

17 Kang Youwei: *Proposal to Establish Confucianism as the State Religion* (1898)

Introduced by Hubert Seiwert

Introduction

The text reproduced below in excerpt is a memorial to the throne, submitted by Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) in 1898. At that time, Kang Youwei was one of the leading figures of the Hundred Days' Reform, which was supported by the young Emperor Guangxu (1871–1908). The reform movement failed after only a few months, due to resistance from conservative officials, and Empress Dowager Cixi's usurpation of the emperor's power. Kang subsequently went into exile, initially in Japan, to escape the death penalty. He returned to China only after the founding of the Republic.¹

Like many political thinkers of his time, Kang believed that China's external weakness and domestic issues could only be overcome through fundamental political reforms. Just a few months before the Hundred Days' Reform of 1898, Germany had forced the cession of Jiaozhou Bay in Shandong Province; subsequently, Britain, France, and Russia had also obtained territorial concessions. The pretext for Germany's military intervention was the murder of two Catholic missionaries, one of many local anti-Christian incidents that had repeatedly led to conflicts with Western powers since China's opening to Christian missions. Such incidents were recorded in the Chinese administration as "religious cases" (*jiao an* 教案).

Kang Youwei uses these 'religious cases' as an occasion to discuss the significance of religion (*jiao* 教) to China's current weakness. He points out China's lack of laws concerning religions, and its resulting absence of clear rules for dealing with religious cases. To circumvent the predictable resistance of Western powers to Chinese religious legislation, he argues for the necessity of engaging in direct negotiations with the Christian churches. However, this would require China to have a religion on a par with the Christian churches.

¹ For Kang Youwei's biography, see Jung-Pang Lo, ed., *K'ang Yu-Wei: A Biography and a Symposium* (Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1967). A new interpretation of Kang Youwei's life, focusing on his religious orientation, is given by Wan Zhaoyuan, *Science and the Confucian Religion of Kang Youwei (1858–1927): China Before the Conflict Thesis*, Ideas, History, and Modern China 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

Hubert Seiwert, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"; Leipzig University, Faculty of History, Art and Area Studies, Institute for the Study of Religion

Therefore, Kang Youwei advocates establishing a Church of Confucius (*Kong jiao hui*).^{II} This church would be organised along the lines of the Christian churches to make Confucius' teachings the moral foundation of the entire populace. Kang links this proposal to extensive criticism of the current decline of Confucian teachings, and the increasing lack of reverence for Confucius. He believed that the main reason for the moral decay among officials lay in the format of the state examinations, which only promoted the mastery of external literary forms, and failed to promote an internalising of Confucius' teachings. Therefore, he calls for a fundamental change in the state examinations.

It is evident that Kang Youwei intended the Church of Confucius to serve as a counterbalance to Christian churches. However, it is unclear whether he understood Confucius' teachings as a 'religion' in the Western sense – i.e. as a 'religious' doctrine distinct from 'secular' teachings. The text is not explicit in this regard, as it only uses the traditional term *jiao* 教 ('teaching').^{III} Kang wanted to place the teachings of Confucius (*Kongzi jiao* 孔子教) on the same level as the "teachings spread by the West" (*taixi chuan jiao* 泰西傳教), meaning Christianity. From his perspective, this required a fundamental reform of Confucianism, which should be induced by the state.

It is noteworthy that the text does not use the established term *rujiao* 儒教 to refer to the Confucian teachings. Kang Youwei does not advocate simply declaring traditional Confucianism the state religion, but rather reforming Confucianism, and organising the teachings of Confucius along the lines of Christian churches. The proposal contains revolutionary elements. While Confucianism, in the sense of *rujiao*, was traditionally confined to scholars, the Church of Confucius was to include the entire populace, with all members having a voice. Apart from the head, all positions should be filled through elections. Temples for the worship of Confucius were to be established not only in the cities, as was usual, but also in all villages. Kang calls for converting folk temples where the people worshipped 'illicit' spirits into Confucius temples.

