David Strong, S.J.

A Call to Mission: A History of the Jesuits in China, 1842–1954. Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2018, 2 vols. Pp. 889 + xlviii. Pb, AUD\$89.90.

Much has been written in recent years about the Jesuit mission to China from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth century, to the extent that the history of the Jesuits and their interactions with Chinese culture and society has become an exciting and promising field in its own right. But less is known about the “new mission” of the Jesuits in China beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, following recovery from the suppression of the Society of Jesus. David Strong’s thoroughly researched, two-volume history is a significant addition to the history of the Jesuits which helps to fill this gap in the historiography.

Unlike Matteo Ricci and other early Jesuits in China, the Jesuits of the nineteenth century arrived at a time when the West was militarily powerful, relative to China, and increasingly culturally arrogant. These two facts caused the new mission to be inexorably tied to Western imperialism. The First Opium War and the Treaty of Whampoa (1844) between France and the Qing Dynasty opened the door for the renewal of overt missionary activity following its prohibition by the Qing in the early eighteenth century. More significantly, the Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries in China, most of whom were French, came to rely on the French Religious Protectorate. This arrangement between church and state, which prospered despite increasing anticlericalism in France itself, offered diplomatic and even military protection in the interior of China, not only for missionaries but also their converts, and further secured indemnities in instances of anti-Christian violence or harassment. For its part, in lieu of significant commercial activity in China, the French State gained a means of promoting the *missione civilisatrice* via the Catholic Church. The relationship between French imperialism and the Catholic missions to China cast a shadow over the entire missionary enterprise and complicated the relationship between the French Jesuits on the one hand, and both Chinese Catholics and Rome on the other. The development of the Protectorate and the attempts to unwind it in the twentieth century are paramount in the history of the Jesuit missions in modern China and thus are central to Strong’s book.

The first and lengthier of the two volumes that make up *A Call to Mission* covers the history of the Paris Province Jesuits in Jiangnan (Shanghai and its hinterland in Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces) and southeastern Zhili (today’s Hebei Province), which was later handled by the Jesuits of the Champagne Province. The second volume deals with the Spanish, Italian, American,

Canadian (Quebécois), Austrian, and Hungarian Jesuits who were assigned to new vicariates that were broken off from the French Jesuits' existing vicariates in the early twentieth century, especially as France became less dominant as a source of money and missionaries in the years after World War I. While there are comprehensive French-language histories of the "new mission," the most notable and widely available being Joseph de la Servire's *Histoire de la mission du Kiang-nan* (Shanghai: Imprimerie de l'Orphelinat de T'ou-S-W, 1914), information on the French Jesuits in Jiangnan is sparse for the early twentieth century, despite the fact that this was the most prodigious period of the mission's history—a period when foreign missionaries, along with Chinese priests, brothers, catechists, and lay Catholics, managed hundreds of educational, medical, charitable, scientific, and theological enterprises throughout Jiangnan. Similarly, while there are existing histories of the non-French Jesuit vicariates that emerged in the early twentieth century, these are generally difficult to find and are in a variety of languages.

Aside from collecting the histories of the various Jesuit missions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century China together, the greatest attribute of Strong's book is its broad base of archival sources, including the archives of the Jesuits in Taipei, Paris, Rome, and California, among others, as well as the French diplomatic archives. Additionally, these sources are quoted, or more often paraphrased at length, allowing for a much more detailed and textured understanding of the daily activities and travails of the Jesuits. Strong's account also benefits from the insider perspective of a Jesuit on the practices and peculiarities of the Society, which helps to clarify some of the writings and actions of the Jesuits in his account.

Strong's book is not intended as an academic monograph, and is instead a chronicle and an internal history of the Jesuits' missions and the more than 1,100 foreign Jesuits who came to China between 1852 and 1950 (1:ix). It therefore lacks some of the broader analytical conclusions and historiographical interventions of other recent works on the history of Christianity in China. Also, though Strong is exemplary in his use of sources in multiple Western languages, including Latin, the lack of Chinese sources or a more thorough and consistent contextualization of the history of the Jesuits in the broader stream of modern Chinese history inhibits a truly holistic understanding of the mission.

In sum, however, Strong's work is a major contribution to the history of both the Jesuits and Catholicism more broadly in China. He is justified in claiming that *A Call to Mission* represents "the first time a general history of these missions has been written in English" (1:x). The book may disappoint

academic readers in some respects, but it remains a wellspring of information that should both inform and inspire fellow scholars' future research.

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DOI:10.1163/22141332-00504010-04