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Renaissance men : Xu Guangqi, Matteo Ricci, and the Jesuit mission in China

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RENAISSANCE MEN

Xu Guangqi, Matteo Ricci, and the Jesuit Mission in China

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in
History from the College of William and Mary in Virginia,

by

David Heitz Hiatt

Accepted for Honors

(Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors)

Edward E. Pratt

Director

James Axcell

[Signature]

Williamsburg, Virginia

April 2001

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Abstract

Jesuit missionaries in China in the seventeenth century broke with tradition and began to accommodate local culture while trying to convert it to Catholicism. Fr. Matteo Ricci pioneered this method. Part of reason for this accommodation was a firmly entrenched Confucian orthodoxy with which the missionaries had to contend. The Chinese scholar-officials who converted believed that their Confucian world order was in peril and thought that Catholicism might help buttress it. Chinese critics believed that the Western religion was subversive instead of patriotic. European critics believed that Ricci had edited Catholicism so much that it was no longer anything but deism. Converts such as Xu Guangqi had to defend the Jesuits from such attacks.

Xu Quangqi eventually rose in the imperial bureaucracy until only the Emperor ranked higher than him, all while being both Confucian and Christian. He believed that the two philosophies perfected one another. In fact, the two were actually one because he believed that there was evidence of the ancient Chinese sage-kings believing in the Judeo-Christian god.

Xu was very active in the faith, converting many of those around him. This was exactly what the Jesuits had hoped for. They wanted to convert China from the top down instead of making it a grass roots movement. If Xu is used as an example, this process (cut short by the Rites Controversy) would have allowed for a stable Catholic community in China, but not a very large one.

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In loving memory of
Rev. Msgr. Charles A. Kelly

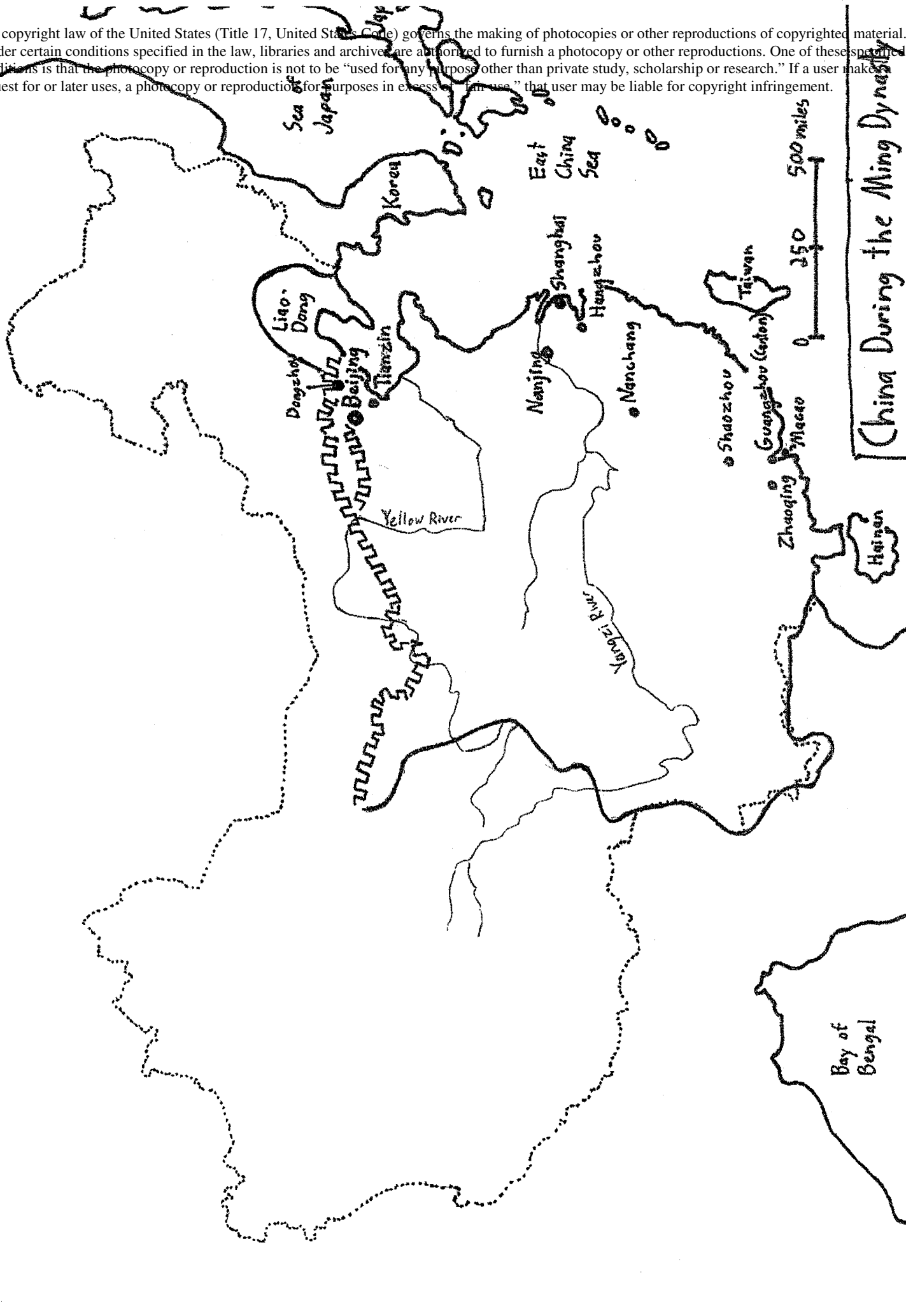
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**Renaissance Men:
Xu Guangqi, Matteo Ricci, and the Jesuit Mission in China**

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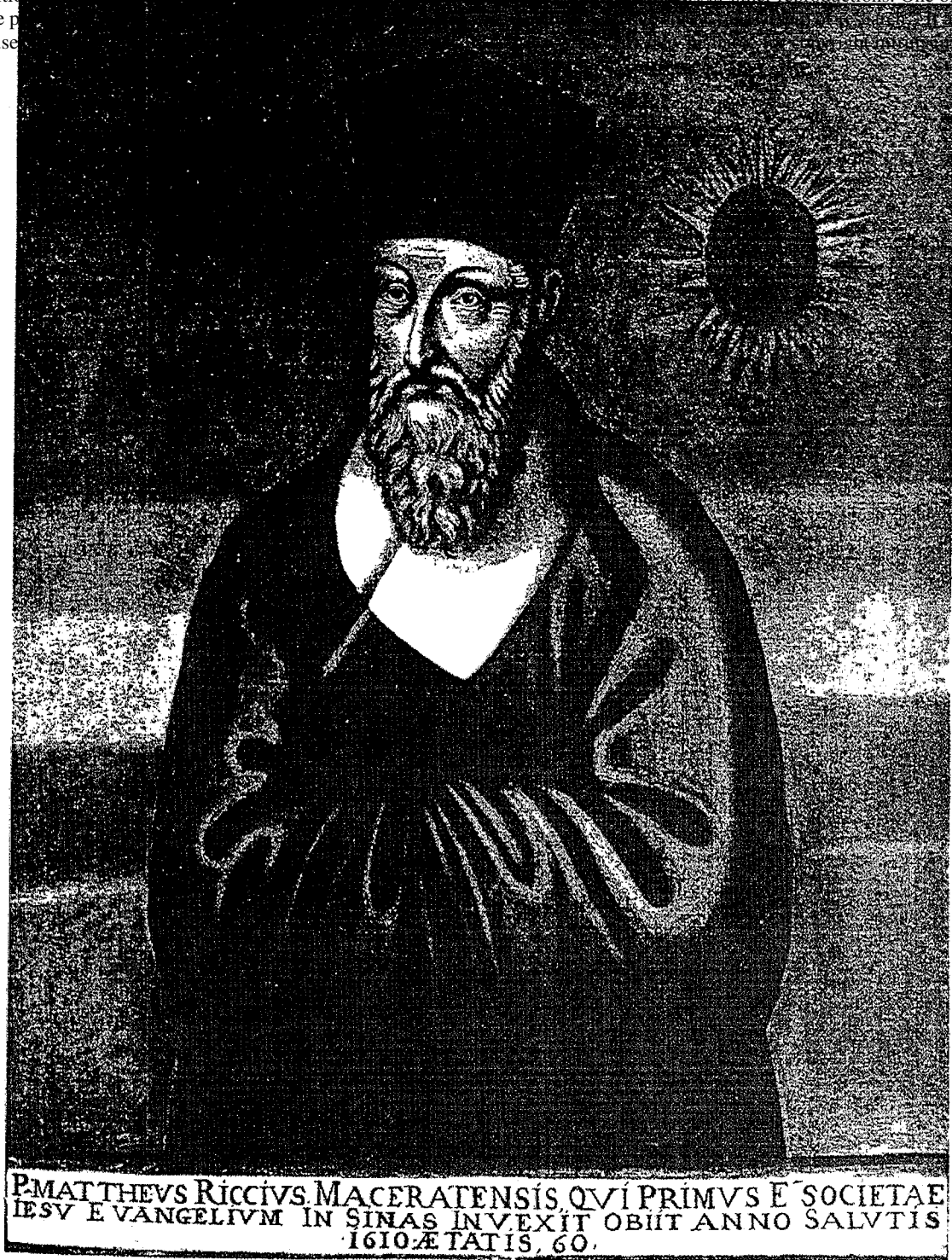
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China During the Ming Dynasty

.... China's current border the Great Wall Ming Border

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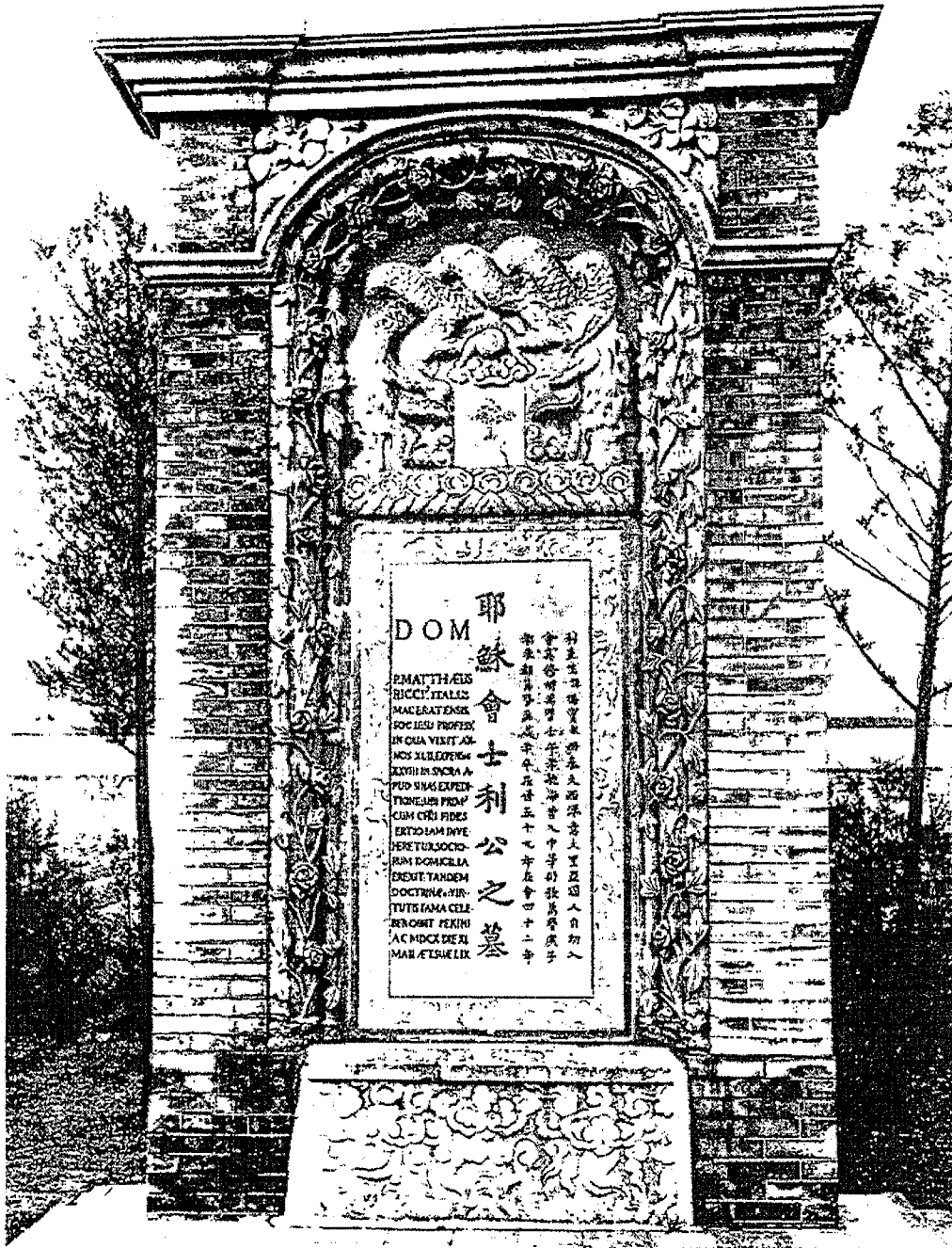
IL P. MATTEO RICCI S. I. (1552-1610)

Ritratto eseguito a Pechino immediatamente dopo la morte del Ricci dal Fr. Eganuck:
Ieuuenhoi 游文瀾 o Pereira S. I. e portato nel 1614 dal P. Nicola Trigault S. I. a Roma
dove si conserva nella residenza del « Gesù »



Figure 2. Matteo Ricci at an altar. Superimposed is the inscription composed by the K'ang-hsi Emperor for the dedication of the newly rebuilt Jesuit Nan T'ang, Southern Church, in Peking on 24 April 1711, one hundred and one years after Ricci's death. The Chinese characters in this plate were copied by a Westerner who omitted two strokes from the second character on the top line which should read 眞. From Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, S.J. *Description ...de la Chine*. Paris, 1741, vol. 2. Courtesy of Theodore N. Foss.

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LAPIDE ATTUALE DELLA TOMBA DEL RICCI IN SCIALA 柵欄

Matteo Ricci's Tomb

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IL DOTT. PAOLO SIÛCOAMCCHI 徐光啟 IN ABITI MANDARINALI (1562-1633). CE. N. 680
Quadro moderno

Xu Guangqi



Xu Guangqi

Figure 1. Copper engraving of the famous Chinese convert, Paul Hsü Kuang-ch'i, friend of Ricci and Grand Secretary of the Ming Imperial Government. From Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, S.J. *Description ... de la Chine*. Paris, 1735, vol. 3. Courtesy of Theodore N. Foss.

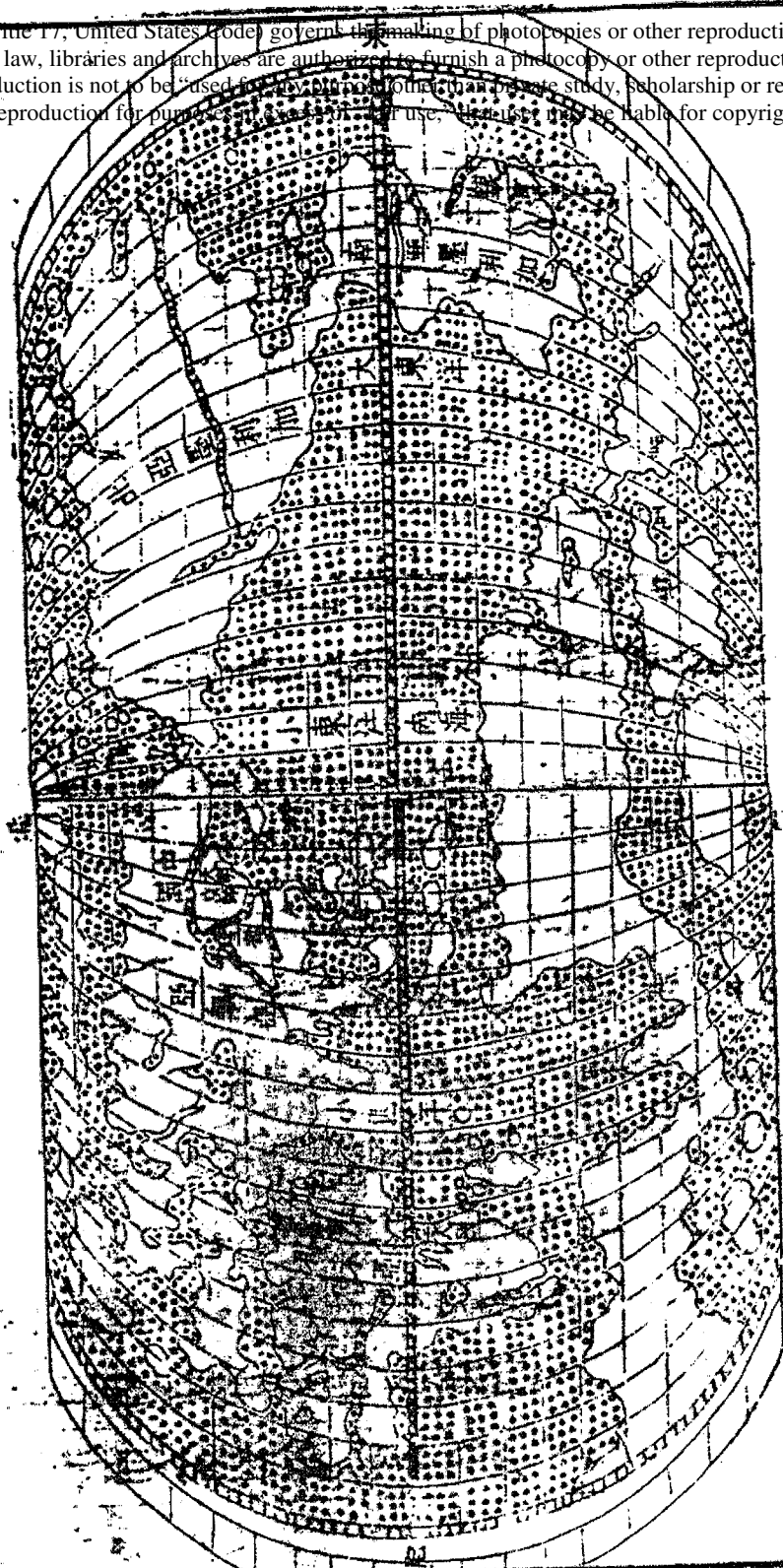
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The Tomb of Xu Guangqi in Nandan/Guangqi Park, Shanghai.

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圖全海山地



The First Edition of Ricci's World Map
LA PRIMA EDIZIONE (I) DEL MAPPAMONDO CINESE DEL RICCI
(Sciachin 蔡慶, 1584). Cf. N. 262
Da CIAMTEUZIN 章斗津, *Collezione di carte e testi* 圖書編, 1623, c. 29, ff. 33b-34a

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山海輿地全圖

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方每方中各十度

外三圈天球定天
度晝夜長短影候



此南方地人至者
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地五州區境之略

線地球橫堅經緯界
別方隅稽度數

The Second Edition of Ricci's World Map
LA SECONDA EDIZIONE © DEL MAPPAMONDO CINESE DEL RICCI

(Nanchino 南京, 1600). Cf. N. 544

1400 - 1400 - 1400 - 1400

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Introduction

Traitors and Oppressors: How Chinese Government Deals with Religion, and Vice Versa

On October 1, 2000 St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City swelled with people waiting to honor men who had died hundreds of years before on the other side of the world. Some pilgrims only had to take a bus and travel a matter of minutes to get to the ceremony. Others had to travel across seven time zones. They all gathered on that day to witness the aged Pope John Paul II canonize 120 Chinese martyrs who died between 1648 and 1930. But this recognition was not universally accepted. The People's Republic of China immediately objected to these new saints in unusually harsh terms.¹ The Roman Catholic Church had chosen an unfavorable date for the announcement, the national holiday that commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of communist rule by Mao Zedong, the beginning of China's officially atheist government. The Vatican claimed that it chose the date because it is the feast of Teresa of Lisieux, patroness of missions. More important was the fact that the government saw these Chinese Christians as anything but saints. Beijing characterized the eighty-seven native converts (the other thirty-three were foreign missionaries) as agents of imperialism and as criminals. Many died in the Boxer Uprising at the turn of the century, when the members of the secret "Righteous and Harmonious Fists" organization attacked foreign enclaves in Chinese cities in response to humiliating defeats at the hands of those foreign powers. In a statement released October 3, the converts were accused of everything from raping women in their parishes to embezzling money from poor peasants.² "We express our indignation at this distortion of history," said Bishop Fu Tieshan of the Political Catholic Church.³

¹John L. Allen Jr., "New Chinese Saints Raise Old Animosities," National Catholic Reporter, 13 October 2000, 3.

²Ibid.

³Associated Press, "Pope Angers China by Canonizing Martyrs," CNN.com, <<http://www.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/europe/10/01/china.pope/index.htm>> (8 February 2001).