II A literal translation of *Kong jiao hui* 孔教會 would be 'Confucius Teaching Association.' However, at the end of the nineteenth century, the term *jiaohui* 教會 was already a common translation of 'church' (in the sense of a religious organisation). Therefore, the term can be translated as 'Church of Confucius,' analogous to the *Jidu jiaohui* 基督教会 ('Church of Jesus' – i.e. Christianity). The alternative translation 'Confucian church' would be misleading, because the Chinese equivalents of the Western words 'Confucian' and 'Confucianism' are *ru* 儒 or *rujia/rujiao* 儒家/儒教, which do not directly refer to Confucius.

III The ambivalence of the term *jiao* in nineteenth-century Chinese discourses is discussed by Ya-pei Kuo, "Before the Term: 'Religion' as China's Cultural Other," *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 20, no. 4 (2010), <https://www.comparativ.net/v2/article/view/347/284>. Kuo. For the history and reception of the term *zongjiao* as the standard translation of 'religion', see Christian Meyer, "Zongjiao as a Chinese Conceptual Term for Religion? Genealogical Notes on Its Development Since the Late Qing Period." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 50, no. 1 (2022): 115–40.

While Kang viewed the organisational form of Christian churches as an example, he emphasised that their teachings were superficial compared to the subtlety of the Confucian doctrine. For him, what mattered was that Western states had national teachings that morally united their populations. In his view, China's weakness stemmed from the absence of an organised national doctrine.

The 1898 text does not definitively reveal whether Kang Youwei at that time conceptually distinguished between religious and non-religious teachings, or was aware of the Western understanding of religion. The term *jiao* remains ambiguous in his argument. However, a few years later, his disciple Liang Qichao 梁啟超, after becoming familiar with the Western concept of religion during his exile in Japan, concluded that religions were irrational beliefs; he therefore vehemently rejected the idea of considering Confucius' teachings to be a religion.^{IV} The goal of establishing Confucianism as a state religion was pursued by some conservative intellectuals in subsequent years, but had no significant political consequences.^V

Bibliographical Information

Kang Youwei 康有为. "Qing shangding jiaoran falü, lizheng keju wenti, ting tianxia xiangyi zengshe wenmian, bing cheng 'Kongzi gaizhi kao' jincheng yulan, yi zun sheng shi er bao dajiao zhe." 请商定教案法律厘正科举文体听天下乡邑增设文庙谨写《孔子改制考》进程御览以尊圣师而保大教折 [Report to the throne, with a petition for fixing through consultation a law concerning religious cases, for correcting the examination system, and for increasing the number of Confucius temples in all counties, at the same time forwarding the respectfully written work 'An Investigation of Confucius as a System Reformer' to be read by the Emperor, in order to honor the Sage and to protect the Great Teaching]. In *Kang Youwei quanji* 康有为全集 [Collected Works of Kang Youwei]. Vol. 4, 92–95. Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 2007.

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IV For details, see Wan Zhaoyuan, *Science and the Confucian Religion of Kang Youwei (1858–1927)*, 129–33.

V For the movement to establish Confucianism as state religion, see Hsi-Yuan Chen, "Confucianism Encounters Religion: The Formation of Religious Discourse and the Confucian Movement in Modern China" (Thesis, Harvard University, 1999).

Translation by Heiner Roetz and Yitao Quan

Kang Youwei: Petition to Establish a Law on Religion

The leading official of the Ministry of Public Works, Kang Youwei, humbly presents a petition for fixing through consultation a law concerning religious cases (*jiao an*),¹ for correcting the examination system, and for increasing the number of Confucius temples in all counties, at the same time forwarding the respectfully written work *An Investigation of Confucius as a System Reformer* to be read by the Emperor, in order to honor the Sage (Confucius), to protect the Great Teaching and to blight further evil. Reverentially, he asks for the attention of the emperor.

According to my humble opinion, the Western countries have used military power to pave the way for trade and for spreading their religion (*jiao*). They highly esteem their religion, and they are bold in spreading it. At the beginning, they intend to change [the minds of] the people of other countries by means of religion, in order to afterwards occupy the other countries under the pretext of fighting for the religion. When formerly the treaties were made, we have not fixed a law of religion (*jiao lü*) together with them, and this is the reason why the whole country is in fear of the evil of religious cases. Since the first year of the Tongzhi era (1861), the eminent officials of our resurging country are well known in China and abroad. During the Guizhou incident, the French enforced the dismissal of the military official Tian Xingshu.² During the Zhenjiang incident, the French sailed up the Yangzi by their military vessels, and during the Tianjin incident, a French general enforced the dismissal of the prefect of Tianjin.³ The court got into anxiety and dismay, but thanks to the spiritual power of our ancestors and a timely happy coincidence France was defeated by Germany.⁴ Zeng Guofan⁵ could handle the matter perfunctorily, but he was openly criticised throughout the empire. The recent Jiaozhou incident led to continuous loss of territory, with impacts on Lüshun the Dalian Bay, the Guangzhou Bay, Weihaiwei and Ji-

