Matteo Ricci's Use of Epictetus

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INTRODUCTION

The life and works of Matteo Ricci (1551–1610) have long been regarded as outstanding and exemplary in the field of cultural adaptation and missiology. He has been considered a modern pioneer in recognizing the inherent value of the indigenous culture and tradition, and adapting it to Christianity. Through the Jesuit missionary policy of "becoming Chinese" Ricci sought to bring the gospel of Christ to China. This meant that Ricci and the Jesuits decided to ally themselves with Confucian doctrine and practice, and thus become Confucian literati or gentlemen-scholars. In their judgment this was the best way to Christianize China.

Ricci's critique and use of Confucianism is the major topic of this study. Ricci sought a distinctive type of alliance with Confucianism principally because the intellectual options of Confucian doctrine were favorable towards Christianity, and because the social identity of Confucian literati, i.e., the intellectual and moral leaders of the people, was decidedly advantageous. Even though such a missionary policy was new, difficult, and demanding, it provided Ricci and the Jesuits with a way to establish themselves within Chinese culture and society. It also contributed to the formation of an explicitly anti-Buddhist and anti-Taoist missiology, and opened the way to the possibility of a Confucian Christianity. In effect Ricci believed that the best if not the only way to establish Christianity in China was through the culture and tradition of Confucianism.

The original dissertation was divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with an introductory exposition and a general history of Confucianism. It begins with the original teachings ascribed to Confucius and leads through the major historical development and formation of the Confucian system. It deals with the
central Confucian virtue of *jen* (humanitarianism or benevolence), the notion of heaven and its Mandate, the ideal superior man, and the distinctive customs of Chinese rites. The historical treatment emphasizes the formation of a classical Confucianism and the innovative developments of Neo-Confucianism. Chu Ihsii and Wang Yang-ming are singled out as the two most prominent Neo-Confucian philosophers of the Ming period (1368—1644). This is the historical setting for the Jesuits' entry into China in the late sixteenth century.

The second chapter deals with the particular historical conditions when Ricci and the Jesuits came to China. The Confucianism of the late Ming period is seen to have its own distinctive characteristics. It was a period of great political and moral turmoil. Corruption was rampant, and various forms of destruction seemed dangerously imminent. Many reform-minded Confucian literati sought to find salvation in a return to Confucius. There were many academies or confraternities of scholars who avidly sought to resolve the crisis of the day. They wished to remain faithful to orthodox Confucianism while attempting to find new and better ways to effect a moral renewal. One such group of reform-minded Confucian literati was the Tung-lin Academy. This academy was very powerful and influential in the time of Ricci. The members and sympathizers of the Tung-lin Academy were primarily interested in the moral, political, and intellectual purification and reformation of the country. Such a Confucian program would begin with oneself, extend to the ruling class, and reach out to the whole empire. People from such groups as the Tung-lin Academy were open and interested in the new teaching of Ricci. Many became friends, and a few were even converted to Christianity. In this chapter we recount how several well-known Confucian literati were attracted and converted to Christianity.

Ricci's contact with and critique of Confucianism form the central subject-matter for the third chapter. Frs. Ruggieri and Ricci were the first Jesuits to enter China under Fr. Valignano's missionary policy of "becoming Chinese." As a result Ricci sought to master the Chinese language, adapt himself to Chinese ways, and find favorable means of introducing Christianity into China. Ricci learned
and gradually found his way through experience. At first he wore the robes of a Buddhist bonze as was expected of him. But on the basis of his own experience, he came to realize that it would be better to wear the garb of the Confucian scholar and thus initially to identify himself with Confucianism. In studying Chinese, Ricci came to read the Confucian classics. This led to his radical distinction between the ancient teaching of Confucius and the contemporary philosophy of Neo-Confucianism. He accepted the truths of ancient Confucianism, and on the basis of the Confucian classics, he rejected the aberrations of Neo-Confucianism. He based his own "revisionist" orthodox interpretation of ancient Confucianism on the central doctrine of one true God, the immortality of man's soul, and the necessity of the moral sanctions of Heaven and Hell. Ricci claimed that all these truths could be found or were at least implied in the ancient Confucian classics. He saw ancient Confucianism as an imperfect ethical theism. In order to become a complete religion it needed Christianity. Concerning the question of Chinese rites, Ricci tolerated them but prudently added that they should be changed.

The fourth chapter deals with the writing, publication, and analysis of Ricci's Book of 25 Paragraphs. Ricci's teaching on the practice of virtue is presented as a general teaching of perennial philosophy which would be agreeable to all truth-seeking philosophers. In this context the central themes of harmony, human limitations, and practical wisdom are discussed. Ricci directed his teaching primarily to the Confucians in the pattern of recognizing their wisdom and also leading beyond it to the greater teaching of Christianity.

In the final chapter we summarize and evaluate Ricci's missiological work by comparing the relationship of Confucianism and Christianity with the relationship of Stoicism and Christianity. The similarities are striking. We propose that Ricci himself understood Confucianism as a kind of Chinese Stoicism, and thus sought to form a Confucian Christianity according to the model of a Stoical Christianity. Just as in Renaissance Europe the Jesuits were using the pagan classics of Greece and Rome as a propaedeutic to Christianity, so too Ricci proposed to use the pagan Confucian
classics as the prolegomenon to Christianity. Ricci understood western Stoicism and Chinese Confucianism as similar moral philosophies of life used to form and educate the cultured gentleman or superior man. This understanding is confirmed by the discovery that Ricci’s Book of 25 Paragraphs is fundamentally a translation and paraphrase of Epictetus’ Encheiridion. Ricci’s struggle to establish a Confucian Christianity also led him to a new understanding of the secular-as-sacred.

In the presentation of the dissertation we have translated the Chinese text of Ricci’s Book of 25 Paragraphs into English, and also provided the parallel texts of Epictetus’ Encheiridion, in Section I, C. Unless otherwise stated, any direct quotations from Ricci are in our own English translation. The majority of these quotations, as will be seen, are taken from Ricci’s personal account of the Chinese mission (to be found in Pasquale D’Elia’s Fonti Ricciane) and from his private correspondence (to be found in Tacchi Venturi’s Opere Storiche del P. Matteo Ricci). With the aid of these works we have attempted to understand Ricci’s mind as he grasped and formulated his understanding of Confucianism and attempted to establish the foundations of a Confucian Christianity. Through the different media of two great and independent cultures, Ricci sought to understand and express the transcultural reality of Christianity. The Book of 25 Paragraphs represents an outstanding example and an historic landmark in bicultural communication.

The excerpt printed here combines and re-arranges elements found in chapters three and five. It begins with the discovery and analysis of Ricci’s use of Epictetus’ Encheiridion in the Book of 25 Paragraphs. Ricci’s use of Stoicism to teach morality to the Confucians leads to the study of how Ricci understood the Chinese Confucianism of his day. For this was the context and audience which inspired him to form and develop his distinctive type of missiology. Finally the study concludes with some theological reflections on Ricci’s missionary approach. This final section places Ricci’s attempts to teach moral philosophy and the practice of virtue in the larger and multidimensional process of Christianization and man’s coming to the fullness of life in Jesus Christ. The title of the original thesis was Matteo Ricci and a Confucian Christianity.
For purposes of clarity and precision, the title of this excerpt has been changed to *Matteo Ricci's Use of Epictetus*.

This study would have been impossible without the assistance and encouragement of numerous people. I can only single out a few of them at this time. My first debt of gratitude is to my director, Fr. William A. Van Roo, S. J., who patiently and generously undertook to guide me in this work; he was generous with his time, unsparing in checking and correcting my work, and most considerate in offering helpful suggestions and guidelines. Special thanks are also due to Fr. Joseph Shih, S. J., who originally proposed the thesis topic and who introduced me to Ricci's *Book of 25 Paragraphs*; he was most kind in explaining the intricacies of Confucianism and its history, especially in the Ming period when Ricci was in China. I also wish to thank in a special way my fellow Jesuits at the Collegio Bellarmino who in their own way patiently and lovingly supported me in all my ups and downs. I would like to extend my gratitude to my religious superiors in Wisconsin and Korea who have given me the opportunity and privilege of doing this work.
I. MATTEO RICCI'S USE OF EPICETIUS

A. Writing and Publication of the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*

In 1605 Matteo Ricci (1552—1610) published a small moral treatise on the practice of virtue which he entitled the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*. He had written part of the manuscript in 1599—1600, but for various reasons it was not prepared for final publication until five years later.¹ Upon completion of the preliminary copy, Ricci had recourse to his usual way of preparing it for publication. He circulated the manuscript among his friends for their comments and corrections. After incorporating their suggestions, he would prepare the text for final publication. The Jesuits did not have permission to publish in China, and censorship was an unbearably long and frustrating process.² Therefore, with the approval of his religious superior, Ricci wrote his treatises in the form of letters and gave them to his Chinese friends. They in turn took it upon themselves to publish his writings. Thus the problems of censorship and publication delays were happily obviated, and Ricci’s writings were quickly printed and disseminated among his Chinese friends.

By 1602 Ricci had written fourteen paragraphs of his *Book of 25 Paragraphs*. Some of his Chinese friends read the manuscript and one, a certain Wang K'eng-t'ang, decided to include this piece of writing in his own work, *Miscellanies of the Study of Iucam*. Wang himself entitled Ricci’s contribution as *Clear Words* and inserted it

¹ Cf. Epilogue to the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*. Hsu Kuang-ch’ii’s epilogue, Feng Ying-ching’s preface and Ricci’s text of the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* is given on pp. 21-50; henceforth will be referred to as: preface, epilogue and text of *B of 25 P.*

² Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche del P. Matteo Ricci*, 2 vols., (Macerata, Italy: Filippo Giorgetti, 1913), II, 304-305. In a letter to Father General in Rome, Ricci writes of the problem of *imprimatur* and publication. He tells the general that most of the *Catechism* and the *Christian Doctrine*, have been published without official permission of the ecclesiastical censors in India, although in a way which has been approved by Fr. Valignano. Ricci goes on to suggest that it would be better if the right of censorship in China be given to the superior of the mission. Henceforth this work will be referred to as Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche*. 
without any major changes. Wang writes: "Professor Ricci has presented me with a treatise entitled Clear Words. I have copied and inserted it in this work [Miscellaneies of the Study of Iucam]." Hsu-Kuang-ch'i indirectly referred to this publication in his epilogue to the Book of 25 Paragraphs when he urged publication of the complete work rather than leaving it half-published.

In 1604 a more polished and complete version of the Book of 25 Paragraphs was sent to Feng Ying-ching while he was in prison in Peking. Feng was so impressed with the work that he begged Ricci to have it published immediately. Hsu Kuang-ch'i also insisted on immediate publication. Ricci at first hesitated because he thought the manuscript was still quite imperfect, but finally agreed to let them publish it as it was. By the end of 1604 Feng and Hsu both had written encomiums in support of the author and the moral treatise. Finally early in 1605 Feng had it published and disseminated among his friends. Because of its popularity Feng undertook a second printing within a few months of its original publication. Soon afterwards it was also reprinted by a certain Wang Ju-shun.

Ricci's treatise on morality seems to have been entitled the Book of 25 Paragraphs either by Feng Ying-ching or Hsu Kuang-ch'i. This title was probably chosen to compare and contrast it with the well known Buddhist Sutra of 42 Paragraphs. This sutra is traditionally believed to be the first Buddhist scripture written in the Chinese language. It was originally used by the Buddhist monk-missionaries to introduce their doctrines and practices in China. In


4 Epilogue to the B of 25 P.


6 The word "paragraphs" in the title is interchangeable with "sections." For the translation of this text see Samuel Beal, "The Sutra of the Forty-two Sections, from the Chinese," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, XIX (1862), pp. 338-349.

7 According to certain versions of the text, an Indian monk named Kasyapa Matanga (or She-mo-t'eng?) was the sole translator; in other versions of the text the translators are said to be Matanga and another Indian monk
his preface to the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* Feng explicitly challenged the readers to compare and contrast this Buddhist sutra with Ricci's work. Feng was certain that the superiority of Ricci's teaching would be evident to all. To the surprise of Ricci himself, this work proved to be very popular and much admired by everyone. Even the Buddhists praised it. Eventually it became one of the better literary works of China.

B. What kind of a document is the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*?

While there is universal agreement that the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* is a moral treatise on how to be virtuous, it is difficult to specify or categorize what kind of morality, or philosophy, or even general teaching lies behind this treatise. It is difficult to classify it as Confucian, or as anti-Buddhist, or Christian, or even as simply philosophical or religious. All these touch on various aspects of the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*, but at first sight this work cannot be reduced to any one over-arching philosophy or theology which covers or includes them all. Ricci himself wrote very little concerning this moral treatise, and yet his brief remarks reveal named Dhmaratna (or Chu Fa-lan). There are also various traditions as to the exact date of its appearance in China. Some scholars hold that it was brought over by Indian missionaries and translated into Chinese in 67 A.D. Others maintain that it was the product of the fourth or fifth century A.D. There is also a difference of opinion as to whether the sutra is a translation of a Sanskrit original or a Chinese compilation of essential points of Buddhism. Stylistically it is modelled on the *Hsia-ching, Tao-te-ching*, and perhaps the *Lunyu*. It contains a general Buddhist teaching with indications that it is a summary of different works. The origin, date and authenticity of the work have been repeatedly questioned. Even though it never became part of the official canon of Buddhist literature, its use and popularity is attested to by the fact that it went through numerous changes and interpolations during its long history in China. Cf. Erik Zurcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), I, 29-30, and II, 429, note 62; Kenneth Kuan Shen Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 34-36; D'Elia, F.R., I, 122, note 3, and II, 287, note 4.

most incisively what he intended this work to be. We shall take three passages—one from his official mission diary and two from his private letters—and thus attempt to discover what kind of moral treatise Ricci intended the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* to be.

Ricci describes the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* as a moral treatise which treats various problems and emphasizes man’s control over himself. It was very well liked and received by his Chinese readers.

Father Ricci wrote twenty-five tracts on diverse moral questions and on control of the evil propensities of the soul. These were pamphlets which the Chinese call Opinions or Sentences. They were read by some of his Chinese friends before they were published and met with their whole-hearted approval.9

This brief description is part of a catalogue of descriptions of the writings Ricci had published in China. There is little here to specify what kind of moral treatise this is. There is a suggestion that it is written in the form of counsel or opinion, and not in the form of doctrine or dogma. Such a style seems to have pleased the Chinese.

In a personal letter to a friend in Rome Ricci describes the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* in a more nuanced way.

In this [small work] I do nothing but speak of virtue and living well with a great interest as a natural philosopher, but as a Christian, without refuting any sect. Thus it is read and most gratefully received by all the sects that exist. From all the other [Jesuit] houses they write of the great influence that this small work alone is having everywhere. Thus not a few who come to visit me request with great insistence that I write other books since in this way we give credence to the things of our religion. In this small work I did not write any preface because in it I speak of the contempt of the world and external

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things, *virtutis nudae rigidus satelles* as the poet says.\(^{10}\)

Ricci treats virtue as a natural philosopher and as a Christian without any intention of refuting any specific sect or false doctrine. He mentions no content as such, but only that he is treating of "virtue and living well with a great interest." Somehow the notions of "virtue" and "living well" are closely related and identified. Ricci observes that the *way* of a natural Christian philosopher seems to have won a large, diversified, and favorably disposed audience of readers. Even people of opposing sects reacted favorably to Ricci's natural but Christian exposition on the practice of virtue. Everyone praises and admires Ricci's teaching. Ricci also adds that he did not write a preface to this work so as not to appear proud or vain. He is content to let the goodness of virtue speak for itself. Finally it is important to note the unmistakable tension between natural philosophy and Christianity; Ricci treated virtue "as a natural philosopher, *but* as a Christian." Ricci is aware that natural philosophy and Christianity are not the same, and yet they can be made to agree.

In another letter to a friend Ricci offers other observations concerning the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*. He begins by contrasting the angry reaction of his enemies toward his *Catechism* with the warm reception of all toward the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*.

The hatred of our enemies [in reaction to the *Catechism*] was greatly lessened by the publication of a rather small work, our *Book of 25 Paragraphs*, which was not meant to refute the other sects, but only to speak well of virtue a little stoically, but all in accordance with Christianity. It was received by all and read with much approval, and they said that this is the way we ought to write the *Catechism*, i.e. not to refute or dispute against their idols.\(^{11}\)

Besides discussing how these two works were received by the Chinese, Ricci re-iterates the non-polemical and philosophical

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\(^{10}\) Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche*, II, 257. The poet is Horace and the text is taken from his *Epistulae*, I, 1, 17: "Virtutis verae custos rigidusque satelles."