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While the Vatican dismisses these accusations as the recycled propaganda of seventeenth-century critics of Christianity, they are signs of a long-standing animosity between Western religion and Eastern authorities. The Chinese government and most Chinese people see Christianity as a completely foreign, and therefore "barbarian," tradition. It is nothing but a form of imperialism to them. This was not always so. At the turn of the seventeenth century, Jesuits supported by Portugal claimed that Christianity was actually as Chinese as Confucianism. Francis Xavier and especially Matteo Ricci attempted to prove that ancient Chinese sages had believed in the Judeo-Christian God and that Confucian ethics and practices were completely compatible with Christianity. This proved to be a relatively popular approach (in that it was not universally rejected and suppressed), so the Jesuits used it, along with their knowledge of Western science, to convert several literati and to gain positions in the Imperial court. They were able to survive attacks from Chinese critics, but not attacks from European critics. Other missionary orders vocally opposed this synthesis throughout the seventeenth century, leading to the infamous Rites Controversy. Pope Clement XI agreed with these critics and in 1704 ordered the Jesuits to cease all accommodation of Chinese rituals. This controversy proved to be such a persistent thorn in the side of the Kangxi Emperor that he officially labeled both versions of Christianity "heterodox" in 1721 to rid himself of the nuisance.

Historians who have studied the Rites Controversy and its aftermath have divergent opinions of the possibility of the Jesuits' success. Western historians often assert that the Chinese were genuinely interested in Christianity and that if the Jesuits had been allowed to continue their accommodation the Church could have gained a strong foothold in China. Chinese historians contend that the literati of the Ming and Qing dynasties had no interest whatsoever in Christianity and only wanted to learn about Western science and technology. Historical discussions of Chinese converts express

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these opinions quite explicitly; these literati were either devout Christians or scientists who only sought "wealth and power" for China.⁴ Either way, by the end of the Rites Controversy Christianity was not identified with its native converts. It had become a fundamentally foreign ideology.

On the one hand, the Jesuits were pioneers. They spoke to the converts in terms that they could understand. Literally, they made the effort to become fluent in the Chinese language and custom. Figuratively, they spoke in terms of self-cultivation and logic instead of divine revelation. What they taught was right because it could be *proved* to be right. Even if the Jesuits did not understand the contexts in which the Chinese Classics were written, they quoted them correctly. The German historian Wolfgang Rienhard characterized the episode as "one of the few serious alternatives to the otherwise brutal ethnocentrism of the European expansion over the earth."⁵

Others have been more critical. The Christianity that Matteo Ricci taught has been called everything from "pure deism" to "Confucian Monotheism."⁶ He did not go into detail about the Trinity, the Incarnation, or the Redemption. S. Wells Williams, a nineteenth-century Protestant missionary in China, claimed that Ricci "disfigured the Christian religion by a faithful mixture of superstition, adopting the sacrifices offered to Confucius and ancestors, and teaching Christians to assist and cooperate in the worship of idols."⁷ Even so, Williams had to admit that "few missions in pagan countries have been more favored with zealous converts."⁸

The reasons for the Jesuit failure in China are more complicated than whether or

⁴John D. Young, Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 41.

⁵"Gegenreformation als Modernisierung," quoted in Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B.C. Oh, East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582-1773. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), xvii.

⁶David E. Mungello, The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800 (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 21.

George H. Dunne S.J., Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 96.

⁷Young, Confucianism and Christianity 26.

⁸Dunne, Generation of Giants 68.

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not the converts were genuinely interested in Christianity. By their own accounts and the accounts of their critics, they were. The Neo-Confucian mindset of the general scholastic community was much too strong for the Jesuits to have overcome or replaced it in a few decades, or even a few centuries. Nevertheless, the very fact that the Jesuits were allowed to establish missions and even construct a church in Shaozhou meant that the Neo-Confucian worldview was weaker at the end of the Ming Dynasty than it had been previously. Ricci appealed to this when he stated that the Neo-Confucians had misinterpreted Confucius and that Christianity was closer to what Confucius had intended. This worked to a limited extent. His success is best seen in the converts he and his colleagues made, including the three high-ranking officials Xu Guangqi, Yang Tingyun, and Li Zhaozhi, the "Three Pillars" of the Chinese Catholic church. If one uses their example Converting China to true Catholicism was possible but would require a much weaker Confucian community. Even the most powerful, most devout convert could not keep Confucian criticism of Christianity at bay for long. The Pope did not cause the downfall of the Jesuits by himself. Confucius had already done most of the work for him.

Perhaps the best example of the Jesuits' tragic flaw is their biggest success, Xu Guangqi. Xu was an unsuccessful scholar at the time of his conversion, but soon afterwards passed the highest level civil service exam, became a member of the Hanlin Academy, and eventually went on to become the Grand Secretary of the imperial bureaucracy. He was interested in everything the missionaries had to teach him, from agriculture to astronomy. He was also a devout believer of the faith as described to him in Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord in Heaven*. He practiced the faith openly and defended it vocally at court in 1616 when the Board of Rites threatened to deport the Jesuits for preaching heterodox ideas. However, some contend that in the strictest terms, Xu Guangqi was a Christian but not necessarily a Catholic. They maintain that he had no

concept of Original Sin, the Virgin Birth, or other dogmas that the Church emphasized. The Jesuits had presented a simplified version of Catholicism to the literati in the hope that it would help spread the faith in the long run. The literati's aversion to a personalized God and the incarnation of God in Jesus made this seem necessary. More important, the Jesuits in China had made a conscious decision to convert from the top down rather than make Christianity a grassroots movement. Ideally, they wanted to convert the emperor and then hoped that the rest of the educated aristocracy would follow suit, and eventually the peasants would convert as well. Xu was the closest they got to that goal, but he proved to be less effective than the Jesuits had hoped in spreading the faith to those outside his family (his descendants remain Catholic to this day). His Confucian colleagues and subordinates remained indifferent. Even the Jesuits' biggest success was incomplete. For us to understand their "incomplete" success, we will have to discuss how they changed Catholicism to fit with Confucianism and vice versa. We will also prove that Xu believed in this amalgamated faith. We will go on to show how he defended it and attempted to propagate it.

Historical perspectives of Xu Guangqi have varied, depending on what hemisphere the historian lives in. Catholic historians emphasize Xu's Christianity at the expense of his Confucianism. Chinese historians, on the other hand, emphasize his scientific nature and his nationalism while rarely, if ever, mentioning his Christianity. Both sides are guilty of reading Xu's life in the light of later movements that could not possibly have affected him. John Kearney thought of Xu as the first member of the Chinese Catholic Action, while Liang Chichao saw Xu practicing Chang Zhidong's (1837-1909) philosophy of "Chinese learning for the basis; Western learning for the application."⁹ My discussion of Xu will attempt to properly place him within both the Confucian and Christian spheres of influence. That placement will then help shed light

⁹Young, Confucianism and Christianity 5.

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on the Jesuits' policy of accommodation.

The fact that Clement XI dismissed the Jesuits' attempt at accommodation does not negate the significance of their effort. Their attempt at compromise was a serious break from tradition. Conversion by the sword was a common tool used by the Church since the days when early Christian kings marched "pagans" into rivers, fired arrows across the banks, and pronounced the pagans baptized when they re-emerged from the water. Such mass conversions were equally common in the New World; Indians usually had no idea what they were agreeing to. The Jesuits, on the other hand, for the first time tried to spread their religion to non-Europeans with the tool they knew best, education. Despite the Society of Jesus's militaristic organization, these men were more teachers than soldiers for Christ. Unlike the American Indians, the educated Chinese literati could be seen by the Jesuit missionaries as Asian counterparts of themselves. Furthermore, while the method of choice for converting the Aztec Empire was force, this method was not an option when facing the enormous Chinese Empire. These conditions led to one of the first nonviolent, intellectual, cultural exchanges between the East and West.

Just as the Jesuits in China re-examined the methods of the Church in their day, the modern Church is currently re-examining the methods the Jesuits used in China. While Vatican historians place the blame for the Church's failure in China squarely on the shoulders of the imperial government, many contemporary Catholic leaders are beginning to admit that the Church was culpable for its own downfall. Furthermore, the "universal" Church continues to struggle with defining its appropriate relationship with local cultures, especially those in Asia. The Jesuits' methods seem to be more and more applicable to them. In 1938 Pope Pius XII reversed Clement XI's decision concerning the Rites Controversy; this allowed Chinese converts to continue to worship their ancestors. Before the most recent canonizations, Roger Etchegary, a French cardinal in charge of the Vatican's Jubilee Year office, expressed his desire for Ricci to be

canonized, implying that the Vatican considered his methods to be correct.¹⁰ On October 2, 2000 Pope John Paul II addressed a group of Chinese pilgrims, saying "With their witness they point out to us that the authentic way of the church is...intertwined with profound and respectful intercultural dialogue, as Fr. Matteo Ricci taught us with wisdom and skill."¹¹

Currently both China and the Vatican want to reconcile the past three hundred years of differences, but neither side's diplomats seem to be interested in this "profound and respectful intercultural exchange." Beijing broke ties with the Vatican in 1951 and in return the Vatican recognizes Taiwan as China. The People's Republic of China (PRC) then formed the Political Catholic Church (PCC) and began to appoint bishops without the sanction of the pope (the pope reserves the right to recognize bishops and cardinals around the world). There are approximately four million members of the PCC, but there may be twice as many people attending underground Catholic churches which remain loyal to Rome. Naturally this worries the PRC, which arrests participants whenever they are uncovered. Members have a strong cult of martyrdom and may see the October 2000 canonizations as support, leading to more vocal, self-endangering protest. Rumors also abound that the pope has infiltrated the PCC, secretly consecrating several bishops. Rome leans more and more towards recognizing Beijing every day but wants the ability to consecrate bishops before it does. Beijing is willing to share responsibility for appointing bishops but is unwilling to let the pope make these decisions unilaterally. Perhaps Beijing and Rome could learn something from the Jesuits and converts who seemed to bring a foreign religion to China with a minimum of political intrigue.

To understand the Herculean nature of this task, a good deal of time will have to be spent discussing the philosophical traditions of the East and the West. Confucianism dominated Chinese philosophy for millennia, and while it borrowed from and coexisted

¹⁰ Allen "New Chinese Saints Raise Old Animosities," 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

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with traditions such as Daoism and Buddhism, it also considered these alternatives to be low-class. The Jesuits presented Christianity as a high-class alternative. The literati of the later Ming dynasty were more receptive to foreign philosophy than were previous dynasties, but at the same time it was more isolationist, preferring to keep all foreign powers at arm's length. This did not satisfy the newly imperialistic European powers of the sixteenth century. European merchants sought China's wealth, while missionaries sought China's soul. Portugal eventually was granted its own enclave at Macao. This enclosed city became the doorway through which the Jesuits entered China.

The Jesuits realized, however, that the method by which they entered China would have to be entirely different from the method of their predecessors. The next section will discuss exactly how Matteo Ricci worked to bridge the gap between Confucianism and Christianity. This process began with simply learning the Chinese language, a task that other missionary societies were loath to undertake. It eventually culminated in Ricci's catechism, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Ricci edited both Confucian and Christian doctrine to make them compatible, and an analysis is necessary to determine whether what he taught was Confucian, Christian, or an amalgam of the two.

Ricci's appealing personality, as well as his scholarly work, won many converts for the Jesuits in China. Xu Guangqi had an equally charming disposition and used it to both spread the influence of the Church and to defend it from scholarly criticism. Those defenses, in addition to the books he co-authored with the Jesuits, paint a fairly accurate picture of his faith. From them we can determine whether or not this Neo-Confucian gentleman was simultaneously a Roman Catholic, thereby gauging the feasibility of the Jesuits' policy of top-down conversion in China.

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Chapter 1

Setting the Stage

Chinese emperors have always been preoccupied with their relationship with heaven. The millennia-old intellectual framework in which they lived demanded that the emperor be the primary intermediary between heaven and earth. If they performed this duty well, then heaven would reward the entire nation; if they did not, then natural disasters could ravage China. During one period when no one seemed to have the firm backing of heaven (the Eastern Zhou 771-256 BCE), a low-ranking official named Confucius developed a philosophy that revolutionized China's world-view and eventually became one of the most integral parts of China's intellectual framework. Daoism and Buddhism rounded out the trinity of Chinese philosophy, but they as a rule had to conform to Confucian standards if for no other reason than Confucians were in power. Those in power at the end of the Ming dynasty were critical of heterodox ideologies, be they Buddhism, Daoism, or Christianity, but not to the extent of previous dynasties.

Meanwhile, in Europe struggles between orthodox and heterodox Christian religions changed the face of the continent. Eventually that struggle spread to other continents, including Asia. Politics in Europe had shifted in such a way that various kingdoms had the means, motive, and opportunity to spread their influence across the globe. Uncharted territories became tools for increasing their political, economic and religious power. Catholic missionaries, backed by both the pope and secular kings, traveled east in the hope of finding new converts to Catholicism. Unlike their counterparts in Central America, Jesuit missionaries in China tended to accommodate Chinese culture. Jesuits tried to convince the emperor and his scholarly bureaucrats that their relationship with heaven had changed. Jesus was the major link between heaven and earth, not the emperor. But first the Jesuits had to discern how the Chinese originally understood heaven and their relationship to it.

The European dualistic universe was one of timeless absolutes; God had always

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existed and was always good, for example. Philosophers therefore concerned themselves with finding the eternal Truth of the universe. Their counterparts in ancient China saw heaven as amoral and the universe in a constant state of flux. The fundamental question for Chinese philosophers was why things within this continuum changed. This eventually led to the notion of *chi*. Chi is what the universe is made of; matter, energy, people, and gods are all composed of it. Gods are not transcendent like the Christian God, they are imminent in this world. Chi can be more or less refined (*yang* and *yin*, respectively); it can also be more or less powerful. These aspects of chi then resonate with one another to cause all of the changes in the universe. The emperor is the emperor because his family has the most powerful yang (refined, heavenly) chi. Gods are simply even more refined, more powerful beings.

Such beliefs led to a view of history in which the line between god and man was particularly indistinct. Folk heroes such as the ancient sage-kings Yao, Shun, and the Yellow Emperor had just as much sway in the universe as any god, if not more. The gods that were mentioned were more impersonal forces than actual beings. *Shang-di* ("Lord on High") was worshiped in Chinese antiquity as an ancestor and supreme authority over human society and the workings of the universe. But by the Western Zhou dynasty (1027-771 BCE) this deity was referred to as *Tian* ("Heaven"). His power remained, but "he" was now more of an "it." This also marked a shift away from divination, but the underlying notion of a universal continuum remained. The universe is always in equilibrium. If the universe created too much heavenly chi, there would be a backlash of earthly chi and natural disasters would ravage the land. Part of the emperor's job was to see which way the universe's chi was flowing at the moment and act accordingly so that he and his country would be better off.

Confucius (551-479 BCE) recast the nature of the continuum and defined the Chinese universe itself for thousands of years after his death. His notions were firmly in

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place by the time that the Jesuits arrived, giving them both a starting point for dealing with Chinese culture and a powerful establishment to contend with. Confucius's influence is all the more incredible considering the insignificant effect he had on politics during his lifetime. Confucius lived during the Eastern Zhou dynasty. Previous dynasties had replaced one another quickly and with relatively little bloodshed. Once the Zhou faltered, several small warring states vied for power for centuries. The rulers of these states sought intellectuals who could help them squeeze the most resources out of their territory and defeat their rivals. The intellectuals themselves tried to find a philosophy that would end the carnage of the civil wars. This patronage of scholars helped create a class of literati who would dominate Chinese politics from that point on. Confucius was born into a respectable family, but never managed to rise in the ranks of what was left of the government. He spent most of his adult life traveling from state to state unsuccessfully trying to get a ruler to follow his plan for a harmonious state. Considering what he was telling these Machiavellian rulers to do, it is not surprising that they ignored his advice.

In Confucius's worldview, morality, not power causes change in the universe. Many philosophers had come to the conclusion that Tian, the source of power, could not be the ancestor of the imperial family (Shang-di) because that position was being vied for by so many families. It seemed as if a ruler had to earn the right to rule and then keep it. To Confucius, the emperor became a fulcrum, a balancing point between heaven and earth. If he ruled well, heaven and earth would both reward him with a long reign and temperate climate, respectively. This is the beginning of the idea of the Mandate of Heaven, wherein natural disasters foreshadow the fall of an empire; in the larger sense of the term, however, it shows how important human beings became in Confucius's universe. Instead of affecting life on earth only, the actions of rulers could affect heaven. In order to gain the mandate, an emperor had to cultivate his morality and then make use

of his moral authority by participating in the proper rituals. He ruled not by virtue of his powerful, deified ancestry but by virtue of his morality and governing ability. According to the *Analects*, Confucius himself never discussed gods.¹ He replied to those who asked him about sacrificing to spirits: "You are not able to serve man. How can you serve the spirits?"² He never expressly confirmed or denied the existence of gods; he simply did not believe that he was capable of addressing the subject. He focused only on this world. Everyone became a moral instrument, affecting the morals of those around them; Confucius in essence "moralized" the entire universe. The emperor was the most moral, so he had the greatest effect on the universe.

The emperor's moral authority could only be cultivated and exercised if he participated in the proper rituals. The ritual was what conveyed the morality. The term ritual (*li*) did not simply apply to ceremonies such as ancestor worship. If morality truly pervaded the universe and it could only affect something else via ritual (*li*), then there must be rituals for every interaction possible within the universe. Ritual included everything from ruling a nation to greeting a friend. Rituals like studying the classic texts helped cultivate an individual's moral authority. Participating in government let a ruler spread his moral authority across his country; people would become more moral simply by being around him and would automatically let him rule by virtue of his morality. One of the ruler's main functions, therefore, was to standardize the rituals performed by everyone. Deviation from the Chinese norm became the sign of a barbarian, a problem the European Jesuits would constantly have to deal with.

One means of standardizing peoples' interactions was to separate them into the five relationships: father-son, ruler-minister, older brother-younger brother, husband-wife, and friend-friend. Each relationship carried with it a degree of formality to use and attitudes to assert (faithfulness for friend-friend, proper order for older brother-younger

¹Confucius, *The Analects* trans. D.C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 88.

²*Ibid.*, 107.

brother).³ Each relationship was applicable on several levels: for example, the king of Korea viewed his relationship with the Chinese emperor as that of younger brother to older brother, while friends would often qualify their friend-friend relationship with age to eliminate any ambiguity in the otherwise equal association. There was little room for equals in Confucius's world-view. Someone would always be older or have more education and therefore have a higher rank. Confucius not only moralized the universe, he stratified it as well.

The Confucian hierarchy became the official hierarchy of China during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). After the short-lived, Legalist Qin Dynasty (221-207 BCE) the Han founders decided that the previous dynasty had fallen because it relied too heavily on strict laws and had not appealed to peoples' virtue. The Han's four centuries in control led to the firm entrenchment of Confucianism as the one fundamentally true Chinese orthodoxy.

Chinese literati did have an alternative to Confucianism in the form of Daoism. Laozi, the originator of this philosophy, was supposedly an older contemporary of Confucius. He believed that Confucius and his fellow intellectuals were perpetuating the carnage of the Warring States Period by producing rival schools of thought and then trying to impose them on the world. He believed that the best way to end the killing was to stop trying to end the killing. As a mystic philosophy, Daoism inherently mistrusts civil society and its rituals. Even the ritual of language kept people from understanding the nature of the universe: "The Dao [Way] which can be spoken is not the true Dao."⁴ Daoism encouraged withdrawal from society, its trappings, and social intrigues so that one can be free of hindrances and live according to nature. Many disillusioned Confucians used Daoism to sanction their withdrawal from official life. Nevertheless,

³Wing-Tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 69-70.

⁴Ibid., 139.

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Confucianism still dominated, since those scholars were expected to return to duty whenever their country needed them. Confucian veneration of age probably also contributed to many Daoists' desire to find an elixir for immortality, thus giving birth to the Daoist school of alchemy. The Jesuits rejected Daoism as superstition, but could not avoid being linked with the philosophy. The Jesuits' knowledge of Western science led many literati to believe that the missionaries held the secrets of alchemy.

While Daoism may have found its place in literati society, scholars nevertheless viewed its search for immortality and alchemy as low-class magic. The lower classes themselves had Confucian values, but not as much as the literati did. Commoners were looking for a religion that would help them have good crops and many children, not rule via moral authority. The aspect of Confucianism which they took hold of was not the Mandate of Heaven but veneration of one's parents. Confucian children entered the world in debt to their parents for giving them life; it was their responsibility to look after their parents in old age. This responsibility seemed to fit perfectly with the long-standing tradition of ancestor worship. If one venerated one's parents both while they were alive and after they died, those ancestors could then help produce better crops and attain a better standard of living for the family.

Confucianism also fit well with the communal aspect of ancestor worship. Confucianism encouraged participation in the community, and Confucian mourning rituals were social responsibilities for families; families had to mourn correctly for the good of the community. If the family mourned correctly, they could create an ancestor who could then provide for the family. If they did not mourn properly, they could create a demon who could harm the entire community. The literati did not believe this, but they carried out the rituals simply because they were right in and of themselves; they kept the world in order.⁵ A new ghost was presumed to be in a very unbalanced and confused

⁵John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 121.

