

# philippine studies

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**China in the Sixteenth Century:  
The Journals of Matthew Ricci 1583-1610  
by Louis J. Gallagher, S.J.**

Review Author: Francis A. Rouleau

*Philippine Studies* vol. 2, no. 3 (1954): 304–310

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education by Far Eastern University's president, Dr. Teodoro Evangelista. M. Cuaderno, Sr., Andres Soriano, A. de las Alas bring to us the voice of business and economics. We have the late President Quezon in his famous speech on loyalty to party and national duty, and the late President Roxas in praise of MacArthur; also Senator Zulueta on the same subject, and General MacArthur himself on "Philippines—Land of the Free and the Brave." The two ex-presidents, Sergio Osmeña, Sr., and Elpidio Quirino are likewise represented. Francisco Ortigas, Jr., speaks a message to new lawyers, Jake Gonzalez contributes "Jaycee Action in Nation Building"; Federico Calero, "A Generous Consideration for the Government"; Geminiano F. Yabut, "The Present Labor Unrest"; Joseph Tagle, "The Brink of Disaster—Bell Trade Act"; Senator Gil J. Puyat, "The Revision of the Bell Trade Act."

Wide variety and high excellence characterize the publication. Good paper and good printing enhance its worth, while the low price—P1.00 per copy—should assure it popular appeal. Your reviewer would suggest an addition. To make the following issues of greater practical value for teachers and students of speech classes in our schools and colleges, would the editors consider signaling one speech in each issue as specially excellent for speech technique? If students were to see a speech analyzed and outlined according to introduction, statement of the question, proposition, body of the speech with its arguments developed to prove the proposition, and a closing summary of what has been said, there would be something substantial to be gained for embryo speech-makers—a living model for study and imitation in the class-room. The same might also serve as an incentive to public speech-makers to conform their speeches to the old and tried principles of oratory, which are as efficient for success today as they were in the times of the golden-tongued Demosthenes and Cicero.

HENRY L. IRWIN

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CHINA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY: The Journals of Matthew Ricci 1583-1610. Translated from the Latin by Louis J. Gallagher, S.J. Random House, New York. 1953. Pp. xii-616. \$7.50.

"Measured by his ability and achievements, Ricci is undoubtedly one of the greatest missionaries whom the Church

has had in China," writes Kenneth Scott Latourette in his now standard *History of Christian Missions in China*.

This is the judgment of a scholar of long working experience in the country and of vast careful research in Chinese history, particularly that bearing on China's religious and cultural contacts with the West. Long before Latourette, of course, practically all independent students of the China scene had, in much the same terms, given merited recognition to the great Italian Jesuit who, by his genial sense of adaptation and uncommon moral courage, was the first to win permanent place for Catholic Christianity in the Middle Kingdom of the modern era. Besides his single-minded idealism, they have revered in him the gifted humanist—the "master from the West"—who succeeded in introducing Europe's new scientific spirit and its products into the age-old current of Chinese culture.

At no time as much as at the present does this fact need recalling. With continental China brought under the Red juggernaut, technicians of Communist propaganda have set out to impugn the grand old missionary heroes of former times, casting on them—just as on contemporary missionaries—the odium of "imperialism" and questionable motives, working eventually for a breakdown of traditional Chinese life and institutions. Naturally enough, in this studied re-casting of the past to suit the party dictates of organized persecution, the gentle and learned Matthew Ricci, chief architect of the China Church, is shorn of the outstanding reputation history has hitherto credited to him.

Among those who have apparently been taken in by this line, may be noted no less a personage than the former Indian Ambassador to China, Mr. K. M. Panikkar, now envoy to Egypt and the author of a number of books dealing with the "Asian renaissance." In a recently published work that has aroused considerable interest throughout India and elsewhere, *Asia and Western Dominance*, Mr. Panikkar packs his historical summary with a spiteful running attack on the whole of Christian missionary endeavor of the past four centuries in the Orient, from Siam to Japan (but leaving out the Philippines). Remorselessly biased is his treatment of the Christian penetration of China, beginning with the pioneer builders of the Church there and their calculated policy of influencing the higher powers as a necessary step to winning over the masses. In real life, in fact, these were dedicated men of science whose bold vision it was to force imperial sufferance for the Christian message through the prestige of their intellectual attainments, where otherwise the self-sufficient Con-

fucian ruling caste would have remained proudly and aggressively aloof from any outside approach. How they succeeded, through tenacious initiative and against enormous odds, is "one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of religion" (Latourette).

It is not such a chapter to India's former Peking representative. With harshness and contempt, he judges the missionary scientists who had a leading part in this spiritual drama. Following the new version, Ricci and his able successors at the Court of the "Son of Heaven" were not much better than charlatans, even if intelligent ones, whose long misguided efforts to "smuggle religion into China through mathematics and astronomy" make up a story of "sordid intrigue," ending, happily, in frustration because the educated Chinese mind saw through their "tricks and deceit" and, anyway, had no need of their alien religious ideas.

