

ANTI-CHRISTIAN POLEMICS IN
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CHINA
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In several articles and books published in recent years attempts have been made to examine the anti-Christian tradition in China and to seek for the causes of the failure of Christianity to substitute itself for the religious and philosophical traditions of the Chinese people.¹ Reflective analyses of missionary policy and strategy, as well as of the Chinese *milieu* within which missionaries carried on their activities, have been made by theologians, historians and sociologists in order to determine what "went wrong."

In the best of the analyses written by missionaries, the policy enunciated by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in its first years of existence still appears to dominate their thinking even when they are not of the Roman obedience. According to this policy, the early Roman Catholic missionary was instructed

. . . not to seek for any reason to persuade peoples to change their customs, as long as they are not openly contrary to religion and morality.

It is not [Europe] which you are to import but the Faith²

Thus David Paton, an Anglican missionary, writes:

... the nations have their own life and culture, and these also must be penetrated with the gospel, and led by it to bring their glory into the Kingdom.³

As may be expected, Paton's analysis of the failure of Christian missions in China is made in theological terms. The whole burden of his argument is that the above-mentioned policy, which is an expression of the theological principle that God is active in all history and all societies, has been violated, and that therefore the missionary *debacle*, especially obvious in the years since the rise of Communism in China, must be understood as the judgement of God upon Christian missions.

Professor C. P. Fitzgerald, writing as an historian, and therefore not so concerned with the niceties of theology, traces the decline of Christianity in China to the failure of the missionaries of the mid-nineteenth century to grasp the opportunity presented to them in the form of the Taiping rebellion.⁴ More recently, however, scholars like J. R. Levenson and C. K. Yang, penetrating to very much deeper levels than Fitzgerald, have shed valuable light on the problem by examining the mental attitudes of the Chinese intellectual. Yang sees the failure of Christianity to exercise any attraction for the Chinese of the twentieth century as due to the religious scepticism and atheistic tendencies of the modern world in general, and to the

1. See, for example, Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity*, 1963; George H. C. Wong, "The Anti Christian Movement in China: Late Ming and Early Ch'ing," *Ts'ing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, New Series III, No. 1, May, 1962.
2. J. R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 1958, p. 118.
3. David Paton, *Christian Missions and the Judgement of God*, 1953, p. 12.
4. C. P. Fitzgerald, *Revolution in China*, 1952, ch. 5.

“dominant social and political movements [in China] in the modern period [which] were no longer launched in the name of the gods and with strength borrowed from magic . . .”⁵ Levenson, on the other hand, writes:

Christianity has failed thus far in any general sense to succeed Confucianism . . . because restless Chinese, for all their turning to western ways, still felt a compulsion to own the ground they stood on. Iconoclasm was impossible unless it left unweakened the Chinese sense of cultural equivalence with the west. Only if its old rival, western Christianity, were dispatched with it, could Chinese Confucianism be thrown to the modern western lions.”

All these are undoubtedly valid observations on events of the first half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it has to be borne in mind that the Chinese people believed that there was ground to be owned and defended long before modern political, economic and scientific factors came into play. Ample evidence exists to show that even as early as the first years of the seventeenth century, when the most eminent Jesuit missionaries of the time were active in the orient, the majority of Chinese were in no mood to submit to an alien faith. The Chinese of this period felt no need to prove their “cultural equivalence with the west.” For them, the completeness, and therefore the superiority, of Chinese thought and culture was self-evident. The general attitude, therefore, was either one of mixed condescension and pity for these foreigners who, despite their undoubted abilities in science and technology, failed to grasp the essential ethos of the Chinese nation, or one of hostility for these “disturbers of the peace” who, through their “contemptible practices”, were able to lead the gullible and untutored members of society astray. The defence against these intruders, therefore, consisted in an unmasking operation which, it was hoped, would reveal their intellectual and moral poverty. It is the purpose of this article to examine this defence as it began to find literary expression during the first four decades of the seventeenth century.

The Nature of the Sheng Chao P'o Hsieh Chi

The writings to which we shall refer were gathered together in 1640 by Hsii Ch'ang-chih, a native of Yenkuang (the present Haining Hsien) in Chekiang, and published under the title *Sheng Chao P'o Hsieh Chi* (Collection of Writings of the Sacred Dynasty for the Countering of Heterodoxy).⁷ According to Hsu's preface to the Collection, he was first introduced to this material by the Buddhist monk Fei Yin whom he chanced to meet on a journey.⁸ It seems that Fei Yin was an assiduous collector of writings directed against Christianity, and that he was on the look-out for someone who would edit and publish them.

The SCPHC, which embraces the writings of more than forty authors, is divided into eight

5. C..K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, 1961, p. 363.

6. Levenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-2.

7. Hereafter abbreviatecl to SCPHC.

8. SCPHC, Introduction, p. 2a.

chuan, the first two of which are devoted to (a) memorials to the throne composed by Shen Ch'ueh⁹ (b) records of legal actions taken against Christians in Nanking between 1616 and 1618, and (c) reports on, and action taken against, Christianity in Fukien in 1637-8. Chuan 3-6 are made up of anti-Christian polemics written chiefly from the point of view of Confucianism, but also frequently defending Chinese attitudes as a whole. These, when dated, come from the period 1637-38. Chuan 7 and 8 are devoted almost exclusively to attacks upon Christianity by Buddhist monks, and range, where dates are available, from 1615 to the late 1630s.

The fact that Buddhist writings make up such an important part of the SCPHC and that its publication was due directly to Buddhist influence means that a degree of caution must be exercised in any attempt to assess its significance. Obviously, no Buddhist collector would harbour, much less try to publish, any writing inimical to his own position. Further, from our knowledge of the work and achievements of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and his fellow Jesuits, as well as of the various intellectual movements in the China of the early seventeenth century, it is clear that not all Chinese scholars were as antagonistic to the missionaries as were the writers included in the SCPHC. Nevertheless, since Buddhism tended to find its allies among the broad masses of the people, and since it is a known fact that considerable numbers of Confucian scholars during this period were deeply enamoured of Buddhism, it is fair to assume that the views expressed here are indicative of the general intellectual climate of the country.¹⁰

Opposition to Christianity, as expressed in the SCPHC, falls broadly into two categories. In the first, it is directed against the scientific skills which the Jesuit missionaries had brought with them, and in the second, the doctrines of Christianity themselves come under fire. We shall examine briefly the reactions to western scientific innovations before turning to Confucian and Buddhist attitudes to the new faith.

The Response to We-sterm Scientific Knowledge

Inevitably, the scientific knowledge and technical skills of the Jesuits tended to provide them with an introduction into Chinese scholarly circles. The accuracy of their calculations in the field of astronomy, their knowledge of algebra and geometry, their cartographic skill, their scientific instruments and their knowledge of weaponry were all highly impressive and quickly attracted the interest, and a degree of approval, of certain scholars and high officials in the major cities of the empire. Even so, there were many who were disturbed over what they felt

9. A *Chin-Shih* of 1592. Shen Chy'ueh was vice-president of the Board of Rites at Nanking in 1616. In that year he instituted legal proceedings against the Catholic Church in China. See A. W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 1, 453.

10. For an account of the influence of Buddhism on the educated classes of China during the last years of the Ming dynasty see Kenneth Ch'en *Buddhism in China*, 1964, Ch. 16.

was an attempt to displace traditional learning, to belittle China's own scientific achievements, and to undermine the authority of the great Confucian teachers of the past.

