

Matteo Ricci's Understanding of the Natural Law in Confucianism

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The Master said: "I would rather not have to speak. Does Heaven speak?... The four seasons run their course, the hundred creatures, each after its kind, are born. But does Heaven speak?"

The Analects, Book XVII, 19.

Matteo Ricci began his missionary work by learning the culture and language of China and by becoming friends with the Chinese Confucian scholars. His first written work in Chinese was entitled *On Friendship*. His intention was to establish himself as a fellow scholar and man of letters who had come to learn from the riches of Chinese civilization as well as offer some small contribution from Western civilization. In this work Ricci appealed principally to the pagan classics of Greece and Rome to present his new teaching on friendship.¹⁾ In another work written in Chinese and entitled as the *Book of 25 Paragraphs*, Ricci presents his teaching on virtue. His intention here was to present himself as a natural philosopher offering another sample contribution of Western learning.

In this (small work) I do nothing but speak of virtue and living well with

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- 1) Cf. my article, "Matteo Ricci's Approach to 16th Century Confucian China" (paper delivered in Taipei, Taiwan September 1983). Cf. also Tacchi Venturi, S.J., *Opere Storiche del P. Matteo Ricci* (Macerata, Italy: Filippo Gioretti, 1918), II, 243~250. Cf. also George Dunne, *The Generation of Giants* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1955), p. 44.

a great interest as a natural philosopher, but as a Christian, without refuting any sect.²⁾

In fact this was a paraphrased translation of Epictetus' Stoical treatment of virtue which was carefully edited to be favorable toward Christianity and appealing to the Chinese Confucian literati.³⁾

Ricci presented himself as a natural philosopher with a special interest in morality and religion. Not only as a scientist, but as a humanist and philosopher he was seeking friendship by wanting to learn from the Chinese and by sharing his knowledge with them. He spent a great deal of time and effort in learning and studying the Confucian classics. In this way he sought to understand the Confucian mind and spirit, both in its historical roots and in its contemporary expression. In studying the religious dimensions of Chinese culture, he perceived a certain ambiguity. On the one hand there was no religion worth speaking of in China, yet on the other hand he saw that there were three main sects of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Ricci rejected the teachings and practices of the first two as false and erroneous. As far as Confucianism was concerned, Ricci claimed that the ancient and original teaching of Confucius was acceptable. Ricci spoke of Confucius as "another Seneca", and the Four Books of ancient Confucianism he described as "good moral books."⁴⁾ Thus Confucianism is not a religion in the strict sense, and yet as a teaching and practice of morality it is close and perhaps can lead toward the Christian religion.

Ricci carefully and gradually came to appreciate the truth and wisdom

2) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 257. See my *Matteo Ricci and a Confucian Christianity* (Rome: unpublished doctoral dissertation at the Gregorian University, 1974), p. 211.

3) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 263~264: "It (*Book of 25 Paragraphs*) was not meant to refute the other sects, but only to speak well of virtue a little Stoically, but all in accordance with Christianity."

4) *Ibid.*, II, 117~118. Cf. also Paul Rule, *K'ung-tzu or Confucius? The Jesuit Interpretation of Confucianism* (Canberra: unpublished doctoral dissertation at the Australian National University, 1972), pp. 126~129.

of Confucianism. He continued to study the Confucian writings and to explore the possibility of forming a relationship between Confucianism and Christianity. He explicitly set out to test the hypothesis of whether there was a possible bridge between these two teachings.

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.⁵⁾

Ricci discovered that he could legitimately interpret Confucianism in a way favorable to Christianity. Ricci believed that the ancient Confucian classics were open to an interpretation which was both faithful to the text and acceptable to Christianity. Ricci saw the teachings on God, man's soul, and life after death as the common philosophical ground for both Christianity and Confucianism.

Ricci's understanding of a possible bridge between Christianity and Confucianism is further nuanced in how he compared Chinese Confucianism with the pagan teachings of ancient Greece and Rome. In studying Confucian teachings and practices throughout Chinese history, Ricci was struck by the fewness of errors and the tenacity and perseverance by which the Confucians tried to live according to their conscience. In many ways he sees the Confucians as more faithfully "religious" than the ancient pagans of Europe.

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

5) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 207.

actions they always made a point to follow the dictates of reason which they claimed came from heaven.⁶⁾

Ricci notes that the ancient or original Confucianism was relatively free from error. He further analyzes the classical Confucian notion of God as the soul or animating principle of the universe which was related to man's following the dictates of reason. In this he was possibly thinking of ancient Stoicism which also held that God was the one animating soul or principle of the universe which naturally guided men through their reason. Just as European Christianity had made a bridge with the Stoicism of Greece and Rome, so too perhaps Christianity could also make a similar bridge with the teaching of ancient Confucianism.

A constant and recurring theme that runs through Ricci's understanding of the religious situation in China is the comparison with the ancient paganism of the West. In writing back to his friends in Europe Ricci frequently describes the Chinese religious situation in terms of the various pagan sects of ancient Greece and Rome. For example he sees the Buddhists as similar to the Pythagoreans, the Neo-Confucianists as Epicureans, and the pure or original Confucians as Stoics. He speaks of the Confucian moral sentiments as being similar to those of Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus. Even the time when Confucius lived and the type and size of books he wrote is compared to the Western classical setting.⁷⁾ Ricci was well aware that in the West Christianity had over the centuries critically accepted, and re-interpreted the pagan classics to fit with the Christian religion. The Renaissance was a renewal of classical humanism, and Ricci himself was steeped in the

6) Pasquale D'Elia, S.J., ed., *Fonti Ricciane: Documenti Cocernenti Matteo Ricci e la Storia delle Prime Relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579~1615)*, 3 Vols., (Roma:La Libreria dello Stato, 1941~1949), I, 108~109.

7) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 45, 57, 117~118, 237. Cf. also Jonathan D. Spence, "Matteo Ricci and the Ascent to Peking" (paper given at the "East Meets West" Loyola Symposium in Chicago, October 1982), *passim*.