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state. It would proceed home and once there wreak havoc if not taken care of. Families had to offer food to the spirit and convince the spirit that its relationship with the family had changed. The spirit could not eat the same food as they nor stay with them; it had to leave. Eventually the family would bury the body (the earthly, yin element) in the earth (the ultimate yin) so that it could decompose and become one with the earth again. Meanwhile they would contain the spirit (the heavenly, yang element) in an ancestral temple. Periodic offerings by Chinese families to their dead parents' spirits ensured quality of life for both them and their parents. If they did not care for their ancestors, then their spirits could terrorize the entire community until they were cared for. Chinese folklore is full of stories of spirits with defiled graves and careless descendants who became demons.

Nevertheless, commoners were not nearly as interested in Confucianism as the literati. Perhaps this was because of distrust of literati landlords or Confucianism's emphasis on a costly education, which they could not afford. Buddhism filled the void Confucianism left for the commoners. They were even more receptive to Buddhism when Confucianism was in peril. The fall of the Han was followed by another period of disunity (220-589 CE) wherein several small states struggled for power for nearly four centuries. Confucianism seemed discredited and Daoism was unable to control the escalating violence.

As their world seemed once again thrust into violence, commoners sought answers with the Buddhist notion of karma. Karma is a law of cause and effect. A person during the course of his life takes an infinite number of actions, each of which is a cause that produces effects. A person can only experience a certain amount of those effects during a lifetime, so upon death those remaining effects collect and become that person's next incarnation. If a person produced good effects, he could be reincarnated as a king or god, but even that was not good because this universe is nothing but delusion

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and suffering (samasara) to Buddhists. Therefore, a person's goal in life is to stop producing karma, experience all of the karma of his past lives and then enter a state of nonexistence called Nirvana upon death.

The form of Buddhism that reached China, however, believed that a single person could not enter Nirvana, because that ignored the interdependence karma implies and the Buddha's fundamental virtue of compassion. Therefore, it was a monk's duty not to work off karma but to gain as much good karma as possible. Monks could then give that karma away, thereby helping others to move forward to the point where the monks were. Eventually everyone would be able to enter Nirvana at once. The embodiment of this ideal was the Bodhisattva, an enlightened person who vowed not to enter Nirvana until every sentient being could enter as well. Like karma, the idea of the bodhisattva caught on very quickly in China. Monks began to co-opt local cults into Buddhism by telling people how local gods came to monks to be enlightened or how they were really bodhisattvas all along but had to present themselves as gods so that the Chinese would accept them.

The common person was not immediately aware of the full ramifications of his belief in karma, however. It completely changed his relationship with his dead ancestors. If he had been reincarnated, then odds are that his ancestors had been too. Since they probably had not heard of Buddhism before they died, they might have been reincarnated as an animal or on some level of hell. Commoners needed some new form of ancestor worship that would allow them to help their departed ancestors. Confucianism and Daoism had no such methods, but Buddhists did and that allowed them to portray themselves as the true religion of filial piety in China. The means by which they did this was the Ghost Festival. The legendary monk and contemporary of the Buddha, Mu Lien, supposedly missed the opportunity to enlighten his mother before she died so he decided to seek her out in the afterlife. He looked in all the levels of heaven and hell and

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eventually found her in the lowest level of hell (because she had beaten a monk who asked for food). Now she was stuck with a huge stomach but a tiny neck, so she was constantly hungry. Her descendants continued to make offerings to her, but she could not make use of them because of her punishment. Mu Lien got the permission of the Buddha to help her out, and with the aid of the entire monastic community opened the gates of hell for three days (the ghost festival), allowing the spirits to make use of offerings. Mu Lien's reason for the entire journey was filial piety, which appealed to Chinese Confucian values. The story also made Buddhist monks an integral part of ancestor worship in China; nothing was accomplished unless they were part of the process. When the Jesuits arrived, they wanted to show that they were just as indispensable to Chinese society as the Buddhists. They also wanted to portray themselves as responsible, religious members of the Chinese community, so they dressed as Buddhist monks. They soon learned that not everyone looked up to the Buddhists.

The literati did not see the Buddhists as vanguards of filial piety. They saw Buddhism as a foreign religion that threatened the Chinese (Confucian) way of life. First and foremost, they accused the Buddhists of not understanding the parent-child relationship. Monks had to leave home to become monks, leaving their parents to take care of themselves. Monks shaved their heads and altered their bodies in other ways, but according to strict Confucian logic a person's body is his parents' gift to him and altering it disrespects them. Monks are also celibate, so they do not insure the continuation of the lineage, leaving their ancestors without descendants to worship and support them. Buddhists do not understand the ruler-ruled relationship either. They renounce the world that the emperor controls, making them exempt from his authority. Buddhism seemed amoral to literati because of its lack of hierarchy and its moral relativism. Finally, like some Daoists, Buddhists were low class in the literati's mind because they concerned themselves with spirits and had rituals that seemed like attempts at magic. The Jesuits

similarly dismissed Buddhism as immoral superstition, but also disagreed with it on theological grounds. Besides the obvious, the Buddhists' notion of the afterlife was entirely different. The very idea that anyone except God was able to break hell open was inconceivable and was a sign of vanity.

Just because literati did not believe in Buddhism does not mean that they did not use it. Confucians used Buddhist terms during the period of disunity to elaborate on the metaphysical world implied by Confucianism. Confucius himself never went into any detail about the metaphysical ramifications of the system of ethics he created. He took the notions of Tian (heaven) and li (ritual) to be self-evident. Later Confucian scholars such as Mencius would elaborate, describing human nature and the nature of heaven. Renewed interest in Confucianism in the Song dynasty (960-1275 CE), along with a more complex philosophical community, let Zhu Xi expand upon Confucius's ethics to encompass even inanimate objects. In doing so, he unconsciously used ideas originating in Daoism and Buddhism. Zhu Xi proposed that everything is physically made up of chi, but also has an innate principle, li. While chi changes, li does not; it is eternal. For example, humans are made of chi, but they all have a basic human nature (their li) that they cannot escape. Individuals only vary from one another in the makeup of their chi. When one understands the role of each thing in the universe, one understands the universal li and is therefore a sage. That li comes from a completely impersonal source of all morality, the *Tai-ji* ("Supreme Ultimate"). While another school of Neo-Confucianism founded by Wang Yangming also flourished during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE), Zhu Xi's version became the official doctrine at that time.

The Ming dynasty was preoccupied with foreigners from its very beginning. The Jesuits were certainly not the first to face Ming nationalism. The Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang, established himself by driving out the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 CE). The Mongols' territory was the largest empire the world has ever seen and, while

the Ming could not rival it in terms of territory, it still tried to become the international power the Yuan had been. Sixty years before Vasco da Gama's voyages to Africa the eunuch admiral Zheng He made voyages to Africa's east coast, as well as to Southeast Asia, India, and the Persian Gulf. Zheng He made seven voyages between 1405 and 1433 in ships as large as 400 feet long and 160 feet wide.⁶ These voyages were a show of Chinese superiority as well as an attempt to gain allies. Tribute missions to Beijing multiplied as a result of these trips. Foreign ambassadors brought spices, resources, exotic animals, money, and hopes of establishing economic and diplomatic ties with China. Unfortunately for these ambassadors, Zheng He died in 1433, after which there were few voyages. The court began to argue that the missions did not accomplish anything other than letting other countries know that China was still there; with that achieved, there was no need for further voyages. The authorities had prohibited the use of certain Chinese goods in 1394 and except for a brief, partial repeal in the sixteenth-century, those bans lasted until the end of the Ming. Merchants had to become more like pirates to make money. Confucianism already frowned upon trade and this only seemed to confirm their worries. When the European merchants first arrived, they were compared to these pirate merchants.

With a decline in tribute missions to China and the new ideas they brought, the Ming intellectuals soon began to suspect all that was not inherently Chinese. They began to wonder how a Confucian was supposed to act in a world that remained far from the Confucian ideal. Wang Yangming argued that the world actually was fundamentally Confucian, but it just had not realized its potential. "The streets are full of sages,"⁷ he wrote. Others took a bit more cosmopolitan approach, as Wu Chengen did in his novel *Journey to the West (Xi Yu Ji)* by asserting that the "three teachings are really one."⁸

⁶Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1989), 241.

⁷Ibid., 252.

⁸David E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800* (Lanham: Rowman &

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Intellectuals continued to waiver between this relative open-mindedness to combining philosophies and deep-seated suspicion of foreign ideas for the rest of the Ming. Politically, China closed itself off just as the European powers began to involve themselves in the affairs of the rest of the world. Matteo Ricci wrote home near the end of his life in 1610 and remarked on the Ming's distrust of foreigners:

It remains hard for us to believe how such a huge kingdom with so many soldiers could live in continual fear of other states that are so much smaller, so that they fear some great disaster every year and spare no pains to protect themselves from their neighbors... the Chinese place absolutely no trust in any foreign country, and thus they allow no one at all to enter and reside here unless they undertake never again to return home, as is the case with us.⁹

The very idea of such isolationism shocked the imperialistic European kingdoms; they began to see it as their duty to "enlighten" China.

The European population began a period of sustained growth in the fifteenth century after centuries of decline and stagnation during the Middle Ages. This led to greater urbanization, technological innovation, intellectual discourse, and especially economic activity. All of these factors played an important part in the growth of European imperialism. Italian merchants increased trade throughout the Mediterranean in order to meet the demands of the new European economy, but this was not sufficient. In 1419 Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal established the Sagres center for the development of overseas trade. At that time Portugal had "discovered" the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa and hoped to use them to round Africa (which Vasco da Gama did in 1492) and make it to Asia. Older trade routes through the Byzantine Empire had been cut off, and European merchants were more interested than ever in acquiring the riches described by Marco Polo (1254-1324) when he had traveled to Yuan China. These riches included gold for the merchants and potential converts for the Church.

Another major reason, albeit a secondary one, for European imperialism was the

Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 16.

⁹Jonathan D. Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci. (New York: Viking, 1984), 54.

propagation of the Catholic faith. Centuries of resentment against the church's extravagance and blatant, profound vice, as well as political resentment of papal taxation and control, served as ample fuel for the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther's ninety-five theses challenging indulgences, in addition to the work of other reformers, spread quickly through a newly literate European population of the early sixteenth century. The Catholic Counter-Reformation tried to correct the mistakes of the Church and guide people back to the Catholic fold, but its success in terms of converts proved to be limited. It needed converts from overseas to make up the lost ground.

Theological reform proved to be more successful. While popes such as Alexander VI were still lambasted for their worldliness, others such as Paul III set about reforming the Church. When he came to power in 1534, Paul III set about putting sincere reformers in the College of Cardinals, as well as nurturing the growth of new religious orders such as the Theatines, Capuchins, Ursulines, and the Jesuits. St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus in 1534 in order to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and convert the Muslims who held it to Catholicism. Unfortunately for him, war with the Ottoman Turks prevented the Jesuits from even entering the Holy Land. Therefore, he submitted a constitution to Paul III that obligated the Jesuits to be missionaries wherever the pope felt they were needed the most. That constitution was recognized in 1540 and Loyola became the first superior general of the order. One place they were definitely needed was Europe, so the Jesuits set about converting via education. They had established more than five hundred colleges throughout Europe by 1640. Another place the Jesuits were needed was in the imperial expeditions sent out by Catholic monarchs to gather wealth and convert souls.

The two most important Catholic powers and the ones who dominated overseas exploration and conquest in general in the sixteenth century were Spain and Portugal. Portugal already had firm control over the African coast, so Spain was the first to try to

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circumnavigate the globe in order to reach Asia. In 1492 Columbus landed in what he thought was Japan, but actually turned out to be the island of San Salvador. Eventually Spanish conquistadors reached the American mainland and realized that they had found a new, entirely separate continent. Spain, wanting to secure its newly found land, and Portugal, wanting to protect its interests in Africa from this new imperial power, sought a third party to act as arbiter. They found this third party in Rome. Pope Alexander VI found the theological backing to do so in the relatively obscure theories of Henry of Suza, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia in the thirteenth century. Henry of Suza had introduced the idea that the pope not only had spiritual authority over the entire world, he also had circuitous political authority over it. He concluded that the pope had indirect authority over all lands held by non-Christian monarchs. His logic was as follows: once a nation converts to Catholicism, their lands belong to Christ. However, Christ had not been incarnate on Earth for nearly 1500 years. That means that the pope, acting as "executor of Christ's estate," has authority over that land and can do with it as he sees fit. Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama brought back news of vast kingdoms populated and ruled by heathens. Alexander VI therefore saw fit to divide that world between the Spanish and the Portuguese in the Bull of Demarcation (1493). The longitudinal line drawn by the pope approximately 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands was formally accepted by the two imperial powers the following year in the Treaty of Tordesillas. By proving that territory fell on its side of the Line of Demarcation and then converting the inhabitants of that land, Portugal could legitimately hold that territory. That is, at least until Christ returned.

Spain and Portugal, having completed the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from Muslims in 1492, took this responsibility to convert very seriously. Spain spent an enormous number of resources securing territory firmly under its command and then converting its inhabitants (those who did not die of European diseases) to Christianity.

Conquistadors were not hesitant to use force to accomplish both tasks. Portugal had fewer resources and therefore did not actually control as much territory as the Spanish. In addition, it had to deal with kingdoms that could resist them more effectively than those in the New World. Portugal was usually content to hold fortified trading posts (*feitorias*) in Africa, the Middle East, India, and eventually China.

The Portuguese reached China for the first time in 1514. Three years later they sent an embassy led by Tome Pires from Malacca to Canton in hopes of meeting with the emperor. The Chinese allowed the embassy to continue to Beijing but hindered their progress from that point on. The embassy waited in Beijing from the summer of 1520 until February 1521, when they were ordered back to Canton. Portuguese merchants had continued to raid coastal towns, convincing the Chinese that all men from that nation could not be trusted; they arrested the embassy and seized their gifts. The prisoners sent letters back home asking for military intervention, but that aid did not materialize in time and they died in prison. Portugal eventually show its force and after much persistence was allowed to control Macao in 1555. Macao turned into a major source of revenue for the Portuguese and an equally profound source of shame for the Chinese.

However intent the Portuguese were on making money in China, they were equally intent on converting the Chinese. Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, the Society of Foreign Missions at Paris, and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith all sent missionaries.¹⁰ The originator of the Catholic mission in China was part of another failed embassy, Francis Xavier S.J. The Jesuits were one of Portugal's main tools for converting Asia and Xavier was one of the most effective of those tools. Along with Loyola and four other priests, Xavier was one of the founding members of the Jesuit order. He had studied at the College of Sainte-Barbe in Paris in 1525, which was directed by the Portuguese humanist Diego de Gouvea and sponsored by King John III of

¹⁰Protestant churches did not sent missionaries to China until 1807. Ideas such as the Calvinist notion of the elect often discouraged missionary work in remote areas.

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Portugal. This left Xavier with strong humanist ideas and equally strong ties to Portugal. He went to Portugal in 1536 and remained there until 1541, when he left for the mission in India, much to the dismay of John III. Before he left, Xavier was appointed Apostolic Nuncio, which allowed him a good deal of independence. The General¹¹ of the Jesuits' efforts in the Indies at the time was Martin Alfonso de Sousa. He told Xavier that converting two or three Indian kingdoms would be no problem. John III urged him to concentrate on converting the aristocracy. He began his mission in India in 1542, moving on to Malacca and Southeast Asia in 1545. He was successful in all of these areas and is credited with thousands of conversions. Instead of focusing on the aristocracy, he focused on the masses. This led him to pioneer the accommodation method later used in China. For the first time, he tried to learn the native languages of the people he was trying to convert. He advised other missionaries to defend native converts from Portuguese criticism, making excuses for them and commending them whenever possible. Loyola himself had conceived of this accommodation in his *Spiritual Exercises*: "The Spiritual Exercises must be adapted to the nature of those who wish to undergo them, suited that is, to their age, education or ability... Again, each should be given whatever is proper to what he has in mind, so that he may get help and benefit."¹² But this did not keep Xavier from becoming frustrated. He never mastered the native languages, so his converts may have participated in Catholic sacraments without fully understanding what was occurring. This might have caused his belief that they were an ignorant and crude people.¹³ In 1547 he heard about the newly discovered island of Japan from a Japanese man named Anjiro and a Portuguese merchant in Malacca. They convinced Xavier that his talents were best suited to the land of the rising sun.

Xavier entered Japan optimistically, and by 1551 had established a thriving

¹¹Supervisors of the Jesuit missions on various continents took the military title "General."

¹²Matteo Ricci S.J., *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, ed. and trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 23.

¹³Young, *Confucianism and Christianity* 14.

community of Christians. He won much respect through his scientific knowledge, explaining the round world, sun's and stars' courses, and comets. The only hindrance he saw was his inability to speak fluent Japanese.¹⁴ He also switched from converting the masses to converting those in power, another method soon copied in China. Xavier hoped to convert the Shogun and then his subordinate lords, the *daimyo*. The only problem was that the *daimyo* were not very submissive to the Shogun, and none of them was very interested in Christianity. This time, Xavier had to deal with the educated Japanese Buddhist establishment. Japanese authorities considered Buddhism to be much more respectable than their counterparts in China did. Xavier wanted to completely discredit Buddhists and then usurp their social prestige, so he debated them whenever possible. He accused them of being totally immoral, both performing immoral sex acts and accepting money for assurances of salvation from hell (not unlike Confucian criticism of Buddhism or Protestant criticism of Catholicism, for that matter). The Japanese were not receptive to Xavier's notion of an "irrevocably shut" Hell, often breaking into tears upon thinking of lost loved ones being eternally tortured.¹⁵ These debates convinced him that converting Asia would take a more intellectual breed of missionaries; he wrote to Rome:

(I)t is self evident that what we want here are powerful intellects practiced in dialectics, gifted with popular eloquence, quick to follow error in its shiftings and even anticipate them... [able] to unravel sophisticated arguments and to show the incoherence and mutual contradictions of false doctrines.¹⁶

The debates also convinced Xavier that he had to convert China to Christianity before the Japanese would even consider conversion. Japan had gotten its writing system from China along with the Confucian classics. He recalled them asking him that if things were as he preached, how was it that the Chinese knew nothing about Christianity?¹⁷ In

¹⁴Ibid., 15.

¹⁵Ibid., 19.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 20.

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1552 Xavier decided to go to China to try to convert the Emperor, thereby opening the door for converting the rest of Asia. He asked Portugal to send another embassy, with him as a member, to the Chinese Emperor. The embassy left Portugal that year but only made it to Malacca. Xavier continued, but never reached the Chinese mainland. In August he arrived at a small island off Macao (still Chinese at this point) named Shangchuan and waited for China to give him permission to enter its closed borders. This permission never came and Xavier died in December.

While Xavier founded the Jesuit mission in China and devised many of its methods, Alessandro Valignano, S.J. (1539-1606) instituted those methods. Valignano was born into a wealthy Italian family that enjoyed close ties to Pope Paul IV. This gave him a good deal of success at an early age; he had his own abbacy at eighteen and was canon of a cathedral by twenty. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1566. Like Xavier, Valignano had spent time in India and China, but with much less success. In 1573 he was appointed visitor to the missions in India and began inspecting missions from Southern Africa to Japan. By 1575 he described Indians as "brute beasts," with a government so corrupt that he and his contemporaries hesitated to hear the confessions of officials.¹⁸ He believed the Japanese to be the next-best prospect at the time, but by 1579 his opinion had changed drastically. He characterized the Japanese as "the most dissembling and insincere people to be found anywhere." "Better to have no Christians," he wrote, "than Christians of that type."¹⁹ Worst of all, since Japanese Buddhists expected salvation on the basis of Amida Buddha's grace, they resembled Lutherans. He feared that Japan could flare up into Protestantism should it be exposed to Christianity. China became his only real opportunity for success. Valignano arrived in Macao in 1577 and soon became convinced that "the only possible way to penetration, will be utterly different from that which has been adopted up to now in all the other missions in these

¹⁸Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci, 41.

¹⁹Ibid., 42.

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countries."²⁰ The Jesuits would have to learn the Chinese language and speak to the Chinese on their terms, in their terms. He did not believe that the missionaries already in Macao would be able to handle such a shift in policy, so he established an independent China mission and asked for new missionaries from Europe.

The first missionary Rome sent to Valignano was the Italian Jesuit Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607). Ruggieri arrived in July 1579, while Valignano was in Japan. Valignano left specific instructions for Ruggieri to immediately begin studying the Chinese language and its texts. This knowledge endeared Ruggieri to local officials from the very beginning. In November 1580 he went to Canton with a group of merchants, making sure that they followed Chinese etiquette. Having dealt with the surly merchants for so long, local officials were so pleased with their behavior that they wanted him to appear with the merchants for all subsequent meetings. The next summer he returned and both he and the merchants were treated to much better lodging and treatment in general. The policy of accommodation seemed to hold some promise. One year later Matteo Ricci, the man who would actually fulfill the promise of that policy, arrived.

But accommodation would be no easy task for Ricci. The philosophical gap between East and West was huge. Xavier and Valignano had narrowed the social gap between the two cultures, but the fundamental philosophical differences remained. Chinese literati were just as convinced that the universe was an impersonal continuum as the Jesuits were convinced that the universe was the creation of an omnipotent God. Social obstacles remained as well. Religious men were not respected socially in China because they deviated from the Confucian norm. The Jesuits deviated even further from the norm with their light skin and brown hair. Ricci eventually found a way of crossing both philosophical and social hurdles, but not without a good deal of trial and error.

