

## **TRUTH TRIUMPHANT: CHAPTER 18**

### **Timothy Of Bagdad; The Church Under Mohammedan Rule**

It was not from Nestorius, but from Thomas, Bartholomew, Thaddeus, and others that this people first received the knowledge of a Savior, as will be seen in the sequel.<sup>1</sup>

They were a strong, and prosperous people before the Mohammedans overran Asia, living on the plains of Assyria, sustaining schools and colleges, whose students carried to China, and throughout India, probably, the first message telling that the Messiah had come.<sup>2</sup>

TIMOTHY is an outstanding leader of the Church of the East in connection with its great expansion throughout Asia. He belongs to the period when the Mohammedans dominated not only Persia, but also the Near East after having overthrown the Zoroastrian dominion. He is a representative of that line of patriarchs who guided the church through centuries of Moslem power.

From the time of Timothy, and even from a short while before, the Church of the East took its place in gospel and prophetic history when it was driven into the wilderness. This is not because the Arabian rulers persecuted Christians but rather because of the attitude of the papal church in the West. When the Moslem power struck low the Mithraic kings of Persia, Mohammedanism was not yet strong enough to completely oppose other religions. In many general ways Mohammed himself felt kindly toward Christianity, especially toward the more simple believers in Jesus, such as the Assyrian Christians.<sup>3</sup> When the victorious Moslem general conquered Zoroastrian Persia, the Church of the East was in the hands of a wise and able head, who secured in the following way a charter of privileges for Christians.

Ishoyab (sometimes called Jesus-Jabus), as catholicos, succeeded in obtaining a pledge granting protection and freedom of worship on condition that the Christians paid certain tribute. Of this Sir E. A. Wallis Budge says:

The patriarch Isho-yahbh II, who sat from 628-44, seeing that the downfall of the Persian Empire was imminent came to terms with Muhammad, or Abu Bakr.... The patriarch stipulated that the Christians should be protected from the attacks of their foes; that the Arabs should not make them go to war with them; that they should not compel them to change their manners and laws; that they should help them to repair their old churches; that the tax on the poor should not exceed four zuz; that the tax on the merchants and wealthy men should be ten zuz per man; that a Christian woman servant should not be compelled to change her faith, nor to neglect fasting and prayer.<sup>4</sup>

These immunities extended by abu-Bekr were not only confirmed by Omar, his successor, but even the taxes were remitted. It remained for the renowned warrior Caleb to confirm and extend the high rights and privileges which were allowed to the church. The Arabs, like the Persians, were very partial to the Assyrian Christians because they found it necessary in the early days of their power to lean upon the splendid schools which this church had developed. Medicine made great progress in the hands of the Church of the East.<sup>5</sup> The Arabian court and its extended administrations employed its members as secretaries and imperial representatives.

Justinian's grievous laws against the leaders in Asia Minor and Persia afflicted the Church of the East. He destroyed any possibility of reconciliation with the Assyrian Church when he issued the imperial

condemnation of the three church leaders usually called the Three Chapters. By this decree he bitterly alienated the millions of believers in Asia without winning the malcontents. Never again would there be any general movement among the Asiatic Christians toward the religion of Rome. The year of this decree is 553.

### **Catholicos Moves to New Capital of Moslem Empire**

The Mohammedaris used the conquered Persian Empire as a steppingstone to further and more rapid conquests. They looked with greedy eyes upon the rich and cultured kingdoms of central Asia. It is difficult for travelers of today who behold the sandy expanses of Palestine to visualize the once mighty kingdoms of Israel and Judah that occupied those wastes. With whirling advances into these gardens of Eden, the intrepid warriors of Mohammed secured decisive victories; then returned to display to astonished eyes the dazzling riches of Transoxiana. Extension of the dominion brought weakness of control. The rapid and unexpected victories of Islam's western armies stretching along the southern Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean and extending northeast to Turkestan broke the unity of the empire.

Strife for pre-eminence came in between different branches of Mohammed's progeny. Instead of one, there arose three caliphates. The name Omniads was given to the dynasty of the prophet's family which seized the power reaching from the Mediterranean Sea to the borders of China. The birth of this new caliphate was the signal for the creation of a new capital. An excellent site on the Tigris River was chosen, and the city of Bagdad, which still stands today, arose in all its splendor.