Western pagan classics as well as Christian theology as part of his own educational background. In the new humanism of his day many pagan figures such as Socrates, Seneca, and Epictetus were portrayed as paragons of virtue, human excellence, and even sanctity. At times these pagan figures were referred to as "saints," and Socrates himself was called a "martyr". The best of the pagan authors were seen as heralds of Christ.⁸⁾ Ricci's understanding and evaluation of pagan Confucianism is part of such an overall missionary evaluation of paganism.

The judgement of Jesuit missionaries in regard to contemporary (Renaissance) paganism was the same (as that in regard to ancient 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.⁹⁾

Confucianism as a Natural Moral Law

In studying the history of Confucian religious teachings and practices in China, Ricci discovered important signs and indications of an already existing natural law or religion. He saw the elements of Confucian morality as positive and even more helpful than the pagan contribution of ancient Greece and Rome. This gave him "the greatest hope," and toward the end of his life he re-iterated his analysis and interpretation of the religious situation in China.

They (Confucian literati) are also inclined to religion (*pieta*), as I am little by little coming to perceive, although it will seem the contrary to others. To begin with the beginning, in ancient times they followed the natural law as faithfully as in our lands, and for 1,500 years this people was little given to idols and those they adored were not such a wretched crowd

8) Francois de Dainville, S.J., *La Naissance de l'humanisme moderne* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1940), p. 232. Cf. also Spalatin, *Matteo Ricci and a Confucian Christianity*, p. 255.

9) De Dainville, *op. cit.*, p. 226, footnote 3.

as our Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans adored, but a lot who were very virtuous and to whom were attributed very good deeds. In fact, in the books of the literati which are those most ancient and of greatest authority, they give no other adoration than to heaven and earth and the Lord of them. When we examine closely all these books we discover in them very few things contrary to the light of reason and very many in conformity with it, and their natural philosophers need 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.¹⁰⁾

Ricci carefully noted that from the very beginning Confucians were inclined toward "religious" observance of the natural law. Without the light of divine revelation, they depended on the light of reason and the practice of virtue. Without being aware of any supernatural elements, they were left to their human powers of thinking and acting. Morality and wisdom are the primary and highest focus of their efforts. According to Ricci, the Chinese Confucians have been rather exemplary in following the light of reason, rejecting error and false idols, and striving to live virtuously. Such an understanding and observance of the natural moral law was common to the paganism of East and West. Ricci believed that this natural moral law was the best place to begin his dialogue with his Chinese friends. It is here that he sought to establish a common philosophical ground and thus clear the way for Christianity.

Ricci sought to find a religious structure within Confucianism which was acceptable to Christianity. As the result of many years of study and reflection on the Confucian classics, he claimed that there were three basic truths which grounded Confucian morality. These three truths were expressions of the natural moral law which governs a human's moral conduct. As we have seen above in Ricci's analysis and interpretation of the Chinese religious situation, from the very beginning the Confucians have believed and striven to affirm that there is

10) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 385. Also Rule, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

one true God, that man's soul is immortal, and that there is a necessary reward for good and punishment for evil. These three truths and the inherent duty to abide by them form the basic structure of the Confucian natural moral law.¹¹⁾ These are the inchoate elements of a natural religion which Ricci claimed are universally true and valid for all humans. According to Ricci these elements are to be found in the ancient paganism of Stoical Greece/Rome and Confucianist China. At the same time he implied that they also form the natural foundation for the supernatural or revealed religion of Christianity.

In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* Ricci set out to expound and prove that true moral philosophy whether Christian or Confucian asserts the three fundamental truths of one God, the immortality of man's soul, and the necessity of Heaven and Hell. Ricci presents his teaching in a dialogue form between two scholars, and the topic of their discussion is natural moral philosophy. Ricci clearly had in mind that this presentation was to be made only according to the light of reason and as a remote preparation for the explicit teaching

11) This missiological program was very much in line with Fr. Alexander Valignano's instructions. Fr. Valignano wrote: "I instructed them (Jesuit missionaries) to introduce themselves in China as men of letters who had come from far off lands because of the fame of the wisdom and writings of China. To this end, they first wrote a treatise in the form of a dialogue in the language and letters of China in which were presented all the substance of our holy faith proving that the soul is immortal, that there is another life and one sole God who must be adored, and finally dealing with the creation, the manner of our redemption, and all the most important things one has to do and believe in order to arrive at the other life." This is quoted in Rule, *op. cit.*, p. 81. Also Ricci wrote: "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 and bad works in the next life with God.... All this is proven only with many reasons and arguments drawn from our holy teachers (Christianity), but also with the great authority of the ancient books (of Confucianism) which the Father (Ricci) had noted when he read them; this gave great authority and credibility to this work." D'Elia, *op. cit.*, II, 293~295.

of the revealed mysteries of Christianity. In this work Ricci did not wish to catechize the catechumens or instruct Christian believers in matters of faith; he only wished to prepare the way by establishing a suitable philosophical ground for the preaching of the gospel.

This (*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*) does not treat of all the mysteries of our holy faith, which need be explained only to catechumens and Christians, but only of certain principles, especially such as can be proved and understood with the light of reason. Thus it can be of service both to Christians and to non-Christians and can be understood in those remote regions which our Fathers cannot immediately reach, preparing the way for those other mysteries which depend upon faith and revealed wisdom.¹²⁾

Ricci concentrates initially on the truths known by natural reason as a means to establish a common ground and clear the way for the eventual preaching of the revealed mysteries of Christianity.

Despite the fact that Ricci clearly declared his intentions and purposes in writing *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, there has been a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding concerning the nature of this work. Many people including Ricci himself have referred to this work as a "catechism", and consequently it has been criticized for teaching an adulterated version of Christianity or at least not presenting the essential mysteries of the faith.¹³⁾ But in this work the word "catechism" refers only to the question-and-answer form used between two scholars, and not to a presentation of the revealed Christian mysteries. When Ricci translated the title of this work into Latin he called it *De*

12) This is quoted in Douglas Lancashire's "Introduction" (p. xiii) to his English translation of Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, to be published in 1984.

13) Rule, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Henri Bernard-Maitre, S.J., *Le Père Mattieu Ricci et la Société Chinoise de son temps* (1552~1610), 2 Vols., (Tientsin: procure de la Mission de Sienshin, 1937), II, 123. Cf. also John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: The First Encounter* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), pp. 26~28.