In the SCPHC most of the scientific skills and instruments of the Jesuits came in for attack. The alarm-clock was held to be no more efficient than the clepsydra, and its manufacture therefore wasteful of funds. Foreign cannon were regarded as a poor investment since they tended to blow up in the faces of the gunners instead of destroying the enemy. But more important than the fallibility of these and other inventions was the danger, these writers held, of forgetting that China had produced her own scholars and technicians who not only exhibited technical skill, but also understood the proper relationship between technical invention and the major aim of all traditional Chinese learning, i.e., the moral cultivation of the individual. Thus Hsii Ta-shou asked: "When has it ever happened that skill has been conceded to barbarians? And even if these things represent skill, of what value is it to the nurture of body and mind?"¹¹

Another author, Li Ts'an, writing in the same vein, said:

[Matteo Ricci] has recently again brought forward his one or two skills, such as his astronomical instruments, which are said never to have been seen or heard of in China, and which he secretly

plans to have us use. These skills of his, however, bear hidden within them the first shoots of calamity. He does not realise that skills of this kind have existed all along in the writings of our own scholars. . . . The truth is that the supreme source of good government and education resides within the mind of man and not in these skills.¹²

As might be expected, however, it was those scientific theories which ran directly counter to the Chinese view of China's geographical position and to accepted notions of the nature of the universe which provoked the strongest reactions. The belief, supported by certain theories in Chinese astronomy which set out to co-ordinate celestial and geographical phenomena, that China was geographically central to the world, had political and cultural ramifications. The Chinese emperor, so it was thought, received his heavenly mandate to rule, not over a limited geographical area with clearly defined boundaries, but over the world, the fringes of which, if not thoroughly sinicized and Confucianized thus far, could expect to be so as the benefits of Chinese civilization became more widely known.

Consequently, Ricci's map of the world, which ran into several editions and which won the admiration of numbers of more open-minded scholars, was severely criticized and ridiculed in the SCPHC. Wei Chun, for example, insisted that by assigning China to the north-western portion of this map Ricci was deliberately misleading the scholars and people of the empire. He asserted that there was no way of checking the veracity of the map and that it had no more significance than paintings of "bogies and sprites."¹³

11. A native of Tech'ing in Chekiang, Hsu Ta-shou's writings occupy the whole of chuan 4 in the SCPHC.

12. SCPHC, chuan 5, pp. 23b-24a.

13. SPHC, chuan 3, pp. 37a-38a

As Joseph Needham has pointed out, the world-view held by Chinese scholars at the time of Ricci's entry into China was known as the Hsuan Yeh doctrine. According to this doctrine the heavenly bodies were thought to float in infinite space. Ricci and his companions, on the other hand, were, ironically, still committed to the Ptolemaic-Aristotelian theories according to which the geocentric universe was made up of "solid concentric crystalline spheres." Ricci had criticized Chinese views in 1595. His criticisms, conveniently summarized for us by Needham, were as follows: The Chinese say that "there is only one sky (and not ten skies). It is empty (and not solid). The stars move in the void (instead of being attached to the firmament)"¹⁴

Hsii Ta-shou, putting forward the Chinese position, but at the same time indicating the way in which, in many Chinese minds, this view was tied in with the hierarchical social structure of the nation, and, indeed, of the world, wrote:

[The foreigners] say that the heaven of the stars is higher than the heaven of the sun and moon, and that the body (t'i) of the five planets and twenty-eight constellations together is larger than that of the sun and moon; but, they do not state that the sacred rule whereby 'the king scrutinizes the year . . . and the people scrutinize the stars'¹⁵ absolutely cannot be changed. Now all who have eyes can see the largeness of the sun and the moon, yet they perversely make them small. All can see that the three lights (sun, moon and stars) are all attached to one heaven, yet they perversely multiply its number. To diminish the sun is to diminish the king, and to multiply the heavens is to multiply the rulers.⁶

Criticism Levelled at Christian Doctrine by Confucianists

When we turn to the attacks directed by both Confucian and Buddhist writers in the SCPHC against Christian doctrine we find that underlying all the arguments employed is the argument from authority. The prime concern was to preserve a way of life which these writers believed to be based on universal truth. They firmly believed that if foreign doctrines were to take hold of the minds and loyalties of the rulers and people of China their traditional Chinese heritage would suffer irreparable damage, and Chinese moral and spiritual values would be undermined. Arguments from authority then, including the use of quotations from the canonical Classics, are not to be regarded as examples of intellectual laziness; rather they are to be looked at from the standpoint of faith. To quote Confucius or Mencius or to appeal to the recorded achievements of China's great sages was not a matter of refusing to think a problem through, but rather of making an affirmation of belief.

14. J. Needham, *Chinese Astronomy and the Jesuit Mission: An Encounter of Cultures*, 1958, pp. 1-2.

15. *Book of History: Hung Fan*. See B. Karlgren, "Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities," No. 22, p. 33.

16. SCPHC, chuan 4, p. 37a,b.

What, then, was the nature of this belief at the end of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) ? Put very simply, it was the conviction that the universe was an organic, rational and moral whole; that man, a part of this totality, could, through moral integrity, be made aware of those principles with which he had been endowed by nature, and thus could become a harmonious part of his environment. The full exercise of the principles informing human nature would guarantee stability in family, social, political and economic relationships, as well as peace of mind in the individual. Nor was this a mere pipe-dream, for the Classics were those documents which preserved for posterity the information that the early rulers of China, such as Yao, Shun, and the Duke of Chou, had reached the highest sagely ideal in their own persons, thereby gaining an inner awareness of the true nature of things, and passing on the benefits of their sageliness to all their fellow men in terms of moral example and good government. The Classics, so it was believed, had been brought together and edited by one, Confucius, who had attained to such a degree of moral perfection that he was able to discern these sagely qualities in China's early rulers.

Complicating the scene, however, was a difference of opinion as to whether emphasis should be laid on the teachings of Chu Hsi, (1130-1200), according to which the human mind was to be viewed as part of the phenomenal world, or on the teachings of Wang Yang-ming, (1472-1529)¹⁷ who saw the mind as a metaphysical reality and regarded it as a microcosmic expression of universal principle (*li*) with which it was equated. To insist that material-energy was a necessary component of the human mind was to stress the importance of the phenomenal world and of its investigation for the purpose of a proper understanding of its processes. To stress the metaphysical nature of mind, on the other hand, was to suggest, along with many Buddhists, and especially those of the school of Ch'an (Zen), that an understanding of the principles and processes of the universe could best be achieved through an experience of mental awakening.

Wang Yang-ming's views were especially popular among those Chinese who favoured the philosophical and religious eclecticism which was a marked feature of late-Ming China. But the more extreme expressions of Wang's philosophical idealism were not regarded with such favour by adherents of the Tung-lin school.¹⁸ The Tung-lin Party represented reform-minded scholar-officials in the political field. They stood opposed to officials and eunuchs in court circles who were steadily undermining effective government, and as advocates of a morally purified court, they rather naturally tended to oppose Confucian-Taoist-Buddhist eclecticism,

17. For the teachings of Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming see Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, II, 533ff; Wang Yang-ming, *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*, trans. by Wing-tsit Chan, 1963.
18. For accounts of the Tung-lin school see Charles O. Hucker, "The Tung-lin Movement of the Late Ming Period", in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. by John K. Fairbank 1957, pp. 132-162; Fr. Heinrich Busch, "The Tung-lin Academy and Its Political and Philosophical Significance," in *Monumenta Serica*, XIV, 1949-55, pp. 1-163.

advocating a return to more "orthodox" Confucian doctrine.