1 [translators' note 13] The Chinese term *jiao*, originally 'teaching,' began to oscillate between 'teaching' and 'religion' after missionaries used it to present the Christian doctrine. This makes *jiao* difficult to render. We will have to switch between 'teaching' and 'religion' in our translation. For Kang Youwei, the difference is secondary. His focus is on the traditional Confucian teaching, effectively reorganised by borrowing from Christian religion.

2 [translators' note 14] Tian Xingshu had ordered the execution of five Christians in 1862, among them a French missionary. The five were canonised by Pope John Paul II in 2000.

3 [translators' note 15] In 1870, churches and the French consulate in Tianjin were attacked after rumors that a Christian orphanage ordered the kidnapping of Chinese children. Several dozens of Christians were killed.

4 [translators' note 16] Referring to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.

5 [translators' note 17] One of the most influential officials of the Qing government and among other things responsible for the suppression of the Taiping rebellion.

long, not to speak of further incidents which have led to the loss of territory.⁶ Any religious case leads to such losses. The churches (*jiao tang*)⁷ of those Westerners stand everywhere, and they can provoke quarrel at any time. This is disastrous for both sides, and interior as well as exterior conflicts can occur each day. This leads to inextricable entanglements, and those countries frequently come with their military vessels backed by their state power. A single spark can cause a prairie fire, and even though the Emperor and the high officials do their best, we will still lose territory, and the whole country will be shocked. After that, they wait for a new opportunity and use pretexts in order to set us under pressure. It is hard to say whether our whole existence will be at stake some day. Recently I have heard that the prefect of Shandong, when he took office, had to pay his respect to a priest (*jiao shi*) first. If believers (*jiao min*) [of Christianity] are seen in a prefecture or a county, they are feared like tigers. If only one converts to that religion when in a lawsuit, injustice can be turned into justice. Crooks often protect themselves by leaning on [Christianity] and tyrannise their villages. The uneducated people in their ignorance increasingly follow the trend, and more and more are compelled [to become believers]. In Dongguan County in Guangdong province, in one night half of the town became followers [of Christianity]. The more [the Christians] are feared and the more we fawn upon them, the more [Chinese] will convert. And the more bad people will convert, the more religious cases we will have. Such has been the situation for fifty years now, and it would be strange to look up to heaven and bind one's hands and be without any means in the end to properly deal with the consequences.

The stupid subject Kang Youwei has long been worrying about this and has intensively deliberated to find a way out of these difficulties. I am of the opinion that in order to protect the [Confucian] teaching (*jiao*) and officially deal with the religious cases a [political] reform is necessary. And the way towards political reform is only in establishing a church (*jiaohui*) and in setting up a law of religion. When formerly the peace treaties were signed, we were under the constraint of the military defeat and could not help to put religion under protection for them (the Westerners). However, as far as the measures for protecting their religion are concerned, there have never been fixed regulations concerning severity, complicatedness and degree. We always listen to what the [Westerners] do after a religious case has occurred. So in a small case they enforce the dismissal of a prefect and raise claims to exorbitant compensations. And in a bigger case, like in the case of Jiaozhou, it comes up to limitless surrender of territory. Thus the situation gets worse and worse. All of this is due to the fact

6 [translators' note 19 {HS: The incorrect placement of the translator's note has been corrected}] In 1897, Germany took the murder of two German missionaries as a pretext to occupy the Jiaozhou Bay in Shandong. The incident was exploited also by the other imperialist powers to enlarge their spheres of influence in China.