Deo Vera Disputatio. Thinking of it as a real "disputation" or argument about matters of god and religion indicates much better the nature of this work.¹⁴⁾ Ricci envisioned this work as a philosophical disputation whereby he attempted to prove the basic truths of the natural moral law which are common to both Confucianism and Christianity. The core of his teaching

...treats of such truths as that there is in the universe a God, who has created all things and continually conserves them in being; that the soul of man is immortal and will receive from God in the next life remuneration for its good and evil works.¹⁵⁾

Ricci's task was to expound a basic notion of God which was common to both Confucianism and Christianity. He claimed that he had discovered such a notion of God already contained and established in the original Confucian classics. Even though Ricci claimed it was evident from the text, it was a totally new concept for the Confucian literati.¹⁶⁾ Ricci's task of linking the natural moral law with the existence of God in a new way turned out to be the delicate task of re-interpreting the true meaning of the Confucian text for the Confucian literati. In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* Ricci spends most of his time and effort expounding his "new" teaching as corroborated by the original Confucian classics. In the last chapter he also claims that all this still needs to be completed by the full teaching of the revealed religion of Christianity.

There have been many studies on how Ricci expounded these proofs of monistic theism, the immortality of the human soul, and the necessity of Heaven and Hell. There is the problem of how to name God.

14) Rule, *op. cit.*, p. 132. D'Elia, *op. cit.*, II, 293.

15) *Ibid.*, II, 292. Louis J. Gallagher, S.J., *China and the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583~1610* (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 449.

16) Young, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Ricci interpreted the Confucian *Lord on High* (上帝) and *Heaven* (天) as one and the same god, and then he created the new name of the *Lord of Heaven* (天主) as the same as the Confucian word for god and at the same time added the meaning of being the Christian God. Thus according to Ricci, Christianity accepted a certain interpretation of the Confucian notion of God, and then added to or completed it with the Christian notion of God. What Ricci did with the divine nomenclature both in interpreting Confucianism and expressing the Christian notion of God has been the subject of discussion and controversy for the past several hundred years. Likewise Ricci's proofs for the immortality of man's soul as well as for the necessity of Heaven and Hell have also been the subject of much debate. Ricci's arguments and proofs for his position are most seriously treated and developed in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. The merits and faults of his work are still very much controverted and discussed today.¹⁷⁾

The question of whether and to what extent Ricci correctly understood and interpreted Confucianism is a historical question which may never be completely answered and resolved. But the question of the validity and significance of Ricci's natural law approach to religion and Christianity still remains to be studied.

The existence of the natural law is based on observation of activities in the world. As one sees the inner drive of the whole world and all its parts toward the attainment of its end, one can discover a pattern, an order or disposition, or a way of acting which reason is required

17) Matteo Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* can be divided into three parts. Chapters 1-2 deal with the problem of God, chapters 3-5 with the immortality of the human soul, chapters 6-7 with the reality of heaven and hell, and chapter 8 introduces Western Christianity.

18) Cf. Owen E. Finnegan, S.J., *An Historical and Metaphysical Study of Natural Law Theory Applied to Questions of Freedom of Expression in the United States* (East Lansing: Doctoral dissertation presented to Michigan State University, 1965), p. 21. Cf. also John Wild, *Plato's Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law* (Chicago: The University

to accept and live by.¹⁸⁾ The regular pattern of the seasons of the year, the order or recurring tendency of plants to grow and produce their proper fruit, the laws of gravity and matter/energy, the constant obligation of humans to act properly and do good and avoid evil are all characteristic examples of the natural law. The necessity to act in a certain way is discovered to inhere in things as they are and as they act. The universe can be understood as a total reality, as the physical and moral world, or in all its individual parts. In all these cases the natural law applies, but because of man's reason it applies in a special way to the human moral law. It is this understanding of the natural moral law that Ricci discovered and interpreted as being part of the original Confucian philosophy.

The natural law understanding of the universe asserts that all beings must act according to their nature toward their proper end. This expression originates in Greek pagan philosophy, but is as Ricci also asserted universally true. In the human moral realm guided by reason, this necessity is experienced in the form of a non-compulsory obligation to act in a certain way. This means for example that a person experiences a non-compulsory obligation to be honest and respect others as human beings, and yet he is free to comply or reject this expression of the natural law. In Ricci's case, he tried to establish the naturally known moral truths of one God, the immortality of man, and the necessity of an eternal reward or punishment. In establishing this as part of the natural moral law he also shows the non-compulsory obligation of humans to observe and live by these truths. According to the light of reason no one can escape these truths and their binding nature. One cannot disregard or disobey the natural law without incrimination and guilt. Such a universal natural law understanding of

Chicago Press, 1953), p. 73. Cf. also Jacques Maritain, *Rights of Man and the Natural Law*, trans. by Doris C. Anson (New York: Scribner's 1943), p. 41. Cf. also C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), pp. 1~25.

reality is part of ancient Greek-Roman philosophy which eventually became part of Western Christianity. Ricci claimed that the same universal natural moral law could also be found in original Confucianism, and it also could be integrated with Christianity. The natural law understanding of reality—whether expressed in Greek, Roman, or Chinese cultural terms—was universally valid and true.

One of the characteristics of the natural law understanding of reality is that some notion of god is necessary. There seem to be three possibilities. The first identifies the whole universe and all its parts as divine. There is no ultimate distinction between God, nature, and man. God is seen as the all-inclusive principle of unity. God is reality, and nothing apart or distinct from it can exist. This is a pantheistic notion of god which identifies the divine as Nature or the Universe, and does away with the immanent/transcendent distinction. The second notion of god sees the divine as the soul of the universe, the principle of life, as the universal principle of unity or perfection. Such a notion can be seen as a further elaboration of pantheism or as a rationalistic and non-personal principle which accounts for the all-inclusive dimensions of life, activities, or grades of being. This rationalist notion of the divine stresses the logical explanation of the universe and all its activities. The third notion of god is a personal supreme being who creates "out of nothing" the whole universe or all of reality as distinct from himself, and yet is also the ultimate rational principle of unity which explains the existence and activities of the whole universe. This personal notion of god embodies the immanent and transcendent dimensions within himself. Ricci was very much aware of all three notions of god as he discovered them in reading the original Confucian classics. Following the natural law view of reality and being sensitive to the revealed Christian notion of God, he steered the notion of god from the false or erroneous ideas contained in the first and second understanding of god to the third notion which he believed was true and most free from error. In studying and re-interpreting Confucianism Ricci accepted