In 762 with their usual foresight the leaders of the Church of the East removed the central administration of their widely extending work to the new capital at Bagdad. They had received recognition from the caliph as a *melet*, the term usually given to subject religions under Oriental monarchs. Abraham Yohannan writes that an Arabian history of India records for the year 1000 that the bulk of population in Syria, Iraq, and Khurasan was Christian.<sup>6</sup> He further states that Assyrian Christians held high offices under the caliphs. The historian Arminius Vambery notes that by 1000 the Church of the East had made greater progress in central Asia than Mohammedan historians are willing to allow.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Catholicate of Timothy**

Timothy I (A.D. 780-824) was elected as catholicos at a time when Charlemagne was wielding his heavy sword to advance the interests of the Papacy in Europe. His election took place twelve years before the founding of Kyoto, the most famous of Japan's ancient cities. It was during the early years of his catholicate that Japan sent Kobo Daishi, of whom more shall be said later, to visit China and bring about a reconciliation in Japan between Buddhism and the old indigenous religion of the mikado's realm, called Shintoism.

In the days of Timothy a wave of inquiry was sweeping over the minds of men in eastern and northeastern Asia. Literature and learning were in the hands of the Church of the East. Practically all the subjects offered in similar institutions today were taught in their colleges.<sup>8</sup> Some of the lines of instruction given were science, philosophy, materia medica, medicine, astronomy, law, Bible, theology, geometry, music, arithmetic, dialectics, grammar, rhetoric, Greek literature, and the Greek, Syrian, Chaldean, and Egyptian languages. Claudius Buchanan writes:

They have preserved the manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures incorrupt, during a long series of ages, and have now committed them into our own hands. By their long and energetic defense of pure doctrine against and-Christian error, they are entitled to the gratitude and thanks of the rest of the Christian world.<sup>9</sup>

Timothy grasped the situation with a master's hand. This unwearied worker was ever busy receiving reports from distant lands, at the same time stimulating training centers to graduate more and still more missionaries. He watched over the purity of the doctrine. He was continually consecrating devoted young men that had the spirit of sacrifice, missionaries who would bring mercy into cruel hearts, who would instill culture into repulsive peoples, and who would gather the galloping tribes of the desert around them to study the messages of the Sacred Word. Timothy must have been thrilled by the news from China, even though delayed because of the immense distances, that in the day of the preceding catholicos a stone monument had been erected with imperial co-operation in Changan, the capital of the nation, to the triumphs of Christianity amid the yellow race. Moreover, China was then the greatest empire in the world, and its imperial center was the most thrilling city on the globe.<sup>10</sup>

There is a record of a letter that Timothy wrote, exulting in the news of the conversion of a king of the Turks. He states that these people have turned from idolatry, have become Christians, and have asked that a metropolitan be consecrated and sent to guide their nation in the new faith. Their demand for a metropolitan would indicate the existence of many leaders of provincial clergy among the Turks. The request, Timothy declares, has already been granted.<sup>11</sup> Or, as the letter recites, "In these days the Holy Spirit has anointed a metropolitan for the Turks, and we are preparing to consecrate another one for the Tibetans."<sup>12</sup> The making of this provision for Tibet portrays the success achieved by the Church of the East in that tableland nation.

In other letters to a certain Rabban Sergius, the patriarch not only records the fact that he was preparing to consecrate a metropolitan for the inhabitants of Tibet, but also that in his time many missionaries "crossed the sea and went to the Indians and the Chinese with only a rod and a scrip." In one of these epistles he apprises his correspondents of the death of the metropolitan of China.<sup>13</sup> Thus while Charlemagne by the strokes of his battle-ax was destroying the beautiful centers of Celtic Christianity in northwestern Europe, and while agents from Rome were laboring to resist the onward march of Scottish and Irish Christianity into England, the Church of the Wilderness in the East was consecrating metropolitans to superintend spiritual leaders in Tibet, China, India, and among the nations of the Turks.