\(^{11}\) Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche*, II, 263-264.
nature of the Book of 25 Paragraphs. But now he adds that the natural philosophy which is in tension with Christianity is Stoicism. Somehow a Stoical treatment of virtue which is in accordance with Christianity seems to appeal to the Chinese. Moreover since the Book of 25 Paragraphs was primarily intended for Ricci’s Chinese Confucian friends, we may also infer that the Stoical-Christian treatment of virtue is somehow compatible with the Confucian teaching on virtue.

If we look to Feng Ying-ching’s preface and Hsu Kuang-ch’i’s epilogue to the Book of 25 Paragraphs we can detect different if not contrary interpretations of what kind of moral treatise this is. Feng suggests that the Book of 25 Paragraphs is an anti-Buddhist work. He directly challenges the readers to compare and contrast Ricci’s teaching with that of the Buddhist Sutra of 42 Paragraphs. He sees Ricci’s new teaching on the service of the Lord of Heaven as refuting and surpassing all Buddhist teaching on virtue.\(^{12}\) In his epilogue Hsu seems to stress the line of continuity between the traditional Confucian teaching on virtue and the new teaching of Ricci. Hsu attempts to show how Ricci’s new teaching safeguards the best Chinese teaching on virtue and also goes beyond it.\(^{13}\) Modern critics seem to follow either the anti-Buddhist interpretation of Feng or the Confucian-Christian line of continuity suggested by Hsu.\(^{14}\) But these interpretations seem to fall short and differ with Ricci’s own analysis and understanding of his Book of 25 Paragraphs.

The single outstanding feature which all the interpreters seem to miss or fail to take seriously is Ricci’s reference to Stoicism. In discussing the type of morality treated in the Book of 25 Paragraphs, the commentators speak of a natural philosophy and the different dimensions of Confucianism, Christianity, and even anti-Buddhism. But they are unaware of anything to do with Stoicism, as if Ricci’s reference to Stoicism was not significant and as if there was nothing in the Book of 25 Paragraphs itself which would

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\(^{12}\) Cf. Feng’s preface to the B of 25 P.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Hsu’s epilogue to the B of 25 P.

\(^{14}\) Cf. D’Elia’s F.R. II, 97, 286-288; also Cf. Paul Rule, K’ung-tzu or Confucius? The Jesuit Interpretation of Confucianism (unpublished doctoral thesis, Canberra: Australian National University, 1972), pp. 115-117, 194; henceforth will be referred to as: Rule, K’ung-tzu or Confucius?
make it Stoical. Certainly part of the problem is that the Chinese did not know of Western Stoicism, and the Western readers were unable to read Chinese. It is our contention that both Ricci's reference to Stoicism and the internal evidence of the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* point strongly and unmistakably to a fundamental Stoic influence. This is confirmed by our discovery that the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* is a selected and carefully edited translation of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*. Unknown to all the critical interpreters and commentators of the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*, Ricci actually translated certain passages of Epictetus' *Encheiridion* and used this work as the structural basis of his own *Book of 25 Paragraphs*. Using the *Encheiridion* as the basic source and inspiration, Ricci presented to the Chinese the Stoic teaching on how to be virtuous. He presented his teaching as general truths of perennial philosophy which in fact are agreeable to Christianity, support the truths of Confucianism, and refute the untruths of Buddhism. As we shall see, this demanded a great deal of adapting and editing from a Graeco-Roman culture to the Chinese culture while always keeping it compatible with Christianity. The reactions of both the Chinese and Western readers attest to the success of Ricci's cultural adaptation since both were seemingly unaware of what Ricci had actually done. The correlation between Ricci's and Epictetus' respective works is as follows.

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16 Hsu Kuang-ch'i was aware and even asked Ricci to translate some Western books into Chinese. But it is not clear that he knew that the *B of 25 P* was basically a translation of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*.

16 For the following correlation of texts see pp. 26-50. The translation of Ricci's *B of 25 P* is mine, and the translation of Epictetus' *Encheiridion* is taken from George Long (trans.), *Discourses of Epictetus with the Encheiridion* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, n.d.).
Ricci did not hold himself rigidly bound to Epictetus' *Encheiridion*. Except for the first and last paragraphs, Ricci freely edited and arranged the paragraphs to suit his own purposes. Some parts he translated faithfully, some he paraphrased by abbreviation or expansion, and some he composed on his own. He retained Epictetus' style of teaching general truths through aphorisms and illustrative anecdotes; this manner of presentation was very congenial to the Confucian mode of learning and teaching. In paragraphs 13 and 21 of the Book of 25 Paragraphs Ricci treats the traditional five Confucian virtues and very consciously includes his own teaching within the historical tradition of Confucianism. In the corresponding sections of the *Encheiridion* Epictetus speaks of the typical Stoical virtues and the Graeco-Roman tradition. This cultural adaptation and transposition is done simply and unobtrusively. Judging from the reactions of the Chinese readers, they were pleased with Ricci's style of presentation and felt it was very

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17 Cf. for example paragraphs 4, 5, 16, 23 of the *B of 25 P*, and compare with corresponding sections in Epictetus' *Encheiridion*.

much within their own Confucian tradition.  

Ricci also corrected and amended the text wherever he thought it suitable. As regards certain doctrinal considerations, he changed Epictetus’ use of the plural “gods” to the Confucian-Christian singular notion of the “Lord of Heaven.” Ricci also tried to suppress Epictetus’ philosophy of appearances while trying to maintain a philosophy of the reality of things which he felt was more compatible with Confucianism and Christianity. But he retained Epictetus’ Stoic model of dealing with forces, i.e. life is viewed as striving to be in harmony with the basic forces which govern reality. Ricci did not use or translate more than half of Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*. He deleted all the allusions to the Graeco-Roman tradition which would be unintelligible to the Chinese; thus he dropped all references to Socrates, Zeno, Homer, Euphrates, Caesar, Diogenes, Heraclitus, and Chrysippus. He also deleted other passages which he thought would be culturally offensive or improper to the Chinese; thus he skipped Epictetus’ references to women bathing, having sexual relations, and going to the theater, horserace, or gladiator shows. ‘As the result of such revisions and alterations, Ricci’s text is less than half the length of Epictetus’ *Encheiridion*; twenty-five paragraphs versus fifty-two longer sections.

Ricci’s method and process in writing the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* is not so novel as it might first appear, even though it was unknown for such a long time. Ricci had translated other works into Chinese, and Hsu Kuang-ch’i refers to Ricci’s translation work at least three times in his epilogue. Ricci’s writings on geography, mathematics, and other sciences were largely ones of translation. His first major work on morality, *On Friendship*, was also a translation. It was a collection of maxims translated and paraphrased from European sources, mainly from Andreas d’Evora’s *Sententiae et Exempla*. This work also shows a heavy Stoical influence, and it was warmly received and lauded by the Chinese. Moreover, Ricci’s

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19 Cf. Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche*, II, 263-264, and D’Elia, F. R. II, 289, as well as Feng’s preface and Hsu’s epilogue to the *B of 25 P.*
20 Cf. for example *ibid.*, paragraphs 1, 12 and 13.
21 Cf. for example *ibid.*, paragraph 9, and Epictetus’ section VI.
22 Cf. for examples paragraphs 4, 5, 11, 12, 17 of *B of 25 P.*
identification of Stoicism with Confucianism— even though it has been ignored and unrecognized by scholars— is an integral part of Ricci’s understanding of China. It is our contention that Ricci saw in Chinese Confucianism and in Western Stoicism a common “natural philosophy.” Ricci was well aware that such works as On Friendship and the Book of 25 Paragraphs were fundamentally Stoical, and he also realized that the Chinese easily accepted this teaching within their own Confucian tradition. In writing to a friend in Italy Ricci calls Confucius “another Seneca”, and refers to the Four Books of Cofucianism as “good moral books.”24 Admittedly such explicit and direct links between Confucianism and Stoicism are few and only to be found when Ricci is explaining his ideas to fellow Europeans.25 But this relationship between Confucianism and Stoicism shows where Ricci found “common ground” between China and Europe. As we shall see, Ricci incorporated this understanding of Confucianism as a type of Chinese Stoicism into his whole missiological approach.

C. Translation of the Preface, Epilogue and Text of the Book of 25 Paragraphs and Corresponding Sections in Epictetus’ Enchetridion

Preface by Feng Ying-ching:

While Heaven does not speak, the next that follows [Heaven] establishes a teaching through words.26 The highest men are born ignorant and need words for awakening. Thus even though Heaven may not speak, the world produces wise teachers who help people understand. This Book of 25 Paragraphs is inspired by Heaven and

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24 Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, 117-118.
25 Cf. also Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, 57 where Ricci calls the (neo?) Confucians Epicureans. For a discussion of the Aristotelian influence on Ricci, see Rule, K‘ung-tzu or Confucius?, p. 122 ff.
26 This sentence seems to be a comment on Confucius’ Analects 17:19: “The Master said, I would much rather not have to talk. T’zu-kung said, If our Master did not talk, what should we little ones have to hand down to him? The Master said, Heaven does not speak; yet the four seasons run their course there by, the hundred creatures, each after its kind, are born thereby. Heaven does no speaking!” For the background of “establish a teaching through words” (ti yen) see D’Elia, F.R., II, 617, second column of footnote.
is the work of Professor Ricci from the renowned far west. But isn’t the far west very distant in its relationship with China? This study holds that only the service of Heaven is important, and all peoples who come from Heaven can help one another. When they are in danger, they are given assurance through the words of the teaching. When there is no other strength, you bring love which somehow comes from the words of the teaching. Thus the wise men do not grow weary of continuing to teach. In general when people become disgusted with eating ordinary food, they go to the sea and mountains to find especially delicious food, even if it is just for a change. Now this man who is carrying the food of this doctrine has scaled the mountains, crossed the seas, and has come to offer it to the Middle Kingdom. This food is like the special meat of the dragon and phoenix. His only hope is to expose the multitude of human losses and gains in order that people may see that human nature cannot be left uncultivated and that passions cannot be left unbridled. This work is a great contribution for the manner and way people should live.

Alas! While it is difficult to teach others, it is also difficult to listen and accept another’s teaching! Therefore the result is that there are many teachings of the Middle Kingdom. But just as those who eat coarse food are ridiculed by those who make wheels, so too those who simply gather together a bundle of quotations are probably reproved by Yu-meng.27

This work demonstrates the symptoms28 and also prescribes the correct remedy. If those who read this work will respectfully exercise their minds in long and profound reflection and if they will also appreciate the interior and depreciate the exterior as they try to reach the virtuous life of Heaven in everything they do, then our father Confucius’ desire to teach all men will continue

27 Yu-meng is a satirical actor mentioned in Sse Ma Ch’ien’s *Historical Records*. What is meant here is that the people who are popular are ridiculed for their defects by common workers such as makers of wheels. In a similar way the superficially learned and popular who only collect famous sayings are also mocked by such satirical actors as Yu-meng.

28 The symptoms refer to the unfortunate situation described above where there exist many different teachings, and people are left in a quandary as to which teaching they should follow.
without allowing Yu and Hsia to come back from the underworld. It would indeed be all the better if you could read and judge for yourselves which of these two works is more useful and beneficial, this one of Ricci's or the Sutra of 42 Paragraphs by Dharmarisa.

I, Feng Ying-ching, have received this work and have learned the teaching, and happily I have benefited from it. Afterwards I had it printed and given to my friends and acquaintances. I would not like people to criticize me for doing it only at the hour of metal and wood in order simply to relieve the interior punishment within me. Nor do I want to be accused of not being totally interested in absorbing this teaching. I do not wish to hide the gift of this benevolent man from the west. I wish that all those on this earth who are under the same law of Heaven see where they should go. My only wish is that those who are truly knowledgeable will echo my sentiments and will join themselves to my heart.

Written by Feng Ying-ching
May 29, 1604

Epilogue by Hsu Kuang-ch'ı:

Some time ago on my way to Mt. Sung, I saw a picture of the Lord of Heaven which had come across the sea from Europe. Previously I had seen the Map of the World which had been done under the sponsorship of the Viceroy Chao [of Nanking] or the Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Yu. In this way I came to know about the existence of a certain Professor Ricci. Soon afterwards I met him unexpectedly in Nanchin, and having talked with him I discovered that he was a learned and accomplished gentleman within the seas. Some time later he arrived in Peking to offer gifts while residing at the Palace for Guests. Within a month all the great mandarins were inviting him to dine with them. Since that time every part of the empire has come to know that there is a certain Professor Ricci, and all the most learned and renowned people yearn to see him. All who have heard him speak

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29 Yu and Hsia are disciples of Confucius.
31 The author was in prison when he wrote this Preface. He is probably referring to the difficult moment of being sentenced, graphically symbolized by metal and wood.
a little or were present at even part of his discussions have been content and satisfied, as if they had obtained something which they did not have before. I too went to hear him and asked even more of him. In this way I came to know the substance of his teaching. I saw that what I had previously held as great and important now seemed only dregs and ashes and even one ten-millionth of this dregs and ashes, for his learning extended to everything. His greatest teaching is sincerity.

[In general his teaching revolves around one point:] Believe and serve the Supreme Lord magnanimously each day in such a way that from morning until night not even one thought is lost. As for disorderly affections and passions we say not only that they did not touch him personally nor were ever expressed from his lips, but even that such things did not ever arise in his heart. He was wholly occupied in cleaning and purifying himself in order to arrive at what is called “the return to the state of integrity.” When I had time I would put forth a whole series of difficult questions and challenges, both profound and banal, in order to try to uncover even one word which did not correspond either to his teaching of loyalty and filial piety or which was not somehow useful and beneficial to the human heart or social morality. But I failed utterly! In fact such a contrary word cannot be found in his books, and it is strictly forbidden by the law of his religion.

I, who was always subject to doubt, felt at this point as if a cloud had been dispelled and that I need no longer remain in uncertainty. Sometimes I could even comment on his teaching, and everything cleared up. But when I was unable to come up with an explanation, I would ask his advice again. At such times I would ask him for a number of books which he had translated, and read them carefully. There were many other books which he brought with him from his country which were still in boxes and not translated. These I could not read. Now that he has come to the capital [Peking], he is so busy that his publications have become less numerous.

This Book of 25 Paragraphs was written in Nanchin. During the summer of this year [1604] Professor Feng [Ying-ching], the great magistrate of Chu-Hsien, asked Ricci to have it published for
distribution among his friends. This work represents only one small part of his teaching, yet the general meaning is clear. I even made a further request: "In the books you have with you, there is a profound doctrine and deep meaning, as deep as the sea and as vast as the universe. If there were others who had the same ideas and would co-operate in translating them in such a way that all men would be filled with this most excellent doctrine and would thus find their Source, and besides could also provide those other secondary things which are useful to people, this would be the greatest joy since the beginning of the world! Perhaps, Professor Ricci, you have such intentions?" To which he replied: "Yes. I had such an intention even before you mentioned it. I have come from the west making a voyage of eighty thousand li. When I was passing through countless countries, I felt as if I were walking on thorns. But when I arrived in China and saw its spirit of benevolence and justice, its rites and music, and the splendor of its famous and brilliant culture, it was as if the clouds and fog disappeared and I could again see the blue serene sky. Since that time the famous literati with whom I have spoken have agreed with me, For this reason I came to see that this teaching is universally true. But up to this time I have not been able to translate these books. So please wait." Thus I am not the only person who has been convinced of this teaching.

Alas! In the ancient times of the sage-emperors when the male and female phoenix were making their nest in the courtyard of the royal palace, it was considered a great event by all. And now in the midst of such splendor there is a most learned and perfect man who attracted by the splendor of our virtue has come all the way to the imperial court to be our safeguard. How can the world not celebrate such a tremendous occasion!

Written by the humble scholar Hsu Kuang-ch'i of Sungkiang

December 22, 1604
Parallel Texts of Ricci's *Book of 25 Paragraphs* and Corresponding Sections of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*

**Book of 25 Paragraphs**

by

Matteo Ricci of the Far West

1

Some things are in my power, and some are not. Desire, opinion, effort, and aversion are things proper to me because they all fall within my power. Property, honor, reputation, and long life are not things proper to me because their existence is not in my power. The things which are proper to me are easy to do. The things not proper to me are difficult to attain. If I make other things proper to me and the things that belong to me proper to others, then there will necessarily be frustration and suffering. Of necessity it will be against nature and also a curse for men of this world, and even for the Lord of Heaven. But if I consider what is proper to me as properly mine and what it proper to others as properly theirs, then my spirit will be calm and my body at peace. There will be no contradictions in me, no damage whatsoever. Therefore when an illu-

**Encheiridion**

by

Epictetus

I

Of things some are in our power, and others are not. In our power are opinion, movement towards a thing, desire, aversion, turning from a thing; and in a word, whatever are our acts. Not in our power are the body, property, reputation, offices (magisterial power), and in a word, whatever are not our acts. And the things in our power are by nature free, not subject to restraint or hindrance; but the things not in our power are weak, slavish, subject to restraint, in the power of others. Remember then, that if you think the things which are by nature slavish to be free, and the things which are in the power of others to be your own, you will be hindered, you will lament, you will be disturbed, you will blame both gods and men; but if you think that only which is your own to be your own, and if you think that what is another's, as it really
sion arises in my mind, I can immediately see it for what it is. If it is something proper to me, then I can immediately say: "If I want everything to go well, it will go well. Why become needlessly perturbed?" If it is something which is not proper to me, then I can say: "It does not pertain to me."

is, belongs to another, no man will hinder you, you will never blame any man, you will accuse no man, you will do nothing involuntarily (against your will), no man will harm you, you will have no enemy, for you will not suffer any harm .... Straightway then practice saying to every harsh appearance: You are an appearance and in no manner what you appear to be. Then examine it by the rules which you possess, and by this first and chiefly, whether it relates to the things which are in our power or to things which are not in our power; and if it relates to anything which is not in our power, be ready to say that it does not concern you.