In view of the state of affairs outlined above it comes as no great surprise to discover that Ricci and his companions found greatest support and friendship among the members and supporters of the Tunglin school.¹⁹ His distrust of Buddhism and his enthusiasm for the Confucian Classics could only commend him to such men.

In his attitude to traditional Chinese thought Ricci adopted the view that the teachings of the early Chinese, as exhibited in the Confucian canonical Classics, were an almost perfect expression of "natural law."²⁰ On the other hand, post-Buddhist Neo-Confucianism, and in particular those aspects of it which seemed to owe most to Buddhist thought, witnessed, he believed, to a process of degeneration. Ricci thus appears to have adopted a position according to which Christianity was to be regarded as completing this natural law rather than displacing it.²¹ Ricci's converts, no matter how loyal to him and to Christianity, never ceased to regard themselves as Confucians, and were never persuaded by him to abandon what he regarded as true in their own tradition.

It must be admitted that Ricci and his colleagues had only a defective understanding of Buddhism. Nevertheless, his frequent strictures upon that religion were supported by such converts as Hsu Kuang-ch'i²² who, in 1616, in a memorial to the throne designed to defend the missionaries against arrest and deportation, denigrated Buddhism as a religion which only seemingly encouraged morality and which, during its long history in China, had failed to change men's hearts and direct them to what is good.²³

The Confucian contributors to the SCPHC usually prefaced their remarks by quoting from Ricci's *T'ien Chu Shih I* (The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven). It will be useful, therefore, to follow them by itemizing the doctrines criticized.

On the Nature of God

In the work cited above Ricci asserted that God, a personal deity whom he called the Lord of Heaven, was omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, and that He was the creator of heaven, earth, and all things. But in his attempt to relate Confucianism to the Christian faith,

19. Busch points out that the Chief Grand Secretary (1608-1614 and 1621-1624) Yeh Hsiang-kao was at one and the same time patron of the Tung-lin Academy and of the Jesuit missionaries, op. cit., p. 159. Not all Tung-lin scholars were so favourably inclined however. The writings of two of these men are included in the SCPHC, and the well-known Tung-lin official, Feng Ts'ung-wu (1556-1627), wrote against Christianity, *ibid.*, p. 160.

20. See *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci*, trans. by L. J. Gallagher, S.J., 1953, p. 448.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 448.

22. See Hummel, op. cit., I, p. 316.

23. The relevant portion of this memorial is quoted by Maurus Fang Hao in his article "Adaptation by Catholics of Confucian Tenets during the late Ming and Early Ch'ing Dynasties," *Bulletin of the College of Arts, National Taiwan University*, No. 11 (August, 1962), p. 156.

Ricci went much further than this. He stated categorically that the God whom he called the Lord of Heaven was none other than the Shangti (Supreme Ruler) spoken of in China's ancient Classics.

Describing Ricci's teachings, but at the same time reflecting popular Neo-Confucian views, Huang Chen wrote:²⁴

They hold that this Lord bestowed on man a soul which is said to be his nature. One is not permitted to say that this nature is heaven, nor may one say that heaven is our mind ... it is even more impermissible to equate the Lord of Heaven with heaven and earth. Heaven and earth, the Lord of Heaven and man are divided into three things which may not be united bodily. They consider as fallacious our Chinese teaching that all things are bodily (i.e. organically) one. They also consider the teaching of Master Wang Yang-ming that it is "innate knowledge" which begets heaven, earth and all things as being entirely wrong.²⁵

Although the religion of the ancient Chinese people which served as the backdrop to the thought of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and Mencius (372-289 B.C.) was clearly theistic in character, the preference for the term Heaven rather than Shangti to designate the supreme deity in the Confucian Analects and in the Book of Mencius already suggests a weakening of the concept of a personal God in the thinking of these two men. Ricci was no doubt right when he insisted that the first Confucians accepted the notion of a personal deity, but it is quite clear that the employment of the term Heaven, no matter what it may have signified in early Chou times, opened the way for later Confucian rationalization of religious terminology. Thus Hsun Tzu, (298-238 B.C.) a younger contemporary of Mencius, took a completely rationalistic view of the universe. In place of a Heaven who rules over the world and who can be appealed to by man, Hsun Tzu substituted a Heaven which is impersonal and which is to be regarded as the naturalistic process of the universe. Reinforced by Taoist naturalism and Buddhist atheism, Confucianism, in its Neo-Confucian form especially, provided educated Chinese with a humanism supported by a coherent metaphysical system, but denuded of religious overtones. Even the seemingly religious cult of ancestor worship was preserved for its contribution to social cohesion rather than for any strictly religious reason.

For the followers of both of the major wings of Neo-Confucianism, then, there could be no room for a personal deity. The adherents of the school of Chu Hsi maintained that final reality was the Supreme Ultimate, a term borrowed from the *Book of Changes*. This Supreme Ultimate, moreover, was to be equated with Principle (*li*), a natural and immutable "law" which informed all phenomena. The followers of Wang Yang-ming, on the other hand, preferred to regard final reality as mind. For them, mind and Principle were one, the universe being contained within the mind.

24. A native of Hsiachang in Chekiang.

25. SCPHC, chuan 3, p. 86.

It was, of course, impossible for Chinese thinkers to deny that the Confucian scripture-classics made frequent reference to a supreme personal deity, but it was equally impossible for them to brand the bulk of Confucian thought subsequent to Confucius and Mencius as fallacious. The first thing that had to be done, therefore, in response to Ricci's challenge, was to insist that Neo-Confucianism was not a denial of primitive Confucianism, but rather an expression of increasing insight into the questions first raised by Confucius and Mencius. Heaven and Shangti may have been regarded as a personal deity in early Chinese religion, but an increasing knowledge of the nature of the universe had brought about a more adequate understanding of what these terms really stood for. There was no question of inconsistency. Thus Yen Wen-hui, a colleague of Shen Ch'ueh, wrote:

Heaven and Ti (i.e. Shangti) are one. When we consider this "one" from the point of view of its bodily form we call it Heaven, but when we regard it in terms of a controlling power we call it Ti.²⁶

As we would expect, the Jesuit missionaries were not disposed to destroy the Chinese concept of Principle. It seemed too close to the Catholic notion of natural law to be discarded altogether. Instead, they put forward the view that Principle was a dependent thing and that therefore the Supreme Ultimate, with which it was equated, could not be autonomous and regarded as the source of all phenomena. Principle, and therefore the Supreme Ultimate, having no intelligence of its own, could only be considered as inferior to man. Confucius understood this, they insisted, when he said, "Man can enlarge the Way, it is not the Way which enlarges man."²⁷

That the Neo-Confucian found it difficult to see why Principle had to be regarded as dependent was due, in part, to the fact that, for him, Principle was no mere austere law. Exhibited most clearly in China's sages, but inherent nevertheless in every man, Principle was equated with human nature, and therefore with the highest moral impulses in man. But because of Neo-Confucianism's thoroughgoing organicism, human nature was also equated with the Supreme Ultimate. Principle or the Supreme Ultimate, therefore, even in its universal operation, could not be divorced from many of the features which Christians normally attribute to God. One of the statements which brings out most clearly the richness of the concept of human nature, and by implication of all those items equated with it, is found in Wang Yang-ming's *Ch'uan Hsi Lu*. In this passage, echoes of which are to be found in the SCPHC, he writes:

Humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are [manifestations of human nature]. Nature is one. As physical form or body it is called heaven. As master of the creative process it is called Ti. In its universal operation it is called destiny. As endowment in man it is called man's nature. As master of man's body it is called the mind. When it emanates from the mind we have filial piety when it is applied to the father, loyalty when it is applied to the ruler, and so on to infinity. All this is only one nature.²⁸

