

# Christianity in Modern China

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Anthony E. Clark

# A Chinese Jesuit Catechism

Giulio Aleni's Four Character Classic 四字經文

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Woodblock image of Giulio Aleni, SJ, the author of the *Tianzhu shengjiao sizijingwen* 天主聖教四字經文 (The Sacred Teaching of the Lord of Heaven Four Character Classic). Fuzhou, 1630. Facsimile, Whitworth University “China Christian Missions Collection”

*To Michael Maher, SJ, this work is dedicated.*  
感恩戴德.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The British diplomat and colonial administrator, Lord George Macartney (1737–1806), is known to have once quipped in 1794 that, “Nothing could be more fallacious than to judge China by any European standard.”<sup>1</sup> Macartney, despite his catalog of foibles when first encountering China in 1793, struck upon a great truism in this assertion. The Jesuit missionaries already understood this principle when they first entered China; and even more, they knew that China would judge Europe by a Chinese standard. This discovery was the kernel that grew into the topic of this translation of a seventeenth-century children’s primer written by an Italian Jesuit in China. Imbedded beneath the analysis and translation provided in this small book is the awareness that such scholarly endeavors cannot happen without both an audience of other scholars who will appreciate and build upon the spadework of such works at this, with its inevitable merits and demerits, and the persons and agencies that have kindly committed themselves to supporting the slow and peripheral labors of the scholarly community.

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<sup>1</sup>J. L. Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China: Being the Journal Kept by Lord Macartney during His Embassy to Emperor Ch’ien-lung 1793–1794* (London: Longman, 1962), 219.

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