

## Christians must know what Confucius said

by Michael Billington

As the 1989 revolutionary upsurge in China was broadcast around the globe, the Western world was awed and inspired by the images of universal truths presented by the courageous young demonstrators: Beethoven's heroic Choral Symphony playing each morning over the students' loudspeakers, set to Schiller's "Ode to Joy"; the Goddess of Democracy statue; the quotations from Abraham Lincoln. To any Chinese viewing these events, especially the bloody suppression by Deng Xiaoping's tanks, another image from antiquity presented itself for reflection. In the closing chapter of the *Analects* (or *The Discourses of Confucius*), the sage quotes a great emperor of an earlier age giving instructions to his appointed successor as his own death drew near:

If there shall be distress and want within the Empire, the mandate of Heaven shall be taken away from you forever.

Clearly, Margaret Thatcher and George Bush did not share that perspective concerning the Deng dictatorship. As the democracy movement was crushed, they proceeded to use every possible means to convince their angry populations that the Communist regime must be preserved at all costs, while deploying various representatives of the Kissinger group (starting with Kissinger Associates executives Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger) to secret meetings with Deng, only days after announcing an official moratorium on all such meetings.

This policy took an even uglier turn as Bush and his British Lords lined up their plans for a "new world order" with the Russian and Chinese dictatorships. The Chinese side of the deal included a green light to put the leaders of the democracy movement on trial, without any disruption of the

renewed lending and investment pouring into the British-style "concessions" (now called "Special Economic Zones") along the mainland coast. In return, the Chinese did not veto the U.N. Security Council resolutions supporting the U.S. war against Iraq. The travesty of show trials is now taking place.

This deal may be quite short-lived, as the world descends into a configuration of global war. It is the urgent purpose of this report to address the underlying basis in both Chinese and Western culture for this evil agreement. An equally urgent purpose is to identify the potential for a higher-order agreement of principle between Chinese and Western forces who wish to reverse the descent into a new Dark Age, and create instead the conditions necessary for a new Renaissance.

This task faces one formidable obstacle in regard to the ideology of the Western population (and a parallel problem among the Chinese). The problem is perhaps best characterized by the persisting effect of the words of the racist Rudyard Kipling, the apologist for the British Empire's rape and looting of "lesser races," who lied that "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Such statements were not philosophical ruminations, but statements of policy: The fruits of Western science and technology would be denied to the East, while the moral and ethical cultural heritage of the East would be distorted and hidden in a cloak of "inscrutability" from Western minds. On top of this is the problem of the degraded "popular image" of Confucius created by Hollywood's "Charlie Chan" and various other perverted caricatures of the sage.

### An ecumenical 'Grand Design'

Only once in history was a serious effort put forth by the West to discover the truths that made possible the develop-



*A demonstration in Houston, Texas, in support of the martyrs of Tiananmen Square, June 1989. The mandate of Heaven has been taken away from China's corrupt leadership.*

ment of the largest and oldest civilization in the world. Following the Golden Renaissance, as part of the same process that led to the discovery and evangelization of the Americas, Christian missionaries from the Society of Jesus settled in China, studying and translating the Chinese classics of Confucius, Mencius, and others, while preaching the Christian message and teaching the new scientific discoveries of the Renaissance. They found in the Chinese sages from the 5th and 3rd centuries B.C. a deep understanding of natural law, and found nothing to conflict with the potential to adopt the Christian faith.

Back in Europe, the great scientist and statesman Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz followed these developments with avid interest and hope. The existence in ancient China of a culture and a philosophy so in keeping with the truths of natural law discovered by Western civilization were proof to Leibniz that the human mind, reflecting man's creation in the living image of God, must naturally arrive at these truths through the exercise of reason—or, as he said, that these truths are “inscribed in our hearts” for all to read who seek them. In addition, he saw the potential alliance between the vast Chinese civilization and the European continent as a force for implementing his vision of a Grand Design, for an Age of Reason, through an ecumenical alliance of sovereign nations dedicated to the development and application of science to nation building.

