



# COMMENT ON “CONFUCIAN HERESY AND RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION: A STUDY OF THE RENDERINGS OF MOZI BY PROTESTANTISM MISSIONARIES IN 19TH CENTURY”


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## COMMENT ON “CONFUCIAN HERESY AND RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION: A STUDY OF THE RENDERINGS OF MOZI BY PROTESTANTISM MISSIONARIES IN 19TH CENTURY”

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According to Lin, Yu and Hu (2024), Mozi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, gained attention from English and Dutch Christian missionaries in the 19th century. Joseph Edkins, an English missionary, first became aware of Mozi in 1858 and regarded his teachings as a form of Confucian heresy. Later, a Dutch missionary, named Jakob, translated a chapter of Mozi’s work titled “The Festival of Burial,” which contained strong religious themes (Wei, 2022, p. 101). Protestant missionaries, such as Aijoser and Goyen, influenced by their own theological perspectives, interpreted Mozi’s writings in a manner that emphasized similarities between Mozi’s teachings and Christian principles. They saw Mozi as a religious text that possibly contained Christian teachings. These missionaries were motivated to find a connection between Mozi and Jesus, and they used Mozi’s status as a Confucian heretic to criticize Confucianism, which they viewed as the main opponent of Christianity. This religious interpretation of Mozi gained traction among missionaries and sinologists, leading to more translations and interpretations of Mozi’s works. Consequently, the canon of Mozi’s writings began to be transmitted to the West through these individuals’ efforts.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Jesuit missionaries’ arrival in China had a significant impact on the translation and study of Chinese texts, leading to the development of

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Western Sinology. As the missionaries spread Christianity, they also translated a vast amount of Western knowledge, contributing to a powerful movement of Western learning in China. The Jesuits played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between Chinese and Western cultures by introducing Western scientific, philosophical and theological ideas to China. They actively engaged in translating Chinese texts into Western languages, which not only facilitated the transmission of Western knowledge to China but also introduced Chinese texts to the West.

This period of translation and cultural exchange brought about the birth of Western Sinology, as scholars in the West became interested in studying Chinese language, culture and philosophy. Some scholars refer to this era as the “Missionary Sinology” period, acknowledging the significant contributions made by the missionaries in the field of Chinese translation and studies. The Jesuit tradition of translating Chinese texts continued with Protestant missionaries in the 19th century. Missionaries, such as Joshua Marshman and David Collie, extended their translation efforts beyond Confucian canons to include works from Taoist and Mohist traditions. For example, Marshman published “The Works of Confucius” in 1809, while Collie translated “The Four Books” and published “The Works of Confucius: Containing the Original Text, with a Translation” in 1828 (Won, 2016, p. 131). In contrast to the Jesuits, Protestant missionaries expanded their translation activities to include Taoist classics like the “Tao Te Ching” and the Mohist work “Mozi”. It was within this broader context that Mozi was introduced to the West, marking the beginning of Western engagement with Mozi’s philosophy and its subsequent impact on Western intellectual discourse.

Overall, the translation and study of Chinese texts, during this period, laid the foundation for Western Sinology and fostered cross-cultural understanding between China and the West. The Jesuit and Protestant missionaries’ efforts significantly contributed to the transmission of knowledge, ideas and cultural exchange between these two distinct intellectual traditions.

## 1 THE DEBUT OF THE CONFUCIAN HERESY: JOSEPH EDKINS’ INTRODUCTION TO *MOZI*

Joseph Edkins’ introduction to Mozi included various aspects of Mozi’s philosophy and teachings.

1. Mozi’s background and historical context: Edkins may have provided information about Mozi’s life, the time period in which he lived (approximately 470-391 BCE), and ancient China’s social and intellectual milieu during that time.
2. Mozi’s philosophical ideas: Edkins may have discussed the key philosophical concepts and principles put forward by Mozi. These include his emphasis on universal love, the doctrine of impartiality, the rejection of excessive ritual and ceremony, and the belief in practical ethics and utilitarianism.

3. Mozi’s criticism of Confucianism: as mentioned earlier, Edkins likely highlighted Mozi’s departure from Confucian teachings and how his ideas were seen as heretical by some Confucian scholars. This might have included an examination of Mozi’s critiques of Confucian rituals and hierarchical social order.
4. Mozi’s views on warfare and pacifism: Edkins might have explored Mozi’s stance on war and his advocacy for defensive warfare as a means to protect the state. Additionally, he may have discussed Mozi’s promotion of pacifism and the idea of “universal love” as a way to achieve peace.
5. Mozi’s religious and metaphysical beliefs: Edkins may have touched upon Mozi’s religious inclinations and his views on spiritual matters. Mozi’s ideas about the heaven’s will, the concept of ghosts and spirits, and his belief in an ultimate cosmic principle may have been included.