Desire contains a movement toward obtaining what one desires, and aversion has a movement away from the things one wishes to avoid. Therefore if one fails in his desire, he is unfortunate; likewise he who falls into what he would like to avoid, is unhappy. If a man attempts to obtain only those things which depend properly on him and avoid those things which are properly to be avoided, then he would never be unhappy or miserable. But if you desire

II

Remember that desire contains in it the profession of obtaining that which you desire; and the profession in aversion is that you will not fall into that which you attempt to avoid; and he who fails in his desire is unfortunate; and he who falls into that which he would avoid is unhappy. If then you attempt to avoid only the things contrary to nature which are within your power you will not be involved in any of the things which you would avoid. But if
honor, wealth, power, and a long life and if you attempt to avoid poverty, hatred, death, and disease, then you will be unhappy and often quite miserable.

Has anyone ever been invited to dinner and received expensive clothes as gifts from rich and important personages in preference to you? If you have not received all these things, do not be sad. Why? Because you have not done what the other man did, so accordingly you cannot expect to obtain what he received. In fact he achieved his goal by means of flattery and adulation. But you who do not want to flatter and adulate, nevertheless want to achieve the same result.

Isn’t there something contradictory if you do not pay the price in return for which those things are sold and if you wish to obtain them for nothing? A person buying vegetables spends a certain amount of money for the purchase. But you do not spend any money, and thus you do not get any vegetables. Do not think you received less than the other man. For he goes off you attempt to avoid disease, or death, or poverty, you will be unhappy ...

Has any man been preferred before you at a banquet, or in being saluted, or in being invited to a consultation? If these things are good, you ought to rejoice that he has obtained them; but if bad, be not grieved because you have not obtained them. And remember that you cannot, if you do not [do] the same things in order to obtain what is not in your own power, be considered worthy of the same (equal) things. For how can a man obtain an equal share with another when he does not visit a man’s doors as that other man does; when he does not attend him when he goes abroad, as the other man does; when he does not praise (flatter) him as another does? You will be unjust and insatiable, if you do not part with the price, in return for which those things are sold, and if you wish to obtain them for nothing. Well, what is the price of lettuces? An obolous perhaps. If then a man gives the obolous, and receives the
with the vegetables, and you go off with the money you didn’t spend. You are both on the same level. In the same way then when a rich and important personage does not invite you to dinner and does not present you with many expensive clothes as gifts, this is only because you did not pay the price. Flattery and adulation represent the price that had to be paid. If you want the merchandise, then you must pay the price.

But now instead of a dinner invitation and expensive clothes, what do you want to attain? Don’t look for adulation, and do not seek for honor and fame! But rather strive to be honest and faithful to yourself. All this you can attain. You should be satisfied with this.

Even though a man may not desire adversity, there are times when he cannot avoid it. In such cases he must do the best he can according to his reason. A man who lives in the world is like an expert player. It is easy for anyone to win when fortune is propitious. But when

lettuces, and if you do not give up the obolous and do not obtain the lettuces, do not suppose that you receive less than he who has got the lettuces; for as he has the lettuces, so you have the obolous which you did not give. In the same way then in the other matter also you have not been invited to a man’s feast, for you did not give to the host the price at which supper is sold; but he sells it for praise (flattery), he sells it for personal attention. Give then the price, if it is for your interest, for which it is sold. But if you wish both not to give the price and to obtain the things, you are insatiable and silly. Have you nothing then in place of the supper? You have indeed, you have the not flattering of him, whom you did not choose to flatter; you have the not enduring of the man when he enters the room.
it is unpropitious and still you manoeuvre in such a way as to win and overcome your misfortune, your victory is due to your own human ingenuity.

If a man has reported to you: “A certain person speaks ill of you and points out this fault of yours.” You should respond: “I have other even greater faults which the man does not know yet. For how could he only point out this fault in me.” If a man recognizes how great his faults are, he certainly will not have the leisure time to discuss them with his critics. Francis, a saint from the western world, always said of himself: “I am the worst sinner in all the world.” But his disciples doubted this and said to him: “You always speak in such a false way. Even the superior man cannot be perfect in all things to the very last detail. Do you speak falsely like this just to humiliate yourself? There are murderers, thieves, and lustful men in the world. Such a man you certainly are not. How then can you call yourself the worst sinner?” Francis answered: “I do not speak in this way for the sake of humility, but what I say is true. If those murderers, thieves, and
lustful men had received the same grace from the Lord of Heaven as I have and if they had been trained and educated as I have been, then certainly their virtue would be greater than mine. Therefore will not my evil be greater than theirs?” If a saint puts himself in this position, then how can I dare to boast and say that I have no faults, and try to dissuade the one who criticized me?

Have you ever received and liked a certain gift, and then wondered what was its real value? First you think that it may be of lesser value, hoping that eventually it may be discovered to be of greater value. Thus if you like an earthen vessel, you say: “I like this earthen vessel. But if it should break, it will not disturb me.” Likewise if you love your wife, you can say: “I love a human being. But if she should die, it will not be an uncontrollable grief for me.” The fact that an earthen vessel is broken or that a human being dies, this is something natural and inevitable.

In everything which pleases the soul, or supplies a want, or is loved, remember to add this to the (description, notion): What is the nature of each thing, beginning from the smallest? If you love an earthen vessel say it is an earthen vessel which you love; for when it has been broken you will not be disturbed. If you are kissing your child or wife, say that it is a human being whom you are kissing, for when the wife or child dies you will not be disturbed.
If you wish to have peace in your heart, you must first discard such worldly preoccupations as these: “If I neglect my affairs, in the end I shall not have enough to live on. If I don’t chastise and reprove my slaves and workers, they will become bad.” In my opinion, it is better to die of hunger than to live in abundance with perturbation. It is better for your slaves and workers to be bad than for you to be unhappy. Begin then from little things. When you accidentally spill some oil over a lamp and break a jar, hold back your anger and quietly ask yourself: What is more precious, peace and tranquility of heart or the gaining of the whole world? Obviously peace and tranquility of heart is more valuable. But why not pay the price for this peace of heart with a spoonful of oil and a piece of clay? What you gain is so precious, and what you lose is so despicable. Why then these regrets? And when you call your slave, let us say he does not respond. Maybe that is because he didn’t hear. Or maybe he heard you, but he has his own reasons why he will not do what you wish. Whatever the

If you intend to improve, throw away such thoughts as these: if I neglect my affairs, I shall not have the means of living; unless I chastise my slave, he will be bad.

For it is better to die of hunger and so to be released from grief and fear than to live in abundance with perturbation; and it is better for your slave to be bad than for you to be unhappy. Begin then from little things. Is the oil spilled? Is a little wine stolen?

Say on the occasion, at such price is sold freedom from perturbation; at such price is sold tranquility, but nothing is got for nothing.

And when you call your slave, consider that it is possible that he does not hear; and if he does hear, that he will do nothing which you wish. But matters are not so well with him, but altogether well with you, that
case, why do you become angry and disturb your own peace and tranquillity of heart because of his stubbornness?

If you desire to practice virtue, prepare yourself from the beginning to be ridiculed [criticized]. When people see that you appear modest and composed, they will invariably say: "This man is supercilious." If they see that you are cautious and careful in your actions, they will invariably say: "He only appears to be serious on the exterior." Thus when you give yourself to the practice of virtue, you must avoid this supercilious look of seriousness. Make a firm resolution as if you were appointed by God to this station. If you abide by these same principles without allowing the slightest deviation, these men who first ridiculed you will afterwards see that it was really founded on the firm conviction of virtue. They begin to admire you and have second thoughts about their criticism. But if you are overpowered by them and withdraw, you will bring on yourself double ridicule. First, people will laugh at you because you put yourself on the road to perfection, and secondly they will it should be in his power for you to be not disturbed.

If you desire philosophy, prepare yourself from the beginning to be ridiculed, to expect that many will sneer at you, and say, He has all at once returned to us as a philosopher; and whence does he get this supercilious look for us?

Do not show a supercilious look; but hold on to the things which seem to you best as one appointed by God to this station. And remember that if you abide in the same principles, these men who first ridiculed will afterwards admire you;

but if you shall have been overpowered by them, you will bring on yourself double ridicule.
mock you because you gave up.

9

Do not be arrogant and proud about some advantage of yours. Perhaps a horse can proudly boast of itself and say: "I am an excellent horse." But if you are proud of the horse, say: "I have an excellent horse." You will not be disgraced by this association, and you will be displaying a proper spirit of boasting. Likewise you have the means to find the true way of life and use things correctly; that is something proper to you. But you should not be proud. All the more, you should not be arrogant about things which are not properly yours.

10

Things do not belong to me except insofar as I have the right to borrow them. If something is taken away from you, do not say: "I have lost it, but rather I have restored it." Is your wife dead? She has been restored. Is your child [son] dead? He has been restored. Has your estate been forcibly taken from you? Has not then this also been restored? But he who has forcibly taken it from me is a bad man. But he too has a

VI

Be not elated at any advantage (excellence) which belongs to another. If a horse when he is elated should say, I am beautiful, one might endure it. But when you are elated, and say, I have a beautiful horse, you must know that you are elated at having a good horse. What then is your own? The use of appearances. Consequently when in the use of appearances you are conformable to nature, then be elated, for then you will be elated at something good which is your own.

XI

Never say about anything, I have lost it, but say I have restored it.

Is your child dead? It has been restored. Is your wife dead? She has been restored. Has your estate been taken from you? Has not then this also been restored? But he who has taken it from me is a bad man. But what is
master. If the First Master ordains that a man is to use something, what is that to you? So long as he [the First Master] may allow you, take care of things as if they belonged to another.

11

Whenever a man encounters something ugly, he immediately turns to himself and reflects on how he should respond to it. When a superior man encounters evil, he will certainly respond with goodness.

When he encounters labor, he will respond with endurance. When he meets corruption, he will confront it with integrity. When there are abusive words, he will answer with patience. You must act as if you were attacking with a whole army, and you must put on armor to parry the blows. In this way how can you possibly be afraid of anything?

12

While you are in the world you should consider yourself as a guest at a banquet. You should realize that the places at the banquet and the quality of the food depend on the master. You it to you, by whose hands the giver demanded it back? So long as he may allow you, take care of it as a thing which belongs to another, as travellers do with their inn.

X

On the occasion of every accident (event) that befalls you, remember to turn to yourself and inquire what power you have for turning it to use. If you see a fair man or a fair woman, you will find that the power to resist is temperance (continence). If labor (pain) be presented to you, you will find that it is endurance.

If it be abusive words, you will find it to be patience. And if you have been thus formed to the (proper) habit, the appearances will not carry you along with them.

XV

Remember that in life you ought to behave as at a banquet.
cannot simply take your place among the attendants. Perhaps you notice that they follow a prescribed order and finally come to you. Take a portion with decency. Perhaps you see that the attendants pass by you without stopping. Do not try to stop the process. Perhaps you notice that they have not come to you at all. Do not go out and get them. You should act in the same way toward those you serve, the same toward your wife, toward power, and toward wealth. Thus you will be worthy to be one of those invited by God to His banquet in Heaven. Since you are already a guest of Heaven and no longer a man tied to this world, you are content but detached when the attendants come and wait on you.

Suppose that something is carried round and is opposite you. Stretch out your hand and take a portion with decency. Suppose that it passes by you. Do not detain it.

Suppose that it is not yet come to you. Do not send your desire forward to it, but wait till it is opposite you. Do so with respect to children, so with respect to a wife, so with respect to magisterial offices, so with respect to wealth, and you will be some time a worthy partner of the banquets of the gods. But if you take none of the things which are set before you, and even despise them, then you will be not only a fellow banqueter with the gods, but also a partner with them in power . . .

The essence of human benevolence ($jen$) consists in honoring and loving the Sovereign Ruler, who is the source of all created things and the real master of all things. The benevolent ($jen$) man believes ($hsin$) that the Sovereign Ruler really exists. He also believes that He is most wise and that there is not the slightest trace of error in Him. Therefore he obeys all His ordinances

As to piety towards the gods you must know that this is the chief thing, to have right opinions about them, to think that they exist, and that they administer the All well and justly; and you must fix yourself in this principle (duty), to obey them, and to yield to them in everything which happens, and voluntarily to follow it as being accomplished by the wisest in-
without waiting to be forced. To know how to obey and carry out the commandments of the Sovereign Ruler, this is called wisdom (chih). Indeed if I obey well the ordinances of the Sovereign Ruler, all goes well for me. If I don’t I am tied and dragged into submittance just like a cow or sheep. Let us examine the following considerations: Who in this world has ever had the power to oppose the ordinances of the emperor and been able to bring about his own desires? If you think that happiness consists in the accumulation of external things and unhappiness in the loss of these things, or if you think that fortune consists in glory and misfortune in the humiliation derived from the outside, or if you think you can disobey the ordinances of the Sovereign Ruler and even use them against Him when you get something you do not want or do not get something you want, then you lack the essence of human benevolence (jen). How is this so? All living things go toward what is profitable for them and turn away from what is detrimental, even in contradictory situations.

For every animal is formed by nature to this, to fly from and to turn from the things which appear harmful and the things which are the cause of the harm, but to follow and admire the things which are useful and the causes of the useful. It is im-
They cannot find any joy in accepting a loss, nor are they willing to sacrifice themselves.

Thus despite the affection that a father and son have between them, they will try to kill each other when their interests contradict their relationship. This actually happened to Wei Che, the son, and Kua K’uei, the father. The son resisted the father because he believed that his happiness consisted in being master in place of his father. The situation is similar for the cultivator of the earth who is bitter over the year’s crops, the merchant who is resentful of the times, and the person in mourning who has rancour against Heaven. For the sake of gaining an external thing these people lose their intrinsic worth, that is their human benevolence [jen]. On the other hand the superior man only considers what depends on himself, according to which he discerns what is true glory and humiliation, true fortune and misfortune, while being detached from external things. He decides to acquire or avoid things according to the criterion of justice [i]. Even in the midst of difficulty he serves the Lord on high and possible then for a person who thinks that he is harmed to be delighted with that which he thinks to be the cause of the harm, as it is also impossible to be pleased with the harm itself. For this reason also a father is reviled by his son, when he gives no part to his son of the things which are considered to be good; and it is this which actually made Polynices and Eteocles enemies, the opinion that royal power was a good.

It is for this reason that the cultivator of the earth reviles the gods, for this reason the sailor does, and the merchant, and for this reason those who lose their wives and their children.

For where the useful (your interest) is, there also piety is. Consequently he who takes care to desire as he ought and to avoid as he ought, at the same time also cares after piety.

But to make libations and to sacrifice and to offer first-fruits
commits himself to His principle of perfect propriety [i.e.] without even a moment's hesitation.

14

Everything has two handles, the one by which it may be borne, the other by which it may not. Let us take for example a father and an elder brother who wish to inflict harm on the son and younger brother respectively. The victim can say: "This is harmful to me!" Thus he takes the negative view and the affair seems to be intolerable. On the other hand he can say: "But this has to do with my father or elder brother!" In this way he shows a positive point of view, and the affair is more tolerable. Even if the father and elder brother are evil and wish to harm the son or younger brother, the victim must not hate them in response. There are in fact fathers and older brothers who do harm. But the Creator has ordained that each man be submissive to his father and older brother. We are not allowed to choose a good or bad father or brother.

according to the custom of our fathers, purely and not meanly nor carelessly nor scantily nor above our ability, is a thing which belongs to all to do.

XLIII

Everything has two handles, the one by which it may be borne, the other by which it may not.

If your brother act unjustly, do not lay hold of the act by that handle wherein he acts unjustly, for this is the handle which cannot be borne; but lay hold of the other, that he is your brother, that he was nurtured with you, and you will lay hold of the thing by that handle by which it can be borne.