²⁰George Dunne, S.J., Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 17.

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Chapter 2

Matteo Ricci and Original Confucianism

Three years after he arrived in China, Michele Ruggieri requested that Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) join the mission there. He had originally met Ricci while the two were traveling in India and was housed with him in Cochin. Ricci was also Italian, born in Macerata in the papal domain, and the two undoubtedly became close during their years of missionary work in India. Ricci's family intended for their son to pursue a law degree. Instead Ricci joined the Society of Jesus in 1571 and went on to study for six years in Rome, Florence, and Coimbra, Portugal. He and his schoolmates dreamed of becoming pilgrims to foreign lands, but decided to pursue domestic vocations before traveling abroad. The master of novices in Rome during his education there was Alessandro Valignano, and in 1578 Ricci decided to follow his former master to Asia. He arrived in Goa on India's west coast and remained there until 1582. Ricci's initial enthusiasm was drained from him by illness, the deaths of friends, and disappointment in the intellectual level of his fellow missionaries and potential converts.¹ He was more than happy to respond to Valignano's request for priests willing to submit to intellectual rigor.

The intellectual rigor itself is what rekindled the sick and depressed Ricci's missionary zeal, according to Jonathan Spence. Specifically, learning the Chinese language fascinated him. After suffering through elementary Greek as a boy, Ricci found Chinese to be wholly different from the languages he already knew. He wrote to his rhetoric teacher in 1583 "I promise you that it is something quite different from either Greek or German. In speaking it there are many words that can signify more than a thousand things, and at times the only difference is between one word and another is the way you pitch them high or low in four different tones."² He even offered to send

¹Jonathan D. Spence, "Matteo Ricci and the Ascent to Peking" in Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B.C. Oh, *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582-1773* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), 6.

²*Ibid.*, 11.

examples of characters to illustrate his point. What he found most useful was that there were "no articles, no cases, no number, no gender, no tense, no mood" in the grammar, and that it was readable by anyone in Japan, Korea, or any other nation which used Chinese characters.³ He had found the lingua franca of Asia. Mastery of Chinese was not only useful for spreading Christianity to other nations, it was an absolute necessity. He firmly states in his journals that "It is also distinctive of the Chinese that all their religious sects are spread, and their religious promulgated by written word, rather than by the spoken word."⁴ Ricci began his career preaching through an interpreter and by 1584 he was hearing confessions in Chinese. He spoke without the aid of the interpreter in 1585 and was moderately literate. In 1593 he undertook the translation of the Confucian Four Books into Latin for the first time. A year later he took the final step of composing an original work without the help of Chinese scholars. His progress impressed scholar-officials and missionaries alike.

His knowledge of the language enabled Ricci to make his first attempts to understand Chinese religion. Nevertheless, Ricci's knowledge of native religion was still in European terms. In October 1585 he wrote to Claudio Aquaviva (d.1615), General of the Society of Jesus, that the literati's views of the afterlife were that of the Epicureans: the soul was not immortal. The lower class, on the other hand, were Pythagoreans: they believed in the immortality and transmigration of souls.⁵ Needless to say, these were about the only things that the Greek and Chinese philosophies had in common.

Ricci's knowledge of the philosophies' roles in Chinese society was equally faulty at the beginning of his career there. Xavier was looking for counterparts of the Jesuits in Asian society and the obvious choices were Buddhist monks. Both wore priestly robes, chanted in their religious services, had temples and statues, and took vows

³Ibid., 11.

⁴Matteo Ricci, China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610 (New York: Random House, 1942), 446.

⁵Jonathan D. Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci (New York: Viking-Penguin Inc., 1984), 116.

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of celibacy and poverty. Furthermore, the monks in Japan were so well respected that Xavier left orders that priests in China wear the Buddhist robes and shave their heads. Ricci wrote home to his schoolmate Giulio Fuligatti in November 1585 "Would that you could see me as I am now: I have become a Chinaman. In our clothing, in our looks, in our manners and in everything external we have made ourselves Chinese."⁶ Little to their knowledge, their attempts to fit in only alienated them further from the Chinese scholars they were trying to convert.

It was the literati who seemed alien to the missionaries at the time, completely unlike the scholars they knew. Ricci was used to the constant struggles between the Italian states in which he had grown up. Indeed, Chinese scholar-officials seemed faint of heart compared to the rough-and-ready city leaders in Macerata. He compared the Chinese scholars to women: very concerned with how they looked and submissive to even the mildest of violence. He wrote "Amongst us it is held to be a fine thing to see an armed man, but to them it seems evil, and they have a fear of seeing anything so horrible."⁷ These impressions most likely came from the scholars' insistence on performing rites properly (of which being properly dressed is a significant part) and general disdain for non-scholarly, physical labor such as warfare.

Eventually the Jesuits realized that Chinese Buddhist monks were not nearly as venerable as their Japanese counterparts. The Jesuits wanted to convert the literati with intellectual discussions, but could not do so if the literati did not respect them. Ricci wrote to General Acquaviva in 1592 about the change in strategy:

To gain greater status we do not walk along streets on foot, but have ourselves carried in sedan chairs, on men's' shoulders, as men of rank are accustomed to do. For we have need of this type of prestige in this region, and without it would make no progress among these gentiles; for the name of foreigners and priests is considered so vile in China that we need this and other similar devices to show them that we are not priests

⁶Ibid., 114.

⁷Ibid., 43-44.

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as vile as their own.⁸

By the summer of 1595 the missionaries had replaced their shaved heads with the long hair and beards of the literati. Their monastic robes were now scholarly silk robes.

Ricci attempted to reach out to the literati with his first original works in Chinese. He wrote about mnemonic devices and gave it to the governor of Jiangxi, whose son was preparing for his civil service exam. Entrance into the government required passing a series of tests on Chinese literature, which required a formidable amount of memorization. This book became very popular and Ricci's fame spread among the literati. In meetings he would entertain them by using his keen memory to read a text once and then recite it backwards and forewords. Besides attempting to appeal to Confucian social conventions, Ricci tried to appeal to Confucian philosophy with his treatise "On Friendship." This he gave to the Ming prince in Nanchang. In it he compiled various Western philosophers' ideas and maxims concerning friendship and tried to show how similar they were to Confucian values. Apparently he was rather convincing, as Zhou Yuanbiao, a well-known Confucian scholar, wrote "The works of our sages...have all been recorded completely and in the greatest detail; can you agree with me that there is no major difference?"⁹ Both texts won Ricci and the Jesuits much respect, but since friendship was the "least important and most egalitarian" of the five Confucian relationships, Ricci had yet to challenge some of the more fundamental notions of Confucianism.¹⁰ He followed these works with pamphlets containing the Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed, which turned out to be relatively popular.

His first challenge to the Confucian worldview came not in the written word but in a drawing he had on his wall in Zhaoqing in 1584. Besides devotional paintings, Ricci

⁸Ibid., 115.

⁹Ibid., 151.

¹⁰John D. Young, Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 36.

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displayed a map of the world as known to Europeans. This map proved to be very popular among visitors to the Jesuits' home; they made woodcuts of it and distributed copies. However, some found it particularly galling that China was not in the center. China had always considered itself the hub of the civilized world; its very name, *Zhongguo* means "Middle Kingdom." To remedy this, Ricci worked on another version of the map and released the Sinocentric version in 1602. In it he presented an idealized, peaceful picture of Europe, devoid of strife. Chinese critics would later resent the idea of a perfect nation existing outside of China, as well as the fact that Europeans presumed to know more about where nations were than China did. Converts saw the map not as new knowledge but as a reappearance of knowledge that China used to have but had forgotten. Li Zhizao wrote that the map did not even show all of the countries that once used to pay tribute to China. As with most things the Jesuits did, the map could be seen as a threat or a boon to Chinese society.

Literati found other items the Jesuits hung on their walls just as intriguing. The Renaissance techniques of perspective and Chiaroscuro (the pictorial arrangement of light and dark objects) were entirely new to the literati, so the art on the mission's walls seemed stunningly lifelike. Fathers Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) and João da Rocha (1565-1623) tried to take advantage of this by procuring one of the elaborate illustrated Bibles produced by Geronimo Nadal in Europe. Literati were sickened by depictions of the Crucifixion but admired pictures of the Virgin Mary. For example, the official Ma Tang detained the Jesuits in Beijing when he found a cross, believing it to be some form of black magic, while earlier he had admired pictures of Mary. Xu Guangqi saw the picture of Mary as the catalyst for his conversion.¹¹ By 1609 Marian societies had sprung up among the converts to act as charitable organizations. Eventually the Jesuits would try to appeal to Chinese sensibilities again by giving the figures in their pictures Chinese

¹¹ Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 247.

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features.

The fact that men who came to China to preach religion under a vow of poverty and yet had such ornate objects made many literati even more suspicious of the Jesuits. The Jesuits had intended to be financed by Spain, Portugal, and Rome, but subsidies from these powers were too irregular to be reliable. To remedy this, in 1578 Valignano arranged a deal with the Macao-Nagasaki silk companies for the Jesuits to invest in their trade. This deal was approved by Pope Gregory XIII and the General of India in 1582 and then by authorities in Macao in 1589. General Aquaviva had many misgivings about the deal, but knew that the investment was too vital to discard. Annual expenses for the China mission were about 12,000 ducats, while the mission made about 4,000-6,000 ducats in the silk trade. One year when Dutch pirates stole an entire ship full of silk, the Jesuits lost 15,000 ducats.¹² Association with Portuguese merchants was detrimental to the Jesuits' reputation, so the Jesuits denied their involvement whenever possible, stressing that they got most of their money from European kings.

No matter how the Jesuits explained their finances, they still aroused literati suspicion. If they told the literati about the trade, they were criminal merchants. If they told them the money came from foreign kings, they were agents of imperialism. If the Jesuits did not explain their finances at all, they were alchemists. Ricci was a man with considerable scientific knowledge, who was interested in money, and who said he had no outside income. The literati saw all of this and assumed he must literally be "making" his money. They saw Portuguese buy large amounts of mercury in Canton for use in silver mines in Latin America and then return with ships full of silver, leading some to believe that Portugal had discovered the secret for turning mercury into silver. While this made the Jesuits very popular in one sense, it made them infamous in another. Associations with silver and with alchemy were both sources of misgiving. In Zhaoqing, where the

¹²George H. Dunne, S.J., Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 104.

Jesuits had a mission, thieves lived in abandoned silver mines, and in 1589 a rumor spread across southern China that the Jesuits had been expelled for not revealing their alchemical secrets. Ricci could never shake the stigma of alchemy, since the more he assured the literati that he knew no such science, the less they believed him. Still, he considered it less evil to be considered an alchemist than to be considered financially dependent on Macao.¹³

Despite the controversy surrounding them and their possessions, the Jesuits became local celebrities in Zhaoqing and Shaozhou. By August 1589 they had created a small Christian community of eighty Christians in Zhaoqing. The Jesuits still knew that the real seat of power in China was in the imperial compound in Beijing, not in the south. They were trying to convert China from the top down but were hundreds of miles away from the top. After six years in Zhaoqing, six more in Shaozhou, three in Nanchang, and one in Nanjing, Ricci felt that their reputations were safe enough in 1600 to make their way to Beijing to present themselves to the Emperor. There they planned to present him with the same kind of items that other scholar-officials had found so intriguing. However, in July they were detained outside Beijing by Ma Tang, the eunuch in charge of collecting customs duties. In order to avoid paying high duties one member of their party abandoned the Jesuits to Ma by letting him know they had gifts for the Emperor. Ma immediately wanted an inventory of the gifts and went through the Jesuits' baggage. There he found a crucifix; "This is a wicked thing you have made, to kill our King," he told the Jesuits, "they cannot be good people who practice such arts."¹⁴ Ricci tried to explain the image of the man nailed to the cross:

Not wishing to say that this was our God, inasmuch as it seemed difficult in these circumstances to explain so profound a mystery to these ignorant people, especially as it would only be interpreted by the eunuch as an effort to deceive...[I] began little by little to explain...that this was a great saint who had wished to suffer for us the pain of the

¹³Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 186, 188.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 246.

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cross; and for this reason we made sculpted and painted representations of him in order always to have him before our eyes so that we might be grateful for so great a benefit.¹⁵

Ricci's explanation did not convince Ma, who detained Ricci and his companions for six months, until January 9, 1601, when the Jesuits unexpectedly received an imperial order to proceed to Beijing immediately.

Ricci never met with the emperor face to face, but his gadgets and his reputation as a gentleman made him a popular figure in both the imperial court and Beijing high society. Some historians have characterized the Jesuit gifts to the emperor as bribery.¹⁶ Ricci explained the gifts as a custom that the emperor expected to be followed. His gifts of paintings, books, a mechanical clock, and the like were an act of submission, of tribute. The literati in Beijing were just as taken as those in the south by the Jesuits' intellectual ability. Ricci received more than twenty invitations every day, and on special occasions like the New Year he could expect one hundred. Most of these visitors did not convert, but they did lend their names to works published by the Jesuits, giving them more credibility. Wu Zhongming, a member of the Board of Civil Offices, wrote in the preface to Ricci's revised world map that the priest was a modest, virtuous man who asked for nothing and whose complicated science seemed correct.¹⁷ Guo Zizhang, governor of Guizhou, wrote in another preface to the same map that Ricci's scientific skills were indubitable. Furthermore, it should not be offensive for a foreigner to teach the Chinese, since past emperors had enlisted aid from foreigners before. Besides, "Ricci has been so long in China that he is no longer a foreigner, but a Chinese."¹⁸ The emperor himself thought that Ricci came to China not to teach them but to learn about the Classics and how to be Chinese.

But Emperor Shenzhong (r.1582-1620) was not exactly a paragon of Confucian

¹⁵Dunne, *Generation of Giants*, 76.

¹⁶Arnold H. Rowbotham, quoted in *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 92.

morals. He took little interest in governing at all, holding only five interviews with the Grand Secretaries between 1590 and 1620. Preferring instead to occupy his time with more trivial matters, he naturally enjoyed the gifts from the Jesuits. Their gifts thereby angered many officials who wanted the emperor to spend more time working. The emperor was so pleased with his new clock that he made sure to keep the Jesuits in Beijing so that they could perform maintenance if need be. Despite the fact that the Jesuits never even saw the emperor, this led to the rumor that they got to meet with him on a regular basis while he ignored important officials in his government. Again, many literati resented the Jesuits for this. They could not believe that the only men who got to hold an audience with the emperor were celibate, the eunuchs, and the foreign Jesuits. That association alone cost the Jesuits a great deal of support.

Gifts were not the only tool the Jesuits had for their evangelization; they were not even a major tool. In general, the Jesuits used the gifts to lure the literati and get their attention. The Jesuits' real tool of choice was philosophy. Their first major task in this philosophical discussion was to explain their worldview in terms the literati could grasp. Perhaps the best example of this was their choice of the word for God. They quickly decided against continuing to use the phonetic version of Deus in favor of finding a term that actually held some meaning for the Chinese. They looked to Chinese antiquity for a suitable name. Shangdi seemed like an adequate name, but it had too many connections to ancestor worship to function as the Christian God. Converts might be confused and believe that Christianity and Confucianism were exactly the same or were both equally true. Shangdi was also a popular deity in Daoism, and the Jesuits did not want to become associated with that school of thought, so they considered other names. Tian was the term that replaced Shangdi, but it was too impersonal. The Christians knew that a personalized God was a strange notion to Ming literati to begin with, so they decided to avoid any confusion that would be caused by that name. The name that they finally

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decided on was Lord of Heaven (*Tian-zhu*). The name came to them when a catechumen "saluted the painting of Christ with the title 'Lord of Heaven.'"¹⁹ This was actually the name of a minor deity from the Buddhist canon, but it was so unknown to the public that the Jesuits adopted the term as their own. It preserved the idea that God was a part of China's original religious tradition while keeping God personalized.

With a name for God decided upon, the Jesuits set about creating a catechism to describe the key elements of their faith. Ruggieri and Fr. Pierro Gomes created the first catechism, *The True Record of the Lord of Heaven*. They completed the first draft in 1581 and published it three years later in November 1584. It used philosophical proofs to explain the basic tenants of Catholicism: the existence of God, God's nature, the nature of souls, etc. Ruggieri and Gomes wrote the text while the Jesuits were still in their Buddhist phase, so it used Buddhist terminology instead of Confucian or Daoist. Ricci replaced the Buddhist terms with Confucian in his seminal work *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (published in 1603). Ricci wrote the catechism as a discussion between a Western and an Eastern scholar and added responses to the questions he had been asked most frequently by Confucian and Buddhist critics. Ricci included all of the philosophical proofs from the *True Record*, but added more proofs and deleted all references to divine revelation exempt from philosophical investigation. The Christianity that he wanted to show China was one where man's logic was capable of proving most of the doctrine. Christianity was something to be examined and believed in once one had been convinced of its argument.

Ricci's main argument in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* is also the most fundamental of Christian beliefs, that God exists. The existence of God and God's omnipotent nature were both very strange notions to the literati. Ricci used standard philosophical proofs as well as appealing to the sense of wonder one feels when looking

¹⁹Pasquale M. D'Elia, S.J., ed., *Fonti Ricciane* 3 vols. (Rome: La Libreria Dello Stato, 1942-1949), 1: 186.

at the heavens. With so many stars, none of which collide, how can there not be someone controlling them and planning their courses? God was like the navigator of a ship at sea during a storm; you cannot see God, but the survival of the vessel is obviously dependent on him anyway. God was eternal and omnipotent, so there could be only one. If there were two, one would have to be superior to the other, and since God is perfect, that cannot happen. But there were plenty of ghosts, angels, and spirit. To both spirits and humanity God was like the head of a household, the ruler of a state. Ricci admitted however, that people are incapable of fully understanding God. He used an analogy from St. Augustine, wherein Augustine was walking along a beach and saw a child trying to fill a seashell with all of the water in the sea. Similarly, the human intellect cannot completely comprehend God.

God was so powerful and God's relationship with man was so great that the Confucian relationships paled in comparison. Ricci wanted to make it expressly clear that God/Jesus was not just another sage-king. God is the ultimate father, the creator of all things, therefore the Confucian father-son relationship applied to him more than anyone else:

The monarch's relationship to oneself is that of lord and subject. The relationship of the family master to oneself is that of father and son. But, when compared to the relationship of God as the common father, all earthlings relationships' of lord and subject, father and son, are equal to the relationship of brothers [among brothers].²⁰

Christianity had entered to help the Confucian scholars make the final leap from differentiated love to universal love, to help them become sages.

Besides describing Christianity in Confucian terms, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* also tried to prove that Christianity as a tradition was Confucian. Ricci tried to prove that men in ancient China had believed in a notion of God similar to that of the Christians, and that Christianity and the teachings of Confucius were completely

²⁰Young, Confucianism and Christianity, 37.

harmonious. Differences arose from faulty interpretations of Confucius, which had led people away from the Lord of Heaven. Confucius had prepared the way for Christianity, but his teachings were not enough to meet China's spiritual needs. Christianity completed the Confucian tradition. This was not just lip service, because Ricci believed that he had actually found signs of ancient Judeo-Christian ideas in China's Confucian classics. He wrote to General Aquaviva that there were many phrases in the two traditions that were analogous: the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, the glory of the blessed, and the like.²¹ The Confucian golden rule of not doing unto others what you would not want done to you was remarkably similar to Matthew 7:12. He proposed that the Shangdi worshipped by the Zhou emperors was actually the Christian God; they referred to God as Tian as a sign of respect in a similar way that the emperor is referred to by the place where he resides, the Throne. Neo-Confucianism had incorrectly led scholars to agnosticism or even atheism, the Jesuits argued. Nevertheless, even Zhu Xi had suggested that there was a supreme deity. Ricci believed that the teachings of Christ and those of the Confucian classics were one and the same.

Another hurdle Ricci had to overcome was to prove that the soul was immortal. To do so he referred to the historical Classics. His favorite example was that of Pang Keng, the seventeenth emperor of the Shang dynasty in the *Classic of Documents*. His descendants feared and worshipped him four hundred years after his demise. Pang himself believed in the punitive power of Shangdi, and told how corrupt officials' ancestors went to Shangdi asking that their corrupt descendants on Earth be punished. King Wen Wang is said to have ascended to heaven after he died. If his body had decomposed, he must have had a soul in order to rise into heaven. Heaven's existence itself was proof of the existence of souls. The classics never mentioned hell, but Ricci's Christian sense of justice assured him that there must be hell as well. "One cannot be

²¹ Matteo Ricci S.J., *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* ed. and trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 14.

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without the other," he wrote, "For example, King Wen and the Duke of Zhou were all in heaven, then Xia Qie and Shang Zhou and other despots must be in hell."²² Confucius had implied the existence of hell all along.