26. SCPUC, chuan 1, p. 23a

27. SCPHC, chuan 3, p. 19b and *Confucian Analects*, XV:29.

28. Wang Yang-ming, *op. cit.*, p.34, with slight adjustments to the translation for the purposes of this article.

Huang Chen in the SCPHC criticized strongly what he regarded as the failure of the Jesuits to see the essential unity of all things, and the consequent distinctions they made between God and His laws, between God and creation, and between God and human nature. As to the assertion that Confucius accepted the inferior status of Principle (here equated with the Way mentioned in the passage quoted above), Huang Chen agreed that there is a sense in which one can say that "man can enlarge it." In man, Principle or the Way has certain functional aspects. It has certain moral capacities and certain moral purposes, and it is man's duty to exploit these to the full. But if one speaks, said Huang, from the standpoint of the source of these moral capacities, then it becomes possible to say that Principle or the Way "can enlarge man." The Way must, in the final analysis, be regarded as the Lord of man. This is why, said Huang, the *Book of Rites* asserted that "the Way may not be departed from even for a moment." Further, the attempt to eliminate the Supreme Ultimate and to put Principle in a dependent category was analogous to trying to distinguish between a horse and its whiteness. The missionaries were trying, he said, to assert that the horse exists autonomously and independent of its coloration. If this were possible, and if Principle or the Way were to be regarded as dependent in the same manner as the colour of the horse is taken to be dependent, this would imply that the Way, and therefore man's moral nature, were not absolute and could therefore be departed from.²⁹

On the Incarnation

Of all the Christian teachings dealt with in the SCPHC it is the doctrine of the Incarnation which appeared most incongruous. To place the incarnation in a Chinese setting Ricci had stated that "The Lord of Heaven was born in the time of Emperor Ai of the Han dynasty. His name was Jesus and his mother was called Mary.... He was put to death through being nailed to a cross by an evil official."³⁰

The question repeatedly asked by SCPHC critics was: How can the processes of the universe continue if God, the controller of these processes, became man for a period of thirty-three years? Tai Ch'i-feng acknowledged that the Jesuits taught that during the period of the incarnation God remained in Heaven as governor of all creation, but he asked whether this did not imply the existence of two Gods.

More important still was the seeming inconsistency between the claims made for God by the missionaries and their assertions concerning His creation. If God is omnipotent, as they claimed, why did He not create good "first parents" instead of Adam and Eve who disobeyed

29. SCPHC, chuan 3, p. 20a, b.

30. SCPHC, chuan 1, p. 23b.

their creator? And if mankind did need saving, asked Tai, why did He not create a good person to do this for Him instead of coming himself? After all, Chinese history provided a number of instances of what sages and good men had been able to do to turn people from evil to good. There appeared to be no reason why the death of anyone was necessary to achieve this end.³¹

But it was the claims made for a crucified "criminal" which seemed most to arouse feelings of repugnance. Thus Yen Wen-hui wrote: "A western devil who was put to death for his crimes is [proclaimed] the Lord of Heaven. Is such a thing possible?"³²

On the Nature of Man

The Neo-Confucian insistence on the essential unity of all things meant that man was regarded, not as a creature standing over against the rest of creation with the right to exploit it to his own ends, but rather as a part of the natural world with which he was to live in harmony. Whether one accepted the "two-world" theory of Chu Hsi, according to which Principle informed material-energy, or the "one world" theory of the Lu-Wang schools which

reduced the universe to mind, a continuum was held to exist between human nature and Heaven (or Principle, or the Supreme Ultimate, or the Way). Further, since Heaven or Principle was held to be a moral absolute, man's Heaven-bestowed nature could only be considered good. Confucian thinkers were not, of course, so naive as to deny the existence of evil, but they did believe that a Confucian education and a constant self-scrutiny in the light of Confucian teachings would lead to the emergence of human nature in its pristine glory. The Christian emphasis on man's sinfulness and on his need for a saviour could hardly be regarded as satisfactory to Confucians who held such an optimistic view of his potentialities.

Hsii Ta-shou who dealt systematically with a number of Christian doctrines pointed out that the missionaries taught that God created all things from nothing over a period of six days; that the human soul is destined for eternal life, but that it does not pre-exist creation; that the nature of animals is different from the nature of man, and that man is born with original sin.

The Christian story of creation, said Hsu, suggested a "rushed job." Heaven in the Chinese view is unhurried in its creative activity. In a conversation with Giulio Aleni³³ which Hsu recorded, he asked the missionary why, if souls have no prior existence, individuals should experience poverty and wealth and other inequalities. Aleni replied that it was for the same reasons as those put forward by Confucians, namely, that physical endowments (i.e. material-energy endowments) differed from person to person. Hsu replied to this that if God can do

31. SCPHC, chuan 5, pp. 10a-11a.

32. SCPHC, chuan 1, p. 23b.

33. Fr. Giulio Aleni (1582-1649).

everything, and if Aleni yet insisted that man's physical endowments could effect distinctions between one person and another, was this not tantamount to saying that God was not omniscient?

Aleni, according to Hsu, allowed that these were deep questions and therefore decided to outline Christian teaching concerning the creation of Adam and Eve, their disobedience to God's commands, and the consequent imputation of original sin to all mankind.

Hsii's reaction to Aleni's exposition was marked by incredulity. How, he asked, could the reward for original sin, which was one event only, be extended to all succeeding generations? The punishment meted out to successive generations was too great, he maintained, for such a small act of disobedience. More important in his view, however, was the notion that the sins of the ancestors could involve their descendants in the processes of retribution. Hsu held that Buddhist teaching on the six ways of rebirth in which each person suffers for his own sins is more equitable, and therefore much to be preferred. The Christian scheme of sin and retribution was unworthy of deity. If a person were unfilial he could always blame Adam for his failure; but it would seem that the only one to be blamed for Adam's lack of filial piety was God.³⁴

The Problem of Evil

The discussion on original sin inevitably led Hsu to ask Aleni how he accounted for the existence of evil. The solving of this problem of evil was of great importance to Neo-Confucian thinkers because of their highly optimistic view of human nature. Broadly speaking, the Neo-Confucian position can be summed up under its positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, evil could be regarded as a result of natural creative processes. According to Chu Hsi and his followers in particular, creation was due to a gradual congelation of primordial material-energy or ether. Although Principle permeated this material-energy and could not be separated from it, except conceptually, the congelating process resulted in qualitative differences in phenomena. Only in man did the finer qualities of material-energy combine to produce perfection. Yet even here differences were held to exist, and these differences were thought to contribute in no small degree to the kind of person a man could be.

Despite this unevenness in man's make-up, however, Confucians did not feel committed to a rigid materialistic determinism. All men, so they believed, possessed a capacity or talent for self-improvement. The negative aspect of evil, therefore, was considered to be man's

neglect of his capacities. All men could improve themselves through Confucian moral education and through a process of self-nurture. Such an education combined with practical moral discipline would lead to the uncovering and bringing to light of man's unsullied nature.

