

S. Alfonso Maria de Liguori: Carteggio, Volume I: 1724-1743. Edited by Giuseppe Orlandi. [Serie dell'Istituto storico Redentorista, Roma.] (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004. Pp. 840. €95.00 paperback.)

Giuseppe Orlandi, C.S.S.R., professor at the Lateran University in Rome and member of the Redemptorist Historical Institute, publishes here the first volume of the correspondence of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori (1696-1787), bishop, founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists), doctor of the Church, and patron of moral theologians and confessors.

This work is most welcome and long overdue, since the last collection of Alphonsus' letters, in three volumes, appeared over one hundred years ago, in 1887. The present edition includes numerous letters found and edited since then, and is not marred by an editorial decision that, in 1887, sometime tampered with the original text. The title indicates that the collection does not consist merely of letters by Alphonsus (*epistolario*) but includes letters to him (*carteggio*). The reader is thus enabled to see Alphonsus in immediate dialogue with his contemporaries.

The General Introduction, which applies to all the projected volumes of the collection, begins with a short biography and personal profile of Alphonsus, accentuating his literary output. There follows a history of the various collections and editions of letters that have appeared throughout the more than two centuries since his death in 1787, together with an evaluation of these. Thirdly, Orlandi explains why he opted to present both the letters of Alphonsus and of his correspondents; and the reasons for including various non-epistolary texts. The principal correspondents in this volume are Bishop Thomas Falcoia, Venerable Maria Celeste Crostarosa, and his early companions: Cesare Sportelli, Paolo Cafaro, Francesco Rossi, Gennaro Sarnelli, and several contemplative nuns.

The General Introduction continues with a description of the formalities of presenting each letter and their transcription; it concludes with a valuable section on contemporary Neapolitan divisions of the day, weights and measures, and coinage—information needed for a precise understanding of the material in many of the letters.

An introduction to volume I consists of an overview of the 296 letters from the years 1724 to 1743, of which 106 are by Alphonsus and 190 by his correspondents, and also the meaning of the abbreviations occurring in the letters and in the footnotes.

The body of the correspondence follows: 296 texts. Each year for which there is a text is introduced with a brief summary of the events in the life of Alphonsus for that year. The formalities of each letter are not cramped together, but are generously spaced: letter number, addressee, short description of the contents, spiritual invocation, place, date, salutation, closing, and signature. Large typeface and ample line-spacing make reading easy and enjoyable. The footnotes, mostly bibliographical references, are helpful but do not overwhelm.

The 192 pages of back material are most serviceable for a study and an understanding of the texts. The section "Archival and Bibliographical References" gives a description of the original document, its location, published editions, and references. Then, short biographies of the correspondents, a glossary of the modern equivalent of archaic words, a year-by-year curriculum vitae of Saint Alphonsus, twenty-seven pages of select bibliography. Finally, there are six indices: proper names, places, addresses, correspondents, chronology of the letters, and general index.

This early correspondence is indispensable for understanding the crucial and troubled events in the founding of the Redemptorist Congregation, the role of Venerable Maria Celeste and Bishop Thomas Falcoia, the formation of its Rule, and the clarification of its charisma in the Church. Present throughout is the very human and amiable personality of Alphonsus himself.

Redemptorist Archives, Baltimore Province
Brooklyn, New York

CARL HOEGERL, C.S.S.R.

Late Modern European

Religious Women and Their History: Breaking the Silence. Edited by Rosemary Raughter. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press. Distributed by ISBS, Portland, Oregon. 2005. Pp. x, 150. \$27.50 paperback.)

Religious Women and Their History is a slim (six essays and a poem) volume of conference proceedings sponsored by the Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre at University College, Dublin. The selections cover a wide variety of topics under the general heading of Irish women's religious experiences from the eighteenth century forward, and serve as an excellent introduction to current directions in the field.

The volume has a number of obvious strengths. First, the essays analyze both Catholic and Protestant women, a welcome trend in Irish historiography. In her introduction, Rosemary Raughter writes, "the evangelicalism of the nineteenth century suffused all branches of Christianity, affecting both Protestantism and Catholicism with its message of spiritual regeneration and moral reform" (p. 5). This is not to deny the differences between Protestant and Catholic women's religious experiences, as Raughter later notes that the operation of the Penal Laws, however fitful, shaped the roles of women in the Catholic Church in ways that were not shared by their Protestant sisters (p. 26). Nevertheless, a volume that asserts the commonality of Christian religious experience, in a country where religious divisions are often replicated in the historiography, should be commended.

The book also strongly emphasizes women's agency. Religious women are too often depicted solely as victims of an obviously patriarchal church struc-