Thomas of Marga, writing concerning the indefatigable labors of Timothy, tells of the appointment of eighty missionaries sent to convert the heathen of the Far East:

These were the bishops who preached the teaching of Christ in those countries of the Dailamites and Gilanians, and the rest of the savage peoples beyond them, and planted in them the light of the truth of the gospel of our Lord.... They evangelized them and they baptized them, worked miracles and showed prodigies, and the news of their exploits reached the farthest points of the East. You may learn all these clearly from the letter which some merchants and secretaries of the kings, who had penetrated as far as there for the sake of commerce and of affairs of state, wrote to [the patriarch] Mar Timothy.<sup>14</sup>

In another place the same historian relates that about this time Shubbalisho was ordained by Timothy to evangelize the primitive peoples inhabiting the country beyond central Asia. The patriarch declared

that the one newly ordained for this task was fitted for it because he was versed not only in Syriac, but also in Arabic and Persian. In this letter it is to be noted that the Church of the East not only brought heathen into their faith, but also overcame a difficult task in converting heretics like the Marcionites and Manichaeans. Thus he continues:

He taught and baptized many towns and numerous villages, and brought them to the teaching of the divine life. He built churches, and set up in them priests and deacons, and singled out some brethren who were missionaries with him to teach them psalms and canticles of the Spirit. And he himself went deep inland to the farthest end of the East, in the work of the great evangelization that he was doing among pagans, Marcionites, Manichaeans, and other kinds of beliefs and abominations, and he sowed the sublime light of the teaching of the gospel, the source of life and peace.<sup>15</sup>

By these facts, which have been well authenticated, one can get a glimpse of the tremendous activity going on in the bosom of the Assyrian Church. This work was to go on for many centuries after Timothy. Timothy may be taken as a type of the intelligent, devoted, and industrious leaders who, for decade after decade throughout Asia, turned many to righteousness.

In the midst of these labors India was not forgotten. It has already been noted how Timothy sent many missionaries to India at the same time he was sending them to China. The patriarch Ishoyabh, who consummated the contract with the Moslem caliph for the protection of his people more than one hundred years previous to Timothy, censured for misconduct the metropolitan of southeastern Persia, who was located near the borders of northwestern India. His written rebuke bemoaned the disastrous effect of this leader's irregularities, because he says that, "Episcopal succession had been interrupted in India," and that "divine teaching by means of rightful bishops" had been withheld from India. In other words, the rebuke implies that throughout the whole of the Hindu peninsula, clergy, provincial directors, organized churches, and companies of Christian communities could be found.

Of Timothy himself it is recorded that while writing to the monks of Mar Maron regarding the disputed words, "who was crucified for us," adds: "In all the countries of the sunrise, that is to say, - among the Indians, the Chinese, the Tibetans, the Turks, and in all the provinces under the jurisdiction of this patriarchal see, there is no addition of the words 'crucified for us'"<sup>16</sup>

### **Conquests of the Mongols**

Mingana quotes a letter purporting to have been written by Philoxenus. He was a famous writer attached to the smaller Eastern church (Monophysite).<sup>17</sup> The document is in two parts. The second part, which is evidently the work of a later writer, outlines the introduction of Christianity among the Turks. The scope and analysis of its treatment dealing with the nations of farther Asia, as well as the freshness of its descriptions, sheds unusual light on a region that is little known. It presents the Turks as dwelling in tents and having no towns, villages, or houses. Well organized, they live as the children of Israel did during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. These Turks had their premises well kept, while the people themselves were clean and neat in their habits. They accepted both the Old and New Testaments in Syriac, although evidence indicates that they had the Scriptures also in their own script. When the divine writings were used in public services, they were translated by officiating pastors into the vernacular in order that the people might understand what was read.

It is a most illuminating statement concerning these Turks to read that they were ruled over by four great and powerful kings who evidently lived at quite a distance from each other. The letter applied

the name Tartar to all the divisions, and designated their country as Sericon. This is the name (as Mingana points out) which was given to China in the days of Christ. Each of these kings ruled over four hundred thousand families who accepted and obeyed the teachings and gospel of Christ. If each family was composed of an average of five persons, it would mean that the four kingdoms had a population of about eight million, and they all were Christians.