### **Mao's ‘anti-Confucius campaign’**

I will discuss this ecumenical project, and its sabotage, with a view to the necessity of recreating that effort today. First, however, it is necessary to familiarize the reader with one aspect of the era of madness known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Toward the end of that fiasco, Mao Zedong launched an assault directly on Confucius and Confucianism, which came to be known as the “Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius Campaign.” The Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s, orchestrated by Mao and directed by his designated successor, Lin Biao (who later became its principal target), turned the People's Republic of China into a state of bloody anarchy perhaps unparalleled in history. As the chaos subsided in the early 1970s, Mao opened an ideological attack on the remnants of Chinese morality and culture in the form of the campaign against Confucius. Although Confucius had been repeatedly denounced by some Communists and their predecessors since the beginning of the century, even Mao had made concessions to certain Confucian policies, while some Communists attempted to maintain aspects of Confucian morality within Communist ideological strictures. Such signs of “bourgeois liberalism in Confucian garb” were no longer to be tolerated.

The anti-Confucius campaign coincided with the “opening up” of China, as Henry Kissinger's 1971 visit began the flow of diplomats and tourists to the mainland. What they



*Confucius (left), the sage of the sixth century B.C., and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the universal genius, scientist, and statesman of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Leibniz was astonished to find that China's Confucian beliefs did not contradict the teachings of Christianity, and provided the basis for collaboration between the cultures.*

saw were mass meetings of students, soldiers, peasants, and workers, being harangued to denounce the very foundations of the morality which had united the Chinese people for longer than any other culture in history.

Ironically, Mao did contribute an important concept to the study of Chinese history, although he did so from an insane perspective. He described all of Chinese history as a battle between ideas and forces identified with Confucius on the one hand, and those of the Legalist School on the other. Mao identified himself with the Legalists and his hero Qin Shi-huang, best remembered for burning the Confucian books and burying alive Confucian scholars in 212 B.C. Mao once said, "He buried alive only 460 scholars; we have buried 46,000 scholars. But haven't we killed counterrevolutionary intellectuals?"

Qin Shi-huang founded the short-lived Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.), which collapsed after 14 years of unbearable tyranny. In the straitjacket of Marxist historiography, the Maoists portrayed the Legalist Qin as the representative of the "newly rising landlord class," while Confucius and Men-

cius were representative of the old slave-owning classes. Thus Qin played "a decisive role in carrying out the correct political line in accordance with the tendency of the historical development of China," as one historian put it in Maoist newspeak.

### **Athens vs. Sparta**

Legalism was a reaction to the concept of the rule of reason contained in the works of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) and Mencius (372-289 B.C.). It rejected the notion of a "mandate of Heaven," in favor of a "rule of law," where laws were defined as whatever the current rulers declared them to be. The approach to history as a "Confucian-Legalist" confrontation is usefully compared to Friedrich Schiller's view of universal history as a confrontation between the ideas associated with Solon of Athens and with Lycurgus of Sparta, the rulers of the ancient Greek city-states of approximately the same era as Mencius. Lycurgus, like Qin Shi-huang and the Legalists, established a tyrannical rule of law controlled by an elite ruling over an extensive slave and semi-slave

system. Solon of Athens established a constitutional order subject to natural law. Like the Confucian concept of a “mandate from Heaven,” where even the emperor is subject to natural law, Solon devised a rule of reason, such that law is not subject to the whims of irrational rulers, but is based on the rights and responsibilities imbedded in natural law. The citizen, through the exercise of reason, perfects his or her knowledge of those laws and can thus contribute to the development of society.

The Legalist philosophers rejected the Confucian moral imperatives, such as virtue and benevolence, on the grounds that the rule of law could not be enforced under such conditions. In reference to the quality of *ren* (“benevolence,” similar to the Christian *agapē*), which was the driving force of Confucian morality, Mao once said, “Because the reactionaries are not benevolent, we would never use the ‘rule of *ren*’ toward them.”

The Legalists considered the poor to be responsible for their own condition, and, as such, they were subject to be made slaves to the state. During the brief Qin Dynasty, positions in government were chosen at the discretion of the emperor, while the masses of the population were forced into corvée labor brigades to build the Great Wall, immense palaces, as well as some canals and irrigation projects. Tens of thousands died on these projects. This is what the Maoists praised as “historically progressive,” because it was supposedly anti-slavery!