34. SCPHC, chuan 4, pp. 11ff.

As we have seen, Aleni was not unwilling to make use of some of these ideas, but for him the primary source of evil was the devil. Hsu stated that he asked Aleni who made the devil, and was told that God created spirits, one of whom was Lucifer, the ancestor of the Buddha [!] Because Lucifer claimed equal wisdom with God, God was angry and banished him to hell. This Lucifer, so Aleni claimed was Yen-lo Wang or Yama, the ruler of Hades. Hsu, however, was not convinced with this explanation and insisted that the creator of Lucifer could not be exonerated from all blame. Moreover, if God's wrath had to be regarded as an eternal feature of his being this seemed to imply that there was someone with whom God was eternally wrathful and who, having eternal life, must possess equal power with God. Adam and Eve, said Hsu, could hardly be held responsible for the evil in the world when the source of that evil transcended them and could, with justification, be attributed to their creator.³⁵

There are few doctrines or activities of the Jesuit missionaries which do not come in for attack by the Confucian contributors to the SCPHC. They are accused of misleading the ignorant masses and of meeting secretly to plan insurrection. They are branded as disturbers of the peace and as serving as the forerunners of foreign invasion. The Spanish occupation of the Philippines is cited as an example of what China could expect should she continue to tolerate the missionary presence. The Jesuits are said to win converts by offering handsome bribes to the populace; to offer worship to Heaven in contravention of laws which forbid all but the emperor to perform sacrifices to Heaven; to undermine accepted ethical principles governing human relationships, and to belittle Chinese religious practices including the all-important ancestral sacrifices. Two passages which we shall now quote, however, will give sufficient indication of the atmosphere pervading the writings of these Confucian polemicists. They are also immensely valuable as direct examples of the discussions which must have taken place on numerous occasions between these early representatives of western thought and faith and educated Chinese.

Dealing with the apparent contrasts between Chinese and western notions governing human relations Hsii Ta-shou wrote:

Sovereign and ministers, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, elder brothers and younger brothers and friends, all pertain to human relationships, and successively lay emphasis upon reverence, affection, discrimination, precedence and trustworthiness. Between them, each chooses what is appropriate. One cannot level heaven to make it equal with earth, nor may one turn one's relatives into strangers, make the Yang (male, positive) principle reverse itself and follow the Yin (female, negative) principle, force the hands to serve the feet, turn one's back on comprehensiveness in order to set up a bias, leave the fields (where one is a farmer) and attend to the affairs of the ancestral temple of the ruling family.

35. SCPHC, chuan 4, pp. 12a-13b.

But the foreigners say that the sovereigns and ministers in their countries have their relations governed by the principle of friendship. They also say that their nations, up to the present day, pass on an inheritance to the worthy and not to sons. . . . Mencius said that the Way of Yao and Shun was to be found supremely in the practice of filial piety and fraternal duty, but the foreigners say: "One need not particularize parents or sons and grandsons." Moreover, they maintain that the heaven which complements earth is not worthy to be considered as a father, or put on an equal fatherly footing with the Lord of Heaven. As to the great relationship, between father and children, they simply view children as males and females to which they have given birth.

The foreigners are also born of parents, yet they can bear to renounce the source whence they come! Now let us look at the matter from the point of view of a father who has already died, but who, whilst he was alive, never heard of this heretical religion. Although he may have been exceedingly good and wise, yet he must suffer the injustice of the hell of purgation; if he had been just an ordinary man, they falsely claim that he will suffer eternal purgation of his sins. They say that though a filial son may be able to please the Lord of Heaven and thus ascend to heaven, nevertheless, the wrath of heaven is exceedingly fearful, and although one may be able to avert all difficulties, the preservation of a filial mind will be of no avail for the spirits of one's relatives....

They say that all the countries through which they passed follow this religion. After they adopted this religion, although a person might possess the dignity of kingship, he is only permitted to have one wife.

In this case the sage emperors Shun and Wen are foremost in being considered beyond the pale of humanity. . . . The foreigners tell the people: "All you have to do is to accept this religion, and you will be able to call any magistrate or anyone occupying high rank by the title 'Church Brother.' They add the word "man" to the Buddhist prohibition "Thou shalt not kill." Thus one knows that they absolutely prohibit the killing of men . . . but once weapons are manufactured, there is a loss both to the treasury and in lives, and one wonders how they reconcile this to the prohibition against the taking of life or to their teaching concerning friendship.³⁶

Because of the importance attached to the continuation of sacrifices to the departed ancestors by male members of the family, it was inevitable that a system of concubinage and secondary wives should develop. In the passage which follows we see the kind of reaction with which Confucianists met the Christian teaching that a man should have only one wife. What also emerges is the realization that if Christian teaching on marriage is true, then those sages of antiquity who were the supreme examples of moral rectitude and patterns upon which every serious Confucian attempted to model his life could no longer be revered. Huang Chen wrote:

Their religion has ten commandments, and they say that if concubines are taken because no son has been born, then one has broken a great commandment and must certainly enter hell. If this is so, then the sage emperors and illustrious kings who have hitherto possessed concubines will not be able to avoid the hell of the Lord of Heaven.

I made enquiries concerning this matter and asked: "King Wen possessed many queens and concubines, what do you say to this?" Ai ju-lueh (Aleni) thought deeply for a long time, but did not reply. The second day I again enquired about this, and again he thought deeply, but did not

36. SCPHC, chuan 4, pp. 16b-19b.

but did not answer. On the third day I enquired yet again and said: "You must explain the meaning of this clearly, setting up a principle valid for ever. Only in this way can you bring people to understand and take refuge in this religion, being completely free from doubt." Ai again thought deeply for a considerable period of time, and then said with great hesitation: 'At the outset I did not wish to speak, but now I will indeed speak.' Again he hesitated for a long time and then said slowly: 'I shall speak to you elder brother, but in the presence of others I would certainly say nothing. I fear that King Wen too has entered hell!' Then hesitatingly, changing his line of speech, he said: 'Let us talk about principles instead of personalities, for it could be that King Wen later repented bitterly, and is therefore not a subject for discussion.'

Now, their religion maintains that after a commandment has been broken it is possible to return to the Lord of Heaven and to repent with sincerity. Thus the punishment of hell can be avoided. But if right up to the drawing of the last breath one refuses to repent, then, alas, nothing will avail.

These are poverty-stricken and evasive phrases with which they defame and slander sagely men.³⁷

Criticism Levelled at Christian Doctrines by Buddhists

Before we examine the criticism directed at Christian teaching from the standpoint of Buddhism in the SCPHC there are two difficulties connected with the documents in this section which must first be investigated. These centre on the controversial work known as the *Collected Documents on Dialectics* (Pien Hsueh Yi Tu)³⁸ attributed to Ricci.

The problems arise out of the incorporation within the *Collected Documents* of a refutation said to have been composed by Ricci, and of a series of short articles by the prominent Buddhist abbot Chu Hung. Later Buddhists, and in particular a disciple of Chu Hung named Chang Kuang-t'ien, insisted that Ricci's refutation was a forgery since Ricci had died in 1610 whereas Chu Hung's articles were not published until 1615 as part of his collected works.

The matter is further complicated by George H. C. Wong in his article "The Anti-Christian Movement in China: Late Ming and Early Ch'ing" in which he appears to link Chu Hung's articles and Chang Kuang-t'ien's defence of Chu Hung with the official actions taken against Christianity by Shen Ch'ueh in Nanking in the years 1616-1622. We shall examine Wong's assumptions first, and then look briefly at the forgery charge made by Chang.

1. Wong's outline of events leading to the incidents of 1616 may be summarized as follows:

In 1615 Abbot Chu Hung published his four essays entitled *On Heaven* (T'ien Shuo) as part of his collected works *Three Essays From the Bamboo Window* (Chu Ch'uang San Pi). Meanwhile, with the particular aim of countering Buddhist criticisms, the Jesuits published the *Collected Documents* which contained Ricci's critique on Chu Hung's articles. To this

37. SCPHC, chuan 3, p. 9ab.

38. Hereafter abbreviated as *Collected Documents*.

collection was appended a statement to the effect that Chu Hung, who died in the autumn of 1615, had confessed on his death bed that he "had taken the wrong road" and "led many people astray."