7 [translators' note 18 {HS: The incorrect placement of the translator's note has been corrected}] *Jiaotang*, a church as a building, in contrast to *jiaohui*, the church as an organisation.

that there is no fixed law to settle these issues. For governing a country, there should be laws for everything, in negotiations between states, everything should be done by treaties, and for joint [Chinese/Western] investigations there should be a public authority. How can it be that of all things it is in such dangerous issues where the very existence is at stake and which happen every day and month we hand ourselves over to the demands of those, without any fixed rule? Recently, there has again been a report of an incident in Guangdong. No matter how we treat this case, easily or severely, it will be absolutely improper. But if there would be fixed law, we could put a stop to their excuses and avoid much loss of territory and payment. Then we would not need to worry about the extinction of the country just because of one case. [p. 92/93]

However, to decide a law is beyond the capability of our state. Obviously, its power is already weakened to such an extent that those [foreign countries] can become rampant. As soon as our country establishes relations with them, they take advantage of their [military] power while we negotiate with them. How could we put such laws into practice then? If we look at the mission of the Western countries [in China], then it turns out that they all have churches (*jiaotang*). Founded since the Jiaqing era (1796–1820), they can now be found in all parts of the country. Those [missionaries] who have come to China have all been sent by their churches, and not by their states, which only take over their protection. In their churches (*jiaohui*), there are leading personnel (*zongli*), members of commissions and consultants. They roughly resemble the principals of the examination officials, the education officials, and the leaders of the masters and students in our rites ministry, with the slight difference that in their church one listens to the recommendations of the believers. If we now wish to set up a law, then we first must neutralise their national power, only then can we evade their coercion. The best solution is to get directly into contact with their churches, establish a church ourselves as a counterpart, and then negotiate with them, enter into a peace agreement and stipulate a religious law. I therefore think that to protect the [Confucian] teaching and officially deal with the religious cases presupposes a political reform.

Our country is entirely under [the influence] of Confucius' teaching. What depends on the establishment of a church then? The destruction of the statue of Confucius⁸ is really a deplorable incident, and if we do not bring the masses together and discuss with them, we cannot regain strength. According to my humble opinion, ever since the time of our various sages, the revered early sage Confucius has absolutely surpassed the hereditary nobility of previous times. He is treated with great honor. If the emperor is wise enough and deliberates timely, then he lets the head of the Kong clan establish a church, and lets all who are ready to take up responsibility, from the high nobility over the scholars to the common people, become its members. The head

8 [translators' note 20] In 1898, German troops occupied the city of Jimo and damaged a statue of Confucius in the local temple.

of the Kong clan shall become the leader, and the scholars and ordinary members of the church shall publicly elect someone with high scholarship and virtuous conduct for supervisor, and some who are next virtuous and educated to be coordinators. All provinces, prefectures and counties shall employ recommended educated and virtuous scholars as local supervisors and coordinators. Their names will be registered by the head of the Kong clan, and the head of the Kong clan⁹ will pass them to the court. The more members there will be, the more money can be raised. It is up to the head of the Kong clan and the executives of the church to select scholars of excellent erudition and knowledge of China and the foreign countries as delegates, and let also the chief supervisors of the other religion delegate persons, so that they together set up a treaty between the two religions and fix a regulation for both. If a believer is killed or a church (*libaitang*) is damaged, then, according to the severity of the guilt, the death penalty or a fine is inflicted, both based on a fixed law. If those attack our religion, then the same penal law applies to them. If a religious incident happens, there should be joint hearings, as it is done [already] in the concession of Shanghai. The Catholic religion (*tianzhu jiao*) disposes of a strong self-protection, and it is improper to hand its protection over to the French state. This [religion] has its own independent leadership by the pope (*jiao huang*), by whom everything is supervised and decided. The pope doesn't have soldiers and military vessels, and it is easy to negotiate with him. It is appropriate that the head of the Kong clan sends some people as constant representatives to his country who stipulate treaties and laws directly with the pope and find some more suitable formulations [than hitherto]. As soon as the religious law is fixed, religious cases get a fixed form. In smaller cases, we need not to worry about overreaction, and in larger cases [we can avoid the] evil of having to surrender territory under pretexts. This would be of considerable help in our struggle for existence. The name of the church should be chosen after the example of the church ministry (*jiaobu*) of the foreign states. Its relationship to the Ministry of Rites should be like the relationship of the Military Office to the Grand Secretariat and the relationship of the Foreign Ministry to the Vassal Office. Although we have to listen to what the people bring up (i.e. to public opinion) to a certain extent, everything will be governed by the head of the Kong clan. It resembles the Official Publication Bureau being led by high officials. Which reservations and doubts should there be?