Those souls were not the same thing that the Neo-Confucians worshipped in their ceremonies. Souls were not just a form of *chi*, they were transcendent substance. They were self-existent, while the bodies they inhabited were dependent. The soul could exist without the body, but the reverse was not true. Neo-Confucians in general failed to make this distinction which Ricci took for granted. They proposed that *li* (ritual) was the creative power behind the universe. Ricci disagreed, saying that while God was self-existent, *li* was dependent; something else had to exist in order for *li* to exist. After all, Neo-Confucians always described *li* as being "within things" and "within beings." *Li* therefore was incapable of being the creator of the universe. Besides, ritual itself is not productive. Ricci wrote:

When a person has *li* in his heart, why is it that a cart is not produced automatically [by the *li* within him]? Why is it that a person has to get wood, and other tools to make the cart? In the beginning *li* supposedly produced everything, but now it cannot even produce such a small item as a cart.²³

Neo-Confucians suggested that *li* was produced by the Supreme Ultimate, but Ricci responded that if this were so, then why did Confucius or other sages never mention it? Ricci completely rejected Neo-Confucian metaphysics. The universe was not just impersonal *chi* and *li*; it was the creation of a personalized, transcendent God.

The one inheritor of the Confucian tradition that Ricci did not reject was Mencius, who lived in the fourth century BCE. Ricci felt this way because Mencius believed that human nature was good. Nevertheless, even Mencius, considered by the entire scholarly community to be the direct inheritor of the Confucian tradition, diverged from Confucius, according to Ricci. Mencius believed that not having an heir and celibacy were the most

²²Young, Confucianism and Christianity, 32.

²³*Ibid.*, 34.

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serious forms of impiety towards one's parents.²⁴ Naturally, Ricci disagreed. Again he wondered why Confucius never mentioned the prohibition on celibacy and what happened to famous benevolent men like Bo Yi, Shu Chi, and Bi Gan, who all had no heirs.

Another thing that the classics left out was an origin myth of the Chinese people. The Chinese liked to believe that they had simply always been there and that there was no story just because their historical documents did not go back that far. Ricci decided that they were a branch of the descendants of Judea, born from Adam and Eve. This proved to be a relatively popular concept among the converts. Later converts such as Li Zibo surmised that humans must have migrated from Judea to China under Fu Xi, the mythical sage-king responsible for discovering fire and who reportedly introduced Shangdi to China.²⁵

The Jesuits believed they had found physical evidence in addition to literary evidence that the Judeo-Christian and Confucian traditions were linked. Ricci actually found a Chinese Jewish community in Gaifeng. One member had heard of Ricci and figured out that since he was neither pagan nor Muslim, he must be Jewish. Likewise, Ricci believed the man to be a Christian until he realized that his knowledge of the Bible covered only the Old Testament. Then in 1625 Chinese authorities unearthed a tablet carved by Nestorian Christians who spread from Syria to East Asia in the seventh century. Several emperors in the Tang and Yuan dynasty actually patronized the religion. Scholars flocked to see the tablet but could not read all of it and brought the Jesuits in to help. The Jesuits did not realize that it was a heretic tradition. They believed it to be Christian but peppered with pagan terms and literary allusions. Li Zhizao, one of the three most important converts, replied to critics who considered Christianity dangerous because it was so new to China: "Who could believe it? 990 years ago this doctrine was

²⁴ Mencius, *Mencius* trans. D.C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 127.

²⁵ Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 86.

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preached [in China]... Now this holy stone... has suddenly come to light... Buried for so many years, this treasure seems to have waited only the propitious moment."²⁶

The True Meaning of the Lord in Heaven itself became the cornerstone of the Chinese Catholic faith. It was even well known as a scholarly work in and of its own right. Qing emperors kept a copy in the Imperial Library and Emperor Kangxi actually became enraged at a papal legation sent in 1706 because they were unfamiliar with the work. Europeans were not as impressed with the work. Many outside the Jesuit community dismissed it as only teaching deism, neglecting proper explanations of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. Ricci talks about Jesus, but only as God descending to earth. He mentions Adam and Eve being punished, but not Original Sin. On secular matters he admits that the pope's dignity is "superior to that of all Christian kings," but still avoids the issue because he knows how sensitive the literati were about the authority of their emperor.²⁷ Ricci responded to this criticism by explaining that he had to explain even more basic fundamentals of the Christian faith before he could move on to dogma. He had to prove that God existed before he could talk about God's intricacies.

This catechism does not treat all the mysteries of our holy faith, which need be explained only to catechumens and Christians, but only of certain principles, especially such as can be proved and understood with the light of reason. Thus it can be of service both to Christians and to non-Christians and can be understood in those remote regions which our Fathers cannot immediately reach, preparing the way for those other mysteries which depend upon our faith and revealed wisdom.²⁸

Ricci's Neo-Confucian audience was too intellectual for him to rely on revelation for an explanation of his faith. He catered to his audience by speaking in terms of self-cultivation instead of divine manifestation.

European contemporaries also condemned the Jesuits' acceptance of Confucian

²⁶Dunne *Generation of Giants*, 196.

²⁷Ibid., 65.

²⁸Ricci *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, 43.

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ancestor worship. The Jesuits allowed their converts to still burn incense and to make offerings at family temples. They contended that the ceremonies were entirely secular. They had no religious significance, just as pledging allegiance to the flag has no religious significance today. They even took the policy of accommodation so far as to suggest that they should be allowed to say mass in the native Chinese language instead of Latin, nearly 350 years before the notion was officially put into practice by the Church. Ricci's associate, Fr. Nicholas Trigault, went to Rome in 1614 and petitioned the pope to let the Chinese wear hats in Church, since to them taking off hats was a sign of disrespect instead of humility. The same petition also requested that the Jesuits be allowed to say mass in the Chinese vernacular. General Aquaviva supported this idea and submitted it to theologians for review. The theologians approved of the measure on January 5, 1615, as did the Holy Office ten days later. By the time the decree reached China, however, only the suggestion about hats was implemented. The language issue was thwarted, probably by disapproving Jesuits in Japan.²⁹

Complementing Confucianism was only one half of *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven's* purpose. The Jesuits also wanted to eliminate Buddhism and Daoism from Chinese philosophy. Xu Guangqi's maxim of "supplement Confucianism and replace Buddhism" (*bu Ru yi Fo*) was a very real policy for the missionaries. The Jesuits considered Buddhism and Daoism to be fundamentally incompatible with both Confucianism and their own faith. Ricci believed that Daoists adhered to the idea that everything came from "nothingness" (*wu*) and Buddhists similarly thought that this world came from "emptiness" (*kung*). In contrast, Confucianism and even Neo-Confucianism were firmly focused on this world. Even the metaphysical Supreme Ultimate "existed" (*yu*). Buddhism was also incompatible in practice, since its practitioners were truly immoral people. "They live in a truly dissolute way," Ricci wrote, "and not only do

²⁹ Dunne, Generation of Giants.

many of them have wives and children, which is forbidden by their monastic rule, they are also robbers, and killers of those who pass along the road."³⁰ Even the virtuous acts Buddhists did were done for the wrong reasons. For example, sometimes Ricci ate a Buddhist diet, but did so as penance, not out of an idea of the oneness of beings in the cycle of reincarnation. Ricci encouraged all converts to destroy their Buddhist and Daoist paraphernalia, even though some items were sent back to Macao as signs of success. Qu Rukuei brought in three crates of Daoist alchemy texts when he converted. Daoists themselves did not respond to Jesuit attacks because the philosophy lacked the orthodoxy and organization to do so. Some scholars responded to Ricci on behalf of Daoism, saying that there was a good deal of overlap between Christianity and Daoism, even constructively offering a reading list for Ricci. Buddhists defended both themselves and the Neo-Confucian school of thought because the two were so closely linked. Neo-Confucians were offended that Ricci considered Confucianism to be incomplete; they saw no need for Christianity. They also tended to gloss over their own use of Buddhism to complete their philosophy.

Neo-Confucianism as a whole was not as unified as it had been in previous centuries. Inequitable concentration of land and of taxation plagued the late Ming, in addition to the rising amount of graft within the imperial bureaucracy and the enormous expenses of the imperial court and its eunuchs. There was no consensus about how to solve these problems, and the scholarly community separated into factions. Literati formed intellectual academies to study and discuss the Classics. They searched the texts to find ways of saving Chinese society from a complete breakdown. Salvation of both society and individuals became an important topic nationwide. The academies grew into a nationwide movement, the largest of which had thousands of members. Academies were not political parties; they were comprised of men who shared a common goal but

³⁰Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci, 211.

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who often had varying philosophical views. One of the more important examples, the Donglin clique, sought to reinvigorate declining public morality and to restore the peoples' faith in government. This party provided the Jesuits with its most influential converts, including the "Three Pillars of the Chinese Catholic Church:" Li Zhizao, Yang Tingyun and Xu Guangqi. One Jesuit clearly recalled the close ties between the Donglin party and the Catholic community:

Our Doctors Leo [Li Zhizao], Paul [Xu Guangqi], and Michael [Yang Tingyun] presided at some of them [the Donglin meetings]. The Fathers approved of the institute because of the great profit which the faith drew from it; for almost all the academicians felt great affection for the Christian Law which... professes and teaches the same morals which they, too, are set to practice...³¹

There were enough Catholic members of the Donglin party that they even formed their own sub-party with at least nine influential scholar-officials listed as members. There was some resistance to Christianity from the Donglin, but these critics were definitely the minority. The Jesuits had truly found counterparts in these men who spent just as much time on education and salvation as they had.

Donglin members found Western learning interesting, but each found different aspects of it intriguing. Some were interested only in Western science. This was acceptable because even then the Jesuits were able to convert some of them. Qu Rukuei visited Ricci because he believed that Ricci knew the secrets of alchemy but stayed to learn about Christianity. In 1605 he was baptized as Matteo. Others, like Yang Tingyun, were interested only in the Jesuits' religion. Most, like Xu Guangqi and Li Zhizao, were interested in both. These three men were all from the lower Yangzi delta, a stronghold of lay Buddhism, which might have contributed to their openness to Christianity by loosening strict Confucianism's hold over them. Li met Ricci for the first time in January 1601. Already interested in geography, he became fascinated with Ricci's world map

³¹Carney T. Fisher, Hsu Kuang-ch'i and the Nung-Cheng Chuan-Shu (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1970), 39.

and began to study cartography with the Jesuit. He made his first efforts to learn about Christianity in 1604 and continued to study until his conversion in 1610. Of the three pillars he had the closest relationship with Ricci. In 1610 Li became ill, and it was Ricci, not Li's family, who nursed him back to health. Out of Li's gratitude and Ricci's fear that the disease might recur, Li was baptized Leo. The next year Li's father died in Hangzhou, and Li invited Jesuits Lazzaro Cattaneo (1560-1640) and Nicholas Trigault (1577-1628) to join him on his journey home to mourn. In Hangzhou the two missionaries established one of the five most successful missions the Jesuits had with the support of Li. Li continued to be one of the main sources of support for the Jesuits throughout China until his death in 1630.

One of the great successes of the Hangzhou mission was the conversion of Yang Tingyun. Also a well-known scholar, Yang was a devout Buddhist when he met Ricci in 1602. In 1609 he retired to Hangzhou and patronized the Chan (Zen) Buddhist sect there. He decided to visit his friend Li Zhizao on the occasion of Li's father's death and met the two Jesuits Cattaneo and Trigault. He became interested in Christianity very quickly but could not bear to part with his concubine and their two sons, which the Jesuit stipulated he had to do before he could convert. Li had faced the same obstacle and convinced Yang that conversion was the right thing to do. After he "provided generously" for his concubine, Yang was baptized Michael in 1612.³² He then went about the business of converting his family. Thirty relatives converted immediately, but his wife hesitated until 1615 because of what she saw the religion do to her husband's concubine. In celebration of her conversion, he bought the home the Jesuits had been renting in Hangzhou and land for burying poor converts. All in all, he converted just under one hundred clan members to Catholicism. Yang fit well into the Jesuits' method of top-down conversion. Yang held high posts in the bureaucracy for the rest of his life and never ceased trying to prove

³²Dunne Generation of Giants, 114.

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how superior he believed Christianity to be over Buddhism and how beneficial he thought Christianity would be for China.

The Jesuits capitalized on such success whenever they could. The Jesuits and literati co-authored so many books together that it is often hard to identify the individual authors of each section. Still, the success of the China mission was very limited. On August 24, 1608 Ricci wrote home to his brother in Macerata that, after twenty-six years of intellectual labor in China, they had converted a total of over two thousand Chinese in five cities.³³ The literati congratulated Ricci on his prematurely gray hair, "They [the Chinese] do not know," he told his brother, "that they are the cause of these white hairs."³⁴

The small number should not imply failure, however. The Chinese who did convert certainly understood Christianity better than the more numerous converts in India. Ricci hoped that each of these new Christians would in turn convert more and more people to Christianity until the religion was a significant part of Chinese society. Before he died, he reflected on the relatively small number of converts: "We desired to build something solid, so that converts would answer to the name of Christian and, in these beginnings, spread the good odor of our faith. For this reason the number of baptized is not as great as might be wished."³⁵ Slow moral cultivation was a fundamental part of the Jesuit mission. By gradually proving themselves to be virtuous men, the Jesuits attracted men to them who were interested in self-cultivation. These men hoped that Christianity could help turn wayward Chinese subjects into the gentlemen from the West they saw before them. Xu Guangqi firmly believed in the transforming power of Christianity and did whatever was in his power to apply Western learning to all parts of society.

³³ Beijing, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Nanzhang, and Shaozhou

³⁴ Spence, "Matteo Ricci and the Ascent to Peking," 14.

³⁵ Dunne, Generation of Giants, 105.

Chapter 3

Xu Guangqi: The Church Relies on Its Strongest Pillar

Xu Guangqi was exposed to evidence of the Ming dynasty's decline from the day he was born. He was well aware that the society in which he lived was far from the Confucian ideal. Corruption, vice, and crime were rampant and the Ming government seemed unable or uninterested in fighting them. But this only strengthened his personal resolve to solve them.

Xu's family originally came from Henan Province but migrated to Kangxi in 1127 when their crops failed. The family finally settled in Shanghai, where the clan changed its occupation from agriculture to trade. Four hundred years later in 1552 Japanese pirates (*wako*, "pirate dwarves") decimated the Shanghai area. The Ming army could not hold the raiders off, so much of what the Xus owned was destroyed. What was not destroyed was extorted from them, as officials forced Xu's father to contribute devastatingly large sums of money to the effort to defend Shanghai. This left his already poor family even worse off. Xu's grandfather was an unsuccessful farmer. He died early on and left his wife to take care of two children in the middle of the wako raids. Xu's grandmother became the matriarch of the family and fled with her children to the woods, where they lived for four years. Xu's father was orphaned at six years old, so he sold his fathers' fields to try his hand at business, unsuccessfully. During the wako raids he served in the army and became very interested in military texts and Daoist divination. Xu's mother encouraged her son, born April 24, 1562, to be an official instead of pursuing the other, less successful careers of the clan. Xu recalled how as a young boy he was fascinated with the study of battles, which his mother encouraged. He was interested in the defense of China from a very early age. Even in 1621, seventy years after the wako raids he never witnessed, he repeatedly referred to them in his writings. He often confided in Ricci his concern that it only took the Japanese twenty-four hours to cross the East China Sea.

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Xu's success as a scholar was not impressive at first. In 1581, a year before Ricci arrived in China and when Xu was only nineteen years old, he passed the first-level civil service exam. He became a low-level scholar, got married, and one year later his son Xu Ji was born. To support his new family Xu became a private tutor and moved from town to town. Throughout the 1580s Xu repeatedly failed the provincial level exams. In 1596, while he was teaching a family in Shaozhou, he met Fr. Lazare Cattaneo. A relative who was an official in the city suggested that Xu discuss philosophy with the Jesuits because they had established themselves as model citizens and men of considerable knowledge. This was his first encounter with Christianity, but he does not seem to have been moved by the Jesuits' arguments at all. He remarked only on having been impressed by Ricci's world map. The next year Xu passed the provincial exam in Beijing, attaining his *juren* degree. When he failed his attempt at the doctoral *jinshi* degree he returned to Shanghai. There he saw a new version of Ricci's map. He decided to visit Ricci in Nanjing on his way to Beijing for his second attempt at the doctoral exam.

Xu was able to see Ricci for only a little while in the spring of 1603, but it seems to have made quite a lasting impression on the fledgling scholar. According to the Jesuits, after the meeting Xu had a dream in which he entered a temple.¹ The first altar he came to was dedicated to God. The second was for God's son. The third altar he found was empty, and he immediately woke up. Only later did he realize that he was dreaming of the Trinity. Christian vision or not, Xu failed the *jinshi* exam again that year. His experience with the Jesuits still haunted him, so he decided to travel from Shanghai to Nanjing once again to see Ricci. Unfortunately, this was the time Ricci was in Beijing, so he met with Fr. Jean da Rocha instead. Xu was captivated by a painting of the Madonna and Child, so da Rocha sent him home with a copy of the Ten Commandments and *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. The next day Xu returned

¹John Young call this account "highly doubtful" (*Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter*, 43), but it is the only account we have of Xu's conversion because Xu never went into detail on the subject.

demanding to be baptized: "I have always been a doubter; but now my doubts have been dispelled. I have always been fond of argument; but now I find myself silenced. I have made up my mind to receive baptism."² Da Rocha decided that the eager neophyte needed instruction before baptism, so for the next eight days he taught Xu about the faith. On the last day he baptized Xu Guangqi Paul.

Xu then set about converting his family, just as Yang Tingyun had done. Xu's father was not immediately convinced by the Jesuits, but eventually gave way after learning about the Jesuits' emphasis on self-cultivation and honoring Heaven. He was baptized as Leon in 1606. That same year his twenty-four year-old son entered the faith under the name Jacques. Soon thereafter Xu's wife converted as well. Their descendants have been Catholic ever since.³ Some have been particularly outspoken supporters of the Church, as was the case with Xu's granddaughter, Candide Xu (1607-1680). Xu was eager to marry her off to a Christian and arranged for her to marry the scholar Xu Yuandu when she was five years old. He died in 1653, leaving her a 46 year-old widow. She devoted much of the rest of her life (twenty-seven years) and money to the Church in Shanghai, sponsoring 135 chapels, publishing books, and helping pay the missionaries themselves.⁴

One year after converting, Xu Guangqi finally passed the *jinshi* exam. He credited Christianity with both his recent success and his past failures. He believed that his past failures were the result of divine intervention. If he had passed, he would have taken a concubine, as was the custom, and would have been loath to part with her when he was facing the choice to convert. His conversion then helped him pass the 1604 test. His ranking on the *jinshi* test itself was not extraordinary compared to other literati, but

²Matteo Ricci, S.J., The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven ed. and trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 39.

³John D. Young, Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 44.

⁴David E. Mungello, The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800 (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 42.

his essays on local defense and waterworks impressed the chief examiner enough that Xu was elected a bachelor of the Hanlin Academy in Beijing. The Hanlin Academy was the central directing organization of Chinese scholars and, according to Jonathan Spence, "the most coveted of all intellectual posts in the entire nation." Matteo Ricci was also impressed with Xu's success, and just like Xu, credited divine intervention: "But it seems as if Divine Providence had selected this man to be a bulwark of Christianity in Peking [Beijing], because he was kept there and appointed to a position of dignity, that surpassed his fondest hopes."⁵ Xu lived up to Ricci's expectations and was a source of both stability and growth for the Church.

In 1607 Xu was promoted again to Corrector in the Academy. However, Xu's father died the same year, so Xu returned to Shanghai to mourn. He stopped by Nanjing on the way there and invited Fr. Cattaneo to come with him to preach and open a mission. Cattaneo could not leave until the following year, however. In Nanjing Xu made sure that the Jesuits performed a Christian funeral for his father. This was the first High Requiem mass many converts had seen. The Jesuits erected a catafalque for the casket and covered the special cedar coffin with black silk tapestries. Xu and the converts still wore the traditional Chinese white mourning apparel. The Jesuits laid out candles and incense, recited the Office for the Dead, and generally spared no expense for the event. Xu then continued on to Shanghai to bury his father. Confucius demanded that sons mourn for their fathers for three years, so Xu did just that and remained in Shanghai until 1610. Once Cattaneo arrived, Xu built a church on the western side of his own estate for him to use. By the time Xu returned to Beijing, the Shanghai mission had over two hundred converts.

Xu's success at being both a Confucian and a Christian was not the only thing that set him apart from his peers in Beijing. Xu was well known for being an independent

⁵ Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610* (New York: Random House, 1942), 452.

mind. He had many unconventional non-literary interests, such as calendar-making, geometry, and military strategy, and willingly engaged in physical labor on his farm. Like most literati, Xu was concerned with how this world worked but he was also interested in empirically testing his theses. He was therefore interested in Western learning as a whole. He made no great distinction between the Jesuits' Christian teachings and their empirical science; it was all the way of the Lord of Heaven. Xu was the first to convince Ricci to publish works on science and math in addition to Christianity. Ricci recounts that "Doctor Ciu Paul [Xu] had this idea in mind: since volumes on faith and morals had already printed, they should now print something on European sciences, as an introduction to further study [of Christianity], in which novelty should vie with proof."⁶ Xu believed that the Jesuits heralded the return of Chinese intellectuals to their empirical roots. He charged Neo-Confucians such as Wang Yangming with ignoring the real world and devoting themselves to incorrect philosophies and superstitions.