The seriousness of this charge for the Buddhist Church was immediately realized. Chang Kuang-t'ien rushed to his master's rescue and wrote an article entitled *On Confirmation of Fallacy* (Cheng Wang Chi) in which he set out to prove that the charges of the Jesuits were totally fallacious.

Having proved his point to the satisfaction of his readers Buddhism was "now out in the clear and reasserted. . . ." P'u-jun, a monk, therefore composed an article entitled *Origin of Collected [Essays] on the Eradication of the Heresy* (Chu Tso Chi Yuan Ch'i) in which he castigated the Christians for their deceitful practices. "The immediate result" says Wong "was the Nanking Religious Incident, 1616-1622. . . ." ³⁹

Now if George Wong had not proceeded in succeeding paragraphs to describe the Nanking Religious Incident one might have drawn the conclusion, in the face of the evidence, that the reference to the years 1616-1622 was due to a slip of the pen, and that what he had in mind was perhaps one of the later attacks on the missionaries and their converts.

Whatever the relationship between Buddhist attitudes to Christianity and the events of 1616-1622, all the evidence points to the fact that the defence of Chu Hung by Chang Kuang-t'ien was made in 1635 or shortly thereafter. Chang's *On Confirmation of Fallacy*,⁴⁰ together with its postscript, are not dated in the SCPHC, but there are references to time in the body of the text which leave no doubt as to the approximate date of its composition. Chang stated quite clearly that it was in autumn of the year Yi-Hai (1635) that he came into possession of the *Collected Documents* and that "it is more than twenty years since Chu Hung died."

Our final criticism of Wong's datings relates to his claim that P'u-jun's article was written "as a response to Chang Kuang-t'ien's accusation." P'u Jun's contribution as reproduced in the SCPHC is dated "The eighth month (of the lunar calendar) in the year Chia-Hsii of the reign-period Ch'ung Chen," i.e., 1634.⁴¹

2. That the date and authorship of the *Collected Documents* pose certain problems is generally recognized. Charges and counter-charges by Christian and Buddhist polemicists of the first half of the seventeenth century make it exceedingly difficult to arrive at any firm conclusion as to the precise nature of the collection in its earliest form.

As we have already seen, Chang Kuang-t'ien claimed that he first obtained a copy of the

39. George H. C. Wong, op. cit., pp. 197-199.

40. SCPHC, chuan 7, pp. 31ff.

41. SCPHC, chuan 8, p. 23a.

Collected Documents in 1635. It was handed to him, so he said, when he visited a Christian church to discuss the contents of an anti-Christian document written by another monk.⁴² It contained replies by Ricci to the writings of the scholar Yu Shunhsi,⁴³ a riposte to Chu Hung's four articles *On Heaven*, and an epilogue by the prominent Christian convert Li Chih-tsao.⁴⁴

Now it so happened, Chang tells us, that the person who presented him with the anti-Christian document about which he had gone to the church to make enquiries, also possessed a copy of the *Collected Documents*, and that this copy, which had been printed in Fukien rather than in Chekiang, contained an additional appendix by Yang T'ing-yun,⁴⁵ another prominent convert and former supporter of Buddhism.

The epilogue, which Chang quotes in full, states that Yang had seen Chu Hung's essays and pitied him, and that before many months had gone by Chu Hung died. "I hear" he went on to say, "that when he was about to die he repented and said: I have travelled along the wrong road and further have misled many people." Yang then proceeded to warn others against living a life that could only result in similar feelings of regret.

Deeply shocked by what he had read Chang stated:

- (a) Chu Hung's essays *On Heaven* were incorporated at the end of his collected writings. According to his own preface to this collection it was spring of 1615 before the essays were carved on blocks and made ready for printing. Chu Hung died in the same year on the fourth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, and it was only after this that his writings went into circulation. Since Ricci died in 1610 he could not have seen them.
- (b) Chu Hung's alleged confession was a lie. On the day that he died he was surrounded by great numbers of monks and laymen including Chang himself. Just before he died the crowd listened silently to his final instructions and then, after repeating the name of Buddha, he turned his face to the west and departed this life.
- (c) It was only in the edition of the *Collected Documents* printed in Fukien that Yang's account was included. The edition printed in Chekiang, where Chu Hung and his followers resided and where its claims could be refuted, omitted it.
- (d) The Christians had to wait till twenty years after Chu Hung's death before they dared print their charges.

42. The *Pien T'ien Ch'u Shuo* (Debate on Heaven) by Yuan Wu included in chuan 7 of the SCPHC, p. 12.

43. Yu Shun-hsi, a *Chin-shih* of 1583 and a retired official, wrote to Ricci advising him to refrain from attacking Buddhism about which he seemed to know so little. Two essays by him are included in the SCPHC, chuan 5, pp. 12ff. In the first he attacks the views of the Jesuits on the taking of life, and in the second he criticizes other doctrines and practices.

44. Hummel. op. cit. 1, 452.

45. Ibid., p. 894.

Despite the force of these arguments and a natural inclination to suspect a body of material which includes such irresponsible statements as those contained in Yang T'ing-yun's epilogue, the facts seem to be that Chu Hung composed his anti-Christian essays as early as 1608, incorporating them in 1615 in his *Essays From a Bamboo Window* along with other material. The *Collected Documents* were probably brought together after 1615 by Hsu Kuang-ch'i who wrote a postscript to them. They finally appeared under their present title in 1629.⁴⁶

The Essays of Chu Hung

The four essays of Chu Hung entitled *On Heaven*⁴⁷ are not noteworthy for the profundity of their arguments, but they are of immense interest as the first systematic criticism levelled by a Chinese Buddhist monk at Christianity. Moreover, Chu Hung is generally recognized as one of the four leading figures in the Buddhist church of his own day.

The arguments Chu Hung adduces to refute the Christian position can be summarized under the following headings:

1. The missionaries' inadequate knowledge of the God who was the object of their worship.
2. Their inability to enter into the spirit of Buddhist teaching concerning the preservation of life.
3. The absurdity of Christian teaching concerning the continued existence of the soul after death.

A significant element in Chu Hung's writings is his use of traditional Confucian teaching as part of his armoury. Undoubtedly, by drawing upon Confucian notions he hoped to gain the ear of orthodox officialdom; on the other hand, Chu Hung is noted for his view that some kind of harmony could be achieved between Buddhism and Confucianism. In his first essay he wrote as follows:

Although [the Jesuits] venerate the Lord of Heaven, they have truly shown no skill in their explication of Heaven. If we turn to the Sutras for evidence we find that what they term the Lord of Heaven is, in fact, the king of the Tao Li heavens (Trayas-trimsas). That is to say, he is the Lord of the thirty-three heavens of a world of four continents surrounding a Mount Sumeru. If, beginning with this world [centered on Mt. Sumeru] we count succeeding such worlds from one to one thousand [we have what is] termed a small chiliocosm [consisting of a thousand worlds each with its own Mount Sumeru, continents and seas]. Thus we have one thousand Lords of Heaven. If we again count from one to one thousand beginning with the small chiliocosm, we reach what is termed a medium chiliocosm and thus we have a million Lords of Heaven. If we proceed once again to count from one to one thousand beginning with this medium chiliocosm we arrive at what is termed a major chiliocosm, and we then have one thousand million Lords of Heaven. He who controls this major chiliocosm is the Mahabrahma devaraja.

46. For details concerning the publication of Chu Hung's essays and the *Collected Documents* see *Fonti Ricciane*, ed. Pacquale M. D'Elia, S.J. (1942-1949), II, 306, n. 1.