Yet, there is a reason for the insult China has suffered by the foreign countries. Although our China nominally honors Confucius, it does not love him. In the illicit cults (*yin si*), all kinds of gods and spirits are venerated. When scholars and common people leave the village schools and receive their qualification to take part in the civil service examinations, they no longer recite the classics of Confucius and they no longer venerate his statue. Before the Kang Xi era (1662–1722), men and women were allowed to enter the (Confucius) temple and pray respectfully. However, the censor Wu

9 [translators' note 21] The descendants of Confucius (Kongzi—Master Kong).

Pei in his ignorance asked to forbid this. Afterwards, except for the incense ritual when taking office and the offering of vegetables ritual¹⁰ when passing the examination, there was no opportunity for a single honorary offering for Confucius. In this way, the common people are driven to give up Confucius and make sacrifices to the illicit spirits (*yin gui*). The cult of Wenchang,¹¹ who is seen now as a god and now as a human spirit, was taken up in the register of offerings, with the same ritual as for Confucius. The officials responsible for education (*jiaoguan*) teach the scholars, but they do not reach the common people. There are Confucius temples (*wenmiao*) in urban areas, but not in the villages, and never more than one. By contrast, the churches of those are to be found everywhere, and every seventh day, princes and subjects, men and women pray on their knees and recite the bible. Even if their teaching (*jiao*) is superficial, its practice is tightly organised. And even if our teaching is subtle, its practice is loosely organised.

As far as the teaching method is concerned, since Zhu Xi (1130–1200) elucidated the principles (*yili*) [of the Confucian classics] and made known and elucidated the Four Books,¹² the authorities of the Yuan and Ming dynasties respected his interpretation, and the scholars were examined in the meaning of the Four Books. The original purpose was that the scholars of the world should daily recite Confucius' words and spread and elucidate the great way. In the course of time [the system] gradually deteriorated. In the annual qualifying examinations¹³ the only consideration is to prevent fraud. What matters in the examinations are the formalities of the Eight-Legged Essay.¹⁴ [. . .] No situation can be worse than this! How can it be achieved under such conditions that they take up responsibility for the Great Teaching and the Way of Confucius, elucidate the principles [of the classics], cultivate humanity, beautify the customs, make achievements and political improvements and glorify the state? [p. 93/94]

So the scholars of the world of today know the regulations while not knowing the Classics, they know power while not knowing the cultivation of the teaching, they know profit while not knowing rightness, know publicity while not knowing privacy, dare to violate the law and commit crimes but dare not to promote public interests and uphold justice. Serving their superiors they know how to salute, to kowtow and observe taboos, they seem to be respectful and cautious, but [in reality] facilitate their

10 [translators' note 22] A ritual mentioned in the Confucian classic *Liji*, cf. Wang Meng'ou, *Liji jinzhuyi* (Taipei: Shangwu, 1977), 209. James Legge, "The Li Ki," in Max Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 27 (Oxford University Press, 1885), 261.

11 [translators' note 23] A popular deity in charge of success in examinations and worshipped by scholars.

12 [translators' note 24] The four Confucian classics *Daxue* (Great Learning), *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the Mean), *Lunyu* (Analects) and the *Book of Mengzi*.

13 [translators' note 25] The *xiucaì* degree is roughly equivalent to a Bachelor's degree.

14 [translators' note 26] *Baguwen*, a restrictive writing format to be mastered for the civil service examinations. {HS: This is followed by a lengthy passage, omitted here, criticizing the ills of the current exam system. This includes translators' footnote 27}.

inside selfishness and white-wash. With friends they have social activities and friendly exchanges and invite each other for banquets, but actually have vicious and light-minded ideas inside. To their subordinates, they are harsh and merciless without clemency and amiability. The problem exists in particular in urban areas and in officialdom. Correspondingly, although there are 400 million people in China who have [nominally] subscribed to the teaching of Confucius, there are few who understand to take responsibility for the affairs of the state. If there are some who advocate public lectures to educate the common people, they are sneered at and criticised to be pedantic and hypocritical, or they are attacked for gathering people. This attack will not stop until in the end they stop teaching and become as greedy and shameless as those attackers. Loyalty and love cool down unless they are polished, and learning and moral action degenerate unless they are stimulated. They are never touched by the crisis of the state, but are eager to safeguard the private profit of a recommendation for an office. Those who still have a conscience look at the palace and sigh, unable to take the initiative and face the dangers, but they would like to repay the grace of your majesty and protect the state.