XXX

... Does a brother wrong you? Maintain then your own position towards him, and do not examine what he is doing, but what you must do that your will shall be conformable to nature .... Were you then by nature made akin to a good father? No; but to a father ....
If you receive any thought of evil pleasure, guard yourself against being carried away by it. You can withdraw a while and reflect: "While enjoying this pleasure I would contaminate and pollute myself. After this momentary enjoyment of pleasure, I would repent and reproach myself. Why is it then I don't abandon such false pleasure and only take true joy in what is good for me and consists in my self-purification? For indeed which is better: that I overcome pleasure or that it overcomes me? I must realize that the moment of pleasure vanishes quickly and only leaves behind an eternal guilt-feeling in my heart." If you think and act in this way your passion will certainly disappear by itself. The desire for perfection will increase, and spiritual joy will swell up in your heart.

When you see someone who is honored before others or possessed of great power or highly esteemed for any reason, take care not to be carried away with useless thoughts which say: "He is truly content and has found..." Take care then when you observe a man honored before others or possessed of great power or highly esteemed for any reason, not to suppose him happy, and be not carried away by the appearance. For if the
true happiness." Do you really believe that true happiness consists only in desiring and getting what depends on you, and not in acquiring the things which are beyond you? Dignity, leisure, and a good reputation do not come from you, but from an external source. Who could possibly say that they depend on you to acquire? But you yourself must not want to be rich, noble, nor highly esteemed, but only to possess virtue and become an upright man. Then you must follow the appropriate way. There is only one way to this, i.e. put aside all the things which are not in your power. The inferior man characteristically fears harm and hopes for good [profit]. All the things which he fears or hopes for are external [dependent on others]. But the superior man characteristically holds himself responsible for that which depends on him and constantly says to himself: "They can put me to death, but they cannot harm my spirit. They can make me rich, but they can't force goodness on me." These are the signs for making progress in virtue: In general much silence and few words; when speaking, one does not talk about the taste of wine or the quality of food; one does not speak evil of others; one praises others sparingly; one

nature of the good is in our power, neither envy nor jealousy will have a place in us.

But you yourself will not wish to be a general or senator or consul, but a free man; and there is only one way to this, to despise (care not for) the things which are not in our power.

XLVIII

The condition and characteristic of an uninstructed person is this: he never expects from himself profit (advantage) nor harm, but from externals. The condition and characteristic of a philosopher is this: he expects all advantage and all harm from himself.

The signs (marks) of one who is making progress are these:

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... And let silence be the general rule, or let only what is necessary be said, and in few words.
does not publicize one's strong points; one listens to praise directed to one while smiling quietly at one's admirer; one listens to criticism of oneself, but does not make any defence; above all one watches oneself as if one were an enemy or thief lying in ambush.

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... if a man praises him he ridicules the praiser to himself; if a man censures him he makes no defence; ... and in a word he watches himself as if he were an enemy and lying in ambush.

XVII

Remember that thou art an actor in a play, of such a kind as the teacher (author) may choose; if short, of a short one; if long, of a long one: if he wishes you to act the part of a poor man, see that you act the part naturally; if the part of a lame man, of a magistrate, of a private person, (do the same). For this is your duty, to act well the part that is given to you; but to select the part, belongs to another.
one is given the role of a poor man, it is fitting that one act the part naturally according to the director's instructions. In fact the assignment of all the roles depends on the director. On man falls only the responsibility to carry out his assigned role well.

Inferior men willingly indulge in carnal pleasure. They spend much time drinking, eating, sleeping, and having sex. On the other hand the superior men give themselves only to sincerity of intention. As for material things, they are embarrassed to deal with them. Unable to do less, they treat them without much importance. Our body is like a donkey, and the spirit is like a son. What would people say if to breed and raise a donkey you put the stable in order, supplied plenty of food and drink, adorned his spurs with flowers, decorated the saddle and reins while you let your own son dirty himself and become hungry, freeze from the cold, and starve to death in the middle of the street. What do you, inferior men, say to all this? Alas! In today’s world the streets are filled with inferior men, and no one laments it.

It is a mark of a mean capacity to spend much time, on the things which concern the body such as much exercise, much eating, much drinking, much easing of the body, much copulation. But these things should be done as subordinate things; and let all your care be directed to the mind.
Would you like to know a criterion for the correctness of your nature? Look at the people who are in similar circumstances as yourself! For instance, when your neighbor’s slave has broken his vase, you are ready to say forthwith: “This can happen to anyone. It is nothing to get upset about.” You must know then that when your vase is broken you should not get angry. In the same way transfer this reflection from small to greater things also. When another man’s wife dies, you know how to say: “This is destiny. Such is fate.” But if the person you love dies, you immediately become greatly troubled and in grief you cry out repeatedly: “Woe to me! How wretched I am!” But why then don’t you remember what you formerly told the others!

We may learn the wish of nature from the things in which we do not differ from one another: for instance, when your neighbor’s slave has broken his cup, or anything else, we are ready to say forthwith, that it is one of the things which happen. You must know then that when your cup is broken, you ought to think as you did when your neighbor’s cup was broken. Transfer this reflection to greater things also. Is another man’s child or wife dead? There is no one who would not say, This is an event incident to man. But when a man’s own child or wife is dead, forthwith he calls out, Woe to me, how wretched I am! But we ought to remember how we feel when we hear that it has happened to others.

It is foolish to get angry over a youth who is enjoying himself, because that’s like wanting the young not to behave as young.

It is foolish to get angry with your slave who is lazy, because that is like wanting an old don-

If you would have your children and your wife and your friends live for ever, you are silly; for you would have the things which are not in your power to be in your power, and things which belong to others to be yours. So if you would have your slave to be free from faults, you are
key not to be an old donkey. You know all this. Yet you do not want to allow your son to die. But isn’t this foolish too, because that is like wanting a man not to be human!

The prudent man does not take upon himself a burden which he cannot carry. He who takes on more than he can carry loses what he has. If you are captured and sold as a slave, you will be ashamed of yourself and angry. You will also feel bitterness because you have given your mind as a slave to external things. Indeed how can you appear to be content in such a slavery!

If you have assumed a character above your strength, you have both acted in this manner in an unbecoming way, and you have neglected that which you might have fulfilled.

When a man is proud because he can understand and explain the Book of Changes, you listen and say to yourself quietly: If Fu Hsi had not written obscurely about the principles of the philosophy of nature and had not enveloped them in trigrams or hexagrams, this man would have nothing to be proud of. Thus if one wishes to study Confucianism one must give oneself to the study of nature [destiny], and understanding them put them into

But what is it that I wish? To understand nature and to follow it. I inquire therefore who is the interpreter? and when I have heard that it is Chrysippus, I
practice. Above all one must consult the ancient authorities of China who have explained these principles best. Among these the most renowned are King Wen, Duke of Chou, and Confucius. As for books there is nothing better than the Book of Changes. One takes this book and reads it. Not understanding it, one looks for an interpreter. Then one queries him in depth. So far there is nothing to be proud of. But when one understands the book and is able to put it into practice, then one has something to be proud of. But if you read the text and can only verbally explain the meaning, you have become an actor and not a philosopher of life. You simply substituted the Book of Changes for the text of a drama. Thus when someone asks me to explain the Book of Changes, I am embarrassed because I am not able to prove my words by my actions. Indeed how can I ever be proud of myself?

But I do not understand what is written, and therefore seek the interpreter. And so far there is nothing to be proud of. But when I shall have found the interpreter, the thing that remains is to use the precepts (the lessons). This itself is the only thing to be proud of. But if I shall admire the exposition, what else have I been made unless a grammarian instead of a philosopher? except in one thing, that I am explaining Chrysippus instead of Homer. When, then, any man says to me, Read Chrysippus to me, I rather blush, when I cannot show my acts like to and consistent with his words.

If ever there is occasion to deal with inferior men you must be careful of their evil intentions, just as when you are walking you must be careful not to walk on nails nor take a wrong step. When one deals with a person... But if ever there is occasion to join in them [associations with ignorant men], let your attention be carefully fixed, that you slip not into the manners of the vulgar. For you must know, that if your companion be im-

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who is impure, one cannot help becoming somewhat impure oneself. Therefore when in the presence of those who are speaking of impure things, you must either find a way to change the topic of conversation in order to purify it, or by blushing and by the expression of dissatisfaction on your countenance you must show that you are displeased at such talk.

When a person speaks ill of you, remember that he does this or says this because he thinks that it is what he should do. Each person has his own ideas, and who is able to act in such a way that everyone will agree with him? Accordingly if a man is wrong in his opinion inasmuch as he only sees the external appearances, he is the one who has been deceived. It has nothing to do with you. If someone, for example, thinks that I am already married while in fact I am not, he is an ignorant person. But how does he offend me? When you encounter a wicked or perverted man, you should say to yourself: "He thinks that it is necessary for him to act in this way." Thus you will not be pure, he also who keeps company with him must become impure. . . . It is a dangerous habit also to approach obscene talk. When anything of this kind happens, if there is a good opportunity, rebuke the man who has proceeded to this talk; but if there is not an opportunity, by your silence at least, and blushing and expression of dissatisfaction by your countenance, show plainly that you are displeased at such talk.

When any person treats you ill or speaks ill of you, remember that he does this or says this because he thinks that it is his duty. It is not possible then for him to follow that which seems right to you, but that which seems right to himself. Accordingly if he is wrong in his opinion, he is the person who is hurt, for he is the person who has been deceived; for if a man shall suppose the true conjunction to be false, it is not the conjunction which is hindered, but the man who has been deceived about it.

If you proceed then from these
shocked, and you will be mild in temper towards him who reviles you.

Once in my home country there were three good literati who were sitting on the edge of the road. Suddenly a man with bad manners insulted them in a most offensive way. The first man was not disturbed in the least. The second began to smile. The third was so sad that he began to cry. The first man was at peace with himself. He was not disturbed and did not allow himself to be trapped by external things. The man who smiled probably had some faults. He enjoyed the fact that another person knew it and was reproving him. The man who was sad to the point of tears realized that this calumny against him was a sin and was proud in his sorrow. Alas, how lamentable are the times! If whenever we are offended we can avoid being revengeful, this is already good. But who has ever felt compassion on the sin which consists in humiliating me? It is said that one can improve one's behavior through the virtue of others. But who has ever heard that one can grow in virtue through the wickedness of others?

opinions, you will be mild in temper to him who reviles you; for say on each occasion, It seemed so to him.

[cf. section XX for a similar treatment of the same theme]
The superior man does not boast about himself; for he who boasts about himself is not worth much. In the midst of other literati he speaks little about the study of virtue but strives rather to put it into practice. For example, at a banquet do not say how a wise man ought to behave at a banquet, but eat and drink as one. Those who follow the feelings of the crowd have a certain external advantage, but they compromise their interior life. The wise man does not risk ruining his interior life in unforgettable shame for the sake of some superficial sensual pleasure. In the discussion of virtue one must give priority to age and dignity. But in the practice of virtue, you should give priority to no one. The more humble a man is, the more he advances. For example, when a man shall say to you that you know nothing because you stutter, and you are not vexed, then be sure that you have begun the work of virtue. How can you tell whether sheep have eaten [digested] sufficiently well? Certainly not by the grass they spit out. But the shepherd can tell from the abundance of wool and milk which they produce.

On no occasion call yourself a philosopher, and do not speak much among the uninstructed about theorems (philosophical rules, precepts); but do that which follows from them. For example, at a banquet do not say how a man ought to eat, but eat as you ought to eat. For remember that in this way Socrates . . . .

And when a man shall say to you that you know nothing, and you are not vexed, then be sure that you have begun the work (of philosophy). For even sheep do not vomit up their grass and show to the shepherds how much they have eaten; but when they have internally digested the pasture, they produce externally wool and milk. Do you also show not your theorems to the
The important points of this study of virtue are: First, practice virtue. If this moral learning is not put into practice, it is false. Second, the demonstrations which prove that it is wrong not to put this learning into action. Third, the judgment which clearly distinguishes good from evil. The third point is necessary on account of the second, and the second on account of the first. But the most necessary and that on which we ought to rest this treatise on virtue is the first point. But we do the contrary. For we usually get bogged down on the third point while entirely neglecting the first point. All of us do evil, and yet we loudly protest with our mouths that one should not do evil! We fill our halls with such sublime discourse and cover pages with such beautiful script.

The first and most necessary place in philosophy is the use of theorems, for instance, that we must not lie; the second part is that of demonstrations, for instance, How is it proved that we ought not to lie? The third is that which is confirmatory of these two, and explanatory .... The third part (topic) is necessary on account of the second, and the second on account of the first; but the most necessary and that on which we ought to rest is the first. But we do the contrary. For we spend our time on the third topic, and all our earnestness is about it; but we entirely neglect the first. Therefore we lie; but the demonstration that we ought not to lie we have ready to hand.
II. THE BOOK OF 25 PARAGRAPHS IN CONFUCIANIST CHINA

A. Ricci’s Understanding of Confucianism

Ricci’s missionary policy evolved to a critical acceptance of Confucianism. This meant that in doctrine and practice Ricci and the Jesuits sought to become Confucian literati. The practical result was that the Jesuits had to abandon their previous identification with Buddhism and any other form of a foreign religion. Instead they sought to identify themselves with the native Confucian scholars who were the political and moral leaders of the country. This important shift radically affected the missionary efforts of the Jesuits. They were no longer dealing on the level of religion or theology, but rather on the level of philosophy and morality. The primary question was not about God or divine revelation, but rather on how men ought to live as true human beings who believed in God. Ricci understood Confucianism as a viable natural philosophy which was open to God. He viewed Confucianism as the logical premise which could extend itself and lead toward Christianity. Ricci felt that the best way to Christianize China was through Confucianism. Therefore he decided to dedicate his life to the study of Confucianism in such a way as to interpret it favorably toward Christianity. In a letter of 1595 he wrote:

During these last years, I have interpreted with the aid of good masters, not only the Four Books but also all Six Classics, and I have noted many passages in all of them which favour the teachings of our faith, such as the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, the glory of the blessed, etc.

Ricci became so well versed in the Confucian classics that he “could adduce and prove things that he said about our holy law

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32 This is not explicitly stated by Ricci, but Trigault expresses this Riccian position in Gallagher, China in the Sixteenth Century, p. 156.
33 Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, 207.
[Christianity] on the authority of their ancient [Confucian] books."34 In other words Ricci attempted to put on the mind of a Confucian so that he could grasp the truths which were common to Confucianism and the natural philosophy or morality of Christianity. The same truths could be corroborated by these two different ways. The problem was not one of different truths or doctrines, but the different ways one adhered to these truths. At first sight there seems to be little that a Chinese Confucian and a European Christian would hold in common. History shows that their meetings have been characterized by differences, misunderstandings, and hostility. However, Ricci maintained that there were fundamental truths which Confucians and Christians held in common. Contrary to appearances, they even adhered to a common natural philosophy or morality which could bring about a mutual understanding and even lead to Christianity. But since this was not evident to the Chinese nor to the Jesuits, Ricci had to establish and prove his thesis.

Ricci's understanding of Confucianism gradually evolved through his own process of learning and experiencing Confucianism. He did not follow a pre-conceived plan or policy in trying to evangelize China. He followed his own instincts on the suggestive complementarity between Confucianism and Christianity. Ricci's study of Confucianism was honest, but not without this distinctive bias: he consciously sought to understand Confucianism in terms favorable to Christianity. Ricci first saw the Confucians as those who reject superstitious beliefs,35 then as a sect of Epicureans,36 and later as those who adhere to the good moral teachings of Confucius who himself is like the Stoic Seneca.37 In all these descriptions Ricci seems to be struggling to find the closest Western model or structure of understanding which best approximates Confucianism. Without explicitly saying so Ricci is moving in the direction of Stoicism.

It is important to keep in mind that Ricci did not view Confucianism as religion, but only as a natural moral philosophy. What first attracted Ricci to Confucianism was "its non-religious nature,

34 D'Elia, F.R., I, 372.
35 Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, 48-49.
36 Ibid., II, 57.
37 Ibid., II, 117-118.
its ethical and social values." Ricci viewed the Confucians as a "sect of the literati," which he preferred over the other sects in China. He did not regard it as a religion which was in competition with Christianity. Therefore the common ground or body of truths which Christianity and Confucianism shared was not strictly speaking "religious," but rather on the level of a natural moral philosophy. Both of these natural moral philosophies endorsed virtue and living well, and condemned vice and living badly. They both spoke of the morality and goodness of human actions as the rational criterion for men to live by. In this regard Ricci saw Confucianism as comparable to the "pagan religions" of classical Greece and Rome. They all espouse in varying degrees and in different ways the human values that are pagan, primarily ethical, and pre-Christian. In this list of "pagan religions" or natural moral philosophies, Ricci thought Confucianism compared favorably.