47. SCPHC, chauan 7, pp. lff.

When Brahma looks down upon what they call the most honoured and supreme Lord of Heaven, it is rather like the Son of Heaven of the Chou dynasty looking upon his one thousand eight hundred feudal lords. The one whom they (the Christians) know about is no more than one Lord of Heaven out of one thousand million. They have not yet come to know of all the other devas of the realm of desire (kamadhatu), nor have they come to know of the devas of the realm of form (rupadhatu) and of the realm transcending form (arupadhatu).

They go on to say that the Lord of Heaven is without shape, form or sound. Thus, their so-called Lord of Heaven turns out to be nothing more than Principle (li). How then can he control ministers and people, issue commands or reward and punish. Although these people are intelligent they have not studied the Buddhist scriptures. Little wonder, then, that their theories are erroneous.

It is in his third essay that Chu Hung draws most heavily on the Confucian tradition. In it, he quotes a long list of passages from the Classics of History and Poetry in which references are made to worship and sacrifice offered to Shangti and T'ien (Heaven). Other aspects of T'ien, as they appear in these two works, are also mentioned. Chu Hung then proceeds to refer to the *Confucian Analects* and the *Book of Mencius*, quoting key passages in which Heaven is mentioned. The conclusion he draws from all these citations is that there is no lack of completeness in the teachings of Chinese writers on the subject of Heaven and that there is therefore no warrant for the creation of any new theory such as the missionaries were trying to put forward.

We now come to Chu Hung's second line of argument which deals with the Buddhist prohibition against killing living beings. This is to be found in the second of the *T'ien Shuo*. He said:

[The Jesuits] say that Buddhism teaches that all living beings were parents in previous existences, and that if one kills [living beings] and eats them one is killing one's parents. If this is the case, [they go on to say], then people also ought not to marry since wives and concubines are really our parents. Nor should people purchase male and female slaves, for this is to employ one's parents as servants. . . . I said: Buddhism only prohibits the killing of living beings, and what is indicated through this prohibition is that for kalpas - in number as the sands of the Ganges - every living being has been born, and every living being must be possessed of parents. In what way can one know that others were not our parents in former existences? Now it is a question of fearing *lest* they were our parents, and not a question of stating, *categorically* that they must have been our parents. If one destroys the spirit by means of the letter, making one rule apply to a hundred eventualities, then the Confucianists also have something to say concerning this problem. The Rites forbid the marriage of people possessing the same surname. Thus, when purchasing a concubine, if one does not know the woman's surname one resorts to divination. [The Confucianists say] if, after divination, the woman is found to have a different surname, then there is absolutely no harm in marrying the woman. When we come to this particular problem I would say, if one does not know whether a woman has been one's father or mother when about to take her to wife, then resort to divination. If, after divination, she is shown never to have been one's father or mother, then in marrying her there will surely be no harm done.... Marriage between men and women ...and the employment of children as slaves, are all common principles in the world of

mortals, and are not comparable with the grievous poison of killing living beings. Thus, the scriptures simply say that all things which possess life are not to be put to death. They have never stated that all things possessing life are not to marry or to be subject to orders. To create difficulties in this manner is called "bolting away with elaborate and woolly talk for the purpose of destroying the clear teaching of the great Way."

It would appear that the foregoing argument failed to resolve the problem since, in his fourth essay, Chu Hung indicated that the Jesuits responded to it by saying:

"Having resorted to divination concerning the choice of a bride, should it turn out that she is neither one's father nor one's mother, one may proceed to marry her. Why do you not say, then, that, if having turned to divination over the killing of a living being, and it becomes clear that [this being] is neither one's father nor mother, you may proceed to kill it? [You say that] if there is no taking in marriage this will bring an end to the birth of human beings. Why do you not [also] say that if killing is done away with, the [Confucian] ritual sacrifices will have to cease?" I replied: "The ancients had the saying: 'Resort to divination in order to resolve doubts.' If there is nothing to doubt, why resort to divination? That people bearing the same surname do not marry is a great law having currency in the world from ancient times until the present day. Thus, if there is any doubt, the thing to do is to divine about the matter. But the killing of living beings has been held in the world to be the great sin and evil from ancient times until the present day, and it is absolutely forbidden. What doubt can there be about this which should lead one to resort to divination? . . . as to bringing sacrificial rites to an end because of the prohibition against killing, have you not heard of the two baskets containing vegetable produce which may be used as offerings, or that the killing of an ox is less to be preferred than the Yueh (Spring) sacrifice? Thus, the sacrificial rites will most certainly remain undisturbed and will not be done away with. Nevertheless, even if some of the sacrifices would have to be done away with, it would be an abrogation of what ought to be abrogated. Doing away with punishment by physical mutilation, and prohibitions against burying the living with the dead and the like are witnesses to comely government. . . ." The foreigners again raised difficulties by saying that the killing of living beings only brings an end to the physical body whereas dissolute behaviour destroys the soul. Their intention [in saying this] is to minimise the importance of killing. They are unaware of the fact that that which is put to death may simply be the physical body, but that he who performs the killing loses his own soul through his mind which has been poisoned by this one intention [to kill].

When we come to the last important subject dealt with in these essays, namely, the refutation of the Jesuits' teaching concerning the continued existence of the soul after death, it becomes rather difficult to take Chu Hung seriously. He says:

Since the soul continued to exist why did not the [sage emperors] Yu, T'ang, Wen and Wu give at least one warning to [the later tyrants] Chie and Chou concerning their evil ways?

Chu Hung then proceeds to cite several popular stories which tell of rebirth. These, he says, are all to be found in Confucian literature of which the Jesuits are totally ignorant.

Of the other articles by Buddhist monks in the SCPHC two deserve special notice. The first is by Fei Yin, to whom we owe the preservation of the documents in this collection, and the second by Ju Ch'un.

Fei Yin⁴⁸ began by summarizing Christian teaching as this was found in Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, and then proceeded to discuss the phrase "Having no beginning and no end." Ricci, of course, had stated that whereas God has no beginning and no end, the human soul has a beginning and no end and the rest of physical creation both a beginning and an end.

Fei Yin's first comment was that the phrase "having no beginning and no end" referred to the Chinese concepts of the "primordial way" and the "goodness of perfect nature." All men, all phenomena and all dharmas, he said, possess in its fullness that to which these concepts refer so that there can be no division between things or between God and creation as suggested by Ricci. To awaken to this reality is to be a sage, but to be blind to it is to remain a common man.

Ricci's difficulty, as Fei Yin saw it, was that he remained in an unenlightened state where man depends solely on that consciousness which supports the perceptions of the organs of sense. Knowing no better he permitted his reasoning, based on these perceptions, to lead him into vain and abstruse conclusions, such as his view that there is an infinite and eternal God.

To prove that it is "creation," properly understood, that should be predicated with having no beginning and no end rather than an inferred deity, Fei Yin argued that all things are impermanent. Thought, he said, does not exist in past or future states and has no permanence in the present. Since this is so, the phenomenal world is freed of all ties and is also devoid of any past, present or future reality. To be liberated in this manner is, for a person, to discover the "primordial Way," and "perfect nature" within himself.

Creation, said Fei Yin, is an eternal process of becoming and passing away within an unlimited voidness. This means that there is no limit to the number of worlds or living beings which come into existence and then pass away. The Chinese tradition of P'an Ku who emerged from chaos and gave birth to the universe had to be understood as referring to the creation of the present world only. The story did not contradict the Buddhist thesis.