By the extravagance of his strictures, Mr. Panikkar convicts himself of little more than a superficial and myopic reading acquaintance with the complex elements of this history and the motives underlying them, as against the thorough research studies of the competent historian. This is unfortunate because such distortion of Christian missionary purpose and methods, popularized under the authority of a diplomat and writer, can work mischief aplenty, particularly in circles where an open Peking *Imprimatur* on arbitrary revision of the sort would undoubtedly be suspect.

Here we have one reason, though admittedly not the major one, why Father Gallagher's handsome English rendering of Ricci's own *memoires* comes so opportunely. Where propaganda has been at work, a reading of this personal "sketch-book" should serve to clear away the smog of prejudice and restore the clean reality of things. Before our eyes, indeed, China's best-known missionary comes to life again in this book, just as he appeared to the numerous *literati* of his day, the distinguished academicians and officials of rank and civil service, who from all parts of the empire crowded his modest salon in the Capital and listened in awe to the new wisdom he expounded with such exquisite tact. Through chapter after chapter we cannot help but recognize his instinct of accurate reporting on customs and institutions, the pure religious motives that inspired his toil and sacrifice, his frank sympathy with much that was good and splendid in the ancient culture which he, a stranger from afar, had blended into his own. When he criticizes habits of thinking and acting repugnant to the Christian conscience, we know he does so in a spirit of courteous loyalty. Every page has the authentic ring of sincerity and scholarliness.

This genius and uprightness of character were clearly recognized by his many Chinese admirers, then and later. Here, for example, is how the annalist of Hangchow sizes up the man and his career: "*Li Ma-tou* (Ricci) was a man of the Great West Ocean, with a curly beard, blue eyes and a voice like a great bell. He was intelligent, witty and of manifold ability, understanding Chinese books and documents and able to repeat what he had once glanced at. Famous nobles and great officers of that day all held him in high regard. The Emperor granted him a house and gave him an official stipend." So profound, indeed, was his influence that by the time of his death "Dr. Li of the Great West Ocean" was in the way of becoming something of a legendary figure wherever the learned gathered to exchange the latest in academic findings and men in high office discussed the state of the nation. Before long the popular imagination itself canonized him as the Clock Deity and placed his long-bearded plaster statue among the benevolent *genii* of the race.

Apart from this and considered as first-hand historical literature, the *Journals of Matthew Ricci* leads us into a fascinating portion of human history, the Chinese of the late sixteenth century and the turn of the next. It was the age of Ming decline. The dynasty would soon be swept off the national stage (1644), first by internal revolution, then by a new tribal power in the north rapidly rising to Asiatic hegemony, the Manchus, who at the right moment would thrust their spearheads through the Great Wall and smoothly take over from the rebels. Ricci knew this pre-Manchu China like a much-loved book. His work span in the field covered the years from 1582, date of his arrival at the Portuguese bastion of Macao on the southern tip, until his death in Peking in 1610.

It was near the end of this long sojourn (probably in 1608) that, now sole survivor of the first adventurous group, he conceived the idea of putting into permanent record the events of these momentous years in which he played so prominent a role. To do this, he had to utilize the rare moments of leisure left him by a cultivated clientele that daily exacted incredible hours of public lecturing and experimentation, to say nothing of the demands of the growing Mission of which he was religious Superior. On this literary project he labored up to within a few months of his death. The result was an immortal epic which, as the translator rightly remarks, "opened a new era in Chinese-European relations and gave us one of the greatest, if not the greatest, missionary document in the world." It is this literary treasure that we now have in English.

Somewhat inaccurately, it is sometimes called Ricci's

"Diary." From the beginning of the China venture, it is true, the Jesuit made it a practice to jot down from day to day the more notable happenings as he observed them and these copybooks, sifted through and supplemented by official Mission files, furnished him the chief source *dossier* for his mature composition. But the finished product as the author made it is a historical narrative whose central theme is the introduction and primitive development of the Catholic religion in a China that for two centuries previously had been tightly sealed to foreign penetration. To the manuscript Ricci himself affixed the title: *Della Entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina*, re-worded for clarity's sake by its latest editor *Storia dell'Introduzione del Cristianesimo in Cina*. As a proper setting to this history, the first eleven chapters (Book One), about a fifth of the book, give us a general description of China's geography, arts and industries, social and religious customs, civil administration and cultural institutions, and like ethnic details. Coming as an unsuspected revelation, it was this section in particular that struck Europe with amazement and curiosity and that gave the book such wide circulation.