But Chinese science had not always been "superstitious". Xu believed that ancient Chinese math was on a par with seventeenth-century European math. That knowledge had just been lost when their first historical emperor Qinshi Huangdi (the man who ended the Warring States Period) collected all of the books in China and burned many of them. Afterwards scholars were like "blind men shooting at random at the target and never hitting, or like those who had only a blurred sense of form, scanning an elephant by a firefly's light, losing sight of the tail if they focused on the head."⁷ The first text he and Ricci translated was the version of Euclid Ricci had received from his math professor, Fr. Christopher Klau (aka Clavius), a friend of astronomers Kepler and Galileo and a developer of the Gregorian calendar. Xu and Ricci met every day for one year and jointly published six books of the work in 1607. The following year Xu

⁶Ibid., 476.

⁷Jonathan D. Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci (New York: Viking-Penguin Inc., 1984), 153.

published *Differences and Similarities in Measurement*, in which he tried to prove how similar the methods used by Chinese antiquity and the Western contemporaries were. Xu applied his knowledge of geometry to studying cartography and astronomy with Ricci as well.

Besides expanding upon the Jesuits' missions and their body of literature, Xu acted as a stabilizing force within the already-established Christian community. In 1609 an aging Qu Rukuei lapsed back into using alchemy to extend his life. Xu discovered this and made Qu follow Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* with him. Afterwards Qu returned to Christianity. Qu professed to Xu that "though I cannot comprehend the grandeur of every mystery [of the Catholic Faith], with all my heart I subject myself to them and believe all that is contained in them... I am starting to believe afresh..."⁸

Xu decided to visit the churches in Macao during his mourning in Shanghai. Upon his return to Beijing in 1610, he was shocked to learn that Matteo Ricci had died during his absence. Fr. Nicolo Trigault described Xu as having attended Ricci's funeral and that the scholar could not have been more grief-stricken if he were European.⁹ Xu allegedly burst into tears and grabbed a rope to help lower his friend down to his final resting place. Modern historian Arthur Hummel contends that Xu did not return from Macao until a few months after Ricci's burial.¹⁰ The emperor had given the Jesuits a plot of land by Beijing's western wall in which to bury Ricci. This was tacit recognition of Christianity's place in China. While Xu knew that this recognition was a great boon to the Church, this small gain was overshadowed by the enormous loss of the leader of the China mission. Ricci's successor, Fr. Nicolo Longobardo, was a capable man, but overly reliant on the older methods of conversion. He concluded that ancestor worship was

⁸Ibid., 249.

⁹Carney T. Fisher, *Hsu Kuang-ch'i and the Nung-Cheng Chuan-Shu* (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1970), 12.

¹⁰Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* 2 vol. (Washington: U.S. Government Press, 1943), 1: 316.

pagan and superstitious and that converts should cease practicing them. This notion did not go over well with the converts or other missionaries, so Longobardo relaxed his position and the Jesuits went back to business as usual.

Xu also went back to his normal routine. He returned to his post as Corrector at the Hanlin Academy in 1610. In December of that year the Board of Astronomy miscalculated a solar eclipse. Chinese dynasties relied on the Mandate of Heaven for legitimizing their rule. Such mistakes could be interpreted as omens of the dynasty losing favor, especially with the rise in Manchu activity in the northeast. Xu suggested that the court use the Jesuits to correct and supplement the Muslim astronomy upon which the court had previously relied. The throne commissioned Xu, along with Li Zhizao, to translate Western calendar-making books into Chinese with the help of Jesuits Sebastiano de Ursis and Diego de Pantoja. The translation project never got off the ground, but the incident established that the Jesuits had a superior method of astronomy. Xu continued to focus on science and technology for the next few years of his career, publishing books on astronomy and Western methods of hydraulics. He did what he could to keep his career intellectual instead of political, preferring not to become entangled in court politics. In 1612 he became an advisor on the Historiographical Board of the Hanlin Academy. A year later he was forced to retire temporarily from his new position, this time because of illness. The same scenario played out in 1617, when he was promoted to assistant secretary of the Supervisorate of Imperial Instruction. Both times he retired to his farm at Tianzin, southeast of Beijing.

While working on his farm, Xu became more and more convinced of the need for the Ming government to reform its social policy as well as its philosophy. He wrote to his friend Jia Hong, his chief examiner in 1604 and an ardent Buddhist, that the Ming's situation was ten times worse than during the Southern Song Dynasty, when China had

lost its entire northern half to invaders.¹¹ Xu complained that his proposals for changes in the bureaucracy and military were ignored by his colleagues. First and foremost, he proposed that the Ming try to resolve the income gap between the rich and poor. It was the responsibility of those who had wealth to live within their means and stock up as many provisions as they could so that they as well as those less fortunate could eat when hard times arrived. Xu was a reformer but he was also an optimist. He had unwavering faith in the ability of science and technology to make peoples' lives better. Policy should not be based on ancient methods if those methods were ineffective; it has to adjust to meet modern needs.

Most notable in Xu's program for reform was his concern for farmers. While most literati paid lip service to the peasants as the source of China's wealth, they disdained physical labor. Xu's description of farming methods and materials could have come only from first-hand experience. Xu still believed that literati were superior but also believed that these superior men had to take their responsibility to the peasants more seriously. He commended the stories of emperors who supposedly went to the fields to see how content the farmers were. Xu also recommended that "After the harvest season, the farmers would attend school... all their work would be regulated, and no farmer might lack an education."¹² After all, the Ming founder had been a farmer and had sent princes to rural areas to become acquainted with farm life and had compulsory schools for farmers. Such egalitarianism was a welcome sign to the Jesuits, reflecting that Xu was moving away from Confucian hierarchical love to Christian universal love.

But Xu's second retirement was cut short when duty called him back to Beijing in 1616. The government recalled him to his job on the Historiographical Board. Little did Xu know that he was returning to Beijing just in time to save the Jesuits from official charges of heterodoxy and conspiracy.

¹¹Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 54.

¹²*Ibid.*, 56.

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Neo-Confucian Criticism

Shen Que was not at all pleased that the Jesuits had settled in his city. Beijing had appointed him the vice president of the Nanjing Board of Rites to root out all improper practices within the city. Then the very embodiment of the heterodoxy he was trying to root out moved into his city at the turn of the century, claiming that Confucianism was imperfect without their teachings. So in June 1616 Shen set about correcting this. His report to the throne, "A Memorial Impeaching Barbarians from Afar," charged the Jesuits with illegal entry into and residence in China. The emperor did not respond. Shen tried to rid the city of the Jesuits by himself, but they were so popular among the literati that he could not get the support he needed to excise the heretics.

Shen found the support he needed in Beijing. Fang Congji, member of the Ministry of Rites there, was just as unhappy with the success of the Jesuits' mission. He and Shen both submitted memorials on August 15, 1616, making the same charges as before. Fang grew impatient when he had not received a reply by August 20, so he decided to jump the gun and authorized Shen to arrest the Jesuits. Shen received the news he had been waiting for by the end of the month and immediately set to work. Converts had tried to publicly protest his action, which Shen took as a sign that the Jesuits had a dangerous amount of influence among the common people. He had to act immediately, so he arrested twenty-seven people in all: Alphonse Vagnoni and two other Jesuits, five boys the Jesuits had adopted, and nineteen converts along with non-converts who had worked with the Jesuits. One infamously zealous convert, the one who had protested earlier, demanded that he be arrested too. He was absolutely intent on becoming a martyr and willing to "shed [his] blood for the faith of Jesus Christ."¹³ The authorities had never seen anything like this. Unsure what to do, they released him, much

¹³George H. Dunne S.J., Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the last Decades of the Ming Dynasty (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 135.

to his dismay. Vagnoni recounts how a crowd surrounded and jeered him and the other prisoners as they were arrested. An arrest was a public event in Ming China and the crowd was having a splendid time. He could not help but laugh too. He ascribed his outburst to grace that gave him "a particular joy and gaiety, which made me burst out laughing, unable to restrain myself."¹⁴ But Vagnoni would not remain jovial for long. Shen still needed imperial permission before he could prosecute the Jesuits, so he kept Vagnoni imprisoned until he got it.

Shen sent a third memorial to Beijing. He made the same charges as before but added that the Jesuits threatened the Chinese government just as much as they threatened Chinese culture. He charged them with actually being spies from Falangji (an imaginary country) whose navy had already conquered the Philippines. Shen's close friend Yu Maozi, a censor in the Office of Scrutiny at the Ministry of Rites, also submitted a memorial on August 31. He told the court about the public demonstrations and secret meetings the Christians held. They were entirely subversive and in collusion with Macao. The throne ignored Yu but did reply to Shen. Shen gladly received an imperial edict to prosecute the Christians.

Dated January 16, 1617, the edict charged the Jesuits with illegally gathering information about China's military. Even though they were not an immediate threat, it contended they were a security risk, so it would be wise to deport them to be safe. Even those employed by the government working on the Astronomical Board had to go. Overall, the tone of the edict was mild and unemotional.¹⁵ Its enforcement was equally unemotional. Authorities closed churches in Beijing, Shanghai, and other cities but did not deport the priests; they simply had to leave the city itself. Most took shelter with the families of the "three pillars." Christians in Beijing were arrested, but those not specifically named were left in the care of Xu Guangqi. Priests in Nanzhang were forced

¹⁴Ibid., 134.

¹⁵Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 61.

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to withdraw to Kianzhang, but were allowed to leave converts in charge of their churches so they could remain open. In Kianzhang they established another successful mission. Authorities in Shaozhou made the Jesuits leave, so they joined Yang Tingyun and other refugee priests in Hangzhou. Yang Tingyun used his authority to avoid the enforcement of the edict altogether, and it became the new headquarters for the Society of Jesus. Only in Nanjing was the edict enforced wholeheartedly.

A tribunal of six judges convened in March of 1617 to review the case against the Jesuits. The Secretary of the Board of Rites reported to them that "[Vagnoni] claims to be 50 years old, to be a European... he claims that his grade corresponds to that of a doctor in China, that he has not desired to become a mandarin, that he entered China with da Salva and others to preach religion...."¹⁶ The accusers took nothing for granted. The tribunal decided that the five boys they found should be sent to a Buddhist monastery; China had no need for European charity. Only five of the converts were banished or exiled to military colonies. One of these converts was sentenced to work on the Great Wall, but another Christian was allowed to take his place. Xu Guangqi was able to negotiate the release of that convert by talking to the commander of that section of the wall. The rest of the converts were beaten and sent home. Jesuits Vagnoni, Alvaro Semedo, Pantoja, and Ursis were all sentenced to be deported to their own countries via Macao. The Jesuits remained in a Canton prison for one month before they were moved to a Buddhist monastery for another eight. From there they proceeded to Macao where they waited for a ship. Pantoja and Ursis both died of illnesses between 1618 and 1620, but Vagnoni and Semedo made their way back into China posing as new missionaries.

By 1620 their persecution had abated. Shen Que had received a promotion to Grand Secretary and no longer had the time to personally monitor the Jesuits. Two years later he became entangled in the political intrigues of Nanjing and was removed from

¹⁶Dunne, Generation of Giants, 140-141.

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office after offending powerful eunuchs. He died in his home in Hangzhou April 1624, the new center of Christian activity since his memorials. He had managed to voice the misgivings that many literati had but was unable to incite a massive public outcry against the foreigners. All in all only ten Jesuits and a few dozen converts were punished.

Shen did not record what sparked his opposition to Christianity. The Jesuits hypothesized that Shen's loss of multiple debates to converts Xu Guangqi and Yang Tingyun had left him bitter. Others believed that he was simply ambitious. No matter what his motivations were, he gave voice to the objections many in the Confucian community had to Christianity. He did not bring the missions down (temporarily) by himself. He was part of a larger reaction to Ricci's notion of "Original Confucianism."

Unlike Buddhism and Daoism, which were harmless superstitions, Christianity posed a real threat to the Chinese government in Shen's mind. Buddhism and Daoism had been in China for centuries, but they had always recognized that they were subordinate to Confucianism. Christianity's claim to being the same as Confucianism amounted to a bid for supremacy. The Jesuits claimed to come from the "great" West. Shen asserted that both Europe and China cannot simultaneously be "great." Since everyone already knew that China was "great," the Europeans must be lying. The very idea that the Lord of Heaven was worshipped by the ancient Chinese was the worst form of subversion that China had ever encountered. He saw no evidence of a Judeo-Christian God in the Classics. Christianity as a whole was entirely new, and new ideas were dangerous in cultures as backward-looking as Ming China.

Christianity also distorted the Confucian hierarchy that was inherent in the universe. The imperial mandate was based on only Tian receiving the absolute highest honor by the emperor ("son of heaven"). Now the Jesuits had invented a Lord of Heaven who was supposedly greater than Tian. Furthermore, the emperor was no longer the supreme spiritual authority on earth since the Lord of Heaven had descended to it 1,615

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years before. Converts lost their bearings within the hierarchy by learning that they should ignore their family duties and ancestor worship. There should be differences between foreigners and Chinese and between their respective religions. Unlike Xu Guangqi, who decided that Christianity was oriented towards this world based on its connection with science, Shen understood that "The human world is despised because only God is the most perfect."¹⁷ He had just as firm a grasp of what the Jesuits taught as converts had, but he came to completely different conclusions.

Buddhists and Daoists had introduced the ideas of heaven and hell to China, and this helped reinforce Confucian values by giving people a reason to worship their ancestors. Now the Jesuits taught that there was no way to help their departed loved ones. "What ugly creatures, propagating such treacherous falsehood," Shen remarked.¹⁸ He understood that Christ had become Incarnate 1,615 years earlier and was crucified by "corrupt" officials. Shen had the same problem with the Crucifixion as did other literati, "But, how could a criminal be the Lord of Heaven?"¹⁹ Besides reading about Jesus, Shen had also seen a picture and was equally offended by it. "Even if there were a portrait for Tian, it would not be one of a picture of someone with a high nose, deep eyebrows and a bearded mouth."²⁰ If Jesus was really that important, he would have been born in China.

The Jesuits themselves lured converts not with their intellect, but with their wallets. Shen asserted that the missionaries told all who would listen that they were supported by their country a thousand miles away and could supply an unlimited number of converts with money. Only someone with ulterior motives could be so generous. Once they had trapped converts, the priests made them give them their wives and children. They applied oil and sprinkled water to seduce women to them and to corrupt native conventions.

¹⁷Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 64.

¹⁸Ibid., 63.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., 66.

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Shen was only one voice of criticism of many and probably the most successful at expelling the Jesuits at the time. His memorials, along with sixty other essays by Confucian and Buddhist Scholars, were compiled and published in 1640 as the *Anthology of Writings Exposing Heterodoxy*. Many of these essays were direct rebuttals to Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Some knew just as much about the West as the three pillars, others did not. One who did not was Huang Tingshi, who gave Shen Que the idea that the missionaries were not actually from Europe, but from the northeastern edge of the world. Just like Buddhist monks, Jesuits were accused of sexual misconduct. Both Ruggieri and Longobardo were falsely accused of rape. Chinese street performers staged plays about how the Portuguese and the Jesuits "kept their swords and their rosaries in action at the same time, and let their priests mix indiscriminately with local women."²¹ Most critics were in the first category, though, and used the same tool the Jesuits preferred to make their points, logic.

They pointed out that the logic Ricci used to explain Original Sin was faulty. Ricci had explained that God punishes and rewards on an individual-by-individual basis; that one person's sins were his alone and did not affect the judgment of those around him. Why then should all human beings suffer for the sin of their ancestor? God's punishment seemed harsh and unreasonable. God should have realized that an ordinary person has limited intelligence and can be easily tempted. Why then did God allow demons to tempt Adam and Eve? Even more to the point, why did God create such inferior beings? "This is like an artisan who has built an unsuited tool," he reasoned. "We [the Confucians] would not say that it is the fault of the instruments, but the artisan has poor skill."²² If man was made in God's image and man was imperfect, then God must be imperfect as well. Worst of all, hell must have been full of Confucian scholars and sage kings because they were polygamous and were not Christian. Yet they did not have nearly as many

²¹Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 220.

²²Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 67.

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objections to the Old Testament as they had to the New Testament.

The idea of God coming down to earth only to be crucified was appalling. Since Literati considered physical work and violence to be low class, the crucifixion of Christ (a carpenter) was an unbelievably degrading idea. The Jesuits realized this aversion very quickly and delayed telling potential converts about the Crucifixion. Their Chinese friends sympathized with Ma Tang, the eunuch who believed that the crucifix was an implement of black magic, telling the Jesuits to "crush it into powder any other crucifixes they had...with them, so there would be no memory of them."²³ If God was really as majestic as the Jesuits claimed, then He never would have subjected Himself to this defilement. Ricci did not go into great detail about the Trinity, leading the literati to ask who was taking care of heaven when God descended to earth?

...the so-called God is the master of all things under heaven. He takes no rest, as he is constantly guiding the transformation of all matters. If he did live on earth for 33 years, all deities would have been without their master, and all matter would have come to an end... It has been said that God is still in heaven supervising, and that Jesus is also God. The one in heaven is God and the one on earth is also God. This is incomprehensible.²⁴

One pointed out that Jesus himself never claimed to be God, only the son of God.

Another suggested that if Jesus was God and was therefore omnipotent, he should have seen Judas's betrayal coming. Others said that Jesus was not just imperfect, he was evil:

...their ancestor is known as Xian Shixi [St. Joseph?] and the mother of Jesus is Xian Jaio Mali [St. Mary]. She gave birth to a son by the name of Liao [Nazareth?] before she was ever married... By fifteen he [Jesus] had already possessed demonic powers. He traveled widely, trying to persuade others to follow his evil practices... some righteous people captured him and crucified him... his followers created the story that he arose from the dead after three days...²⁵

The Bible showed them a case of illegitimate birth and criminal activity, not Incarnation and Resurrection.

The *Anthology of Writings Exposing Heterodoxy* replied to Ricci's criticism of

²³Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 247.

²⁴Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 67.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 66.

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Neo-Confucianism, in addition to his theology. Confucianism and Christianity were in no way compatible in the authors' eyes. The very idea of the Neo-Confucians' fates being in the hand of some supreme deity offended them. Xu Dashou suggested that if Ricci actually read the Confucian classics more carefully, he would find evidence of the Supreme Ultimate. Ricci had suggested that later scholars had misinterpreted Confucius and invented the Supreme Ultimate. Ricci's argument that one's love for God should be so great that it made all differentiated love nominally equal was not taken well either. To love everyone equally was to be disloyal to one's ruler and unfilial to one's parents. The Christians also threw the Confucian relationships into disarray by giving women too much independence: "the barbarians teach that a husband should treat his wife with equal status. When the wife dies the husband should become a widower [and observe the proper rituals reserved for a widow]. A man without sons should not acquire a concubine."²⁶ Besides, how could a tradition with so few (Chinese) books be taken seriously? Ricci had taken the knowledge of ancient China too lightly and his own too seriously; after all, "the ancient Chinese also knew how to make self-winding clocks."²⁷ Ricci had offended their notions of literacy, hierarchy, gender, and history.

But the Jesuits were more than a threat to culture, they were there to undermine the Ming government. Xu Guangqi's idea to use the Jesuits to forge European firearms for the Ming reinforced their connection with the military. Critics wrote:

During the reign of Jiajing (1567-1572), these foreigners sneaked into Luzon and borrowed land from local chieftains in the name of trade. Soon they seduced the local chieftains into accepting their religion and following the teachings of the Lord of Heaven. By persuasion they conquered...²⁸

Surprisingly, the literati were not the origin of this rumor; Europeans were. Residents of Macao were shut into the city one on top of another, and as anyone who has had to deal

²⁶Ibid., 73.

²⁷Ibid., 75. Personally, my favorite quote.

²⁸Ibid., 74.

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with a roommate knows, such claustrophobic conditions can lead to easily frayed nerves. Molehills constantly became mountains. In 1597 Michelle de Santis, a former Jesuit and current Augustinian, became head of Macao's church. His hostility to the Jesuits was no secret and his faction started the rumor that the Jesuits would attack and conquer China with the help of the Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese. They pointed to Lazzaro Cattaneo as the future ruler of a conquered China. Mandarins often asked "So have you already become king of China?" to a confused Cattaneo.²⁹ But the literati's willingness to accept this rumor as fact was not a case of unfounded paranoia. In 1587 Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the unofficial overlord of Japan, announced his intention to conquer China by way of Korea. Konishi Settsu-no-kami was sent to Beijing to negotiate the peace. One of Hideyoshi's main supporters, he was also Christian, "one Agostino, a good Christian."³⁰ The Spanish under Philip II had conquered the nearby Philippine Islands in the sixteenth century. At the turn of the century they killed 20,000 Chinese people living there. Twenty-five years earlier the Jesuit Alonso Sanches had actually colluded with Francisco de Sanda to conquer China by force, but they never got the chance, thanks to the English defeating the Spanish Armada.

The other seditious group to which critics linked the Christians was the White Lotus Society. This quasi-Buddhist group, whose members were known as Red Turbans, had originated in the Yuan dynasty but remained active and infamous well into the Qing. They had rebelled against the Yuan in 1352, were repressed, and met in secret ever since. They were entirely suspect in the eyes of the loyal scholar-officials. Christians were rumored to meet in secret, so many loyal scholar-officials assumed that the cases were one and the same.

Franciscans who entered China were usually at odds with the Jesuit policy of accommodation and focus on the well-to-do instead of the poor. Their activities were

²⁹Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, 52.