what he believed were the true notions of *Heaven* (天) and *Lord on High* (上帝) and renamed the notion of God as the *Lord of Heaven* (天主). In Ricci's mind, he was rejecting the errors of the first two notions of god which the Neo-Confucians and others held, and was asserting the third as the true notion and as the one which Confucius himself originally held. The merits and defects of his attempts are still open to study and debate. But what he attempted to do was establish the true notion of god according to a natural law view of reality. If this was valid and legitimate, then a new and suitable cultural foundation for Christianity would be established. For the natural law of reality is an expression of a universal truth, and as such it is acceptable to Christianity.

Ricci continued on to prove that the immortality of the human soul and the necessity of an eternal reward and punishment are also found in original Confucianism. This completed the basic structure of the natural moral law and merited the designation of a natural religion. Such a system of a belief in god and the consequent moral obligation to obey his commands according to the light of reason expresses a kind of natural religion. Without any explicit supernatural revelation, the Confucian natural religion represents the lofty achievements as well as the limits of human reason. As we have seen, Ricci saw the accomplishments of Confucians and the Confucian moral law as comparable to Socrates, Seneca, Epictetus and their teaching of the natural moral law. In both East and West this represents a contribution to the knowledge of the truth and the practice of virtue. For Ricci's missionary purposes such an understanding of the natural moral law represents a common meeting ground for peoples of different cultures, and also provides a suitable cultural stepping stone to receive the supernaturally revealed teaching of the Christian religion.

The Natural Law is Incomplete

All notions of the natural law or natural religion are limited and incomplete. This is evident from various points of view, e.g. intrinsic limitations of human reason, the historical testimony of failures and deviations from the law, and the lack of supernatural revelation. The natural law understanding of reality is a product of human reason, and as such it is limited and imperfect. The rational wisdom and virtue that one can attain through such natural moral teachings of Confucianism and Stoicism is never perfect. The ideal of the perfectly wise or virtuous man is never totally realized; it remains precisely that, an ideal. Human reason seems to be in the dark at times, and as such it experiences ambiguity in what it knows and uncertainty in what it should do. The highest expressions of these teachings—whether Socrates or Confucius—admit that they are not perfectly wise or virtuous. They do not deny the truths of their teaching or belief, but they do admit an ever-existing gap between them and the ideal. While regarded by others as outstanding models of human wisdom and virtue, they themselves are aware of their limitations and they keep looking for more complete knowledge and more faithful practice of virtue. Moreover, history itself gives witness to the reality that humans in general fail to keep the natural moral law. It is a puzzling reality that humans recognize a divine or heavenly command—as for example the command to do good and avoid evil—and yet despite their best intentions and efforts, they fail to keep it. The natural moral law enjoins one to keep a law that is in fact impossible to always observe. It seems to be a universal fact that humans sin or fail in this way, no matter how wise or virtuous they may be. Thirdly, the notion of the natural moral law does not have any criterion to accept revelation, supernatural or otherwise. If there is any legitimate teaching or wisdom beyond reason, it remains unknown or at least outside the all

inclusive notion of the natural moral law. For reason cannot readily accept an ultra-reasonable reality such as supernatural revelation. Both Socrates and Confucius lived before the time of the explicit supernatural revelation of Jesus Christ. Both perhaps admitted a kind of personal or private relationship with god or something divine. But in the Stoical or Confucian doctrines of the natural moral law, they did not go beyond the power of natural reason. In Ricci's view, Confucius believed in God and sought to live according to the natural moral law which God enjoined on him. But still Confucius did not have any clear notion of who this God was since he was without the revelation of Jesus Christ.

One part of Ricci's intentions was to enter into dialogue with the Confucian literati and point out the limitations and incompleteness of the Confucian natural law. This was done primarily in two ways. In analyzing and interpreting Confucianism and its history in China, Ricci re-constructed what he believed was the genuine structure of the original Confucian natural religion. He then proceeded to pinpoint the errors and deviations of heterodox Confucian teaching of the moral law. He did this in the form of a philosophical disputation in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Secondly and perhaps more quietly and indirectly, he inferred or implied the incompleteness of all theories of the natural law. While a natural religion is good and helpful, it is also insufficient. This is self-evident. The problem was to show how the insufficiency and incompleteness of such a natural religion leads to Christianity.

The Natural Law is Completed by Christianity

It is clear that in Ricci's mind the teaching of Christianity completes the Confucian moral law. The natural moral law is the basis and preparation for something more. There is a sense of dissatisfaction or incompleteness in the natural law view of reality. It is universally

true and good, and yet it is not enough. Confucius was very conscious of the limitations of reason and its understanding, and thus he deliberately remained silent on matters beyond nature and beyond his knowledge and control. While the teachings of original Confucianism assert the existence of God and His rule over humankind, the elaboration of the content of such a divine principle remains vague and non-explicit. Ricci himself explicates what he believes is already implicit in Confucianism, and then suggests that its incompleteness looks for its fulfillment elsewhere. In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* Ricci spends seven chapters establishing the valid doctrines of original Confucianism, and in the eighth chapter he speaks of the customs of Western Christianity and the birth of god as the Lord of Heaven in the West. The relationship of the teachings of original Confucianism and Christianity is left unspecified.

In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* Ricci characteristically describes the Chinese scholar as dissatisfied with the Confucian way of life, even though it is virtuous. The Chinese scholar is aware of the limitations of the Confucian moral law and asks whether the Western teaching on the Lord of Heaven is better or more complete.