How the masterpiece first reached the reading public is an interesting story in itself. Matthew Ricci did not live to see it in the press, if indeed he ever intended it for more than private circulation among the brethren of his Order. After his death (May 11, 1610), the Italian manuscript, covering 131 large Chinese sheets filled in on both sides with the author's small even hand-writing, was found among his papers. Two years later Ricci's successor as Superior, Nicolo Longobardo, sent an energetic newcomer in China, the Belgian Nicolas Trigault, back to Europe on business of the Mission. Besides propagandizing the fledgling Chinese Church, Trigault was to collect money and books and scientific apparatus for its further development, as well as to muster a sizable contingent of missionary recruits to take care of the expected expansion. In his baggage with him he carried the precious *Storia* of the deceased founder, and on the long voyage westward translated it into Latin. To this original, however, he added substantial portions of his own, drawn from personal knowledge and relevant Mission sources, including final chapters on Ricci's death and his burial in a plot donated by the Emperor.

Arrived in Europe, the Mission procurator had his work published (1615) under the title *De Christiana Expeditione in Sinas*, etc. It proved to be an immediate best-seller. The intelligent public throughout Christendom was electrified by the account of the strange populous land on the other side of

the world and by the extraordinary vicissitudes of the Jesuit missionaries in gaining a Christian foothold there. Trigault's nephew, also a China missionary, later wrote of the book: "All Europe admired it and welcomed it with the keenest pleasure." Three more Latin editions followed the first in rapid succession; and by 1625, it had appeared in French (three editions), German, Spanish, Italian and excerpts in English. By all odds, it was the publishing event of the age.

Meanwhile, Ricci's original manuscript, the core of Trigault's bulkier work, was locked up in the Jesuit archives in Rome, where for three centuries it lay hidden and forgotten. To commemorate the third centenary of his great compatriot's death, one of Italy's best-known scholars, Pietro Tacchi Venturi, S.J., published the famous text, along with other writings of Ricci, in two volumes entitled *Opere Storiche del P. Matteo Ricci S. I.* (1911—1913), and thus for the first time students could by-pass Trigault and go direct to the source. More recently, Pasquale M. D'Elia, S.J., experienced sinologue and specialist in *Ricciana*, has undertaken a more comprehensive collection of Ricci's works, profusely annotated with notes in both Chinese and the vernacular. Beginning with 1940, three magnificent volumes of his *Fonti Ricciane* have thus far come from the press. They are a monument of scientific research and editing.

Though having these later and superior editions of Ricci's own text on hand, Father Gallagher has preferred to translate Trigault's longer Latin adaptation of 1615, no doubt because it gives us a more complete narrative picture and because it is better known. Ever since its appearance, in fact, China scholars have drawn heavily on Trigault's classic. Father Gallagher deserves high credit for making this dramatic record available at long last to a large interested public beyond the narrow cloisters of sinologue and historian. His smooth readable English is a delightful achievement in its own right, giving suppleness to descriptive reporting and factual episodes.

This book is for all who appreciate past human action of real greatness, especially where that endeavor has deeply influenced the current of world history. Such a turning point was the Jesuit penetration of China in the sixteenth century and its cultural impact on both East and West.

Attentive readers will be distracted by a minor defect in this edition. It is somewhat curious that in a modern English context Chinese geographical and personal names and titles keep the archaic transliteration the early pioneers first coined for them according to the phonetic values of their language.

Even those long familiar with the Chinese terms will often find it worrisome to decipher these strange readings into the equivalents they commonly know and use today. To remedy this inconvenience, the translator has added a valuable index containing the word-forms as they appear in the text along with their modern spelling. I am afraid, though, that not all will have the patience to turn back frequently to this appendix in search of the recognizable sounds. Is not the simpler solution to give us, in the body of the narrative itself, a current "romanization" that corresponds to the language of the book? All the more so in that, for place names, the official Postal Guide employs a standard English phonetization for international usage.

Of such superb excellence is this volume, however, that we can afford to overlook a small slip of this kind.

FRANCIS A. ROULEAU

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HIS HEART IN OUR WORK. Edited by Francis L. Filas, S. J.  
The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee. 1954. Pp.  
x-192 . \$2.75.

A fresh spotlight illuminating the changeless verities against the back-drop of modern living is ever a welcome and indeed necessary stimulus to spiritual growth. This is precisely the effect intended by Fr. Filas in editing this collection of spiritual essays. Taken from articles that appeared originally in the now-defunct quarterly bulletin of the League of Sacerdotal Sanctity, *Alter Christus*, these "reflections", otherwise disparate in content, find a unity in their common purpose, the sanctification of the priest.

While no particular logical order is followed, still there is hardly a facet of the priestly apostolate which is not touched upon. Topics range from the theological and devotional to the practical and pastoral. The title of the book is taken from the first essay, written by Fr. William F. Kelly, S. J. Scattered through the forty-five succeeding articles are such interest-arousing titles as: *The Priest and Little Children*; *Some Laymen Look at the Clergy*; *Christmas and the Priest*; *The Liturgical Apostolate Among One's Acolytes*; *Taking a Trip?*; etc. These alone should be sufficient to whet the interest of even the busiest *cura parroco*, were they not further buttressed by the renown of the contributors themselves, a veritable roster of Jesuit preachers and writers whose life work has been