³⁰Dunne, *Generation of Giants*, 48.

usually prohibited, so they and their converts usually met in secret. Those secret meetings were assumed to be the norm for the Jesuits' converts as well. For example, in 1622 authorities arrested a Nanjing Christian for interfering with police after he had argued with them for arresting another man. When they searched his house, the police found Christian objects and accused him of being a member of the White Lotus Society. Under torture he named forty other Christians. All those arrested admitted to belonging to the Catholic Church and denied belonging to the White Lotus Society. Xu Guangqi stepped in and wrote a defense of Christianity (his second), pointing out fourteen fundamental differences between Christianity and the sect. The local magistrate, Xu's subordinate, took a very non-Confucian, defiant tone when he responded. There was no doubt, he claimed, that the Christians were also in the White Lotus Society. He also accused Xu Guangqi and Yang Tingyun of vowing disobedience to the emperor, his laws, and his ministers. This is the only known case of someone showing disrespect to Xu because of his religion. Even when he wrote his first, more influential defense of Christianity in 1617, his colleagues who had accused the Jesuits never showed such insubordination.

The Pillar Remains Steady

Xu could not address all of these criticisms of Christianity in his 1616 memorial because the critics were not his audience; he was trying to get the attention of the emperor. He let the Jesuits argue with the Neo-Confucians about philosophy. Meanwhile, Xu tried to convince the emperor that the Jesuits and their religion were beneficial to society. The Jesuits came to China because they had heard that its literati were just as virtuous and respected as those in Europe. They soon discovered how similar their principles were and decided to come to China to teach about the Lord of Heaven. The Chinese, they hoped, could cultivate themselves properly and to their full

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potential as Christians. They did not come to conquer China, nor did they come to make a profit like the merchants in Macao. Xu asserted that they had never received any money from any Chinese person. The Jesuits were "true followers of the sages," and their way was one of "rectitude."³¹

They are indeed worthies and sages; ...their doctrines are most correct; their regiment most strict; their learning most extensive, their knowledge most refined; their hearts most true; their views most steady; and that among the people of their own nations, there is not one in a thousand so accomplished, or one in ten thousand so talented as these men.³²

They were in essence the ideal Chinese citizens, according to Xu.

Xu then contrasted them with members of the other Chinese religions, who were the last type of people the emperor should want to rule over. Like the Christian heaven and hell, Buddhism had karma and the cycle of reincarnation to persuade people to do good deeds. But since Buddhists believed that this entire universe was an illusion, and an illusion of nothing but suffering at that, Buddhists told people to disregard the world they lived in. This left them morally ambiguous at best. Xu continued: "Why is it that during the 1,800 years since the Buddhist religion came to the East, the ways of the world and the hearts of man have not been reformed, except it be because, though seeming to be true, that religion is false?"³³ Daoism could be dismissed out of hand as dark, farfetched, and unreliable.³⁴ Xu felt that it was imperative that these two harmful institutions be replaced by Christianity:

Were the High Ruler [Shangdi, presumably] worshipped as reverently as Buddha and Laozi, and were your majesty's courtiers [the Jesuits] received as indulgently as the priests of the two sects, their royal instruction would rise and flourish, and the principles of rectitude be carried to such a degree of perfection, as to transcend all that was witnessed in the times of Yao and Shun and their immediate successors.³⁵

³¹Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 49.

³²Xu Guangqi, "Memorial to Fr Matteo Ricci 1617" *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*, ed. Paul Halsall <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1617hsukuang.html>> (29 October 2000).

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

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At the very least the throne should tolerate and not repress Christianity. After all, it had allowed the Muslims working on the Astronomical Board to live in Beijing and worship their god. The Jesuits just wanted to do the same thing, and their astronomy was much more accurate than the Muslims'.

The Board of Rites had accused the Christians of spreading heterodoxy and fooling the literati into believing their false claims. Xu admitted that he believed in what the Jesuits had preached, and if they were to be punished he would have to be punished. This also implied that since Xu was so dutiful, so too were his Jesuit teachers. He had heard the same rumors as the Board of Rites, and if there was even a shadow of a doubt in his mind about the character of the Jesuits, he would not be defending them. The Jesuits themselves had tried to reach the emperor to show him how virtuous they were but failed, so Xu would be remiss if he did not reveal to the emperor their beneficial nature.

Xu defined Confucianism just as Ricci had argued, that subsequent disciples had distorted the original masters' teaching. Christianity was then completely compatible with that Original Confucianism: "All of their commands and injunctions are in the highest degree compatible with the principles of Heaven and the feelings of man. Their laws cause men to do good most truly, and to depart from evil most completely..."³⁶ All of their principles revolved around worshipping Shangdi, protecting the body, saving the soul, reforming errors, and practicing virtue. They valued loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and love just as much as Confucians. Confucianism just needed Christian ideas such as heaven and hell to keep people from despairing if something awful happened, such as a tyrant living a long, wealthy life. Christianity, however, would eliminate such people from Chinese society.

How did Xu know that Christianity would have such benefits? He felt changed

³⁶Ibid.

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on a personal level since God had "created, nourished, and saved" him.³⁷ His other piece of evidence was Europe. Xu had an incredibly idealized notion of the European continent:

the nations of Europe ...receiving and practicing this religion, during a thousand and some hundreds of years up to the present time, whether great or small, have alike been kind to each other;... their prescribed boundaries have required no guard... throughout their whole domain, there have been no deceivers or liars; the vices of lewdness and theft from old have never existed; and even gates and doors of cities and houses it was not necessary to have closed at night. As to revolt and anarchy, rebels and insurgents, not only were there no such things and no such persons, but even such terms and such names had no existence.³⁸

It is unclear how much of this fantasy Xu actually believed. He had been exposed to extraordinary Europeans such as the Jesuits, but he had also visited Macao himself. Either way, the significance of this hyperbole was that he believed that it was possible to have an ideal community *outside* of China. Being foreign did not make one a barbarian automatically in Xu's mind. The Jesuits' learning should not be ignored just because they were not born in China. Both the Qin and the Han dynasties had foreign officials working for them, and while the former was unsuccessful, the latter went on to become one of the most successful Chinese dynasties.

Xu then set about creating an imperial policy that would prove that the Jesuits were disciples of the sages and would monitor them. First he proposed, let ministers translate and then evaluate all of the Christian documents. Then, let the Jesuits, Buddhists, and Daoists openly debate and have scholar-officials judge them. Unfortunately, Buddhism's and Daoism's representatives may not be competent in comparison with the Jesuits, but it was still worth trying. Finally, let the ministers summarize the religion for the emperor and have him decide upon its correctness. The first way of monitoring the Jesuits was to officially sponsor them, giving them just enough for food and clothing. That way the crown could monitor all financial activity

³⁷Young, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 50.

³⁸Xu Guangqi, "Memorial to Fr Matteo Ricci 1617.

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and the Jesuits could then cut their financial ties to European kings. Chinese subjects could thereupon give bonds of security for the Jesuits and, if the Jesuits were guilty of a crime, then the court would punish those who had bonded them as well. Finally, let the Jesuits become officially authorized teachers. This would give the government a list of all of the Jesuits and their students. Officials could then check the list against criminal records to make sure that the Christians were acting as the good citizens Xu described. All these were goals had also been goals for Matteo Ricci, and this gave the Christians the excuse they needed to express their desires at court. This defense of the Jesuits was such a milestone in Chinese Catholicism that in 1676 it became just that: a milestone, engraved outside the Jesuit church in Shanghai.

Xu signed his 1616 memorial as "Guardian and tutor of the sons of the Imperial Family, and Chancellor of the Imperial Academy."³⁹ Despite his obvious Christianity he was still fit to teach the most important students in the nation. Ricci remarked that Xu was one of the most respected members within both the Christian and Confucian communities. According to Ricci, Xu was "a rare example of devotion and holiness of life, he was imitated by the converts and admired by the pagans, among whom, some of the more distinguished would frequently remark, 'Is there another man as hold as Ciu Paul [Xu]?'"⁴⁰ He showed no signs of being torn between two worlds. Most of his scientific and Confucian works were preceded by an explanation of Christianity and Western learning. He truly believed that he was not a practitioner of two complementary philosophies but of one, universal way.

Perhaps Xu's particular view of Confucianism allowed him to think this way. Xu was not torn between the Neo-Confucians Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming as most of his contemporaries were. He considered them both equally gifted Confucian disciples. He

³⁹Lewis A. Maverick, "Hsu Kuang-ch'i, A Chinese Authority on Agriculture," Agricultural History no. 14 (October 1940): 149.

⁴⁰Ricci, China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610, 451.

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never openly attacked Neo-Confucian metaphysics, but he definitely felt that li and chi were inferior forces compared to God. The only Confucian text of any real value though was the Book of Rites. Confucians had always wanted to keep the people from doing evil so they produced volume upon volume on ethics. But the emperor's rewards and punishments and the Classics' treatises on morality could only influence a person's outward behavior; Confucius's teachings could not reach a man's internal disposition. Confucianism's lack of a transcendent moral agent to guide men left them to find their own way. Such a hard task meant that only a few were able to figure out what the way was and to become sage-kings.

What impressed Xu about the Jesuits was their openness; they taught anyone who was willing to listen about God's way, memory techniques, astronomy, or whatever else interested them. He found fault with the Daoists and Buddhists because of their reclusion and privacy. These doctrines affirmed the person in the private realm, but led them to shirk their responsibilities to society. A good Confucian had to participate in society to be fully human. Xu wanted a religion that would produce good members of society, and he believed that Christianity was it. Buddhism had been in China for 2,000 years, yet peoples' morals had deteriorated. But if everyone praised the Lord of Heaven, everyone would become a sage. The Master of Tian was the same God that the ancient sage kings worshipped, Shangdi. To worship Him was their way. Therefore, practicing Christianity was the same thing as following the way of the sage kings.

Xu's knowledge of Christianity was fairly extensive as well. It is evident that he was familiar with twenty-four books of the Old Testament, twenty-seven of the New Testament, and the sacraments of baptism, Eucharist, Confession, and the Anointing of the Dying. In a letter to his clan in 1616 he stressed the need to have a priest present for final absolution before death. Xu's "In Praise of Jesus's Image" explained that he understood that God had created everything, even the Neo-Confucian Supreme Ultimate.

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God's omnipotent nature and universal love led him to descend to Earth as Jesus. One can have pictures of Jesus, but not of God. In order to love God, one had to love others. Xu disregarded the Confucian need for differentiated love. Since everyone had the same ancestry in Judea, everyone was part of the same clan. After Creation, man began to sin and so God gave the world the Ten Commandments and the Confucian three bonds, which had led to some differentiation of love. Belief in God would not just save society, it also had personal spiritual benefits, which Xu described in his preface to Li Zhizao's treatise on the soul:

the above described, who is the most perfect, ...the creator of all things, is the final destination of all things created and all acts committed. Any person [who recognizes this] is never lost but, like a boat with a compass, always knows his own direction. Having this [faith], one would have eternal blessings in life and eternal life in death. One would meet great joy in misery and honor in suffering; great richness in poverty and warmth in hunger... revered by all, and worshipped daily by scholars in the West, who have told us he [Shangdi] taught us to love one another; out of pity and love descended to earth as that all would receive the blessings of heaven. His name is God. The author of this book wishes to let man know about Him and to share these blessings.⁴¹

Despite this verbose statement of faith, Xu did omit some very important Catholic dogmas. During his entire life as a Christian, Xu never mentioned Original Sin or the Virgin Birth in anything he wrote. This has led some to classify him as a deist instead of a Christian. Either way, his beliefs were directly in line with *The True Meaning of Lord in Heaven*.

Xu also shared Ricci's distrust of Buddhism. After the Nanjing Incident had settled down, Xu retired to his farm in Tianzin to escape court politics. There he wrote "Refuting Heterodoxy" and went into detail about how Buddhism had harmed China. First of all, the idea of reincarnation was ludicrous, he argued. If it was true, how could China's population increase a thousand times over since Yao and Shun? What was to prevent a man from being reincarnated as a chicken and then eaten by his children? He

⁴¹Young, Confucianism and Christianity, 52.

lashed out at the Ghost Festival in which the monastic community broke hell open so that ancestors could enjoy the benefits of their descendants' offerings. First of all, the monks did not have the power to do what they said. God had created hell and, besides being infinitely powerful, God gave no one party more power than another. A person's punishment/reward was based on his own personal behavior; his family's or friends' influence was not a factor in deciding his fate. If entering hell were negotiable, a man with less influence in the monastic community would have his rights in the next life denied. No matter how many offerings people gave to the dead, their fate had already been decided by God; ancestor worship had no effect on them whatsoever. (Xu did not realize that his religion also had a means of helping the dead in Purgatory through offering of indulgences.) Chan Buddhism, in particular, offended Xu. This sect emphasized the direct transmission of the Buddha's enlightenment from master to student. Xu believed that it was more important to know about Tian than the Buddha Mind. Salvation came from without, not within. Chan's esoteric nature was too elitist for Xu. Heaven and hell were open to everyone. The truth needed to save society could be understood by everyone. Pure Land Buddhism, wherein adherents chanted Amida Buddha's name so that he might take them to a pure land upon death, was equally offensive. The sect that Xavier had compared to Lutheranism made no sense to Xu, because if even the sage kings did not have the power to change life and death, how could someone as insignificant as Amida Buddha?

Beijing called Xu back to duty in 1618 after Fushun fell to the Manchus. By then he was both Supervisor of Imperial Instruction and a Censor. He was ordered to gather and drill troops in Dongzhou for use against the Manchus. Xu thought that one of the best ways to fend off the foreign encroachers was to use other foreigners against them. He proposed that China get cannon and troops from Macao. The throne reluctantly agreed but returned most of the cannons and all of the troops. After inexperienced

officers misused the remaining cannon and killed several people, the idea was sidelined. Xu also petitioned the emperor for permission to go to Korea and get aid. The Board of War agreed, but the emperor did not. This was especially troubling for Xu, because he had hoped to bring Christianity to Korea in the process of requesting aid.

Xu spent most of his free time in Dongzhou writing about how to reform the Ming Dynasty. Xu believed that the country needed everything from land reform to changing the exam system, since the Ming dynasty was in such bad shape. In 1620 the Xizong emperor came to power. But the term emperor should probably be used loosely, since he preferred to make furniture all day long and left the government in the hands of his eunuchs. One of those eunuchs was Wei Zhongxian, well known for his corruption. Wei made it his business to antagonize the members of the Donglin party. It was he who promoted Shen Que to grand secretary in 1621. In 1621 the Manchus took Liaoyang and made it their new base of operations. The government recalled Xu to Beijing to deal with the situation. Again, he proposed using Korean troops and again was denied. The government told him to raise troops but it did not have the funds to pay all of them, so Xu and the other two pillars used their own money to pay for the troops. All of this frustrated Xu so much that he retired to Shanghai later that year.

Once in Shanghai, Xu turned his attention to supporting the Church there. In 1620 there was only one church in the city. That soon proved to be insufficient, however, because Xu brought in so many catechumens that Cattaneo had to contact Hangzhou to get assistance dealing with all of them.⁴² Xu himself studied Western medicine and helped translate Aristotle's *De Anima* into Chinese. Soon other literati came to Xu to study Western mathematics, and many of them converted. Sun Yuanhua converted after studying with Xu and then helped found a mission in Gaiding. Ma Sanzhi was baptized Peter and began a mission in Yangzhou, converting his family and many of his

⁴²Dunne, Generation of Giants, 149.

colleagues. Xu had undeniably become the leader of the Church in China. When Fr. Trigault returned from Rome he carried with him a letter from Cardinal Robert Bellarmine. The cardinal spoke on behalf of Pope Paul V and talked about the joy they both felt upon hearing of the Church's success in China. The response to the pope's letter was not written by a Jesuit but by Xu. The letter sent from Beijing thanked Rome for the letter, explained the recent tribulations the Church had experienced, and expressed optimism about Christianity's future in China.⁴³ Xu and the other Christians spent much of the 1620s in retirement because Wei Zhongxian denounced the Donglin clique. Nearly 330 officials were stripped of their rank because of Wei. Xu stayed in the Shanghai area until 1627 when Sizong, the last Ming emperor, took power and forced Wei to commit suicide. The Donglin party was reinstated to their former posts and Xu was promoted to Minister of State (*kalao*).

While in Shanghai, Xu was not content to revitalize the churches on the periphery of China. He wanted to reestablish the churches in Nanjing and Beijing as well. In 1623 Fr. Longobardo and Fr. Manoel Dias were summoned before the Board of War in Beijing. The Board asked them if they could obtain cannon from Macao and if they were experts in forging cannon; the Jesuits answered "yes" and "no," respectively. The Jesuits were then allowed to stay in Beijing. It turned out that the entire exercise was the result of the collaboration of the Christian members of the Board and other supporters of the Jesuits. "And there they still reside in peace and honor," the Jesuits wrote in 1635, "without anyone ever having said another word to them about cannons, wars, or Manchus."⁴⁴

Warfare was not the only tool the Jesuits used to regain their foothold in the capital; astronomy proved to be just as effective. Xu was intent on reforming the Ming

⁴³Keizo Hashimoto, Hsu Kuang-ch'i and Astronomical Reform (Suita-shi, Osaka: Kansai University Press, 1988), 21.

⁴⁴Dunne, Generation of Giants, 187.

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calendar and the astronomical techniques behind it. The Chinese calendar governed everything in a peasant's life from when to plant to when to take a bath.⁴⁵ The founder of each dynasty issued a new calendar, allegedly more accurate than the last, showing that he truly understood the ways of Heaven/Tian. The Ming dynasty had inherited the Chinese Astronomical Bureau and the Muslim Astronomical Bureau from the Mongol Yuan dynasty and allowed each to function side by side. The Arabs were the leading force in astronomy until the sixteenth century, when Europeans J. Kepler and then Galileo revolutionized the field. The inadequacies of the Muslim-based Ming calendar became clear throughout the sixteenth century, as it incorrectly predicted solar eclipses at least three times. These mistakes, in addition to the encroaching Manchus, were taken as signs of the Ming losing the Mandate of Heaven. Ming rulers hoped that by correcting the faulty calendar they could restore social order. The calendar was not just scientific, it was political.

Some have suggested that European astronomy was just as important politically as its Chinese counterpart. Patricia Seed even theorized that it was astronomy, not conversion, that the Portuguese used to legitimize their territorial claims in the New World.⁴⁶ With their Renaissance education and association with the Portuguese, many of the Jesuits in China were accomplished astronomers, Ricci included. The Ming decided to use their more accurate techniques to buttress its government. This in turn strengthened the Jesuits' place in the capital. Their official business would let them stay there indefinitely and they could officially join the ranks of scholar officials by being paid like other members of the Board of Astronomy.

Xu's initial attempt at calendar reform came in late 1610 after the Board of Astronomy's prediction for a solar eclipse was off by one half-hour, while the prediction

⁴⁵Young, Confucianism and Christianity, 24.

⁴⁶Patricia Seed, Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World 1492-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

made by Fr. de Pantoja was correct. The Jesuits were more than happy to help the reform. "If this plan (as a matter of fact, of Xu Guangqi) is successful," Longobardo wrote, "two or three missionaries will professedly occupy themselves with these scientific studies (i.e. translations of astronomical books), while the rest of the missionaries will calmly and safely attend to the Christians in other parts of the kingdom."⁴⁷ The emperor abandoned this initial effort quickly after eunuchs and scholars insisted that using foreign astronomers was too much of an embarrassment for those scholars already on the Board of Astronomy. Astronomical reform in the late 1620s was on a much larger scale. It involved more than fifty scholars and was the largest scientific endeavor in China since Guo Shoujing introduced Arab astronomy 350 years earlier. It began after the Board miscalculated yet another eclipse in June 1629. Xu believed that Chinese astronomy was still competitive, but it had to learn from the West. The calendar that Xu's initiative produced was used until the end of the Qing dynasty in the twentieth century. Jesuits were in charge of the Astronomical Bureau for nearly as long. With the Jesuits firmly established in Chinese government, Li Zhizao died in 1630 with a great sense of accomplishment. He took his friend Xu by the hand and said, "I die content because with my own eyes I have beheld our fathers re-established and strongly supported by your authority. I would not presume to commend them to you, knowing well the place they hold in your heart... I put upon your shoulders the Christianity of China."⁴⁸

Xu certainly had the authority to bear that weight by himself, but not the longevity. In 1629 he had become senior vice-president of the Board of Rites. By the next year he was the president of the Board of Ceremonies. In 1632 he became the Grand Secretary of the Dongge. In 1633 he was promoted to Grand Secretary of the

⁴⁷ Hashimoto, Hsu Kuang-ch'i and Astronomical Reform, 15.

⁴⁸ Dunne, Generation of Giants, 217.