The Confucians, far from representing “slave-owning society,” had a profound belief that “all men are created equal,” to borrow the phrase from the U.S. Declaration of Independence. In discussing his belief that the nature of man is fundamentally good, Mencius spoke as follows about those qualities that constitute virtue in man:

Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are not infused into us from without. We are certainly furnished with them. A different view is simply owing to want of reflection. Hence it is said: “Seek these qualities, and you shall find them. Neglect these qualities and you shall lose them.” Men differ widely—it is because they cannot fully utilize their natural powers.

That men act differently in the use of their potential is a necessary result of man’s free will, which makes possible the individual contribution of new creative discoveries for the development of society. Although “free will” means men are free to choose between good and evil, Mencius makes clear that “if men do what is not good, the blame cannot be imputed to their natural powers.”

Mencius is also concerned that the “free will” of the people not serve as an excuse for rulers to avoid responsibility for a breakdown of society. While every individual is born with the potential for good—and is certainly personally re-

sponsible for his actions and their consequences—the responsibility for the advancement of society as a whole, or its degeneration, passes beyond the mere collection of actions of each individual, and becomes instead a question of political economy. Mencius says:

In good years the children of the people are most of them good, while in bad years most of them abandon themselves to evil. It is not owing to any difference of their natural powers conferred by Heaven that they are thus different. The abandonment is owing to the circumstances through which they allow their minds to be ensnared and drowned in evil.

These profound discoveries about the relationship of man with nature and with society were dismissed and denounced by the Maoists as “metaphysics.” Mao and his collaborators, primarily the “Gang of Four” centered around Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing, rewrote all of Chinese history, simple-mindedly placing everybody into the category of either “Legalist” or “Confucian.” They portrayed every peasant rebellion throughout history as a glorious paradigm of Legalist correctness against “Confucian reactionaries.” Scholarship itself was attacked as reactionary, as universities were closed and students driven into the countryside—not to uplift the backward peasants with instruction on modern techniques and culture, but to “learn from the peasants” by carrying nightsoil and digging dirt with primitive hand tools. Those who promoted “decadent bourgeois music”—that of Beethoven and Schubert was particularly targeted—were enemies of the people.

Although the Gang of Four was overthrown and the Cultural Revolution publicly denounced for its excesses, the ideological content of the Anti-Confucius Campaign was maintained by the Deng regime. The Legalists, and especially Qin Shi-huang, remain as models to Communist society, while Confucius is smothered under an “official line” and considered a relic of the past. What was *totally* rejected, however, was the actually useful notion that history could be characterized by the conflict between Legalism and Confucianism, perhaps because such a characterization made it all too clear that the Communist dictatorship is a direct descendant of extremely evil forces.

The fact is that these two schools of thought do characterize the fundamental conflict between two opposing world views. The study of the Confucian classics was never merely an academic issue in China, since positions in government or civil service depended on passage of standardized national examinations which were based on knowledge and interpretation of these classics. Confucianism was not a religion in the sense of a church with a priesthood, but, to a certain degree, the government officials and administrators functioned like a priesthood. Advancement in government service required passing rigorous examinations at every stage, in-

tended to enhance the Confucian tenet that virtue, rather than practical skills alone, was the primary requirement for political leadership.

Because of this, the classics functioned as a sort of constitution for the empire as much as a guide for personal conduct. Partially through the Examination System, the natural law imbedded in the classics was sustained as a guide to moral government and as a check against the irrational whims of statesmen.

The Legalists hated the Examination System, arguing that appointments should be by "merit" and based on "talent and practical ability" rather than "academic" achievement. That, of course, created a situation where the rulers could determine their own criteria for what constituted "merit" and "talent," leading inevitably to tyranny. There certainly were problems with the Examination System over the years, including the difficulty of introducing scientific advances into the educational structure. But the rejection of the classics altogether not only eliminated the moral foundations of education, but also left the nation subject to the positive law composed by rulers to justify the rule of "Might Makes Right." When Sun Yat-sen eliminated the examinations after the 1911 Republican Revolution, he did so only on the basis of introducing a Constitution which embodied the principles of natural law, developed primarily from the American Constitution, in conjunction with aspects generated from China's own experience.