Of all the pagan sects known to Europe, I know of no other people who fell into fewer errors as regards religion in the early stages of their antiquity than did the Chinese. For I find in their writings that they always adored one supreme being whom they called "King of Heaven" or "Heaven and Earth," perhaps in the belief that heaven and earth were animated to make one living body of the supreme god, as if he were their soul .... In all their actions they always made a point to follow the dictates of reason which they claimed came from heaven.

Ricci also judged Confucius as the supreme Chinese philosopher who elaborated and embodied in his life a very lofty and noble moral way of life. Ricci called Confucius "the greatest philosopher among them [Chinese]," and also "the author, restorer, and head" of the ancient religious way of life in China which still continues in Chinese tradition. Ricci joined the Chinese in praising Confucius

38 Rule, K'ung-tzu or Confucius?, p. 127.
39 Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, 48-49.
40 D'Elia, F.R., I, 108-109. In footnote 2, D'Elia suggests that such a passage might have been a Chinese source for Spinoza's philosophy. Such an understanding of the divine might even have some affinity with Stoicism. Cf. also ibid., I, 115, and Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 18-24 and passim.
41 D'Elia, F.R., I, 39 and 115.
and his heroic qualities.

Confucius has been considered and venerated by all as the holiest man that ever existed in the world. And truly, in what he said and in the way he lived in conformity to nature, he is not inferior to our ancient philosophers, and superior to many.\(^{42}\)

Ricci carefully qualified his judgment according to the norm of the natural.

Another crucial stage in the development of Ricci’s interpretation of Confucianism was the realization of the divergencies between the commentaries and the original sources of Confucianism. In a letter to a friend Ricci distinguished the original works traditionally attributed to Confucius from the multitude of commentaries which followed.

At the very time when, if I calculate correctly, Plato and Aristotle flourished among us, there also flourished among (the Chinese) certain literati of good life who produced books dealing with moral matters, not in a scientific way, but in the form of maxims. The chief of these wrote four books which are most highly esteemed, and read day and night. In volume they do not exceed the size of the letters of Marcus Tullius, but the commentaries and glosses, and the commentaries on the commentaries, and further treatises and discourses upon them by this time are infinite.\(^{43}\)

As one among the many different interpretations of Confucianism which appear throughout Chinese history, Ricci began to develop his own distinctive Christian interpretation. He sought to establish his orthodox interpretation of Confucianism primarily and exclusively on the basis of the ancient Confucian classics. In this way Ricci placed the Jesuits and the teaching of Christianity solidly on the side of those urging a return to the original and pure teaching of Confucianism. As a consequence Ricci discounted and rejected all post-classical developments of Confucianism, especially Neo-Confucianism which was dominant in his day. In Ricci’s mind the best of China remained in ancient Confucianism. Later developments in Chinese history led to the untruths of idolatry and atheism.


\(^{43}\) Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche*, II, 237.
Just as human nature corrupts and tends of itself to degenerate if it is not helped by divine grace, so there came [after the time of Confucius] some miserable men who little by little so extinguished that first light [of Confucianism] and extended themselves to such a great liberty that they spoke and acted as they wished concerning right and wrong without any fear; the result is that among those who these days escape from idolatry only a few manage not to fall into atheism.\textsuperscript{44}

In refuting the false doctrines of Neo-Confucianism, Ricci would not only appeal to reason and logic, but even more to the authority of ancient Confucianism.\textsuperscript{45}

B. Doctrinal Basis of Confucianism

Ricci’s hopes to understand and accommodate Christianity to Confucianism were also based on certain commonly held truths. On the fundamental questions of God, man, and life after death Ricci claimed that Confucianism and Christianity held basically the same positions. From the natural philosophical point of view, they held the same doctrines.

In the universe there is one Lord and Creator of all things which He continually preserves; there is the immortality of man’s soul which is given the payment of good or bad works in the next life with God . . . . All this is proven not only with many reasons and arguments drawn from the holy teachers [of Christianity], but also with the great authority of the ancient books [of Confucianism] which the Father had noted when he read them; this gave great authority and credibility to this work.\textsuperscript{46}

Ricci spent a great deal of effort to prove that these doctrines were

\textsuperscript{44} D’Elia F.R., I, 110.

\textsuperscript{45} D’Elia, F.R., I, 116. Cf. also the mistranslation of Trigault in Gallagher, China in the Sixteenth Century, p. 95.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., II, 293-295. Cf. also Trigault’s translation in Gallagher, China in the Sixteenth Century, p. 449. This triadic doctrine is also part of Vignano’s missionary policy for Asia; Cf. Rule, K’ung-tzu or Confucius?, p. 81.
to be found in ancient Confucianism. In his *Catechism* he elaborated in great detail how these are to be found in the original Confucian classics.\(^{47}\) In such works as *On Friendship* and the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* Ricci assumed this doctrinal kinship between Confucianism and Christianity, and then continued on to present his practical teaching on friendship and virtue.

Ricci asserted that by doing good and faithfully following the light of reason man can come to the true knowledge of God. He believed that Confucius had done so, and that he had incorporated the notion of God as “Heaven” or “Supreme Ruler” as an integral part of his moral teaching.\(^{48}\) This one true God is the same one the Christians know and believe in. Ricci called this same God of the Confucians and of the Christians the “Lord of Heaven.”\(^{49}\) Obviously Ricci did not discover all this in the Confucian classics, but reasoned to it from his understanding of Confucianism and Christianity. He realized that both systems of thought or moral approaches to life had the same basic notion of God as a supreme being who preserves and governs all of reality.

His [Ricci’s] position would be fairly represented as an assertion that there is some notion of a supreme God in the earliest Chinese texts, associated especially with the terms *tien* [Heaven] and *shang-ti* [Supreme Ruler]; and that reason, by logical deduction, can establish that he must be the sole preserver and governor of all things.\(^{50}\)

According to Ricci this same type of reasoning showed that Con-

\(^{47}\) Cf. especially chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, of the *Catechism*. The *Catechism* refers to Ricci’s *True Doctrine of God* which he published in 1603. Ricci refers to it in Latin as *De Deo Verax Disputatio*. In Italian it has been translated by Pasquale D’Elia as *Solido Trattato Sù Dio* (unpublished translation kept at the Gregorian University Library). All references to the *Catechism* are from D’Elia’s unpublished translation. Cf. D’Elia, *F. R.*, II, 293, footnote 1; cf. also Rule, *K’ung-tzu or Confucius?*, pp. 131-133.

\(^{48}\) Cf. Ricci’s introduction to his own *Catechism*, pp. 10-16.


\(^{50}\) Rule, *K’ung-tzu or Confucius?*, p. 135.
fucianism and Christianity also shared the doctrines of the immortality of man and the divine sanction of good and evil.\textsuperscript{51}

While Ricci spent a great deal of effort at proving that the basic Christian notions of God, the immortality of man, and the divine sanction of good and evil were in the Confucian classics, the Chinese Confucians were relatively unimpressed. Ricci interpreted the Confucian notions of Heaven and its Mandate as fundamentally equivalent to the Christian notions of God and divine providence. He also proved the immortality of man’s soul and the doctrine of Heaven and Hell (the divine sanction of good and evil) from the nature of God and his relationship to mankind. These are all inferred or reasoned doctrines which are present or necessarily implied in the Confucian classics.\textsuperscript{52} But all such reasoning and proofs of doctrines had little impact on the Chinese. What seems to have mattered was the manner Ricci treated the Confucian or Chinese tradition and way of life. The Chinese Confucians were not interested in doctrinal debates as much as discussing what is the best way for man to live. Thus Ricci’s \textit{Catechism} aroused a hostile reaction and simply left the Confucians cold and relatively unimpressed. The reason was that the \textit{Catechism} was a book of proofs and refutations of doctrines which in various ways attacked the Chinese Confucian way of life. In contrast to this, the \textit{Book of 25 Paragraphs} received a warm and heartfelt reception, and left a favorable impact on the Chinese readers. The \textit{Book of 25 Paragraphs} did not deal with doctrines, but only spoke of the better and more enlightened ways of practicing virtue. In the \textit{Book of 25 Paragraphs} Ricci did not speak of God, the immortality of man, or the divine sanction of good and evil. He only offered practical insights on how to be virtuous and live well. It is interesting to note that Ricci was first interested in establishing doctrines, and then observing how people put them into practice. But the Chinese Confucians seem to reverse the priorities to living well first, and then seeing what doctrines are implied in man’s virtuous living. Ricci himself seems to have bent and adapted himself to the new situation. He sought out passages in the Confucian classics to prove his doctrines. When there are no passages, he argued that the

\textsuperscript{51} Cf. chapters 3 and 6 of Ricci’s \textit{Catechism}.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 53-75, 146-148, 153-173; also D’Elia, F.R., I, 115-116 and especially footnote 9.
doctrines were necessarily implied. But ultimately these truths were proved by the "manners" or the way men live. This is the final proof.

For there are many things which he [Confucius] did not treat of. Perhaps there were even things he communicated orally but were not written down in books. Perhaps they were even recorded, but later were lost. Perhaps finally some later scribes who were ignorant and did not believe such things, excised them from the text. Furthermore the wording of texts is sometimes altered and we cannot be certain whether or not a particular text really read as it does now. Modern scholars make mistakes in interpreting ancient books, and cannot master the meaning. They are quick to quote the text, but slow to interpret it. And so, while modern scholarship flourishes, modern manners are in decline.53

In dealing with the notions of virtue and the Confucian superior man Ricci moved to a less doctrinal and more practical description of the moral truths that the Confucians and Christians shared. Here there were no controversies over true and false doctrines, but only better and worse presentations of how to practice virtue and live well. In Ricci's mind this practical description of virtue flowed directly from the doctrines he so painstakingly uncovered and proved to be true for both Confucianism and Christianity. But to the Chinese Ricci's description of virtuous living was praiseworthy because it was insightful and clarifying in itself. Everyone could appreciate an enlightening and helpful presentation on how to be virtuous, without any reference to doctrines which might be inferred. This is not to say that doctrines are not important, but that a clear and practical teaching on how to be virtuous can be appreciated in and for itself. This is what the Book 25 of Paragraphs meant to the Chinese Confucians.

In the final analysis Ricci described Confucianism as "una legge non formata."54 It is difficult to translate this phrase exactly, but it seems to approximate most closely "an incomplete law or way of life." This must be understood in terms of a natural moral philosophy. Confucianism is an incomplete moral way of life espe-

53 Ricci, Catechism, pp. 163-164.
54 D'Elia F.R., I, 120.
cially in contrast to the divinely revealed law or way of life in Jesus Christ. For Ricci believed Christianity to be the complete and perfect way of life. Therefore Ricci can be understood to see Christianity as a type of logical extension of the Confucian premises. Trigault translates Ricci's thought by saying that Christianity is the supernatural law added on the natural law of Confucianism.

What the Fathers continually endeavored to emphasize... was the fact that the Christian law was in perfect accord with the innate light of conscience. It was, as he [Ricci] maintained, by this same light of conscience that the most ancient of the Chinese scholars had approached to this same doctrine of Christianity in their writings, centuries before the appearance of the idols [Buddhism]. They explained, also that they themselves were not abolishing the natural law, rather they were adding to it what was lacking, namely the supernatural as taught by God who Himself had become man.55

Ricci viewed Christianity as providing something Confucianism was lacking. Hsu Kuang-ch'i, an eminent Confucian Christian and close friend of Ricci, also saw the relationship between Confucianism and Christianity in terms of completion. He said that Christianity "does away with idols [false teaching of Buddhism] and completes the law of the literati [Confucianism]."56

If there are no major doctrinal differences between Confucianism and Christianity on the level of moral philosophy and if the Chinese are most interested in maintaining and perfecting their Confucian way of life and practicing virtue, it follows that the Chinese can become Christians without abandoning their culture and tradition. In Ricci's mind coming to believe in Christ does not deny nor suppress any truths, rather it enhances them. Therefore Ricci believed that he could legitimately accept Confucianism. Moreover he wished to facilitate the conversion process for the Chinese by showing them that they could retain their Chinese Confucian way of life and still

55 Gallagher, China in the Sixteenth Century, p. 156.
56 Ibid., p. 448. This passage is also an interpretation by Trigault which is not found in Ricci's original text.
become Christians. Christianity does not destroy or abolish Confucianism, it adds to and perfects it.

Once a Chinese became a Christian in practice he acknowledged, believed in, prayed to t'ien-chu [Lord of Heaven]; and t'ien-chu acquired for him specifically Chinese connotations. He was not required to abandon his cultural heritage; to redefine it, perhaps, but not to reject it. And in public he could continue to behave as before. His monogamy might be regarded as eccentric, and his moral code excessively strict, but in essentials he remained a ju, a Confucian scholar.\(^{57}\)

C. A Model of Understanding

In attempting to see how Ricci understood Confucianism and Stoicism as an integral part of the Christianizing process of China, we have noted that he critically accepted what can be called ancient Confucianism and categorized it as a natural moral philosophy. As such, Confucianism can even be compared favorably with the ancient "pagan religions" or natural moral philosophies of Greece and Rome. Ricci even found a common doctrinal basis which according to his understanding Confucians and Christians shared. In his Catechism Ricci proved that ancient Confucianism also held the true doctrines on God, the immortality of man, and the divine sanction of good and evil. In Ricci's mind this common doctrinal foundation was very important, but for the Chinese this was not so important. They were much more impressed with his practical and non-polemical teaching on how to be virtuous as presented in the Book of 25 Paragraphs. It is this Stoical teaching on the practice of virtue which Ricci translated and transformed into a Chinese Confucian setting which so impressed his Chinese readers. How can we understand this success which also surprised Ricci? And how does the Stoical-Confucian moral teaching fit into Ricci's overall mission to Christianize China?

The success of the Book of 25 Paragraphs was due primarily to Ricci's adaptation to the Chinese Confucian culture and to his penet-

\(^{57}\) Rule, K'ung-tzu or Confucius?, p. 153.
trating presentation on how to practice virtue and live well. The Chinese Confucians were proud of their moral heritage and tradition; they believed that they would naturally be the best spokesmen and exemplars of virtuous living. Others would not understand, and certainly others would not be able to supersede them in their profession of moral teaching. Yet in fact Ricci, a foreigner who had just recently become a Confucian, presented such a profound and clear moral teaching that he astounded his Confucian readers. Ricci had even mastered the style and manner of Chinese Confucian pedagogy. By accepting ancient Confucianism and presenting his moral teaching in the native Confucian way, Ricci spoke to them within their own tradition and life style. Not only did Ricci laud their Chinese Confucian way of life, but he even suggested how it might become greater and more perfect. For some this was threatening; in some sense it lead beyond Confucius. For others, Ricci’s contribution was a welcome addition to the Chinese Confucian tradition. But for all who seriously read such a work as the Book of 25 Paragraphs, they were significantly impressed.

It is a more difficult task to grasp how Ricci’s understanding of Stoical-Confucian moral philosophy fits into his missiology. Ricci was not a thinker who explicitly analyzed and elaborated a system. He treated problems and questions as they arose. He felt his way and dealt with persons and situations practically, rather than structuring or plotting beforehand a policy or course of action in a theoretical way. His acceptance of Confucianism was gained through practical experience; later he sought to reason and justify his stance. In such a way Ricci used Stoicism to teach moral philosophy to the Confucians. He felt it was right and appropriate, but he did not work out beforehand the theoretical affinities between these two natural philosophies. What Ricci did in practice preceded what he could explain in theory. His use of Stoicism never did reach the point of explicit theoretical explanation.

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60 Cf. for example Ricci and the complex question of Chinese rites, Rule, K’ung-tzu or Confucius?, pp. 151-162.
To help us better understand how Ricci might have understood the relationship between Confucianism and Christianity and how Ricci managed to blend Stoicism so easily with Confucianism, we shall propose a theoretical structure which might explain in theory what he did in practice. We propose a fourfold structure of moral and religious experience: (1) the experience of the holy, (2) ethics of moral experience, (3) ethical theism or the philosophical understanding which identifies the holy one as the guardian of morality, and (4) the Christian religion or the divine revelation in Jesus Christ. If we apply this structure to Ricci’s missiology, we find that number one is assumed, number two and three are equivalent to Ricci’s interpretation of ancient Confucianism and Stoicism, and number four is properly Christianity to which ancient Confucianism and Ricci’s brand of Stoicism are directed. The whole process is religious and any element of this structure or development can be considered part of the process of Christianization. When Ricci speaks of the “pagan religions” of Greece and Rome, he is situating them on the level of ethics or ethical theism. Thus they are also similar to Confucianism and Stoicism. But Christianity alone is complete because it includes the true divine revelation which is absent in all the pagan religions and moral philosophies. They are all incomplete because they lack the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Ricci’s missiology centered on the recognition and interpretation of ancient Confucianism as an ethical theism, i.e. moral way of life which sees God as the author and ruler of man’s morality. Ricci attempted to found his position doctrinally by discovering the true notion of God, the immortality of man, and divine sanction of good and evil in the Confucian classics. Practically speaking he did this by teaching a life of virtue grounded in God or the Lord of Heaven. In this way Ricci hoped to accentuate and incorporate what is best in the Chinese Confucian tradition into the process of Christianization.