So bad are our morals, and so heartless have the people become. If there are no scholars who have the courage to remonstrate in normal days, then there will be no officials who have the honor and courage to die for loyalty in times of need. Then, once the situation changes, whom could your majesty count on? Mengzi says, "If in the court one does not confess to the Dao and in the offices one does not confess to the rules, if superiors have no civility and inferiors have no learning, then rebellious people will rise, and the day that the state is lost is not far away."¹⁵ The Westerners call our country a country without religion and degrade us to barbarians. Therefore the ambassadors which they sent to China during the recent years all had been in Africa before. They are presumptuous and overbearing and treat us like barbarians. This certainly results from the powerlessness of our country. And the reason for the powerlessness of the country, for the stupidity of the people and for the depravity of the morals is that the teaching of the sage (*sheng jiao*) has degenerated into the examination system and the Four Books have degenerated into the Eight-Legged Essay.

Therefore, the decay of the country is due to the fact that we do not have a religion (*jiao*), and that we do not have a religion is due to the eight-legged essay [system]. Therefore, the Eight-Legged Essay is the foremost [reason] for the loss of the state and the teaching.

Since Heaven has created the people, it has selected a ruler for them in order to bring them together into a society, because they have a physical existence, and it has

15 [translators' note 28] *Mengzi* 4B1, *Harvard-Yenching Sinological Index Series. A Concordance to Meng Tzu* (Taipei: Chengwen, 1973). Mengzi (ca. 370–290 BC) is regarded as the 'second sage' of the Confucian school after Confucius.

honored the teachers in order to educate them, because they have a heart.¹⁶ The ruler governs the masses by regulations and principles, and the teacher educates the hearts of the people by the principles [of Confucianism]. But political orders can only form the external behavior, while influence by education reaches the inner part [of man]. Therefore, the vicissitudes of a state depend on whether the teaching flourishes or not. If the teaching flourishes, then the morals are refined, and the ruler can govern without effort. If not, then the morals decay, and the state will follow. This rule works anytime and everywhere. The Han official Jia Yi said: “The [roles of] ruler and minister and higher and lower levels have not been established by heaven, but by the sages.”¹⁷ The sage of China is in fact Confucius. When Confucius wrote the *Chunqiu*, the rebellious officials became afraid.¹⁸ He wrote the six classics, and their meaning was revealed.¹⁹ He ensured that everybody knew the guiding principles of the relation between ruler and minister, father and son, and that the families knew humaneness and mutuality and the way of loyalty and love. Otherwise, the people become careless, and disorderly. They cause harm to their heart and confuse their nature, they become brutal, cruel and ignorant. Even if there are penal laws and an administration, how could one bring them into effect? Therefore, if in the people of 400 million that live in China today father and son love each other, husband and wife care for each other, the ruler is respected and the superiors are loved and one finds pleasure in encouraging efforts, then there will be no aggressions from hostile foreign countries, the emperor can rule in tranquility and without effort with just a few old high ministers who let their gown hang down [i.e. are with ease]. This is nothing that can be achieved by laws and orders, but something due to the deep influence of the Great Teaching of Confucius (*Kongzi da jiao*) on the human hearts, and the emperor can enjoy the result sitting at ease. However, if the Great Teaching degenerates, then the guiding principles and cardinal virtues will be lost, and the way of ruler and minister will dissolve. With whom together will your majesty then rule the country? At present, the cession of territory is too frequent, and the people’s hearts are already slightly alienated from the ruler. If there will be any more religious cases and turmoil, how will your majesty be able to suppress and pacify them with two or three officials? I humbly opine that today our country cannot be consolidated without bringing together people’s hearts and encouraging loyalty. But if we do not honor Confucius, then we will be without

16 [translators’ note 29] Alluding to Shujing, Taishi, Gu Jiegang, *Shangshu tongjian* (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chu-banshe, 1982), 10.