### **The Renaissance in China: Ricci and Leibniz**

I will now take up the dramatic developments of the 17th century, when a Grand Design for East-West relations based on Christian morality and Renaissance science nearly succeeded, only to be sabotaged by the European enemies of the Renaissance. Once before, during the 13th-century reign of the Kubla Khan over China, Franciscan missionaries from the West had followed Marco Polo to Cathay, establishing close contacts with the ruling Khan and extensive networks among the Chinese population. But the Franciscans appear to have made little attempt to learn the Chinese classics—in fact, they appear to have been primarily a "foreign mission," serving Europeans who came in following the Mongol conquests. With the end of the Mongol reign, the mission collapsed without a trace.

Three hundred years later, St. Francis Xavier, one of the founders of the Society of Jesus, traveled to Asia. After a period in Japan, he determined that the Japanese respect for and deferment to China on philosophical issues necessitated the conversion of China first. He died before reaching the Middle Kingdom, however, and the opening of China fell to another Jesuit, Matteo Ricci.

Ricci arrived in 1581, and developed the policies that guided the mission through the next two centuries. He had received extensive training at the Roman College under the direction of the German Christopher Clavius, who was an

associate and friend of the astronomer Johannes Kepler and later of Galileo. Ricci spent four years with Clavius studying geometry, geography, and astronomy, including the construction of astronomical and musical instruments.

What Ricci discovered in China was totally unlike the conditions that prevailed in the Americas, Africa, or India. The Jesuits' reports to Europe described a country with a civilization which preceded and surpassed in many ways that of the West. A century later, Europe's greatest philosopher, scientist, and statesman, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, reflecting on the reports from Ricci and those who followed him, reported:

There is in China in certain regards an admirable public morality conjoined to a philosophical doctrine, or rather a doctrine of natural theology, venerable by its antiquity, established and authorized for about 3,000 years, long before the philosophy of the Greeks.

Recorded Chinese history preceded the generally accepted date for The Flood. The question was posed for Europeans: How could an advanced civilization, outside of the Biblical history of God's interaction with man, be explained? To Leibniz and to Ricci, China's history and culture stood as a monument to the truth of One God: that the mind reflects the perfect creation, and thus must lead through reason to the concept of the creator. To Leibniz's "Spartan" opponents, however, who argued that only the select few had been predestined by God to be saved, the idea that the ancient Chinese sages had known the true God was blasphemous, and no proof would convince them otherwise. But Leibniz recognized that China, by far the most populous nation on Earth and ordered in a civil structure more successful in many ways than any in European history, must have achieved that population and that order through some identifiable means. He even suggested that "Chinese missionaries should be sent to teach in the aim and practice of natural theology, as we send missionaries to instruct them in revealed theology."

Ricci quickly determined that Confucianism was not a religion, but more like an academy which existed for the good of society. Confucius was not worshiped, but the Chinese would "praise him for the good teachings he left in his books . . . without, however, reciting any prayers nor asking for any favor." According to Leibniz, the Masters, and one's own ancestors, were honored in rites whose goal was "to display the gratitude of the living as they cherish the rewards of Heaven, and to excite men to perform actions which render them worthy of the recognition of posterity."

Leibniz studied the Chinese issues throughout his life, writing the *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese* in the last years of his life. He characterized Confucianism as follows:

To offend Heaven is to act against reason; to ask

pardon of Heaven is to reform oneself and to make a sincere return in work and deed in the submission one owes to this very law of of reason. For me, I find this all quite excellent and quite in accord with natural theology. . . . Only by strained interpretation and interpolation could one find anything to criticize on this point. It is pure Christianity, insofar as it renews the natural law inscribed on our hearts, except for what revelation and grace add to it to improve our nature.