From the twenty-seven grand divisions of the church administration covering the Orient, communications were sent in not only concerning new religious developments, but also about events of international importance. Thus in the year 1009, Abdisho, metropolitan of Merv, the church director in the powerful province of Khurasan, northeast Persia, wrote to the patriarch John informing him that two hundred thousand Turks and Mongolians had embraced Christianity. He pointed out that the conversion occurred because the king of the Keraites, which people spread over the region around Lake Baikal, Siberia, had been found wandering in a high mountain where he had been overtaken by a violent snowstorm. In his hopelessness he considered himself lost, and dreamed or thought he saw a giant appear to him in vision, saying, "If you will accept Christ, I will lead you to safety." Having promised to become a Christian and having returned safely to his kingdom, he sought out Christian merchants who were traveling among his tribes, and learned from them the way of salvation.

Mention should be made here of the name of Prester John, stories of whom stirred medieval Europe. Reports came through to the West of a powerful Christian king who, in the depths of Scythia, ruled over a mighty people. He is known variously by the names, Prester John, Presbyter John, and Priest John. Some think he was a king of the Keraites, and others believe that, in addition to being a great king himself, he was also son-in-law to the king of the powerful Karakitai. The picture of these nations with their dreaded kings, all, or nearly all, of whom had been brought to Christ, confirms the opinion expressed by Mingana that the Church of the East "was by far the greatest missionary church the Christian cause has produced."<sup>18</sup> In following its evangelical conquests, one ranges through Turkestan, Siberia, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Tibet. One is introduced to stretches of territory more vast than would be possible to visualize in any other quarter of the globe. One becomes interested in, and familiarized with, peoples and portions of the earth's nations which previously had no claim upon man's attention. Truly, the Church in the Wilderness was a wonderful missionary church.

### **Conquests of Genghis Khan**

Twelve centuries of ever-widening spiritual conquests were not accomplished any too soon by the Church of the East. The fierce energy of the countless tribes of Mongolia and Siberia, stirred by the new ideas heard from the lips of missionaries, was beginning to display itself as a world menace. These hordes needed only a leader possessing the caliber of a Julius Caesar to go forth on conquests never halting until Germany, France, and England trembled before the next blow. In the beginning of the thirteenth century, that leader appeared. His name was Genghis, a chief of the Mongols. After his first victories over surrounding tribes in Siberia, he took the title of khan, or king. How Genghis Khan conquered all Asia, how he and his son, Ogotai, devastated eastern Europe, and how the pope started up in alarm at the report of this news and sought to utilize the influence of the Church of the East to save the Catholic nations in the West is a story of great significance.

The name Mongol, for two centuries after Genghis Khan, was the terror of central Asia. Yet the origin of the tribe is in obscurity. Numerically it was not the largest of the Tartary kingdoms. Genghis came of a warlike father and mother, but was left fatherless when he was only thirteen years of age. His

mother resolutely assumed the reins of the kingdom, and regained supremacy over half of the revolting chiefs. Later, Genghis brought all the rebels back into subjection and began successful conquest of the near-by kingdoms of the Keraites, Merkits, Uigurs, and Naimans.

The immense victories won by Genghis in China were the results as much of strategy as of prowess. He possessed skillful ability in coordinating massive bodies of troops spread over wide areas, aiming at separate points of conquest. He was tolerant of religion. He treated Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and other faiths with impartiality; some authorities say he killed them all alike if they were in the way of his conquests or were in the cities doomed to destruction. Abul Faraj writes of him that he "commanded the scribes of the Uigurs and they taught the children of the Tatars their books."<sup>19</sup> He was a lawgiver of high order, creating for the people over whom he ruled, a code of regulations which later conquerors were glad to adopt. Fortified by his victories in Siberia, Mongolia, and China, he turned his attention to new successes in western Asia and eastern Europe.

**Of the ruin wrought by Genghis Khan, Arminius Vambery writes:**

Though already seventy years old, Djenghiz once more took the field against Tanghut, which had rebelled against him; but he died during this campaign in the year 624 (1226), leaving behind him traces throughout all Asia of the fire and sword with which his love of war had devastated a whole continent; but nowhere so deeply marked as in Transoxania, where the civilization of centuries had been destroyed, and the people plunged into a depth of barbarism in which the remembrance of their former greatness and their whole future were alike engulfed. No part of all Asia suffered so severely from the incursions of the Mongolian hordes as the countries bordering on the Oxus and the Yaxartes....

