part of a series of essays denouncing Christianity written between 1659 and 1665.

**Document Excerpts with Questions** (Longer selection follows this section)

From *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 151-152. © 2000 Columbia University Press. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

**I Cannot Do Otherwise (Budeyi)**  
By Yang Guangxian

... according to a book by [the Christian scholar] Li Zubo,<sup>1</sup> the Qing dynasty is nothing but an offshoot of Judea; our ancient Chinese rulers, sages, and teachers were but the offshoots of a heterodox sect; and our classics and the teachings of the sages propounded generation after generation are no more than the remnants of a heterodox teaching. How can one abide by these calumnies! ...

Our Confucian teaching is based on the Five Relationships (between parent and child, ruler and minister, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and friends), whilst the Lord of Heaven Jesus was crucified because he plotted against his own country, showing that he did not recognize the relationship between ruler and subject. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a husband names Joseph, but she said Jesus was not conceived by him.

---

<sup>1</sup> Li Zubo, *Tianxue quankai* (A Summary of the Propagation of Christianity, 1665).

**Primary Source Document, with Questions (DBQ) on  
I CANNOT DO OTHERWISE (BUDEYI), BY YANG GUANGXIAN**

**Questions:**

1. On what grounds does Yang Guangxian criticize Christianity?
2. How do Yang's arguments against Christianity compare to earlier Neo-Confucian arguments against Buddhism (as exemplified in Han Yu's "Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha")?
3. How would the Chinese Christian Zhang Xingyao rebut Yang's arguments?

**Longer Selection**

From *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 151-152. © 2000 Columbia University Press. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

**I Cannot Do Otherwise (Budeyi)  
By Yang Guangxian**

In [the Jesuit Father] Adam Schall's own preface one can read that [the Christian scholars] Xu Guangqi and Li Zhizao both understood that they could not dare publicly to give offense to Confucian norms. Adam Schall's work says that one man and one woman were created as the first ancestors of all humankind. He was not actually so bold as to make the contemptuous assertion that all the peoples in the world are offshoots of his teaching, but according to a book by [the Christian scholar] Li Zubo,<sup>2</sup> the Qing dynasty is nothing but an offshoot of Judea; our ancient Chinese rulers, sages, and teachers were but the offshoots of a heterodox sect; and our classics and the teachings of the sages propounded generation after generation are no more than the remnants of a heterodox teaching. How can we abide these calumnies! They really aim to inveigle the people of the Qing into rebelling against the Qing and following this heterodox sect, which would lead all-under-Heaven to abandon respect for rulers and fathers. ...

Our Confucian teaching is based on the Five Relationships (between parent and child, ruler and minister, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and friends), whilst the Lord of Heaven Jesus was crucified because he plotted against his own country, showing that he did not recognize the relationship between ruler and subject. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a husband named Joseph, but she said Jesus was not conceived by him.

Those who follow this teaching [Christianity] are not allowed to worship their ancestors and ancestral tablets. They do not recognize the relationship of parent and child. Their teachers oppose the Buddhists and Daoists, who do recognize the relationship between ruler and subject and father and son. Jesus did not recognize the relationship between ruler and subject and parent and child, and yet the Christians speak of him as recognizing these relationships. What arrant nonsense! ...

---

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1, above.

[The Jesuit Father] M. Ricci wished to honor Jesus as the Lord of Heaven (*Tianzhu*) who leads the multitude of nations and sages from above, and he particularly honored him by citing references to the Lord-on-High (*Shangdi*) in the Six Classics of China, quoting passages out of context to prove that Jesus was the Lord of Heaven. He said that the Lord of Heaven was referred to in the ancient classical works as the Lord-on-High, and what we in the west call “the Lord of Heaven” is what the Chinese have spoken of as “the Lord-on-High.” [According to Ricci] the Heaven (Tian) of the blue sky functions as a servant of the Lord-on-High, which is located neither in the east nor in the west, lacks a head or stomach, has no hands or feet, and is unable to be honored. How much less would earthbound land, which a multitude of feet trample and defile, be considered something to be revered? Thus Heaven and Earth are not at all to be revered. Those who argue like this are no more than beasts able to speak a human language.

Heaven is the great origin of all events, things, and principles. When principles a (*li*) are established, material-force (*qi*) comes into existence. Then, in turn, numbers are created and from these numbers, images begin to take form. Heaven is Principle within form, and Principle is Heaven without form. When shape comes in to its utmost form, then Principle appears therein; this is why Heaven is Principle. Heaven contains all events and things, while Principle also contains all events and things and, as a result, when one seeks the origin of things in the Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji*) it is only what we call Principle. Beyond principle there is no other principle, and beyond Heaven there is no other Heaven [i.e., Lord of Heaven].