Ricci took issue with the idea held by most Confucian literati of his day that "All is One," which had been put forward by the "Neo-Confucian" school of the 11th and 12th centuries. This, he argued, was a form of atheism, since the Creator could not have created Himself, and thus could not be of the same substance as that He created. Although the Neo-Confucians claimed these concepts were derived from the ancient classics, Ricci argued that they reflected more the extensive influence of Buddhism in China since the 3rd century A.D. The Masters, he showed, believed in a First Cause, God the Creator, Who created man according to His own nature. Leibniz extended this by comparing the Confucian concept of Reason (*Li*) with his own notion of the "monad," which orders the progress of the phenomenal world without being affected by it, and which also relates to a universal Monad. One particularly beautiful poem from the *Book of Poetry* (one of the classics) expresses this idea of the relationship among man, the Creator, and the creation:

Heaven, in creating mankind,  
Created all things according to law,  
Such that people can grasp these laws  
And will love virtue.

Mencius quotes this poem and adds that Confucius said, "The author of this ode knew indeed the principle of our nature."

Ricci translated all the classics into Latin, and wrote several tracts in Chinese that won him great respect and fame amongst the literati. These included a dialogue between a Western scholar and a Chinese scholar called *The True Idea of the Lord of Heaven*, and several translations, including Euclid's *Elements* and scientific studies.

Although he befriended and debated a number of the Buddhist and Taoist scholars, he consistently argued against the common acceptance of a "merging" of Confucianism with Buddhism and Taoism. He concluded that if the Chinese would reject Buddhism and Taoism, and also reject polygamy and a few other relatively minor rites, they "could certainly become Christians, since the essence of their doctrine contains nothing contrary to the essence of the Catholic faith, nor would the Catholic faith hinder them in any way, but would indeed aid in that attainment of the quiet and peace of the republic which their books claim as their goal."

Ricci's knowledge and teaching of Renaissance science were inseparable from his teaching of the "true religion." He believed that the leap in scientific progress in Renaissance Europe, while inseparable from the parallel developments in Christian religious thinking, was not a "secret" of the West, but the patrimony of all mankind. Just as he found the Chinese of a moral disposition to embrace Christianity, so were they willing and anxious to enhance their rich scientific heritage with the scientific ideas and technologies that Ricci and the later Jesuits brought with them.

Although Ricci never met the emperor, his successors established themselves as the official court astronomers and headed the engineering bureaus. These positions were generally unaffected by the fall of the Ming Dynasty and the founding of the Qing Dynasty under the Manchu in 1644. The first Manchu emperor, in fact, placed his son under the tutelage of the Jesuit fathers for training in both the physical and moral sciences.

### The rule of Kang Hsi

This son was to become the Kang Hsi Emperor, whom Leibniz referred to as a monarch "who almost exceeds human heights of greatness, being a god-like mortal, ruling by a nod of his head, who, however, is educated to virtue and wisdom . . . thereby earning the right to rule."

While Kang Hsi was receiving this training in Christian theology and Renaissance science, he also immersed himself in a study of the Confucian classics, with daily debates over conceptual issues reflected in his diaries. This commitment eventually convinced the Chinese literati that they could support the foreign Manchu as emperor. After a series of rebellions in the South were militarily put down, the empire lived in relative peace throughout his long reign (1661-1722), and China's first international treaty was signed establishing the borders with Russia, negotiated in Latin, with Jesuits as intermediaries.

In 1692, with Kang Hsi established as a Sage Ruler and the Jesuits holding all leading positions in the astronomy and engineering bureaus, the emperor issued an edict granting all Christians the right to teach, preach, and convert throughout the empire, subject only to the Ricci policy that scholars—i.e., civil servants—must maintain moral allegiance to the Confucian principles and continue to perform the rites and ceremonies connected to their offices. The eruption of the "rites controversy" thus disrupted an extraordinary potential to achieve what Ricci had identified as his greatest goal: the "universal conversion of the whole kingdom."