Our (Chinese Confucian) way of self-cultivation—where will it end up? Although our plan is clear as far as this life is concerned, we know nothing about what happens after death. I have found that you, sir, (Western scholar) have travelled throughout the whole world to transmit the scriptures and commands of the Lord of Heaven and induce men to do good. I wish to receive this great teaching.¹⁹⁾

As a result of dialoguing with the Western scholar, the Chinese scholar begins to see Christianity as logical extension of Confucian premises. Ricci himself never uses the term “logical extension” or “logical conclusion” to describe Christianity’s relationship to Confucianism, but

19) Quoted in Rule, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

Nicholas Trigault in his version of Ricci's memoirs describes Ricci's missiological undertaking in such terms.

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 they 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. 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.²⁰⁾

The natural moral law was added to and completed by the supernatural revelation of God made-man or in Confucian terms the Lord of Heaven. While Ricci undoubtedly saw Confucian and all natural moral laws as intrinsically lacking something, he did not specify or elaborate how this lack was fulfilled. Perhaps he intuitively felt the inadequacy of the traditional Western explanations in terms of the dichotomies of nature-supernature, immanence-transcendence, reason-faith, or this world-next world. Hsu Kuang-ch'i, one of Ricci's closest friends and perhaps best interpreter, understood Ricci's teaching of Christianity as "doing away with idols and completing the law of the literati."²¹⁾ (補儒斥佛) Ricci's teaching of Christianity rejects all the false teachings found in Buddhism, Taoism, and Neo-Confucianism, and "completes" what is already established in the natural moral law of original Confucianism. The addition or completion which the Christian teaching is supposed to provide is left unspecified.

The goal of Christian missionary work is conversion to Christianity.

20) *Ibid.* See also Gallagher, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

21) Cf. Willard Peterson, "Why Did They Become Christians? Hsu Kuang-ch'i, Li Chih-tsao and Yang T'ing-Yun," (paper given at the "East Meets West" Loyola Symposium in Chicago, October 1982), pp. 28~29 and especially footnote 45. Cf. also Rule, *op. cit.*, pp. 141~142. Notice this is Trigault's addition to Ricci.

Ricci undertook the learning of the Chinese language and culture, the cultural accommodation with Confucian moral philosophy, the cultivation of friendship with the Confucian literati, and the introduction of Western learning into China in order ultimately to convert the Chinese people to Christianity. The ultimate step of conversion—of freely accepting and believing the teaching of the Lord of Heaven as Jesus Christ—is a most mysterious step in the missiological process. Ricci spent most of his efforts trying to philosophically “prove” the existence of this God and show the philosophical “necessity” to believe and obey His commands. Thus he argued for the existence of the basic truths of a natural religion in Confucianism. Logically, existential belief should follow. But in fact conversion does not come inevitably from logical necessity. Even if Christianity could be shown to be the necessary conclusion of the premises of Confucian moral philosophy, existential belief does not necessarily follow.

Of course, most of the debate and controversy precedes this final step; it focuses on the validity of the philosophical argumentation. Did Ricci adequately understand Confucianism? Was his interpretation of original Confucianism correct? Did Ricci in any way dilute or compromise Christianity by founding it on an understanding of the natural law? Ricci put forth his theses in the form of philosophical disputation and argumentation. He sought to prove his positions and invite dialogue, debate, and ultimately lead to a deeper understanding and agreement. His philosophical argumentations were pre-evangelical although clearly orientated toward a better and deeper evangelization. The inherent incompleteness and lack of the natural law added impetus and poignancy to find a completion elsewhere. But how this last step was to be taken was left unspecified. Ricci himself did not explicitly claim that Christianity was the necessary conclusion of Confucianism, although other Jesuit missionaries after him did not hesitate to do so. He did not speak in terms of nature/supernature, the immanent/transcendent, reason/faith, and the secular/sacred. He was more careful and

deliberate. It is our opinion that Ricci believed that Christianity did "somehow" complete Confucianism, but this aspect involved a mysterious step beyond logical necessity and the traditional Western explanation such as nature/supernature. There was a logical hiatus or a "leap of faith" which cannot be fully explained. Ricci was reserved and silent about this aspect of his missiology, perhaps because it wasn't problem in his day or possibly he didn't have any adequate explanation to this problem. In any case, his exposition of Confucianism as a pre-evangelical natural moral law was meant to somehow lead to the full religion of Christianity.

Conclusion

Ricci's missionary work focused on pre-evangelical work or clearing the way for preaching the gospel. He realized that the Chinese worldview was global and all-inclusive. It sought an ideology or a teaching where science, technology, ethics, philosophy, and religion all formed one organic whole. Ricci thus introduced "western learning" (西學) or "Heavenly learning" (天學) as such a universal and organic worldview. The title of his most serious work, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (天主實義) was originally *The True Meaning of Heavenly Learning* (天學實義), showing how Ricci equated learning with God and morality.²² In presenting one, you also include the others. Thus in this work which deals with the true notion of God as the Lord of Heaven, Ricci is primarily concerned with the restoration of the pristine religious doctrines of original Confucianism and not the complementary truths of Christianity. This startling approach was taken because Ricci believed that this was the best way to introduce Christianity into China. Ricci did not directly confront and challenge

22) Jacques Gernet, *Chine et Christianisme: Action et reaction* (Paris, Gallimard, 1982), pp.17~18, 35, 54, 81~89.

Confucianism because he found in it elements of a true notion of God and a true understanding of the natural moral law. He reconstructed this into a natural religion which was universally true and thus acceptable to all men of reason and good will. He focused his interpretation of original Confucianism on the notion of God as the Lord of Heaven (天主), carefully avoiding possible pantheistic or rationalistic interpretations and clearly understanding God to be the supreme and personal being who is responsible for the natural moral law or the Heavenly/divine way for man. Even though there was no explicit supernatural revelation, Ricci believed that original Confucianism did possess a true notion of God and a true natural religion.²³⁾

Ricci saw his work as "clearing the forests," and not harvesting and not even sowing the seed.²⁴⁾ He took the long-range view and envisioned the permanent stay of Christianity in China. To do this he accommodated himself and Christianity to the culture of Chinese Confucianism. In particular he sought to establish a universal understanding of the natural moral law which was common to both China and Europe. This common language would allow for communication between East and West, between Confucianism and Christianity and thus open the way for a sharing which would Confucianize Christianity and Christianize Confucianism. Such an East-West exchange of ideas would be mutually beneficial in coming to a deeper understanding of the one universal religion with a message for all mankind.