61 Ethics can be defined as the philosophical study which determines what types of activity are good, right and to be done (or bad, wrong and not to be done) so that man may live well. Cf. Vernon J. Bourke, “Ethics,” New Catholic Encyclopedia, V, 570.

Continuing to be a Confucian was not an impediment, but an asset in the process of becoming a Christian. While this may have been appealing and reassuring to the Chinese, it was risky for the Europeans. The Westerners were ignorant and suspicious of Confucianism. Many thought it was a primitive, superstitious, and even false religion—very much below the dignity and development of Western philosophy and theology. Even some of Ricci’s fellow Jesuit missionaries had misgivings about Confucianism. They would not classify Confucianism as an ethical theism nor equate it with religious Stoicism. As we have seen, Ricci did not seek to prove his thesis, as much as practically accept it as true and act on it.

Ricci’s understanding of Confucianism as “an incomplete law or way of life” seems to be a very accurate definition. Confucianism does not claim any divine revelation, yet it strongly advocates a moral or ethical way of life. Ricci sees Confucianism in practice as primarily a system of ethics, a socio-political philosophy.

The aim of this law of the literati [Confucianism] is the peace and quiet of the kingdom and the good government of households and their individual members. In these matters they give very good advice, completely in conformity with the light of nature and Catholic truth.

Ricci consciously sought to relate this system of ethics with a belief in God, theism, which he also claimed was present in ancient Confucianism. If a man understands and tries to live by these norms, he is on the way to becoming a superior man. A modern Sinologist also views Confucianism as not quite a religion, but yet being a socio-politico-moral doctrine and a way of life which somehow looks toward God.

Viewed in this light, Confucianism is not treated here as a full-fledged religion in the theistic sense, but as a socio-

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64 D’Elia, F.R., I, 120.

political doctrine having religious qualities. Confucianism set up no god as the premise of its teaching, and its basic principles were developed mainly from pragmatic considerations .... Confucianism did address itself to the ultimate meaning of life and death, but only in terms of moral responsibility to man, not to any supernatural power. The religious nature of Confucianism as a system of thought lies in its furtive treatment of the ideas of Heaven and fate as an answer to human problems unaccountable for by knowledge or in moral terms. And Confucianism as a practiced doctrine received support from the cult to Confucian worship and from many supernatural ideas and cults associated with the functioning of the Confucian tradition.⁶⁶

Some questions arise concerning the relationship between ethical theism and Christianity. Judging from what Ricci practically did, two observations can be made. First, Ricci believed that establishing Confucianism as an ethical theism was the best and most appropriate way to Christianize China. He felt that this identification of Confucian morality and way of life as the acceptable way and process of Christianization would best establish and insure Christianity in China. Adopting ancient Confucianism was an acceptable if not the better natural preparation for the Chinese to receive Christian faith and revelation. All this was a matter of practical and prudential judgement on Ricci’s part. It is theoretically debatable now as it was then. Second, Ricci very consciously saw his work as only a preparation for Christianity. Other missionaries would have to supplement and complete his work by explicitly teaching the Christian mysteries.⁶⁷ Ricci saw himself as a pioneer in the long process of Christianization.

There are other factors which also corroborate and fit into the fourfold structure of religious experience. Ricci described Confucianism as an incomplete law or way of life; he described the Confucians as the sect of the literati. This is understood to be part of the religious or Christianization process, but it is not religion in the full sense

of the word. Religion applies properly, truly, and only to Christianity; it has a law or a moral way of life which is "completed" by the divine revelation in Jesus Christ.68 How did Ricci view Buddhism? He called it the sect of the idols which promoted a defective law and moral way of life. He also called it a false religion and a heretical parody on Christianity; it claimed a false revelation and theology for itself.69 Therefore the real opposition on the religious level is between Buddhism and Christianity. Confucianism does not claim any revelation, nor does it hold any false doctrines even though they may be incomplete. As a moral way of life there should be no opposition between Confucianism and Christianity. The relationship is one of incompleteness to completeness, not one of right to wrong. Ricci criticized the post-classical tradition and history of Confucianism because it abandoned its original ethical theism and assumed false doctrines—such as atheism, polytheism, materialism—which are false and destroy the original and true moral way of life taught by Confucius.70

D. Ricci's Use of Stoicism to Teach the Confucians

Ricci's use of Stoicism to teach ethics to the Confucians happened more by practical experimentation than by theoretical planning. Ricci seems to have done it because it felt right. Since such works as On Friendship and the Book of 25 Paragraphs were so well received, there was never any debate or discussion of Ricci's methodology in these works. While there was some discussion over Ricci's interpretation and use of ancient Confucianism as an ethical theism in the process of Christianization, his use of Stoicism was hardly recognized or noticed. Evidently it was not a problem.71

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69 The Jesuits believed that Buddhism was not only a misguided paganism, but also a false religion which attacked Christianity. Cf. Ricci, Catechism, pp. 231-232, and George L. Harris, "The Mission of Matteo Ricci, S.J.: A Case Study of an Effort at Guided Cultural Change in the Sixteenth Century," Monumenta Serica, XXV (1966), passim, especially 116-117.
71 It is even debatable whether anyone knew that Ricci used Epictetus'
In adopting the Stoicism of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, Ricci did not establish or prove any doctrinal basis with Confucianism. It was not necessary. Ricci was more interested in presenting an ethical teaching which supported, clarified, and pointed beyond Confucianism. By practical experimentation he found that Epictetus' *Encheiridion* was helpful in presenting his practical teaching on how to be virtuous. Even though there was no attempt to establish any common doctrine, it is noteworthy that the three doctrines of God, man, and the afterlife which Ricci claimed to have found in Confucianism are also tenable in Stoicism. In the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* Ricci seems to assume that these doctrines are common to both Confucianism and Stoicism. Without any explicit reference to any doctrine, Ricci simply presents his practical teaching on virtuous living.

What characterizes the Stoicism contained in Epictetus' *Encheiridion*? Basically Ricci edited and modified Stoicism in such a way that it re-enforced what he considered was best in ancient Confucianism and clarified what was still unclear in Confucian ethics. As we have seen, the first title attributed to Ricci's unfinished *Book of 25 Paragraphs* was *Clear Words*. This expresses succintly what Ricci tried to present in his teaching. He clarified how men's passions and thinking process can effectively contribute to self-control and attainment of virtue. He did this in a practical non-dogmatic way. This can be seen in the various practical attitudes or points of view which characterize the virtuous man. They are culled from the wisdom of practical experience and are designed to meet the practical problems men face. These practical insights originate from the experience of other virtuous men, and are handed on in the forms of maxims which are meant to solve various types of human predicaments. Thus in the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* the virtuous man is not depicted by the

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*Encheiridion* as the basis of his *Book of 25 Paragraphs*. There is no known evidence that indicates that anyone was aware of how Ricci composed the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*.


73 See Feng's preface and Hsu's epilogue for their discussion of how Ricci's teaching brings clarity and effective control over the passions and affections. Cf. above pp. 21-25.
speculative truths he believes or adheres to, but by the practical insights and know-how which effectively enable him to handle the problems and difficulties he experiences. It is in terms of man attempting to cope with or solve the predicament he faces that marks the beginning of Ricci’s and Epictetus’ moral teaching. This effective, practical, and man-centered approach to virtue is grounded in a clear and practical understanding of man’s resources and limitations. Following Epictetus, Ricci clearly and practically delineates the scope of his teaching as follows: “Some things are in my power, and some are not.” This defines man’s moral task as knowing and controlling what is properly within his power.

This man-centered problem-solving approach to moral human living stresses the practical truth of attaining virtue. It is not primarily interested in the actual attainment of perfect virtue. It focuses on how a man can properly and effectively accommodate himself to all the powers of reality—both within and beyond man’s control and responsibility—so that he can attain the moral life he desires. Such a structuring of the moral task results in the dual outlook of optimism and resignation. Man has the desire and capacity to become virtuous. He recognizes the moral obligation and responsibility to live in a certain way. He is confident that he can attain the level of virtuous living proper to him if he so desires. This realization of power provides man with an optimistic outlook on life. No external force can stop him from attaining virtue. This sense of optimism is based on a proper sense of self-confidence and invincibility in who he is and what he can do. But man also realizes that this optimism has severe limitations within which he must contain himself. Man recognizes that he must resign himself to the greater powers which are beyond him. Death, sickness, and tragic events are examples of the uncontrollable and inevitable realities of life. Such realities can only be met with detachment and resignation. For man no other practical or more effective solution is possible. What is beyond man’s power is to be accepted in a quiet, peaceful, and willingly resigned manner. This tension of invincible power to attain virtue within unavoidable limitations of reality defines the structure and specifies the activity of man’s moral task in Ricci’s

74 B of 25 P., paragraph 1.
Book of 25 Paragraphs,\textsuperscript{75}

Ricci’s presentation of his Stoical moral teaching is admirably suited to the Confucian moral way of thinking since Confucianism also defines its moral task in terms of the invincible moral power of man and the binding laws of Heaven. According to Ricci both Confucianism and Stoicism seek light primarily not in theoretical or speculative understanding, but in the practical way this moral life is to be lived. Ricci therefore practically presents man’s moral task in life in terms of the metaphors of a player in a game, or a guest at a banquet, or an actor in a drama.\textsuperscript{76} These practical examples show the optimism and resignation necessary to succeed. Success is possible within the given structure and the specific type of behavior which each participant comes to realize as the proper way to act. Man has the power to win the moral game of life if he is optimistic and confident. He can become the guest at the heavenly banquet if he acts properly. He is assured of success if he plays his assigned role well. These metaphors are all comparable to man’s moral task in life, and thus shed light on how man is to practice virtue. With this presentation Ricci implies that such a moral view of life and attainment of virtue is basically Stoical, compatible with Christianity, and appealing to the Confucians.

Ricci’s moral teaching is basically directed at clarifying the process whereby man is to practically understand and exercise virtue. Man is to see more clearly what he can and ought to do, and how he can do it more effectively. Almost every paragraph of the Book of 25 Paragraphs reflects this pattern of clarification and efficient problem-solving as man proceeds on the road to perfection. Each paragraph poses a practical problem in the task of morally living well, and then attempts to solve it. Let us take paragraph \#10 as an example. The problem is how men should use things. The clear

\textsuperscript{75} In paragraph \#1 of the Book of 25 Paragraphs Ricci speaks of “desire, opinion, effort, and aversion” as things properly within man’s power, and of “property, honor, reputation, and long life” as examples which are beyond man’s power. This is the basic structure of man’s reality which governs the whole moral treatise.

\textsuperscript{76} These are three major metaphors in the Book of 25 Paragraphs which present an optimistic and resigned picture of life. See paragraphs \#4, 12, 17.
principle is that things in this world do not belong to man. A person should use things as if he were borrowing them from another. It is understood that this principle may be useful and helpful to anyone who is interested in becoming a virtuous man. Stoicism, Confucianism, and Christianity all endorse and approve this practical principle. A man takes on such an attitude not because he speculatively understands the truth of it nor because he wishes to adhere to a certain belief in God or in a reality beyond man, but because he sees it as practically true and helpful in overcoming the difficulties or problems he may have to face. The reason or wisdom of such a moral principle is to be seen in the effective working out of such an experience. In the practical instance of the death of a wife or child, or the loss of property, how is man to effectively and properly handle such a problem? He is to remember that everything takes place under the rule of the First Master; he is to relate to everyone and everything as if it were not properly his but only lent to him. Thus excessive grief, anger, or despair in such instances would indicate an unvirtuous and improper way of living. Such passions would reveal a lack of proper control; they should be considered as deviations from the true path of virtue. What is implied is that reason should control all passions and feelings.

Ricci's edited Stoical teaching in the Book of 25 Paragraphs represents a significant contribution to the Confucian tradition and wisdom of practicing virtue. The Confucians saw it as enlightening and beneficial to their own desire to become superior virtuous men. To attempt to categorize Ricci's teaching as Stoical, or Confucian, or even as Christian is to make an unnecessary and incorrect division and distinction. If we try to analyze Ricci's moral teaching according to its doctrine and practice, we see that Ricci assumed and understood the same doctrines of God, immortality of man, and the afterlife to be present in each system of thought. As to the practical moral truths of Ricci's teaching, it seems that Ricci felt that these were also suitable and adaptable to Confucianism, Stoicism, and Christianity. Indeed these doctrinal and practical truths are envisioned as universally true. Every system of thought and every moral approach to life which is open to the truth would assent to the universal teaching of the Book of 25 Paragraphs. As Ricci and his Chinese readers observed, there were no polemical overtones in this work. Even the opposing
camp of the Buddhists lauded this work. Ricci remaked that this teaching was Stoical and Christian, and clearly directed to a Confucian audience. Feng and Hsu were seemingly unaware that it was Stoical. But they both observed that Ricci’s moral teaching was a new teaching concerning the Lord of Heaven, i.e. Christian, and also a continuation and deepening of the Confucian moral way of life. In effect the Book 25 Paragraphs combines certain essential elements of these seemingly disparate traditions of Stoicism, Confucianism, and Christianity and claims that they meet and share the same fundamental moral philosophy and pursuit of virtue. This is not done through a speculative or theoretical comparison of systems or even through an explicit harmonization of doctrine, but through the common acceptance and appreciation of the same practical truths which characterize the true exercise of virtue and the art of living well. This is the level where Ricci sought to meet the Confucians. In this endeavor he sought to enlist the practical truths of Stoicism to help clarify and enlighten the common pursuit of true virtuous living.

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77 Feng speaks of Ricci’s new teaching from the West as the service of the Lord of Heaven and also how Ricci’s teaching continues Confucius’ desire to deepen the pursuit of virtue. Hsu also characterizes Ricci’s new teaching as believing and seeing the Supreme Lord, and also as safeguarding and deepening Confucius’ teaching on virtue. Cf. the prologue and epilogue to the Book of 25 Paragraphs.
III. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

A. The Jesuit Humanism of the Renaissance

Ricci’s understanding and interpretation of Confucianism assumes that it is like Stoicism, especially as regards the practical truths of moral philosophy. As we have seen, Ricci regarded Confucianism as another “pagan religion,” in the same category as the pagan religions of ancient Greece and Rome. It is noteworthy that Ricci and the Jesuits of Renaissance Europe were caught up in the new learning of classical literature and physical sciences. They combined these pagan classics with the sciences to form a distinctive Jesuit philosophy of education. The Jesuits of the Renaissance were imbued with the spirit that all true knowledge and learning—no matter what it may be—was in some way a helpful preparation for the gospel. They faced the risks of paganism and the unknowns of the new learning of the sciences with the confidence that all truth meets and ultimately converges in Christ. There can be no contradiction between the truth of man or nature and the truth of God or Christ. Truth was the unmistakable line of continuity between nature and grace, true paganism and Christian revelation, the human and the divine. According to the Jesuit humanism of the Renaissance, this learning of the pagan classics and the sciences was the best education available in the formation and training of the ideal Christian gentleman.⁷⁸

In the area of moral philosophy the Jesuit humanism of the Renaissance focused on Stoicism. Even though Stoicism was primarily considered to be a moral philosophy or ethics, it had roots in a

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more comprehensive philosophy of life. In its original form it was composed of three integral parts: logic, physics, and ethics. Logic dealt with man's way of knowing, i.e. how man came to form an organized body of knowledge through his experiences. Physics was the science which dealt with the reality of nature and the discovery of the laws which govern its operations. Ethics was the specific science of human behavior which originated in man's experience of his moral responsibility, and it sought to find the heavenly-human moral laws which govern his actions. In the history of Western philosophy this ethical dimension eventually became the primary and dominant concern of Stoicism. The Jesuit humanism of the Renaissance in which Ricci was educated was greatly influenced by Stoicism. Logic and the rules of correct thinking became the focus of philosophical study. The new learning of the physical sciences and mathematics lead to a deeper study of nature and its laws. Such a body of knowledge was seen as the foundation of the moral order and the context of man's moral quest for virtue and perfection. The literature of the pagan classics and the discoveries of the physical sciences became the key elements of the new Jesuit form of education. This process of learning was considered to be an acceptable process of human maturation toward Christianity or the Christianization process itself in a broader sense. This humanistic learning was consciously directed toward the moral cultivation and practice of virtue. The models for such a formation and training were the great moral heroes of antiquity. Such classical Stoical figures as Socrates, Seneca, and Epictetus became the paragons of virtue, wisdom, human excellence, and even sanctity. At times they were referred to as "saints," and Socrates was called a "martyr." Their moral teaching was compared to the gospel message, and their practice of virtue represented the indispensable human means toward salvation. A man had to be "prepared" to receive the saving grace of faith. Such a humanistic and moral education which Ricci absorbed and lived with his fellow European Jesuits is reflected in the saying that "pagan authors have


become the heralds of Christ." For Ricci and the Renaissance Jesuits the classical pagan literature and the new physical sciences became the natural preparation for the faith and revelation of Jesus Christ.