### 'Rites controversy' wrecked the Leibniz plan

The conflict that led to the complete severing of relations between China and the West was a debate that took place almost entirely in Europe, and played a crucial role in the Reformation/Counterreformation conflicts that shook Europe and undermined the ecumenical efforts identified with

Leibniz. The public issues arose from accusations that the Jesuits had condoned "pagan" practices and (perhaps intentionally) misinterpreted crucial Chinese terms relative to Confucian views of God. But the actual target of the attack was the Grand Design which Leibniz and his allies were creating to break the power of the "Spartan" oligarchs, who generally opposed the dissemination of Renaissance science.

The opposition to Ricci's policies emerged from a faction among the missionaries composed of Franciscans, Dominicans, and a few Jesuits. The Jesuit João Rodrigues from the Japan mission visited Ricci in 1616 with the intent of imposing a prohibition against missionaries teaching mathematics or science! Rodrigues denounced Ricci's collaboration with China's literati, insisting that the method used in Japan (insistence on total renunciation of all "pagan beliefs and rituals" for Christian converts) must be applied to China and Confucianism as well. His argument that this "hard line" was not only necessary theologically, but also successful, was undermined when the Japanese began severe persecution of the Christians the following year.

Franciscans and Dominicans arrived in the 1630s, from Japan, the Philippines, Europe, and from the missions in the Americas. The leading opponent of Ricci (who had died in 1610), and the major target of Leibniz's rebuttal, was the Franciscan Antonio de St. Marie. The Chinese have the "gigantic presumption" to regard their sciences and "their so-absurd philosophy" as the only one in the world, he charged. "So the Fathers of the Society (S.J.) have gone to great pains to hide their errors under the cloak and guise of words with a heavenly tinge, whereas in reality beneath is concealed the pallor of hell." On Chinese history, he wrote: "What does it matter to our mission whether the ancient Chinese knew God, or didn't know Him, whether they named Him in one way or another? The question is completely indifferent. We have come here to announce the Holy Gospel, and not to be apostles of Confucius."

St. Marie had arrived in China in 1633 from the Philippines, spending only three years before returning to Rome to argue against the Jesuits. It should be noted that the Franciscans and Dominicans pointed to their success in the Americas in the conversion of whole cultures as proof of the method of total renunciation of native pagan beliefs. That this could be true precisely because the native beliefs were pagan, but that Confucianism was not, was dismissed as heresy. One exception among the Dominicans, perhaps the only one, was the Dominican Bishop Gregory Lopez (Lo Wen-tso), the only native Chinese Christian prelate of the 17th and 18th centuries. He agreed totally with Ricci!

The controversy remained largely a matter of theological debate throughout the 17th century. Efforts of several opponents to draw the Pope into the controversy were side-stepped by the Pontiff. But soon after Kang Hsi issued the edict in 1692 granting full rights to Christian proselytizing, the European efforts to crush the mission went into high gear. In

France, the great statesman and nation-builder Jean-Baptiste Colbert had initiated policies that resulted in a group of French Jesuits joining the China mission in the 1680s. But by the end of the century, an inquisitional investigation of a book published by one of the returning missionaries was launched at the Sorbonne.

The inquest was run by members of the Jansenist sect, followers of Cornelius Otto Jansen, a nominal Catholic whose "predestination" dogma echoed that of Calvin. They preached that all men were evil, with redemption only available through the grace of Christ, and only to a small number, "chosen in advance and destined to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The Renaissance was their primary target, since, they claimed, it had alienated Christians from Jesus.

The Jansenists had become extremely powerful at the Sorbonne, and to a lesser extent in Rome. They led a general assault against the Jesuits, with the China issue playing a central role. The inquest of the book about the China mission resulted in the condemnation of several central aspects of Ricci's view on the Chinese conception of God and morality. The Jesuit author Louis Le Comte, in response to the charge that the Chinese were pagans who had no knowledge of the true God, asked how it could be that "in an empire so vast, so enlightened, established so solidly, and so flourishing . . . in number of inhabitants and in invention of almost all the arts, the Divinity has never been acknowledged? What of the reasoning of the Fathers of the Church, who, to prove the existence of God, have drawn on the agreement of all peoples, arguing that Nature has impressed the idea on them so deeply that nothing can efface it?"