23) The identification of the Christian God or Jesus Christ as the Lord of Heaven is not too dissimilar to the early apostles' identification of the Hebrew Old Testament *Yahweh* with the Greek *theos*. Also, in contrast to the supernatural revelation of God-made-man in Jesus Christ, some people refer to 'natural' or 'primordial' revelation. This is perhaps applicable here. Cf. Joseph Sebes, S.J., "A Bridge between East and West: Father Matteo Ricci, S.J., His Times, his Life, and his Method of Cultural Accomodation" (paper delivered in Taipei, Taiwan, September 1983), pp. 49~50.

24) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 246~247.

For Ricci this process meant disengaging Christianity from the false and non-Christian elements of Western civilization, and also accepting the true and legitimate elements found in Chinese civilization. Such an idealistic venture was not without great dangers and difficulties, for both sides. Both European Christianity and Chinese Confucianism would have to abandon all forms of superiority and prejudice, and thus enter into an open dialogue of friendship. The ethical standard of always dialoguing in true friendship was very high and very demanding. But Ricci believed that this risky and long-term venture was not only possible but also the best way to carry out his missionary work in China.²⁵⁾

Ricci envisioned the work of "clearing away the forest" as the first step in the long process of converting China to Christianity. Once the forest of errors and false teachings were cleared away, a new and better teaching would have to be planted, nurtured, cultivated and finally brought to fruition and harvest. This is how he envisioned the conversion process. While nature and its laws are recognized and accepted, conversion itself is not automatic or inevitable, nor is it the result of logical force or any sort of violence. Conversion happens "naturally" only in the area of ethics and freedom. It is built on the solid ground of friendship, dialogue, and the concomitant virtues of respect, trust, and openness; it flowers only in freedom and love. Ricci's pioneering contribution was in the area of creating a language, a common world-view understood and accepted by the two divergent cultures of China and Europe. Ricci believed that the supernatural religion of Christianity—whether in Chinese or European cultural forms—was the universal religion meant for all mankind. In terms of friendship and open dialogue, Ricci sought to win over the Confucian literati. The first step was to show the possibility of a Christianity which could culturally also be Chinese. Ricci's sensitivity to Chinese

25) Joseph Sebes believes that this perhaps was Ricci's greatest miscalculation. Cf. Sebes, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

culture and his desire to found Christianity on Chinese soil led him to investigate, probe, and discover a universal natural moral law, a true notion of God, and a legitimate structure of a natural religion in the original Confucian classics. This was the first step, the clearing away of the forest, and only the beginning of an East-West dialogue; he did not work out the later stages of his own idealized conversion process. Thus he was reserved and silent on how such a common philosophical understanding of the natural law and God would lead to Christianity. This he left to his "successor-friends," both Europeans and Chinese. Ricci was well aware that this way of friendship and dialogue was difficult and fraught with many dangers and trials, but it was not impossible. He had the "greatest hope" in the conversion of China, but he was not unmindful of the difficulties and risks.²⁶⁾ It is in this sense that I wish to interpret Ricci's last words to those who were attending him on his deathbed.

I leave you before a door open to great merits, but not without numerous dangers and much labor.²⁷⁾

Ricci has begun a work which ever remains to be completed.

26) Tacchi Venturi, *op. cit.*, II, 375ff. Also Rule, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

27) D'Elia, *op. cit.*, II, 540.

〈國文 要約〉

儒敎思想의 自然法에 대한 마테오 릿치의 見解

크리스토퍼 스팔라틴

마테오 릿치는 中國에서 1583年부터 1610년까지 27年間 살았다. 學者로서, 科學者로서 그리고 宣敎師로서 그는 中國에 들어가서 中國말을 배우고, 中國文化의 眞價를 이해하고, 中國사람들의 친구가 되고, 西洋의 學問을 그들과 나눔으로써, 基督教에 대한 길을 引導하는 方案을 모색하였다. 그러기 위하여 그는 그 自身과 基督教을 儒敎의 道德觀에 適應시키고자 하였다. 릿치는 宣敎活動을 儒敎의 研究에 焦點을 두었다. 릿치는 自己가 自然의 道德法則의 有效適切한 原理, 神의 참다운 概念, 그리고 自然宗教의 基本構造를 發見하였다고 생각하였기 때문에 初期儒學의 素朴한 敎訓으로 되돌아 가려고 하였다. 릿치는 儒敎 經典의 도움을 받고, 이를 根據로 論證함으로써 自己의 理論을 證明하는 일부터 시작하였다. 그의 가장 眞摯한 著作인 「天主實義」는 西洋의 學者와 中國의 學者 사이의 哲學的 論爭이다. 이 책은 儒敎에서 시작하여 基督教에 이른다.

中國을 基督教로 改宗시키려는 릿치의 目標은 하나의 長期計劃이며 그것은 많은 試練과 困難에 가득찬 것이었다. 릿치는 自己가 하는 일이 “金을 開墾”하는 것이라고 생각하였다. 그의 後繼者들은 中國人이든 유럽人이든 땅을 갈고, 씨를 심고, 栽培하고 드디어 收穫을 거두는 일을 계속하여야 하였다. 릿치는 다만 첫 시작을 하였는데, 그것은 하나의 共同의 言語, 즉 東과 西가 對話와 親交를 시작할 수 있는 길을 터놓는 일이었다. 中國의 儒敎를 研究하고 解釋함에 있어서 릿치는 初期 儒敎의 經典 자체를 발견하고, 그 經典에 의하여 證明하는 일부터 시작하였다. 즉 첫째로 儒敎가 自然의 道德哲學으로서 眞正 適切한 것이고, 둘째로 自然法으로서

는 不完全한 것이며, 셋째로 儒敎는 基督教의 가르침에 의하여 補完되어야 한다는 것이다. 릿치는 自身은 첫째의 문제를 定立하는데 그의 大部分의 努力을 消耗하였으며, 한편 둘째의 문제는 自明한 것으로 여기고, 셋째의 문제에 대하여는 그것이 어떻게 이루어져야 할 것인가 하는 點을 詳論하지 않은 채로 남겨 놓았다.