Falling back on Buddhist scripture Fei Yin pointed out that when mind comes into being so do the dharmas, but that when mind is extinguished all things cease to be. Mind, he said, is the basic support of all things and the final source of all dharmas.

Fei Yin then proceeded to employ Buddhist inferential logic to show that Ricci's assumptions were untenable. His argument ran as follows: Since, according to Ricci, all things were created at a certain point in time, there must have been a time when there was no creation.

48. SCPHC, chuan 8, pp. 3ff.

Since there was a time when there was no creation, God's ability to create during that time must also have been extinct. Since God's ability to create was extinct, it is manifest that prior to the creation of all things nothing existed. Therefore God did not exist.

It is not difficult to detect in Fei Yin's rejection of Ricci's teaching about God as the first cause of all creation, the familiar Buddhist principle that to posit a "first cause" is to make a false inference, since the notion of causation "is bound up with antecedents and consequents," and therefore with the world of relativity.⁴⁹

Ju Ch'un,⁵⁰ like Fei Yin, dealt point by point with Ricci's teachings.

- (a) As with other polemicists in the SCPHC he began by questioning the validity of Ricci's doctrine of God by pointing out what he regarded as its inconsistencies. He asked how a God who is omniscient and omnipotent and totally good can create a man and a woman who disobey him and contaminate the whole human race with sin. Surely, he argued, if God were concerned for the continuity of his creation he could have removed the evil and created man afresh. What was most appalling, however, was the suggestion that God inflicted punishment on those whom He knew would sin before He created them. This, said Ju Ch'un, was deliberately to set a trap for mankind. A deity such as this was unworthy of the title Lord.
- (b) Ricci, said Ju Ch'un, introduced divisions in creation where there is in fact an essential unity. It is true, he said, that one can speak of "nature" and "form," but it had to be remembered that "form" is false and an illusion whereas "nature" is true and a unity. All creation possesses this "nature," but all things are endowed with differing "forms." To doubt this, he said, is to doubt the Buddha. To say that God, man and phenomena have differing natures is to shatter the Way which permeates all things.
- (c) In his writings Ricci rated existence higher than non-existence and then proceeded to attack the Taoist concept of "non-existence" and the Buddhist notion of "voidness." Ju Ch'un took Ricci to task for failing to realize that these two terms were employed to denominate the ultimately real, not because it is nothing, but because it is indescribable. Both Buddhism and Taoism wished, he said, to avoid attaching names to final reality, but since the employment of some terms was unavoidable, it was felt that "non-existence" and "voidness" were the least objectionable.
- (d) Ricci had maintained that whereas the killing of man was forbidden, the killing of animals for food was perfectly legitimate. He cited China's ancient sages as authorities for his teaching.

Insisting that Ricci failed to grasp the true significance of their actions, and incidentally throwing an interesting light on the way in which Buddhists rationalized China's ancient

49. D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lanka vatara Sutra*, 1930, pp. 146-7.

50. SCPHC, chuan 8, pp. 26ff.

traditions for their own purposes, Ju Ch'un asserted that Yu the Great, for example, controlled the flood-waters of his day in order to drive dragons, serpents, tigers and the like into those places most suited to them and so that each type of animal would remain secure in its own habitat. There was no question of making these animals available to hunters.

(e) Finally, Ju Ch'un dealt with Ricci's claim that prior to the entry of Buddhism into China the Chinese had no knowledge of the doctrine of rebirth. Ju Ch'un admitted that the doctrine itself may not have been known, but cited instances from early Chinese writings where individuals were said to have turned into various animals, and which therefore implied that metempsychosis had at least been observed.

Conclusion

In the writings of Ricci and his associates it is made abundantly clear that their missionary policy was "to complete Confucianism and to do away with Buddhism" (Pu Ju Yi Fo or Ch'u Fo Pu Ju).⁵¹ It is little wonder, in the face of this declaration of war, that the impetus for creating a collection of anti-Christian writings such as the SCPHC should come from members of the Buddhist church. That so much of this writing comes from the pens of men who felt compelled to defend both Confucianism and Buddhism at the same time serves to illustrate the fact that "during this period Buddhism was accepted by a considerable number of Confucianists." As Kenneth Ch'en has pointed out, of the twenty lay disciples of Chu Hung, two became prominent in official life, whilst nine took the Chin-shih degree in the Confucian civil examinations.⁵² Through his philosophy of mind and his emphasis on intuitive knowledge, Wang Yang-ming had blurred the lines separating Confucian and Buddhist thought, and had thereby paved the way for a syncretistic outlook which he himself would have repudiated, but which became a feature of the thinking of a large section of the educated community.

Despite the sympathetic hearing which Ricci and his colleagues won for their interpretation of Confucianism and for their theories regarding the possible relationship between early Chinese thought and Christianity among the reform-minded scholars of the day, few of these men could accept the view that Neo-Confucianism represented a degeneration of the Confucian ethos. The suspicion, expressed by some of the writers in SCPHC, that the Jesuits' open attack on Buddhism was a ruse to weaken, and ultimately to bring about the elimination of Confucianism itself, would, no doubt, also have been in the minds of many of the more open-minded literati, even as they tolerated the presence of the foreigners. Nor can events in the Philippines be ignored. They are referred to here and there in the SCPHC, and could not but instil a sense of caution in the minds of responsible Chinese in their dealings with westerners.

51. Gallagher, *op. cit.*, p. 448; Maurus Fang Hao, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 156.

52. Ch'en, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

There seemed to be ample evidence from Luzon and Formosa that the cross and the sword must eventually walk hand in hand.

It is important to notice, however, that at this stage of initial contact between Europe and China the Chinese polemicists argue chiefly on the level of what Paul Tillich calls "ultimate concern." It is not until the full pressure of the powerful secular and national forces drawn up behind Christianity's missionaries was felt during the nineteenth century that we find a major shift in interest from matters of ultimate concern to the matter of immediate concern; namely, how China was to maintain her existence in the face of western technology, trade, and military might.

Whether Ricci's ideal of a Christianity grafted on to the Chinese Confucian tradition could have been realized if there had been no "rites controversy"⁵³ and no western political and economic interference in China's internal affairs may be an academic question, but it seems fairly clear that if the dream could have been achieved two major obstacles would have had to be overcome.

In the first place, Buddhism and religious Taoism would have had to be superseded since they had achieved a status in China similar to the one Ricci desired for Christianity. Confucianism had over the centuries so rationalized the religious elements in its system of thought that, despite its metaphysics, it could only minister to the moral and political life of the nation. The religious vacuum thus created had been filled by Buddhism and popular Taoism. It was because Ricci understood this, and because he believed that the Christian religion was incompatible with these religions, that he opposed them so strongly, making their replacement an integral part of his declared aims.

In the second place, Christianity would have had to emulate Buddhism by developing its theological and philosophical thinking in China to such a degree that it could exercise an influence on Confucianism equal in intensity to that formerly exerted by Buddhism.

The fact that arguments against Christianity in the writings of Buddhists and Confucians of more recent times reveal little advance on those put forward in the SCPHC is an indication that this development did not take place. In fact the dialogue initiated by Ricci and his colleagues which might have proved fruitful in this direction was largely allowed to lapse by both Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the post-"rites controversy" period.

53. The "rites controversy" resulted in a turning away from Ricci's policy of "Completing Confucianism." Its effects are to be seen in later editions of Ricci's *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* where traditional Chinese terms for deity are expunged and replaced with others coined by the church. See Maurus Fang Hao, *op. cit.*, p. 200. For the reasons underlying the "rites controversy" see Malcolm Hay, *Failure in the Far East*, 1956.

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