

DOCTORAL THESIS

The Ruist way of heaven and the Jesuit way to heaven: cosmogonic meditations by Fr. Angelo A. Zottoli SJ (Chao De Li 晁德蒞, 1826-1902)

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ABSTRACT

Fr. Angelo Andrea Zottoli S. J. (*Chao De Li* 晁德蒞, 1826-1902), was an Italian Jesuit missionary who arrived in Zi-ka-wei (Xujiahui 徐家匯, Shanghai), on September 1848. He played a major role in the community of Zi-ka-wei as an educator and an erudite sinologist. This project aims to highlight his writings on creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by God and his perspective on cosmogony since it had been a crucial and constant topic of his theological and philosophical writings. In fact, just one year after his arrival, in 1849 Zottoli started to work on theological texts on Roman Catholic cosmogony adopting, however, a very usual and common theological approach in accordance with the education of the Jesuits of his community. Subsequently, in 1879, he published his *Cursus*, a course in five volumes on Chinese literature for European missionaries, discussing also Confucian and neo-Confucian cosmogony. However, already in 1869, in his *Qu pi xun meng* 《取譬訓蒙》, he expressed his vision on Roman Catholic cosmogony adopting terms from Confucian cosmogony, like *hua cheng* 化成 to express the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. As a result, this project aims to reveal the creative approach of Zottoli on cosmogony and, at the same time, his role as a transmitter of the Jesuit spirituality in the late Qing dynasty China. It aims also to unfold the personal journey of Zottoli who had been deeply influenced by Chinese philosophy in his writings on cosmogony and creation.

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