릿치는 對話와 親交의 過程을 밟기 시작하였으나 이것을 그의 후계자들에게 남겨 줄 수밖에 없었다. 그것은 하나의 危險한 過程으로서, 東과 西의 兩者가 모든 偏見과 優越感에서 解放될 것을 要求하는 것이었다. 그것은 또한 모든 人類를 위한 福音을 傳하는 하나의 世界宗敎를 찾으면서, 西洋의 基督教나 中國의 儒敎가 다같이 自由롭고 相互의 影響力에 開放되어야 할 것을 要求한다. 그리하여 基督教이 儒敎化하고, 儒敎가 基督教化할 수도 있으며, 이러한 霧圍氣속에서만 眞正한 對話와 親交와 改宗이 이루어질 수 있다. 릿치는 매우 切迫하고 危殆한 過程을 밟기 시작하였다. 그는 可能性의 門戶를 열어놓기는 하였으나 아직도 今後의 試圖를 기다려야 할 것이었다.

<Reaction>

Back to Fundamentals...

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In my response to Father Spalatin's paper, *Matteo Ricci's Understanding of the Natural Law in Confucianism*, I shall direct my remarks to two main areas of inquiry: (1) the issues disclosed by Father Spalatin in his paper and (2) the theme of this international symposium, "Matteo Ricci: His Legacy in East Asia," in light of the issues disclosed by Father Spalatin in his paper.

First of all, I focus my inquiry on the issue disclosed by Father Spalatin's paper. If I understand him correctly, Father Spalatin probes the foundations of Matteo Ricci's missiological approach to the Chinese people, one of those foundations being Ricci's understanding of the natural law in Confucianism on which Father Spalatin has chosen to focus. To better understand Ricci's missiological approach, as well as his understanding of the natural law in Confucianism, let me pose three questions of a fundamental sort which Ricci may have asked himself: (1) Out of a profound respect for the Chinese people and Chinese scholarship, how could Christianity be introduced to China and thus convert Chinese people to Christianity? (2) More fundamentally, is there the possibility of a 'God experience' already implicit in Chinese thought which might possibly provide an avenue of entry for Christianity? (3) If there is such a possibility of a 'God experience' already implicit in Chinese thought which might possibly provide

an avenue of entry for Christianity, how does one talk about this implicit 'God experience' in appropriate ideas and language which neither distort Chinese thought, nor compromise Christianity?

To these God questions and their answers Matteo Ricci devoted twenty-seven years of his life on the China mainland. Ricci found his answers, judiciously tentative as they were, in the natural moral law approach to religion which he sets forth in his philosophical dialogue, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Father Spalatin further directs our inquiry to "...the question of the validity and significance of Ricci's natural law approach to religion and Christianity..." (p. 12), arguing that Ricci held that the natural moral law, as part of Graeco-Roman philosophy to which Western Christianity eventually accommodated itself, could also be found in the Confucian moral teaching to which Christianity could possibly accommodate itself. In other words, Ricci's missiological approach was to go from Athens-Rome to Beijing and then on to Jerusalem and Rome (Roman Catholicism). After all, in the history of Christianity an Athens-Jerusalem axis of cultural accommodation had occurred, and why not now a Beijing-Jerusalem axis by way of Athens and Rome? what can be discovered in the natural moral law is a validity and a truth applicable to all of humankind and this validity and truth can be validly and truthfully articulated in Greek, Latin, and Chinese because all three traditions possess the natural moral law.

Father Spalatin states as follows: "In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* Ricci set out to expound and prove that true philosophy—whether Christian or Confucian—asserts the three fundamental truths of one God, the immortality of man's soul, and the necessity of Heaven and Hell. Ricci clearly had in mind that this presentation was to be made only according to the light of reason and as a remote preparation for the explicit teaching of the mysteries of Christianity" (pp. 8-9). Father Spalatin carefully points out this *caveat*: Ricci viewed the natural moral law approach to religion in Graeco-Roman

philosophy, as well as in Confucian philosophy, to be only preparatory, that the natural moral law is in itself incomplete, thus needing something else for its fulfillment. In other words, intrinsic to the natural moral law of the Graeco-Roman-Confucian traditions, which reflect the experience of all human beings in their striving to do that which is good, there is always an experience of uncertainty, an obscurity even, which reaches out toward an horizon of experience, calling for an experience of transcendence which the Christian specifies by the personal name of 'God'.

Regarding Ricci's natural moral law approach to Confucianism, Father Spalatin emphasizes that in original Confucianism Ricci happily discovered pantheistic and rationalistic interpretations for the possibility of a God experience to be lacking. In original Confucianism Ricci found elements "...of a true notion of God and a true understanding of the natural moral law. He reconstructed this (natural moral law) into a natural religion which was universally true and thus acceptable to all men of reason and good will" (p. 26). Furthermore, Ricci modestly insisted that his approach to the introduction of Christianity to China and the conversion of the Chinese people was only one of 'clearing the forests' and "not harvesting and not even sowing the seed of Christianity" (p. 27). As to the possibility of talking about God, Ricci took as his method the way of a true humanist scholar: friendly dialogue, probing, investigating, and debate. Moreover, in order to show how seriously he took Confucianism and Chinese culture, Ricci, already a scholar of "western learning," sought to accommodate himself to Chinese culture by becoming a Confucian scholar, immersing himself in all aspects of Chinese life. He was perceived by many of his Chinese colleagues to be a Confucian scholar and thus 'sincere'. Finally, Ricci knew that he did not have all the answers. There are some tantalizing silences in his *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, and, like a wise Chinese, he left something for the next generation. His book was meant to be an entry way.