17 [translators’ note 30] Paraphrasing Jia Yi, *Xinshu* 17, Rao Dongyuan, *Xinyi Xinshu duben* (Taipei: Sanmin, 1996), 123.

18 [translators’ note 31] Quoting *Mengzi* 3B9. The *Chunqiu* is the chronicle of Confucius’s home state Lu and one of the Confucian canonical writings.

19 [translators’ note 32] According to the orthodox Confucian understanding, Confucius is [merely] the transmitter and editor of the ‘six classics.’ Since Kang wants to present Confucius as the founder of a religion, he departs from this view and makes him the author of the canonical texts.

any means to bring together people's hearts and encourage loyalty. This is the foundation of political reform.

According to my studies, Confucius worked on the six classics and accomplished the achievements of previous sages. He became the greatest master of the teaching of China and a luminous sage king. The institutions and principles of China originate from him. Therefore, Mengzi calls the composition of the *Chunqiu* by Confucius a "matter of the Son of Heaven,"²⁰ and Dong Zhongshu as a pure Confucian of the Han dynasty calls him a "new king" of the "reformation of the system."²¹ This is the unanimous tradition of Zhou and Han times. If in later times Confucius was worshiped, then with the rites and music reserved for the Son of Heaven. In the Tang and Song dynasties, he was honored with the name "King of the promulgation of culture." Following the point of view of Mengzi and Dong Zhongshu, I have compiled opinions from the Zhou and Han, and accomplished a book *An Investigation of Confucius as a System Reformer* which I respectfully present to your majesty for reference. I humbly hope that your majesty will dedicate yourself to its study, continue the Confucian heritage and elucidate the Confucian way. I most respectfully ask the Emperor to conduct a supervision ceremony at the National School (*guozijian*), in order to have the Office of Rites discuss decrees and regulations for the honoring of Confucius, and in particular to issue an edict that all illicit temples (*yin si*) in the Empire should be turned into Confucius temples, to prompt that all scholars and normal people, men and women, are allowed to pray to Confucius on their knees and sacrifice (*jisi*) to him, to prompt that scholars selected by the Confucius-church (*Kong jiaohui*) serve as ritual experts (priests?) in the Confucius temples of all municipalities and counties, that they are responsible for lectures in order to propagate Confucius' way of loyalty and love, humaneness and righteousness day and night, and that those among the teaching scholars of high moral practice and illuminated are rewarded with honorable official positions.

The most urgent thing to begin with in order to solve the problem from the bottom is a correction of the examination system and a reform of the annual qualifying examinations. The Four-Books-Style [essay] should have as its main topic the spreading and elucidating of the Great Dao, and this Dao should be verified by bringing together historical material from later epochs and of all countries of the world. It has to be ensured that in learning the present and the old, China and the outer world are combined. Then the Four-Books-Style can be brought into effect like it was by the Han and Song scholars who passed the examination. The abolishment of the *bagu*-system is not possible without an edict by the Emperor in order to make sure that the news goes through the whole Empire. Once this system is changed, the scholars and the people will immediately fol-

20 [translators' note 33] Mengzi 3B9.

21 [translators' note 34] Referring to *Chunqiu fanlu* 1, 2 and 23, Lai Yanyuan, *Chunqiu fanlu jinzhu jinyi* (Taipei: Shangwu, 1984), 11, 19 and 175. Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BC), the supposed author of the *Chunqiu fanlu*, is an important source of inspiration for Kang Youwei's utopian Confucianism.

low the trend, and outstanding persons will emerge generation by generation accordingly. [94/95] There is no faster way than this to “make the country flourish by a single word,” as Confucius said.²² Given the sagacity of the Emperor, why should one be afraid of changing the system? In all my stupidity and clearly aware of my presumptuousness, I do not dare to conceal the dangers that my heart tells me. I humbly request that the emperor makes a decision by his wise heart and orders the prime minister and the officials of the provinces to discuss measures with the head of the Kong family. Moreover, I request that the Emperor issues an imperial edict that the examination system be immediately reformed. Do not let yourself be moved by vain words and be misled by outdated theories. All under Heaven will be extremely fortunate! I humbly ask the Emperor to consider [my proposal] and give an instruction. This is my sincere memorial.

22 [translators’ note 35] *Lunyu* 13.15, *Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series. A Concordance to the Analects*, (Taipei: Chengwen, 1972).