

Light a Candle. Encounters and Friendship with China. Festschrift in Honour of Angelo S. Lazzarotto P.I.M.E., edited by Roman Malek S.V.D. and Gianni Criveller P.I.M.E., *Collectanea Serica*, Institut Manumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin, Nettetal 2010, 564 pp. ISBN 978-3-8050-0563-0

As the editors of this volume explain in the Introduction, “this *Festschrift* is presented to Fr Angelo S. Lazzarotto P.I.M.E.¹ on the occasion of his 85th birthday on May 14th 2010. [... Its] idea was born in Sankt Augustin (Germany) and developed in Hong Kong during the conference “History of Catholic Religious Orders and Missionary Congregations in Hong Kong” at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in December 2007. A much discussed topic at this conference was the interdependence of Church history and historiography of Christianity in China.”² It should therefore not be any surprise that there had been such an interdependence between the charisma of the institute and of the life of Angello Lazzarotto, that is briefly summarized in this Introduction (p. 1) and complemented by two profiles written by Gerolamo Fazzini (pp. 9-30) and 陳村富 Chen Cunfu (pp. 31-41).

This very active and influential life has had apparently two focuses: Hong Kong at the service of the Catholic church in China (1956-1965, 1978-1986) and Rome where Angelo Lazzarotto had to accept various positions and responsibilities (1965-1977 in his congregation, 1986-1991 as Rector of the Collegio Urbano of the *Propaganda Fide* and 1991-1996 at the service of the Italian Bishops Conference). Between these two focuses, on the occasion of his visits to China, he has always felt that, as he said, “I could not but complain about the limited basic training in the Chinese language I had been offered 25 years earlier.”³ Such a training that he had missed for so long had nevertheless not been any hindrance to his prolific scholarly output: this is abundantly shown by his bibliography of 417 items that span 60 years of work (1950-1960), mainly on missiological and the Church in China topics; it was compiled by Gianni Criveller (pp. 43-65). As the phrase goes: “We are not here to curse the darkness, we are here to light a candle.”⁴ Lazzarotto took the lesson seriously. That explains the title given to the collection of the essays gathered in this *Festschrift*, a title which is illustrated by 沈祖儀 Shen Zuyi’s painting reproduced on the book cover. Barbara Hoster gives a short commentary on it (p. 7-8).

Obviously there has been darkness in the history of Christianity in China. This *Festschrift* has certainly not as its purpose the drawing of even a sketchy fresco of these darker pages, on the contrary. Yet by reflecting on the contents of the volume, divided into five sections, this reviewer has shared, with the editors of the book, the difficulty they seem to have had in giving some coherence if not progression between the sections. This explains the fact that they are deprived of any title or unifying theme. But even as such they are rich in substance.

The first gathers seven scholarly studies on topics relevant to the Jesuit China mission period (1583-1773): the identity of Cathay and China, to start with; the importance of 恕 Empathy for Confucius and the Golden Rule; the *Western Mnemonic Arts* of Matteo Ricci which was badly received in China; the unfinished introduction of Aristotle in the Middle Kingdom; the preparation for death in China and Europe; an essay on Saintly Governance; and the European search for a universal language and Leibnitz. These erudite essays give glimpses of the difficulties and implicit misunderstandings that accompanied the encounter between China and Christianity during that period.

In the second section, four articles go a step further, first by interestingly opening the cultural horizon in which “applications to be sent to mission” (*litterae indipetae*) were lived in the Jesuit Belgium Province (1640-1700); then, the attention is led to some Chinese Rites Controversy

¹ ‘Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere’, in English: Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, in Milan, Italy.

² Introduction, p. 1 and 2.

³ Fazzini, “The profile [...]”, p. 23.

⁴ Quotet p. 2.

documents kept in Brescia; the same is done for Chinese ancient artefacts kept in Milan. But a prospective survey and bibliography of Christian Monastic literature in China opens some promising vistas.

The third section opens with a few but vigorous and documented reflections on the missed occasions, to say the least, of the Catholic Church all along its history in China. Then follows a study of the lingering (1846-1926) controversy over the formation of a Chinese clergy and the establishment of a Chinese catholic hierarchy (it is not said if this paper was presented during the conference in Hong Kong mentioned supra at the origin of this *Festschrift*). The following chapters deal with the Church in China in the XXth century under the policies of Pius XI and John Paul II, and then nowadays, and concludes with a list of Chinese born Bishops.

The fourth section has two contributions, one on the cooperation of the P.I.M.E. and the Maryknolls in Hong Kong during World War II and the Sino-Vatican relations during the same period.

Section five examines electronic communication in China and the Chinese contemporary writer and Nobel Prize winner Gao Xingjian.

The volume is certainly a source of new information on topics unfortunately disconnected and of unequal academic value. One may wonder if an organisation, not by periods but by subjects studied along their historical development would not have been a better approach to celebrate Fr. Angelo Lazzarotto's service to the Church in China. The scope of his writings and his reflections would also have benefited more from a thematic presentation than from the chronology of his publications. Along that line, an Index would have rendered a great service for further reference to the works of the contributors (a name list with contact addresses is given pp. 563-564).

Yves Camus