

The Religionization of Confucianism: A study of the concept of “*shangdi*” 上帝 in the Qing  
Confucian scholar Wang Qiyuan’s 王啟元 *Qingshu jingtan* 《清署經談》

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Qing Confucian scholar Wang Qiyuan’s 王啟元 *Qingshu jingtan* 《清署經談》 is a Confucian classic written in contention with Catholicism. Wang adopted the structure and doctrines of the Catholic Church, religionized Confucianism to contend with the influence of the Catholic Church and rebuilt the Confucian orthodoxy and supreme principle. He regards the teaching of Confucianism as “holy teaching,” the six classics as “holy canon,” and Confucius as the “founder”; these discourses revolve very closely around the redefinition and interpretation of the relationship between *shangdi* 上帝, and *tian* 天 and *tianzi* 天子. This paper shall focus on clarifying how Wang’s interpretation of the concept of *shangdi* and the affairs stemming from this concept created an image of the “religion of Confucianism” in the pluralistic and syncretic cultural context of the late Ming and early Qing. Lastly, the paper shall also discuss the problem in the alternations of concepts and limitations of the hermeneutical dimensions within the context of the cultural exchange between Christianity and Confucianism.