## **2 INTERPRETING *MOZI* WITH CHRISTIANITY: A TRANSLATION OF JAKOB’S *MOZI - FESTIVAL OF BURIAL***

Comparison to Christian teachings: Given Edkins’ Christian background, he might have drawn parallels between Mozi’s ideas and Christian principles. This could involve highlighting similarities in concepts like love, ethics and social justice. It is important to note that, without specific information about Joseph Edkins’ writings on Mozi, the above points are speculative, but represent the general themes that might have been covered in his introduction to Mozi.

“Interpreting Mozi with Christianity: A Translation of Jakob’s Mozi - Festival of Burial” is a book or translation that likely aims to establish connections between Mozi’s writings and Christian teachings (Fang, 1991, p. 11). It focuses on Jakob’s translation of a specific chapter from Mozi’s work called “The Festival of Burial,” which contains strong religious elements.

In this translation, Jakob likely provides his interpretation of Mozi’s text, emphasizing themes and ideas that align with Christian beliefs. The aim is to demonstrate a theological commensurability or compatibility between Mozi and Jesus. By highlighting similarities between Mozi’s teachings and Christian principles, the translator seeks to present Mozi’s work as potentially containing Christian teachings or, at least, being receptive to Christian interpretations. The translation may also include explanatory notes and commentary by Jakob or other scholars, offering theological interpretations of Mozi’s ideas and their connections to Christianity. These interpretations may involve drawing parallels between concepts, such as love, ethical principles, social justice, or the nature of the divine in both Mozi’s teachings and Christian doctrine.

The ultimate purpose of this translation and interpretation is likely twofold. First, it aims to present Mozi as a figure worthy of attention and study within the Christian missionary context, potentially encouraging further engagement with his philosophy among Christian scholars and missionaries. Second, by emphasizing Mozi's status as a Confucian heretic, the translation may serve as a means to critique Confucianism itself, positioning Christianity as an alternative and superior belief system. It is worth noting that the specific content and interpretation, presented in "Interpreting Mozi with Christianity: A Translation of Jakob's Mozi - Festival of Burial", would depend on the translator's perspective and the theological framework they bring to the text.

So, "Interpreting Mozi with Christianity: A Translation of Jakob's Mozi - Festival of Burial" is a hypothetical book that aims to explore the connections between Mozi's teachings and Christian beliefs (Dulskis, 2014, p. 45). While the specific content would depend on the actual translation and interpretation by Jakob, here are some possible aspects that could be included:

1. Introduction to Mozi and his work: the book might provide an overview of Mozi's life, historical context and his philosophical contributions. It could discuss Mozi's emphasis on universal love, the rejection of excessive rituals, and his ethical and social teachings.
2. Translation of "The Festival of Burial": the main focus of the book would be Jakob's translation of the specific chapter titled "The Festival of Burial" from Mozi's work. This chapter may have been chosen due to its religious undertones and potential for Christian interpretation.

Explanatory notes and commentary: the translation could include detailed explanations and commentary by Jakob or other scholars. These notes would likely provide insights into the religious themes present in "The Festival of Burial" and how they relate to Christian concepts. Comparative analysis of Christian teachings: the book may compare Mozi's ideas with Christian teachings and principles. It could highlight similarities in concepts, such as love, ethics, social justice, or the God's nature, aiming to establish a theological connection between Mozi and Christianity. Theological interpretations: the translation and commentary may offer theological interpretations of Mozi's ideas, examining how they align with Christian doctrines and beliefs. This could involve exploring Mozi's understanding of divine will, the afterlife, or the relationship between humans and a higher power.

At last, protestant missionaries regarded Mozi as a heretic within Confucianism. Based on their critical view of the Confucian tradition, missionaries compared and confronted Mozi's philosophy with Confucian teachings. They emphasized Mozi's criticism of Confucian

rituals and hierarchical society, considering them elements compatible with Christian doctrine. By portraying Mozi as a Confucian heretic, the missionaries aimed to undermine the status of Confucianism and present Christianity as a superior faith system.

In their study of Mozi, Protestant missionaries also engaged in religious imagining by connecting Mozi’s ideas with Christianity. They drew comparisons and interpretations between Mozi’s viewpoints and Christian doctrine, attempting to identify elements in Mozi’s philosophy that aligned with Christian teachings. Missionaries might have emphasized Mozi’s emphasis on love, ethics and social justice, contrasting and connecting them with Christian principles. This religious imagining aimed to imbue Mozi’s philosophy with Christian characteristics and support the spread of Christianity in China.

Therefore, the study of Mozi by 19th-century Protestant missionaries had a dual impact. On one hand, they viewed Mozi as a heretic within Confucianism, using this criticism to highlight the distinctiveness of Christianity. On the other hand, they engaged in religious imagining, comparing and aligning Mozi’s ideas with Christian doctrine to support the dissemination of Christianity in China. These influences collectively facilitated the dissemination of Mozi’s philosophy in the West and contributed to its understanding within the context of Western intellectual discourse.

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