Stoic moral philosophy was an accepted and integral part of Jesuit Renaissance education. It was considered to be an excellent natural preparation in wisdom, human judgment, and the natural practice of virtue. Christianity was understood to be the supernatural religion or the revealed teaching which was built on what is naturally true and good; it also continued beyond this natural foundation. Therefore Christianity is capable of absorbing these elements of classical paganism and is capable of transforming them according to the light of Christianity. "The way to Christianize the classical authors is not to take them out of their world, but to fill up their lacunae, to refute their errors according to the light of Christian morality." Such an endorsement and acceptance of pagan Stoic moral philosophy as a legitimate preparation for Christianity is also the basis for the Jesuit acceptance of other similar pagan moral philosophies. Jesuit missionaries in other parts of the world made similar evaluations and judgments of the contemporary pagan moralities which they encountered in other cultures.

The judgment of Jesuit missionaries in regard to the contemporary paganism was the same [as that in regard to classical paganism]. The Chinese and Japanese did not seem to be different from the Greeks, Romans or the gentiles of Asia and Europe during the time of the apostles.

Ricci's interpretation of Confucianism as a legitimate form of contemporary paganism seems to fit such Jesuit thinking. As we have seen in the Book of 25 Paragraphs, he saw Confucianism as a type of Chinese Stoicism.

The comparison of the contemporary pagan religions in Asia with those of ancient Greece and Rome was not uncommon among Jesuit missionaries. The comparisons were often made in terms of

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81 de Dainville, La Naissance de l'humanisme moderne, p. 232.
82 Ibid., p. 233.
83 Ibid., p. 226 footnote 3.
specific points of similarity and contrast. For example Fr. Valignano, Ricci’s immediate superior in Asia, saw China’s natural philosophy as similar to that of Europe but as yet lacking the Aristotelian method and the light of Christianity.

“Although their sciences,” wrote Fr. Valignano in reference to the Chinese, “are not so perfect as ours, they seem to have attained a degree possessed by the ancient philosophers before Aristotic introduced the method and before their philosophies were cleared by the light of Christian doctrine.”

This judgment agrees with Ricci’s overall evaluation of the religious and philosophical scene in China. Ricci made several attempts to relate various aspects of Confucianism with Aristotelian concepts. He referred to the Buddhists as Pythagoreans, and the Neo(?)-Confucians as Epicureans. The Confucians he understood as being most similar to the Stoics. All these evaluations and judgments seem to flow from the new Jesuit humanism of the Renaissance which the Jesuit missionaries brought with them to Asia. They seemed to be conscious of a similar moral philosophy operative in very different cultures and historical circumstances, i.e. in the classical paganism of Greece and Rome which they used as a pedagogical tool and in contemporary Chinese Confucianism.

Ricci’s understanding and acceptance of Confucianism was done with critical and painstaking care. His careful and reflective study of Confucianism resulted in his distinctive critical interpretation and acceptance of ancient Confucianism. He was aware of the weaknesses and defects inherent in the teachings of Confucianism. Having some model of Aristotelian-Thomistic thought in mind, he realized that

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84 Quoted in de Dainville, *La Naissance de l’humanisme moderne*, p. 226, footnote 3, as part of the *Monumenta Xavier*.


87 See Paul Rule, “Jesuit and Confucian?”, p. 122 where he claims that Ricci’s norm or model was “the medieval synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian revelation in the theological system of St. Thomas Aquinas.”
Confucianism lacked the philosophical method which provided clarity, precision, order, and certitude. He viewed the Confucian way of teaching in the form of maxims as very unscientific. He saw this lack of correct logical thinking as a most serious drawback in the pursuit of clear and exact understanding.

They [Chinese] have no conception of the rules of logic, and consequently treat the precepts of the science of ethics without any regard to the intrinsic co-ordination of the various divisions of this subject. The science of ethics with them is a series of confused maxims and deductions at which they have arrived under guidance of the light of reason.

Another type of weakness Ricci noted in Confucianism was its lack of divine revelation. Fortunately Confucianism admitted this lack, and did not claim any false or superstitious revelation like Buddhism. Ricci attempted to interpret the Confucian moral philosophy favorably toward and in the light of Christian revelation. He attempted to understand and "use" Confucianism much in the same way as the Jesuits in Europe "used" the classical pagan moral philosophy of Stoicism to prepare the way for the acceptance of Christianity. In both cases the Jesuit ideal was the formation of the Christian gentleman, one being European and the other Chinese.

B. Ricci's Missiology

Ricci's missionary efforts to interpret and use Confucianism as a legitimate part of the Christianization process reveal an intrinsic tension. According to the fourfold structure of religious experience given above, the missionary tension Ricci experienced can be focused on two different places. The first is the problem of establishing an adequate or complete ethics which we have called an ethical theism. This involved the critical task of human reflection and belief in establishing the so-called second and third phase of religious ex-

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88 Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, 237.
89 This is Trigault's translation of Ricci (cf. D'Elia, F. R., I, 39) which is found in Gallagher, China in the Sixteenth Century, p. 30.
perience. How does man critically establish and come to believe in a personal God? The second area of possible focus is the question of divine revelation. Does it exist and how does it relate to the third phase of ethical theism? This is not primarily a question of thought and reflection, but rather one of faith and commitment when confronted with the factual disclosure of Jesus Christ. Both of these areas can be viewed as different parts of the whole religious or Christianization process. They both can be understood as occurring under the influence of God's grace and His revelation, but only if one already believes and is committed to Christ. Ricci believed in Jesus Christ, but the Chinese Confucians as yet did not. Ricci decided to focus his efforts on establishing Confucianism as a legitimate ethical theism which was open to the revelation of Jesus Christ. According to his evaluation and judgment, this was the best way to introduce Christianity into China.

Ricci intentionally did not introduce Christianity as the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. He did not present his doctrine as revealed by God or any other supernatural being. He rarely dealt with the explicit mysteries of the Christian faith, and rarely talked about Christ. He referred to the Old and New Testament as sacred books containing the most wise teachings of Jesus Christ. This moral teaching and practice of virtue which Christ taught was also meant for the Chinese, but because of Buddhism and other idol worshiping sects the teaching of Christ was prevented from entering China.90 Ricci did not announce the coming of God in Christ as man's salvation or redemption, but he did declare that the new moral teaching of Christ was superior to Confucianism. Ricci did not wish to reveal a new foreign God whom the Confucians did not know, but he did want to challenge them with a new superior teaching on the practice of virtue. When Ricci wished to speak of Jesus Christ, he spoke of him as the embodiment of the God the Confucians also professed to believe. In effect Ricci was seeking a common ground of moral experience where Christians and Confucians could meet. Once this

90 Cf. Ricci, Catechism, pp. 230-233. Only in the last section of the last chapter of the Catechism does Ricci speak of Christ and the Christian mysteries. In the Book of 25 Paragraphs there is no reference to Christ at all. The only possible reference to anything in the Christian tradition is a story about Francis Xavier in paragraph #5.
common understanding was established and accepted, the explicit revelation of Christ and his way of life could be more easily grasped and accepted. Just as the European Jesuits sought to bring the western world to Christianity through Stoicism, Ricci sought to bring the Chinese to Christianity through Confucianism.

The relationships of Stoicism and of Confucianism to Christianity form the distinctive missiology of the Renaissance Jesuits. In each case it is the question of the relationship of a moral philosophy or an ethical theism to the revealed religion of Christianity. According to Ricci these different phases of religious experience were related in terms of incompleteness to completeness. Stoicism and Confucianism were incomplete moral laws or ways of life, whereas Christianity represented the fullness of moral living. While such an understanding emphasizes the line of continuity between moral philosophy and Christian revelation, the tension of discontinuity is also present. Christian revelation is not simply a better moral way of life; it also includes elements of a different kind of life. It includes the unique reality of God freely and explicitly disclosing Himself in a way and to a degree that man could not come to know by himself. In establishing an ethical theism man comes to believe in the one, true God as the Supreme Being, and also man comes to see this same God as the author and ruler of his moral experience. This important realization, however, does not reveal much content about God. God exists as the ultimate principle of reality and even as the supreme personal ruler of man's moral life. But this offers man little content to effectively relate with. While he is aware that God is supreme, he hardly knows who He is. In the moral life of practicing virtue and living well, man comes to realize more about God and His binding relationship to man. He comes to realize this in the very experience and practice of virtue which he has committed himself to. This practical knowledge and experience of virtue, so distinctive and dominant in Stoicism and Confucianism, is the area where Ricci focused his missiological efforts. The true practice of virtue will invariably lead toward Christianity.

Even though the Stoical and Confucian practice of virtue is true, good, and actually reveals something more about God, it still falls short and is incomplete in comparison to the fullness of
Christianity. While such a practice of virtue is not fully Christian, it is in some sense a preparation for and a way toward Christianity. If the practice of virtue is understood and “used” properly, it is a positive step in the total Christianization process. But it must realize its proper limitations. If it is understood and “used” improperly—as Ricci claimed the Neo-Confucians had done— it becomes harmful and destructive. A person can decide that in the human situation such a moral way of life is all that man can attain. Such a person in fact denies divine revelation. A person can also decide to take on a false or superstitious revelation to supplement what is lacking in moral philosophy. In this way he denies the true divine revelation of Christ, and also undermines his own moral life with superstition and magic. In Ricci’s mind the first danger more properly fits Stoicism and Confucianism, and the second fits Buddhism. Ricci’s missionary policy was to accept and develop man’s moral practice of virtue (1) to stretch man at least to some vague awareness and desire beyond the limitations of any self-contained human morality, and (2) in this way to prepare him for the revealed good news of Christ. Such a missiological approach stresses human and moral training and formation as the way to ultimate truth. It uses the man-centered approach of moral philosophy and the practice of virtue to arrive at the possible acceptance of divine revelation. It does not stress theology or the study of God and His revelation, but it emphasizes the human preparedness and predisposition for such a revelation. Stoical and Confucian moral philosophy falls short of and yet at the same time leads toward the revealed teachings of Christ.

Ricci’s missiological approach endorsed the Confucian moral philosophy as an acceptable natural moral law. Ricci noted that in their faithful observance of this natural law the Confucians were moving toward Christianity. They protected themselves from error, and through their efforts were probably saved through God’s mercy.

They [Confucians] are also inclined to religion (pietà), as

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I [Ricci] am little by little coming to perceive, although it will seem contrary to others. To begin with the beginning, in ancient times they followed the natural law as faithfully as in our lands ... [There were] very few things contrary to the light of reason and very many in conformity with it, and their natural philosophers yield to none. We may hope, in the divine mercy, that many of their ancestors were saved by the observance of the natural law with the help that God in his goodness gave them.\textsuperscript{93}

The influence of God is already present in their moral efforts to keep the natural law. Their attempts to be faithful to the Confucian moral way of life and to improve their lives as virtuous men somehow moved God to possibly grant them salvation. The practice of virtue and the attempt to live well are already within the economy of God’s grace; this moral effort somehow contributes to man’s salvation. Ricci believed that the Christian missionary effort should accommodate itself to this legitimate moral practice of virtue and by this means come to the explicit revelation of Christ—all through the divine influence of grace.

**C. Divine Revelation and the Light of Christianity**

Throughout the entire missiological effort to Christianize the Confucians there is the ongoing tension between the light of reason and the light of Christian revelation. While ethical theism and the practice of virtue are treated as the supreme avenues of wisdom and harmonization with God and the laws of Heaven, the mysterious and revealed teachings of Christ are understood to be superior and somewhat discontinuous with man’s moral efforts. In discussion with the Confucians Ricci set out to critically establish the rational science and practice of true virtuous living. This was a human, rational approach to know and practice the best and most perfect way of living which man felt morally obliged to follow. God was the ultimate goal of his quest, and also the first principle which guided all his thoughts and actions. In a word, everything was to be done

\textsuperscript{93} Tacchi Venturi, *Opere Storiche*, II, 385.
in the service of God. 94 In his better moments, man realizes that this is the way he ought to live. Ricci accepts and affirms such a noble human effort, but also implies that there is "something more" that the Confucians are ignorant of and do not realize. This is the explicit divine revelation of Christ and His teaching. Ricci implies that this critical factor is superior to and also discontinuous with the Confucian moral effort. Thereupon results the inherent missiological difficulty of how to treat and relate man's rational moral effort with God's factual self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. How is the human practice of virtue related to God's free and binding self-revelation to man?

Divine revelation can be understood in many different ways. There are many misconceptions and misunderstandings of revelation which do not fit Ricci's practical missiology. The divine revelation of Christ and His teachings is not to be understood as simply another wise man's teaching, however extraordinary it may be. Revelation is not just an historical fact in the list of world historical facts which the Confucians should know but do not. Revelation is not even a body of indubitable, universal, and immutable truths which have been secretly revealed to a chosen person or nation for mankind. Such understandings seem to be incompatible with Ricci's missiology. In the broadest sense of the word, divine revelation can be understood as the living or present self-disclosure of God to man, in every possible way. 95 This would include any true relationship between God and man. Thus the whole religious experience given above includes this divine revelation as man strives to find the proper way to live with God. In all these religious experiences some form of God's self-disclosure to man is understood or presumed. Within such a general understanding of divine revelation there is the specific revelation of Jesus Christ. 96 This corresponds to the fourth phase of religious experience given above. This produces the practical missiological problems which Ricci had to face in his

94 See Hsu's epilogue to Ricci's B of 25 P, which claims that this is the essence of Ricci's teaching.


attempts to Christianize the Confucians. How does the specific divine
revelation of Jesus Christ relate to the general divine revelation of
God, which is given for example in the Confucian ethical theism
and practice of virtue? This question is not explicitly treated by
Ricci, but in practice it had to be dealt with.

Ricci’s acceptance of the Confucian moral way of life can be
metaphorically described as man’s ascending movement toward God. Confucianism
seems to arise from the practical human desire to be
perfect, to be virtuous, and to live well. It attempts to form the
mature, virtuous gentleman who continually strives for greater per-
fection. In pursuing this quest the Confucian moral man comes to
realize that his desire to be perfect meets with God’s command to
obedience. In metaphorical terms, God’s demanding self-revelation
to man comes in a descending movement from above. Man’s moral
knowledge and practice continues but also shifts from a self-appointed
task of perfection to a free response to the directives which man
experiences and believes come from God. All this continues and
develops man’s ongoing moral desire to live virtuously and relate
properly with God. Such a movement seems to characterize the
Confucian and Stoical moral way of life. It even seems to fit a
certain basic pattern of pagan religions which accept and live by a
man-centered, rational approach to the general revelation in reality.
Human virtuous living confronts and comes to accept God’s supreme
role. But how does such a true pagan religion relate with the specific
revelation of Jesus Christ? More concretely, how does an authentic
God-believing virtuous man, whether a European Stoic or a Chinese
Confucian, deal with the specific revelation of Christ? This seems to
be an inherent problem in the Jesuit missiological effort of the
Renaissance.

Ricci met the problem of the virtuous man and the specific
revelation of Jesus Christ more in practice than in theory. He
dealt with the problem as a moral philosopher until he felt he

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97 Paul K.K. Tong, “Understanding Confucianism,” *International Philoso-
phical Quarterly*, IV. 4 (December 1969), 518-532. This author claims that
oriental philosophy is “an ascending movement of the human mind groping
on its own being; while Western philosophy with the data of Judeo-Christian
revelation had been primarily a descending movement as being revealing”
(p. 518).
could proceed no further, i.e. to the point of faith and conversion in Jesus Christ. The practice of virtue did not necessarily or logically conclude in the acceptance of Christ. But it did lead one closer to the possibility or even the probability of conversion to Christ. Conversion involves an about-face from old values and ways of living, and a turning to a new beginning and to a greater value-laden way of life.\textsuperscript{98}

In accepting and living the Stoic or Confucian moral way, one experiences a moral conversion from satisfaction derived from pleasure to the values of loving the other as the criterion of one's actions. How does one move from such a conversion to the greater religious conversion which entails another about-face and a new beginning described as being grasped by ultimate concern, i.e. being grasped by God and finally by Jesus Christ?\textsuperscript{99} It is my belief that Ricci could not articulate a theoretical explanation of how this conversion was to take place. In practice Ricci encouraged the acquisition of virtue and the consequent tendency toward religious conversion. At that point he prayed and hoped it would happen. Religious conversion can only be accepted freely and in faith; it is not a conclusion demanded by the force of rational logic. Man chooses to surrender to God and Christ; he cannot be forced or programmed into it.