I hope that I have done justice to Father Spalatin's argument and the issues he discloses. I would now like to offer a brief critique of Father Spalatin's paper. Father Spalatin has provided us with a most valuable introduction to an aspect of Ricci's thought which has been neglected. Concerning Matteo Ricci's missiological approach to the Chinese people, he has helped to "clear the forest" a bit more. I look forward to a more detailed textual explication on the part of Father Spalatin of Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, as well as an explication of the original Confucian classics which Ricci used. I wish that Father Spalatin's paper had been more tightly argued, and I wish that Father Spalatin had presented a critique of Ricci, that perhaps regarding the 'God question,' Ricci saw more in the "implicit" than was explicitly there. However, such a critique might have taken him beyond the scope of his paper. I myself am not convinced of the validity of Ricci's approach and the conclusions he draws. The leap from Athens to Beijing, from an Aristotelian noetic consciousness (*nous*) to a Confucian humanity consciousness (仁) may be too great of a jump. However, that some of Ricci's Chinese colleagues made that jump is significant. What is yet more significant is that they made the trip from Beijing to Athens, from Athens to Jerusalem, and then went on to Rome. I would only go so far to say that in the early Confucian classics that I have read I find an experience of transcendence. However, because of the valuable contribution Father Spalatin has made, I have more homework to do.

As Father Spalatin points out, and this is also significant, Ricci departed from the Thomistic philosophy and theology of his times, suspending the truth question of metaphysical and theological propositions, and shifted his focus to the morality of human behavior on the basis of human experience—of what people really do—which is more of a Confucian emphasis. In other words, Ricci was not only able to free himself from the polemical mode of Counter-Reformation argumentation in theology, which could be and was quite vicious regarding

adversaries, but Ricci also freed himself from the Counter-Reformation method of posing philosophical and theological questions. That which is to be *done* comes first, rather than that which *is*. However, Ricci might have switched the two at certain points in his *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (the word 'true' in the title smacks of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy) and perhaps the sensitive, tantalizing silences in his book, for whatever reason they are there, may have led succeeding Confucian and western interpreters to interpret him according to their own biases, thus distorting what he was really trying to say.

Using Father Spalatin's paper as a point of departure, I wish to briefly speculate upon what I think are some of the underlying presuppositions of Ricci's use of the natural moral law approach to a philosophy of religion. In the opening line of *Joseph and His Brothers* Thomas Mann wrote: "Very deep is the well of the past" (Trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968, p. 3), and the philosopher of history Eric Voeglin has written that, "History, it appears, has a long breath" (*The Ecumenic Age*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974, p. 331). Because of his Renaissance education as a humanist-scientist and because of his spiritual and theological formation as a Jesuit, Ricci possessed an acute historical sense. He saw the process of history as a myself in process of revelation.

For Ricci, history had a transcendent direction. Within history one can discover the experience of a transcendent direction. Within history one can discover the experience of a transcendent presence, not only in the soul, but also in the cosmos in its spatio-temporal existence and order. This transcendent presence he knew to be expressed in differentiated cultural symbolizations—in Greek and Roman philosophy, in Christianity, and in Confucianism—culturally contextualized but not culturally bound. Employing the "well of the past" and the long breath of history, as articulated in the great books of the past, both

in the Chinese and western traditions, Ricci sought to create a dialogue wherein the historical consciousness of China and the historical consciousness of the West might on the most common level of human experience—what being human means—mutually discover points of correspondence. History for Ricci, as it was for Plato, an *anamnetic* process, memory, not only pointing toward the historical past, but also pointing downward and inward into the depths of the historical present and then outward to a transcendent horizon of experience. Thus, the past-present-future matrix of human history itself is constituted by a transcendent direction which demands a loyalty and a love of transcendental values.

I now direct my remarks to the theme of this international symposium, "Matteo Ricci: His Legacy in East Asia," focusing on the word 'legacy' in light of the issues disclosed by Father Spalatin's paper. As we all know, a legacy is something which comes from an ancestor or a predecessor. Ricci himself received a legacy from two cultures and brought them together in dialogue, and Ricci left a legacy to his successors, "...a door open to great merits, but not without numerous dangers and much labor" (p. 30). The missiological legacy left by Ricci has a history of success, brilliance, holiness, heroism, compassion, love, frustration, hate, zeal and piety without careful thought, good will coupled with ignorance, downright malice, and sheer stupidity. The Ricci legacy continues to be distorted by inflated Caucasian notions of conscious or unconscious racial superiority, inflated notions of Asian cultural and/or racial superiority because of longevity, the arrogance of technocratic expertise, multinational corporations, dependency economies, totalitarian regimes, coercive proselytization, dogmatic ideology masking as religious experience, militarization, nationalism, and the worst enemies of all—human pride and human fear. No matter to which culture we belong, we all know these demons, formidable obstacles which prevent otherwise good men and women from mutually discovering their own rich humanity. These

demons are enemies of the human. To specify Ricci's legacy, I would say that his experience with the Chinese people, as well as his own deep commitment to his own experience and this on the level of basic humanity, gave him a deeper insight as to what being a human being means.

Father Spalatin points out in his paper that Ricci took as his point of departure a reflection upon human experience as the foundation for his natural moral law approach to missiology which he found in both the west and in China. In the symbolism of the natural moral law of both Confucian and Graeco-Roman philosophical legacies, Ricci discovered a way to reflect upon and articulate about the *humanum*, the fundamental human condition of humankind. On the one hand, Ricci was not so naive that he did not realize that the *humanum* is historically conditioned and culturally contextualized; he was not a purist. On the other hand, Ricci was not so obtuse that he did not recognize that there are certain common characteristics and values without all human beings share, and that these characteristics and values might manifest themselves in different symbols, make them all the more attractive because they are different. Furthermore, Ricci time and again insisted on friendship and dialogue. He took the way of the gentlemen to bring Christianity to China because he already found gentlemen in China. To be a gentlemen was to be human, and to be human was to be a friend. Because Father Spalatin's paper is concerned with the foundations of Ricci's missiological approach, I have entitled my response to his paper, "Back to Fundamentals." And if I might be permitted a strangle hold on the obvious, the legacy Ricci leaves to us today in a more complex world in which he lived is a cross-cultural reflection upon our fundamental human condition in dialogue and friendship. What is it that we really want as human beings living together on this earth?

In conclusion, to honor a thinker like Ricci is not to praise, nor even to interpret, but to disclose his work, thereby keeping it alive

and demonstrating that it defies time and retains relevance. In taking another step to disclose the thought of Matteo Ricci, Father Spalatin has kept alive the legacy of Matteo Ricci, demonstrating that Ricci's legacy defies time and retains its relevance, "...a door open to great merits, but not without numerous dangers and much labor."

Thank You.