As the fight in Europe intensified, the mission in China recognized that serious countermeasures were necessary. They decided to propose to Emperor Kang Hsi that he issue an edict in his own name clarifying the meaning of the terms in question and the meaning of the rites honoring ancestors. His response was unambiguous, especially on the two crucial issues: There was, in Chinese philosophy, an omnipotent deity who created and rules over the universe; and the rites of ancestor worship were signs of respect, without any superstitious beliefs in spirits existing in the stone tablets. As we shall see, even the authority of the sage emperor did not deter the opponents of ecumenical peace and development.

The agitation in Europe finally succeeded in persuading the Pope, Clement XI, in 1704 to issue a Bull against Christian adherence to Confucian beliefs and rites, and a papal legate was sent to China to further investigate. The legate was at first somewhat reasonable, and in a meeting with Kang Hsi was nearly convinced of the emperor's position. However, in a second meeting, he was joined by Msgr. Charles Maigrot, the Vicar Apostolic in Fukien, of the French Foreign Missions, who fanatically despised China's culture, its literati, and the Jesuits. Maigrot had learned little about the Chinese or their language, yet in his meeting with Emperor Kang Hsi he challenged the emperor's knowledge



A march of Chinese students in San Francisco, June 1989.

of the meaning of Chinese terms. Kang Hsi was disgusted, and made clear that “the Doctrine of Confucius was the teaching of the empire, and it could not be touched if one wished that the missionaries remain in China.” Maigrot was banished for his insolence.

When Kang Hsi later read the Papal Bull, he wrote: “On reading this proclamation, I can only conclude that Westerners are small-minded. . . . Now I have seen the Legate’s proclamation, and it is just the same as Buddhist and Taoist heresies and superstitions. I have never seen such nonsense as this.”

The demand that the Chinese denounce Confucianism in order to become Christian meant that no scholar in any official position—including teachers—could become a Christian without renouncing his position, and no Christian could become an official of any sort. To the emperor, such a demand was tantamount to insisting that his officials no longer be accountable to the moral code that had guided the nation for thousands of years—the “constitutional” foundation of society. Adopting the new, higher moral standards of Christianity posed no difficulty—in fact, it was encouraged—but that could in no way be interpreted as being a rejection of the natural law precepts of the Masters.

Kang Hsi banned Christianity after his meeting with Maigrot, but softened his position and tried for years to negotiate a solution. However, reaction had seized control of the process. A year after Leibniz’s death in 1714, a new Papal Bull reiterated the ban. Kang Hsi, dumbfounded, asked the missionaries if they had failed to convey his views to the Pope: “You have corrupted your teachings and disrupted the efforts of the former Westerners. This is definitely not the

will of your God, for He leads men to good deeds. I have often heard from you Westerners that the devil leads men astray—this must be it.”

As late as 1720, he called a conference of all the missionaries and reiterated that for nearly 200 years the Christians had preached “without violating any laws of China.” He asked, how could Maigrot, “who did not even recognize the characters, presume to discuss the truth or falsehood of Chinese laws and principles?” But in 1721, after a second papal legation made no concessions, Kang Hsi changed his perspective. His writings began to identify irreconcilable distinctions between East and West. By 1742, with yet another Papal Bull, any hope for saving the alliance was finished. Christianity was banned, Westerners expelled, and China was cut off from Western science and technology. The Papal Bull was not to be lifted until the 1940s.

The emperors who followed, after Kang Hsi’s death in 1722, maintained a few Jesuits in the court, but they were reduced to the status of advisers, with little hope of reopening the teaching and conversion process of either the literati or the masses. Both China and Europe were significantly set back. One hundred years later, a weakened China was prey to an evil, drug-running British Empire, which had emerged from the defeat of the republican forces in Europe. The infamous Opium Wars unleashed a century of wars and foreign conquest from which the Middle Kingdom has yet to recover.

Today, if the kind of Grand Design envisioned by Leibniz and Ricci is to succeed, the model of ecumenical unity between East and West developed during the 17th century must be reborn, in the spirit of Christian *agapē* and Confucian *ren*.