Conversion implies transformation in the human quest for self-transcendence.\textsuperscript{100} "There is a new basis for all valuing and all doing good."\textsuperscript{101} There is a new understanding of reality in thought and action—Ricci's Stoic and Confucian practical truth of practicing virtue—which results from conversion. The religious conversion represents a continuous-discontinuous line of human growth. It includes all that was previously thought to be true and good.

But it is not to be thought, however, that religious con-


\textsuperscript{99} Lonergan, \textit{Method in Theology}, pp. 240-44.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 104-7.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 242.
version means no more than a new and more efficacious
ground for the pursuit of intellectual and moral ends.
Religious loving is without conditions, qualifications, reser-
vations; it is with all one's heart and all one's soul and all
one's mind and all one's strength. This lack of limitation,
though it corresponds to the unrestricted character of human
questioning, does not pertain to this world. Holiness abounds
in truth and moral goodness, but it has a distinct dimension
of its own. It is other-worldly fulfillment, joy, peace, bliss.
In Christian experience these are the fruits of being in love
with a mysterious, uncomprehended God.\footnote{Ibid., p. 242.}

Freely allowing oneself to be so loved and to so love God and Christ
is the essence of the Christian religious conversion which Ricci wished
to point towards.

The religious conversion to Christ has its own special light which
precedes and supersedes the intellectual conversion to truth and the
moral conversion to goodness. When man allows himself to be
grasped by God, he can see that the gift of God's love is causally
first and sheds light on all of reality.\footnote{Ibid., p. 243.} This is to say that the
light of Christianity brings out the truth and goodness of reality
and strengthens man's capacity to be virtuous to a degree and in a
manner not previously possible. Ricci therefore could realize and
transcend the capacity and limitations of the human moral practice
of virtue as the self-appropriated task of human perfection. In
allowing himself to be first loved by God in Christ, Ricci realized
that he was living according to a greater teaching than the Con-
fucians. He wished to lead the Confucians to this greater virtuous
life of Christ not by the direct preaching about Christ, but through
the moral experience of virtue which should lead to and culminate
in the same faith and love experience of being totally known and
loved by God. Ricci's missiological efforts attempted to lead the
Confucians to Christ not through the understanding of speculative
truth, but through the practical truth of virtue and faith.

Besides the problem of trying to lead the Confucian moral man
to freely accept the specific revelation of Jesus Christ through faith, there is the rationalist problem of self-sufficiency. Religious conversion through faith demands a certain breakdown of the old and the taking up of the new. Through conversion man declares a radical lack of self-sufficiency. Even man's rational power and his control in the practice of virtue is not ultimate. The faith of religions conversion confesses a human need and insufficiency which has to be freely surrendered through the risk of being grasped by God. What lies in the balance is the self-sufficiency of human reason and the self-containment of man being the measure of all things. The Confucian and Stoical man comes to the basic life decision of choosing himself or God. Ricci pointed to the insufficiency of human reason through the practical truth of practicing virtue. The act of faith as the truthful confession of self-insufficiency and as the free surrender to God and His ways—Heaven and its laws—is the mysterious way to a new and greater life. Without faith the originating value is man, and the terminating value is the human good man can bring about. But in faith the origin is God and His knowledge and love, and the terminus is the whole universe. Man becomes absorbed and incorporated into a new reality and way of living.

Where before an account of the human good related men to one another and to nature, now human concern reaches beyond man's world to God and to God's world. Men meet not only to be together and to settle human affairs but also to worship. Human development is not only in skills and virtues but also in holiness. The power of God's love brings forth a new energy and efficacy in all goodness, and the limit of human expectation ceases to be grave.

Such a new reality and way of living comes only through faith in God and Jesus Christ.

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104 See D'Elia, F.R., 42-43, footnote 1 where Yeh Hsiang-hao, a close friend of the Jesuits, freely chooses Confucian agnosticism over Christian faith.

D. Conclusion

It is a difficult and complex task to evaluate Ricci's deep involvement with Confucianism. He was a scholar, scientist, sinologist, and missionary. His life work of almost thirty years spanned two great and different cultures on a level and depth never before attained. The missionary policy of "becoming Chinese" was new and fraught with debatable problems in almost every step of the way. Ricci's three-pronged approach of rejecting Buddhism as a false religion, distinguishing ancient from modern Confucianism, and allying himself with the literati of ancient Confucianism, was controverted by his Jesuit contemporaries as well as by later historians and critics. But during Ricci's lifetime the differences of opinion and interpretation were confined to internal debates among the Jesuit missionaries. They did not undermine the basic unity and drive of their missionary efforts. Later when the missionary endeavor became more complex and increasingly problematic—especially with the influx of non-Jesuit missionaries—the differences became external, divisive, and even causes for bitter quarrelling and scandalous behavior.

The controversy around Ricci's missionary methods and especially his involvement with Confucianism raises the central question of what he actually accomplished. A number of contradictory labels have been appended to Ricci's work in China, especially as regards his innovative relationship with Confucianism.\textsuperscript{106} In general one

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{106} The following are some examples of how various authors have attempted to label Ricci's missionary involvement with Confucianism:


(b) Rule, \textit{K'ung-tzu or Confucius?}, passim, and especially pp. 172-173. He rejects syncretism and accommodation because they are either false or inadequate explanations of Ricci's work. He prefers to see Ricci's life as an encounter of Confucianism and Christianity. It is born and developed through the exchange of individuals on a personal level and through cultural exchange on a systematic level.
\end{footnote}
may distinguish two different missionary approaches to Christian evangelization, accommodation and confrontation. They are general approaches which characterize the basic attitude and operative methodology which Christianity assumed toward the newly encountered value-system and religious way of life. In the face of Con-

(c) Vincent Cronin, The Wise Man from the West, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955), p. 142. Ricci was convinced that “his best hope of spreading Christianity was to ally himself with Confucianism, which in almost all respects harmonized with Christian principles. Its lines, like those of a Chinese building, were horizontal: a system of right conduct between men, it had little to say of man’s relations with God. Ricci therefore presented Christianity as essentially reasonable theology completing and perfecting those principles in Confucianism which conformed to natural reason.”

(d) D’Elia, F.R., I, xlv. Christian revelation does not destroy, but indeed completes and perfects whatever is good and beautiful in the Chinese tradition of the Supreme Being of Confucius.

(e) George Dunne, The Generation of Giants (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1955), pp. 42-43. Ricci is falsely accused of presenting Christianity as a completion of Confucianism. He did not even attempt an alliance between Confucianism and Christianity. Rather he sought possible points of contact in Confucianism whereby he could develop an atmosphere increasingly favorable to Christianity.

(f) Joseph Levenson, Confucian China and Its Modern Fate (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 119-121. The author claims that Ricci’s methodology was ultimately self-defeating because he did not adequately distinguish the Christian cultural relativism, whether European or Chinese, from the Christian religious absolute. Ricci was “a pioneer for Christian-Confucian syncretism” (p. 121). He is also accused of a certain dishonesty in trying to “smuggle” Christianity into the Chinese civilization. Cf. Also Rule, K’ung-tzu or Confucius?, pp. 163-169, for a discussion of Levenson’s critique.

(g) K. M. Panikkar, Asia and Western Dominance (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954), pp. 394, 411 and part vii. The author accuses the Jesuit mission in China of being nothing more than a “sordid intrigue,” based on trickery, deception and expediency. When Ricci died he left the door open “for clocks, mathematics, astronomy and charts, but hardly for Christianity.”

(h) Arnold Rowbotham, Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), pp. 63-64. Ricci’s greatest efforts were spent in harmonizing the teachings of Christian dogma with those of Confucianism. But since he and the Jesuits adopted a policy of compromise and conciliation, their theological theories were also compromised with the ancient works of Confucius.


107 Heinz Robert Schlette, Towards a Theology of Religions (New York: Herder, 1963), passim. In the initial encounter with paganism, Christi-
fucianism, Ricci favored the accommodation method. As we have seen, he critically accepted Confucianism according to his distinctive interpretation of ancient Confucianism. In doctrine, Ricci understood Confucianism to possess the true teaching on God, the immortality of man's soul, and the afterlife of Heaven and Hell. In practice, Ricci viewed Confucianism as a moral philosophy, as "an incomplete law or way of life." It was to be completed by the superior teaching and way of life of Christianity which is founded on the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. As Hsu Kuang-ch'i understood Ricci's missiology, Christianity "does away with the idols and completes the law of the literati." 108

In the light of our study of Ricci's work in China, three major questions arise. Is Ricci's understanding and interpretation of Confucianism legitimate? Is his practical identification of Stoic and moral philosophy justified? And thirdly, is his missiology viable and even suitable for the proposed Christianization of China? Let us briefly treat these questions as the conclusion of our study of his Book of 25 Paragraphs.

The question whether Ricci's interpretation of Confucianism is legitimate or not is extremely difficult to answer. It is practically impossible to find the criterion whereby such a judgment can be made. Confucianism has been interpreted as a theistic, atheistic, and agnostic system of thought which has been labeled as a religion, science of morality, philosophy, law, and education process. It has been called progressive as well as conservative, and is open to innumerable revisions and adaptations. For our limited purposes we can see that Ricci viewed his understanding of ancient Confucianism as new, correct, and orthodox. Some of his Jesuit missionaries did not think that Ricci's interpretation was altogether correct, but in practice followed his lead. The Chinese people in general respected Ricci's scholarly efforts and his amazing adaptation to the Chinese way of life; but they did not seriously evaluate his interpretation.

anity has generally tended to see the new culture and religion as erroneous and false. Ricci's approach represents somewhat of an exception to this prevalent missiological tendency.

108 Gallagher, China in the sixteenth Century, p. 448. This passage is also an interpretation by Trigault which is not found in Ricci's original text.
of Confucianism. In our opinion Ricci’s interpretation of Confucianism is tenable and recognizable by the Confucians. It is founded and supported by the critical reading of the original texts, and not based on any commentary or secondary sources. In a debate with other Confucian scholars, Ricci could hold and defend his position. Ricci’s interpretation of Confucianism is also novel and revisionist. Ricci was consciously “prejudiced” by Christianity, i.e. he sought to interpret Confucianism favorably according to the light of Christianity. Such an interpretation of Confucianism embodies Ricci’s missiological effort to be faithful to Confucius (orthodox) and also lead to Christ (new).

Ricci’s identification of Confucian with Stoic morality resulted from practical and useful missiological considerations. Ricci realized there was a basic similarity in their moral approaches to life, and he felt that Stoicism could supplement and clarify the Confucian teaching and practice of virtue. Such works as On Friendship and the Book of 25 Paragraphs reveal the dominant influence of Stoical moral philosophy. Ricci’s use of Stoicism to teach and clarify moral philosophy to the Confucians illustrates the central thrust of his missiological efforts to clear the way toward Christianity. Ricci discovered through intuition and experimentation that the Stoical moral teaching was helpful and appealing to the Confucians. The question whether Ricci’s practical identification of Confucianism with Stoicism is philosophically valid or not is irrelevant. It simply worked. The question for Ricci was whether or not it was useful and helpful in the process of Christianization. Since Ricci found that Stoicism brought greater light and encouragement to the Confucian quest to practice virtue, he used it. This implied a certain affinity

109 Cf. Rule, K'ung-tzu or Confucius?, p. 197 where the author quotes the following official Chinese evaluation of Ricci and the Jesuits:

The men from this land (Western Europe) who came from the East, were mostly intelligent and accomplished scholars who were intent only on teaching, not on gaining rank or profit. The books that they wrote were mostly on topics that the Chinese had not heard of, and so those who quickly respond to new ideas adhered to them. Even high officials like Hsu Kuang-ch'i, Li Chih-tsao, etc., first came to appreciate their teaching, then polished the style of their writings, so that their sect rapidly increased.

110 Tacchi Venturi, Opere Storiche, II, pp. 246-7 and Rule, K'ung-tzu or Confucius?, p. 139.
in the practical truths and also secondarily in the theoretical truths of Confucianism and Stoicism. Such a relationship was not proved nor even questioned; it was hardly noticed or recognized by Ricci and his contemporaries. But the favorable effects resulting from Ricci’s use of Stoicism in teaching morality to the Confucians were noticed, and they were their own validation and justification. No theoretical or philosophical legitimization was felt necessary or needed.

The evaluation of Ricci’s missiology depends largely on the evaluation of the Jesuit humanistic approach of the Renaissance. The Jesuit process of Christianization consists primarily in a broad humanistic education and training to receive and live the new life of faith. This approach highlights the human cultivation of knowledge and the practice of virtue as the preparation towards faith and religious conversion. It was considered better if a man was educated and trained to be a good and virtuous pagan first. Thus prepared and already committed to the good life of virtue, a man could better receive the fullness of divine revelation in Jesus Christ. This was the Jesuit missionary approach which Ricci brought with him and adapted to the culture and civilization of Confucianist China. In his mind this was the best way to found and establish Christianity in China.

This Jesuit missiological approach has a precedent in the history of the Catholic church. In the first encounter of Christianity and Greek culture, there are many factors which parallel Ricci’s situation in late sixteenth century China. The early Christian missionaries were faced with the pagan Hellenistic classical world as Ricci and the Jesuits were confronted with the pagan Confucianist world of China. They both felt the need to find a common intellectual and philosophical basis for discussion. The early missionaries of the West adapted themselves to the classical Greek form of education and training, the so-called Greek paideia. Through this accommodation they attempted to show that the Christian teaching included everything that was true and good in Greek culture, and also that Chris-

tianity went beyond paganism to the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. In effect the *paideia* of Christ took over and superseded the classical Greek *paideia*. From a missiological point of view, Christianity affirmed and absorbed the intellectual and moral education of classical humanism as an excellent and effective pedagogical instrument in the total process of Christianization. This classical pagan and Christian *paideia* was considered to be so excellent that it was revived in Renaissance Europe and became the distinctive hallmark of Jesuit humanism and the new classical form of education. Ricci continued this Jesuit tradition in China by adapting Christianity to the classical Confucian *paideia*. Ricci's critical interpretation of ancient Confucianism and his moral teaching in the *Book of 25 Paragraphs* represent a concrete attempt to create a new Confucian-Christian *paideia* in China.

Ricci's missiological approach in Confucianist China has been debated and controverted for almost four hundred years. Even his contemporary fellow Jesuit missionaries debated and disagreed with Ricci's missiological evaluation and approach. To determine whether Ricci's missiology was viable and suitable for Confucianist China is a difficult task because the criterion for Christian success is so elusive. China is not Christian today. But had Ricci's missiology prevailed, what kind of a nation would China be now? It is impossible to know, and it is perhaps of little value to speculate on a hypothesis. In our opinion, Ricci's critical interpretation of ancient Confucianism is a tenable position; it is at least an acceptable understanding of Confucianism. Ricci's accent on the true practice of virtue as a preparation for Christianity is also acceptable and even commendable; the true practice of virtue is an essential element of the Christian way. Ricci's use of Stoicism in teaching morality to the Confucians is legitimate and insightful. It helped and enlightened the Chinese in their practice of virtue and thus in

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113 Cf. George Ganse, S.J., *St. Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University*, p. 4, where the author claims that the Jesuit educational philosophy of the Renaissance could be described as St. Ignatius' concept of Christian *paideia*.

some sense led them closer to Christ. Ricci’s broad missiology of accepting anything that was true and good as leading to Christ was concretized in what he understood to be the better or best human way to faith-life in Christ. Ricci seems to have envisioned the creation of a Confucian-Christian *paideia*, a Chinese humanistic education and moral training which lead to the mature acceptance of faith and the divine revelation of Jesus Christ. Ricci believed that this was the best human way to found Christianity in China. This vision and his efforts in this direction are perhaps the greatest achievements of his life and work. Ricci’s Chinese converts to Christianity reflect this Confucian-Christian maturation process which is born in moral effort but ultimately grounded and enveloped by faith in Jesus Christ. Ricci’s attempts to understand the Chinese Confucian and to find the best way for him to come to Christ are outstanding and, I believe, unparalleled in the history of Christian missionary efforts in China. He stands as the most eminent person in attempting to bridge the gap between two radically different cultures and traditions in their unified quest for truth, goodness, and ultimately holiness in God.

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115 For the Chinese Christians’ reflections on Ricci’s missiology see Rule, *K’ung-tzu or Confucius?*, pp. 190-208.
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