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Wenyuange, and was "the first man in China after the monarch himself."⁴⁹ That year was also his last on earth. Xu fell ill on September 23 and, despite the special physicians the emperor sent for him, he died on November 8. His last memorials to the throne concerned the progress of the Astronomical Bureau, his chosen successor (a convert), and praise for the Jesuits' work within the Bureau. His titles were raised posthumously to Inspector of the Salt Gabelle, Grand Secretary of State, Senior Guardian of the Heir Apparent, and Keeper of the Imperial Library.⁵⁰ Xu was also posthumously honored with the name *Wen Ting* ("Illustrious Tranquility"). The emperor told the Board of Rites to pay for the funeral expenses and sent a particularly expensive casket for Xu. He did this both out of respect and out of necessity. Despite Xu's success, he died a poor man. The Xu family gazette reported that Xu's son and grandson opened trunks in Xu's home to find money to bury him but all they found were old clothes and notes on agriculture. The Jesuits did not have the resources to pay for the funeral either. Xu had kept just enough money to maintain himself and his family; the rest he gave away as alms to the poor imprisoned and the old. His need to pay for the troops he trained for the Ming probably also contributed to this poverty.

Nevertheless, in death Xu straddled the Confucian and Christian worlds just as well as he had in life. Both philosophies claimed him as their own. Xu was willing to do whatever it took to defend either tradition. In fact, he differed from most literati since he saw Confucianism and Christianity as a single tradition. The two schools completed one another. By helping the Confucian empire survive, he was helping Christianity flourish. By promoting Christianity he was strengthening the Confucian empire. Both schools stressed frugality and the giving of oneself to those who required help. Xu was more than willing to oblige, whether that needy man was a beggar in need of meal or an

⁴⁹Väth, Adam Schall von Bell quoted in Keizo Hashimoto, Hsu Kuang-ch'i and Astronomical Reform (Suita-shi, Osaka: Kansai University Press, 1988), 31.

⁵⁰Maverick, "Hsu Kuang-ch'i, A Chinese Authority on Agriculture," 150.

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emperor in need of an army. It is no surprise, then, that Xu Guangqi is currently being considered for canonization.

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Conclusion

The Fate of Christianity in China

Eleven years after Xu Guangqi passed away, the Ming dynasty finally fell, replaced by the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644-1911). One might think that the new dynasty's foreign origin would make it more open to non-Chinese ideas such as Christianity, but this was not the case. The emperors themselves were much more tolerant of Christianity and Western learning in general than their Ming counterparts had been. The literati, on the other hand, were very conscious of being ruled by foreigners, making them very protective of their Confucian tradition. They were less willing to let other philosophies such as Buddhism and Daoism mix with Confucianism, let alone Christianity. Even the new Manchu rulers did everything they could to portray themselves as Confucian gentlemen. After 1644 the Jesuits' converts were of lower rank than the three pillars had been, but they still saw themselves as part of the same tradition. Yet the Jesuits, did exert much more influence on the imperial court. Jesuit influence on the literati peaked with Xu Guangqi; its influence on the monarchy peaked with the first Qing Emperor.

The new Qing monarchs were just as intent on having an accurate calendar as those they had replaced, which explains why they kept the Jesuits on the Board of Astronomy. The most influential of these post-Ming Jesuit astronomers were German Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666) and his subordinate Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688). These two became the first Europeans to actually head the Board. Schall had read the *True Meaning of the Lord in Heaven* in 1616 and because of it decided to go to China to try to convert the emperor. He came surprisingly close doing so. He offered his own services, as well as those of his fellow Jesuits, to the new prince-regent as soon as the Qing had established itself. The Manchus were eager to assert their claim to the Mandate of Heaven and so made Schall the Director of the Astronomical Board. This gave him the opportunity to become very close to the Shunzhi emperor (r.1644-1661). Schall

frequently discussed matters of state and religion with the new emperor. Like Schall, Shunzhi had to learn Chinese in order to function in Beijing, so the two often talked about linguistics as well. After Schall cured the empress-dowager (Shunzhi's mother) of an illness, his relationship with the emperor became closer and more informal. The emperor called Schall "grandpa" and visited Schall's cathedral in 1656. Schall was able to present his petitions directly to the emperor himself, instead of having to go through the bureaucracy. He tried to teach the emperor what he could about Christianity. The emperor showed a good deal of interest, but he did not like the Christian stance on monogamy and controlling one's sex drives. By 1657 he had turned to Chan Buddhism instead. But this did not mean that Schall fell out of favor. Even when Shunzhi died, Schall's position was not questioned. In 1657, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, he received congratulations from all the most prominent mandarins, even the new Grand Secretary. This security would not last.

Schall had made enemies of the Muslim astronomers by humiliating them on several occasions. One instance was especially irritating. They had accused Schall of making a faulty prediction, but the throne decided that their accusations were unfounded. It was about to punish them, but Schall intervened on their behalf, sparing them. These embarrassed astronomers then encouraged an up-and-coming conservative Confucian named Yang Guangxian. Yang had made a name for himself in the decade after Xu Guangqi's death as a model of Confucian values. Even though he did not have a classical education, he submitted memorials against a corrupt general. When he got no reply, the next time he submitted a memorial he carried a coffin with him, suggesting his willingness to die for what was right.

Yang submitted his first memorials against the Jesuits in 1660 and 1661. He attacked Schall and his calendar for implying that Chinese astronomy (and therefore China in general) was inferior to its European version. As was the case with Shen Que,

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Yang was ignored at first. Many of the men he approached were actually supporters of the Jesuits, so he got nowhere with them. On September 15, 1664, he submitted an essay to the Kangxi emperor (r.1662-1722) called "Choosing the Date." In it Schall was accused of choosing an inauspicious day for burying the Shunzhi emperor's infant son in 1658, thereby causing the baby's mother's death and the death of the emperor. Schall was stricken with paralysis at the time and could not talk, leaving his defense to Fr. Verbiest, who was new to China and could not defend his friend adequately. He did prove that Western astronomy was reliable, but he could not prevent Schall and seven Chinese astronomers from being sentenced to lingering deaths on April 15, 1665. Five other converts were sentenced to death and the three Jesuits in Beijing were to be exiled. The very next day an earthquake struck Beijing, which started a fire in the imperial compound. The tribunal took this act of nature as an act of Heaven. This, in addition to Shunzhi's mother (the empress dowager he had cured) intervening on Schall's behalf, led to the Jesuits and others' release on May 17. Unfortunately, it was too late for the five Christian astronomers who had already been executed. In addition, all of the Churches in China were closed until 1671, and except for the four Jesuits in Beijing, all other priests were ordered back to Macao.

Meanwhile, because Yang had brought the charges against the Jesuits, the Board of Astronomy was left in his care, despite his repeated objections. Yang was no astronomer and he knew it; he went back to using Muslim methods, which were easily proven faulty once again by Verbiest. The emperor declared that from that point on Western techniques would be used to create all future calendars, but that their titles would not mention their use of Western techniques. In August 1669 the court sentenced Yang to lingering death, but that sentence was commuted to exile on account of his old age. He died on September 5 on his way home. Schall, who had died in 1666, had his titles restored posthumously, as did the executed converts. The missionaries had their

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property returned to them, and in 1692 the emperor revoked the law prohibiting Christian missionary activity.

Yang did not accuse the Jesuits out of professional jealousy but out of a sense that a true Confucian would do what was right, even if it was unpopular, hence the title of his memorial, *I Could Not Do Otherwise*. His accusations were not that different from those leveled against Vagnoni and others fifty years earlier. If God was so powerful, then why was there no paradise on earth? If the Lord of Heaven had descended to earth for thirty-three years, then who was taking care of heaven? The Virgin Birth was actually a case of a scandalously unwed mother. Jesus's miracles were the tricks of a mean and low person; the dignified creator of all things should not stoop to such parlor tricks. Such heresy offset any possible good the Jesuits could do; it was better "not to have a good calendar than to have Westerners in China. Even with an accurate calendar, the Han dynasty still lasted for over 400 years."¹

This time, though, the Jesuits got a chance to respond to their critics. Verbiest and others wrote *A Rebuttal of 'I Could Not Do Otherwise'* in 1665 to refute the charges against Western religion and then followed up in 1669 with a second treatise refuting charges against Western science. First and foremost, Tian was in fact the Christian God. Even Zhu Xi had described how principles in the Daoist *Book of Changes* acknowledged Tian as both lord and father, just like God the Father in the Christian tradition. Adam's sin was not a sign of God's imperfection; it was a sign that God had given man free will. God could have forced Adam to do good, but that would have stifled Adam's true potential. If Adam knew about goodness and then freely chose to act accordingly, that would be much more beneficial. God could have made a paradise on Earth, but did not because God wanted to eliminate the root of evil, not just the evil itself. There could, however, be a paradise on earth - if China converted to Christianity. Jesus was not born

¹ John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 94.

in China because Judea was the only country that still knew God's ways. Chinese people should not worry about having their roots in the Middle East, because of "China being China, because of China's and music, literary achievements and its teachings on loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and righteousness, and not because early man was born in China."² God decided to be a poor carpenter instead of a king, because God wanted to show how insignificant riches and power really were.

The Jesuits also made the first attempts to explain the Trinity to the non-Christian populace. The birth of the Son of God was the birth of a man who had two natures: one godly, the other human. Christ the God and Christ the Man were like two branches of the same tree. Just because Christ was on earth did not mean that God was not in heaven. God did experience the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, but he did so through the person of Jesus. God did not die when Jesus did. God could not have descended directly to earth because that would have thrown the world off balance, so He was born to the Virgin Mary without Original Sin. God needed a way of saving men from sin within the limits of *ren* (benevolence) and *yi* (duty). If God forgave them without punishing them, that would go against *yi*. But to punish humans would be against *ren*. Only God was powerful enough to redeem mankind's sins, and the Incarnation was the only way to do so. Christianity itself did not teach people to be unfilial, it just taught people to worship what the ancient Chinese had worshiped. The ancients did not pay homage to the Neo-Confucian heaven-and-earth, but they did pay homage to the Lord of Heaven.

These explanations fared well with the literati, so the Jesuits' positions remained stable for the next thirty years. In 1692 the Kangxi Emperor issued an Edict of Toleration, which read:

Since we permit our people to burn incense and worship in the temples of Lamas and Buddhists, and the Westerners do not violate our laws, it seems improper that their religious teachings should be prohibited. We should order all churches in all provinces to be opened as previously. We should allow those who attend the churches to burn

²Ibid., 108.

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incense and worship as usual. With your Majesty's approval, your servants will proclaim this to all provinces.³

All of this implied that the emperor did not care about the religious inclinations of the Chinese people, just their outward behavior; the Jesuits had proved that they were good people, so they could preach what they wanted to. The next time they fell from power would be their last.

The critics who finally put an end to the Jesuits in China were not Confucians, but Franciscans. And Dominicans. And Augustinians. And all the other religious orders that disapproved of how much the Jesuits had accommodated Confucianism. They complained to Pope Clement XI, who sent a papal legation to China to rectify the situation in 1701. The leader of the legation was Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon, Apostolic Visitor to the East Indies and China, and Charles Maigrot, Vicar Apostolic of Fukien, assisted him. The Kangxi emperor saw this struggle in Confucian terms, so he played father to his two feuding sons and mediated their argument. Tournon condemned the Confucian rites and proclaimed that the Pope was the only supreme spiritual authority on earth. Maigrot showed such a complete ignorance of Confucianism that the emperor banished him from China. The fact that both had not read the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* enraged the emperor to such an extent that in 1707 he proclaimed that the only brand of Christianity that was allowed in China was that described by the Jesuits. The pope responded with a bull entitled *Ex Illa Die* that confirmed the anti-rites stance of the Church. Kiangxi, meanwhile, issued a second warning to all missionaries:

Again I say, if you do not follow the rules of Li Madou [Ricci], the [Western] teaching preached for 200 years in China will have to be discontinued; all Westerners will have to leave. Many times I have pointed out to you the ruinous conducts of Do-lo [de Tourmon] and Yentang [Maigrot]. Why have you not given my views to the Pope? ...you have corrupted your teachings and disrupted the efforts of the former Westerners. This is definitely not the will of your God, for he leads men to do good deeds. I have often heard from you Westerners that the devil leads men astray - this must be it.⁴

³Ibid., 118.

⁴Ibid., 120.

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Tournon and Maigrot could not even recognize Chinese characters; how could such people presume to discuss the truths of the universe?⁵ Kiangxi explained that the Confucian rites were completely secular. They were a sign of reverence for one's parents; true Confucians never believed they had any spiritual significance. The Confucian sages were like Western saints, men who had done great deeds and deserved respect after their deaths. A second legation arrived in 1721, carrying a copy of *Ex Illa Die* and ignoring Kangxi's arguments. This pushed Kiangxi over the edge; he was so infuriated that he decided to rid himself of the problem once and for all. His edict to the head of the second legation on February 21, 1721 read:

Scoundrels [missionaries] of this type are rarely seen in China; it is best if the teaching of the Western Ocean is not longer allowed in China. This way everything will return to normal and quarrels the different groups will dissipate. This is the best solution.⁶

The emperor was totally disillusioned with Christianity; its practitioners lied and cheated while claiming moral righteousness, just like everyone else. Kiangxi allowed those Christians who pledged to follow the ways of Ricci to stay and work on the Astronomical Bureau. Otherwise, China had no need for Christianity. Kiangxi turned Ricci's original Confucianism on its ear to prove this. If the ancient Chinese knew about God, they must have introduced it to the West. There was no need to combine civilizations, because China had been correct from the very beginning.

Concluding Remarks

Beijing continues its tradition of labeling religions, both foreign and domestic, as "heterodox" almost three hundred years after it first rejected Catholicism. Anyone who converts to any religion is a threat to national security. The only thing that has changed is the rhetoric. Instead of banning religions by imperial edict, the People's Republic of China orchestrates Mao-era mass movements, as in the case of the quasi-Buddhist Falun

⁵Ibid., 121.

⁶Ibid., 122.

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Gong sect. The government has organized anti-Falun Gong demonstrations in all the major cities and in the western periphery. It has forced 40,000 members to choose between their jobs and their faith. There are even rumors that Jiang Zemin may call in the People's Liberation Army to suppress the cult before July 1, 2001, the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. This suppression has given many members the same sense of martyrdom as those in underground Catholic churches. One Falun Gong member was killed and three others were seriously injured when they protested the persecution by self-immolation in Tiananmen Square. Religious people in China did not carry out such protests until their religions became "heterodox." If they look to examples provided by men like Xu Guangqi, they might learn that martyrdom is not the only end for a religious person in China. If the government were to take men like Xu seriously, it might learn that men who follow foreign religions can also be loyal servants to the state. "The opiate of the masses" need not always be a subversive element. Religious men were not always ostracized from power; Xu was at the very center of political power in traditional China. He was the highest-ranking Christian in China until Chiang Kai-shek.

The question still remains of whether or not Xu was actually Christian. There can be little doubt that the man was a believer, but what exactly did he believe in? John Young contends that "If Xu's own writings are indications of his spiritual and intellectual orientation, we must conclude that he was a true believer, at least in the kind of Christianity Matteo Ricci presented to him."⁷ What strikes me is that no historian has ever compared what Ricci taught and Xu professed with the Nicene Creed, the most basic statement of the Catholic faith.⁸ Between the two of them, they discuss every one of the

⁷Ibid., 57.

⁸We believe in one God, the Father the Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, one in being with the Father. Through God all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilot; he suffered died and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy

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points of faith in the Creed. Ricci may not have mentioned the Trinity, but Xu's dream of the three temples shows that he was familiar with the concept. Even if that story is untrue, the impersonal aspect of heaven, which is similar to the idea of the Holy Spirit, was implied in Xu's Neo-Confucian upbringing. He also had a firm grasp of God being in heaven while Jesus was on earth, and yet they were both the Lord of Heaven at once. Xu never mentioned the Virgin Birth, but he did admit that a picture of the Virgin Mary was the catalyst for his conversion. At the very least he was familiar with the religious figure and why the Jesuits revered her so much. Xu never mentioned Original Sin either, but this is not part of the Creed and therefore irrelevant to whether or not Xu was Catholic. Even so, one of the literati's favorite targets for criticism was the idea of Original Sin. How could they know about it and yet the converts did not? Even if Ricci did not mention the Redemption, Xu believed in Christ's return to heaven, life after death for humanity, and in Jesus having to become incarnate to save humanity. Xu may not have had a very intricate Christian faith, but it was essentially Catholic.

Xu was Catholic in action in addition to being Catholic in belief. His worship of his ancestors does not classify him as a "Confucian monotheist." The Catholic Church's current stance on the issue of Chinese rites was that Xu and his fellow converts were doing exactly what the Church fathers did in the first few centuries of the Common Era: they understood Christianity in terms of their own cultures. Pope John Paul II addressed the International Ricci Studies Congress on October 25, 1982, the four-hundredth anniversary of Ricci's birth, with the following: "Just as the Fathers of the Church thought to Christianity and Greek culture, so Matteo Ricci was rightly convinced that faith in Christ would not bring any harm to Chinese Culture, but rather would enrich and perfect it."⁹ The rites were not heresy; they were cultural rather than religious. The

Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come. Amen.

⁹Matteo Ricci, S.J., The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven ed. and trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 52.

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converts' Christian religion made their rites more virtuous, while their rites made Christianity easier to understand.

But Xu's beliefs did not increase the possibility of a Christian China. Shen Que almost single-handedly disrupted missionary activity when the Jesuits were at their peak of success with converting the literati. Yang Guangxian nearly accomplished a similar feat during their peak of influence with the emperor. The Neo-Confucian mindset was just too deep-seated for the Jesuits to overcome. The Neo-Confucian orthodoxy would have hindered them even if the Rites Controversy had not. This is not to say that the Jesuits would have lost ground. They had enough influence to continue converting at their current rate for a long time to come. They just would not have picked up speed as they went along. By 1700, after over one hundred years in China, the Jesuits had baptized some 300,000 Chinese to Catholicism. The Church had just as many converts in Japan, which had a much smaller population. Progress for the Jesuits was steady, but incredibly slow.

Most, if not all, of the friction between Confucianism and Christianity came from their fundamentally different worldviews. China focused on correct action, while Europe focused on correct thought. In China, one always had to act properly to be considered fully human. A scholar performed the Confucian rites because they were right in and of themselves. It did not matter what he was thinking, just so long as he showed no signs of heterodox thought. Of course, a true gentleman both thought and acted correctly. Christianity, on the other hand, required that everyone think correctly at all times. This is what turned many of the Church's early followers in the Roman Empire into fodder for gladiators. The Romans did not care what the Christians thought; they just wanted the Christians to perform the pagan rites. The rites were what kept the world in order; they were right in and of themselves. The Christians refused because any religious ceremony they performed was a sign of their beliefs, and they did not believe in pagan gods. The

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orders of priests who opposed the Jesuits' accommodation of Confucianism did so for similar reasons. The Jesuits' improper ceremonies created heterodox thoughts. The literati who opposed the Jesuits did so because the Jesuits had changed the nature of the Confucian rites. The Jesuits' heterodox ideas created improper ceremonies. Critics in both hemispheres saw the Jesuits' methods as a threat to their very way of life.

Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi were renaissance men in every sense of the word. Both men believed that they were uncovering a unified, ancient knowledge that had been lost, giving it a "rebirth." In their minds, they were not combining two philosophies; they were simply discovering that they had both believed the same philosophy all along. They both mastered many skills, from math and science to language and rhetoric. And they both lived during the actual Renaissance. The two men were also Catholic in every sense of the word. They were members of the Church led by Rome. They also believed that they were part of a belief system that was applicable to every human being on earth, whether they lived in the hills of Tuscany or the Middle kingdom. In their minds, their faith was catholic in the "universal" sense of the word.

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The sources used in this thesis basically began with the Ronan and Oh's collection of scholarly essays in East Meets West. Of these essays, Peterson's on why the three pillars converted proved to be the most useful. I began to look at various sources about the Jesuits in the hope that they might contain information about the three pillars' beliefs. There is a wealth of literature about the missionaries and the Rites controversy, including Allan's Jesuits as the Court of Peking, MacLagan's The Jesuits and the Great Mogul, Minamiki's The Chinese Rites Controversy, Rowbotham's Missionary and Mandarin, Witek's Ferdinand Verbiest, and Dunne's Generation of Giants. It turned out that Dunne's work contained the most information on the converts. I would have been remiss to ignore Jonathan Spence's Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci since he is the leading authority on the subject. The book contained an enormous amount of useful information, even if it was oddly organized into various "rooms" in Ricci's imaginary memory palace. John Young's Confucianism and Christianity provided the most primary sources, even if they were only excerpts used to prove his argument. My inadequate Chinese kept me from reviewing many original sources available via interlibrary loan, but in Chinese. The three volumes of the Fonti Ricciane are likewise in a foreign language and could have been very useful. Nevertheless, most of the articles' abstracts were in English, allowing me to pick up many of the broader themes involved in the Jesuits' accommodation. The Fonti Ricciane also provided a good number of pictures and maps, showing how the Jesuits saw each other and the world around them. Sourcebooks, such as Chan's Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy and the Internet Modern History Sourcebook also explained the philosophies the literati espoused. Textbooks like Shirokouer's and Mungello's provided many statistics. Standaert's book on Yang Tingyun was exactly the type of book I hoped to find on Xu Guangqi, explaining his worldview. Those books which I did find on Xu reflected more of his policy: how he

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hoped to shape astronomy and agriculture, specifically. That is why I decided to focus this paper on piecing together the sections of Xu's philosophy that I could find and creating a more coherent whole.

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