No wonder, then, that within five short years, the great high roads of central Asia, by which the products of China and India were conveyed to western Asia and to Europe, were deserted; that the oases, well known for their fertility, lay barren and neglected; or, finally, that the trade in arms and jewelry, in silks and enamels, so celebrated throughout Islam, decayed forever. The towns were in ruins, the peasants either murdered or compulsorily enrolled in the Mongolian army, and the artisans sent off by thousands to the farthest East to adorn and beautify the home of the conqueror....

Bokhara and Samarkand never regained their former mental activity, and their intellectual labors were henceforth entirely devoted to casuistry, mysticism, and false religion.<sup>20</sup>

At the time Russia was conquered it consisted of many small independent states constantly at war with one another and nominally under the common suzerainty of a grand prince or czar.<sup>21</sup> All the cities ravaged by the armies of Genghis were so completely obliterated from the sight of man that the Mongol chieftain could say, as he said many times to his fallen foe, that he was "the scourge of God." Thus, while his armies were subduing the northern Chinese empire in the east and other armies of the Mongols were conquering the northwestern part of India, Genghis Khan was also laying waste a part of Russia and attacking on the upper Volga. Death overtook him while in this warfare.

He was not a persecutor of Christianity. It is stated that one of his wives, a Kerait by birth and a near relative of Prester John, was a Christian.<sup>22</sup> He bequeathed his vast empire, reaching from China all the way to Hungary and Poland, to his three sons. One of the three, Ogotai, was chosen as the king of kings to succeed his father.

Kuyuk Spares Europe

It was the terrible wars waged by Ogotai which brought home to the nations of Europe the threat of subjection to the Mongols. Batu, the intrepid and invincible general of Ogotai, suddenly appeared on the eastern flanks of Poland and Hungary. Hungary had been relied upon to check the Mongols, but unexpectedly it offered comparatively feeble resistance; and for a number of years the forces of the Tartars passed and repassed over her lands, pillaging, ravaging, and devastating. Only the Holy Roman Empire now lay between the conquerors on the east and France and England on the west.

Ogotai died in the year 1241. The princes were recalled from war to elect a new khan. While they were coming together, the queen mother labored earnestly for the election of her favorite, son, Kuyuk, and her work resulted in his election. Kuyuk was a true Christian, and in his days the prestige of the numerous Christians in his dominions was very high.<sup>23</sup> Mingana relates that his camp was full of church leaders, clergy, and scholars, and that a Christian by the name of Kaddak was his grand vizier. Under Kuyuk the massacres and devastations which had characterized the rule of Genghis and Ogotai seem to have come to an immediate end. It is a question if Europe was not spared further Mongolian wrath because a Christian, such as Kuyuk, was elected to supreme command.

After the death of Kuyuk in 1251 the succession passed to Mangu. Tule, a brother of Ogotai, was a mighty general. Of Sarkuty Bagi, the wife of Tule, Mingana shows that she was another Christian queen, a true believer and the wisest of all.<sup>24</sup> She was the mother of three sons who in turn became vested with imperial dignity, and all of them were professed Christians or possessed of Christian wives. Their names were Mangu, Hulagu, and Kublai. The thrilling story of their contributions to the Church of the East belongs to the history of China in a later chapter.

When the sword of destruction hung over Germany, Italy, France, and England through the menacing attitude of Ogotai's skillful generals, the pope decided to send an envoy to the relentless Batu, leader of the Tartar armies. Friar John of Plano Carpini was chosen for this task. He journeyed to the banks of the Dnieper where the Tartar legions were encamped, encountering many difficulties on the way. Receiving scant attention, he was hurried on to the Volga, the headquarters of Batu. But Batu was unwilling to handle the proposition, and the wiry friar had to proceed by forced marches to the central camp farther east. He arrived after the death of Ogotai and before the election of the new emperor. Some years after the journey of Friar John, King Louis IX of France commissioned Friar William of Rubruck to proceed to the central camp of the Mongolians, hoping that he might convert the emperor to the Roman faith. Friar William reports many items about the Assyrian Christians.<sup>25</sup> What interests one most is what Friar William of Rubruck said of the Assyrian Christians (called by him, Nestorians) whom he encountered in his visits to those realms. He found them in nearly all the countries which he traversed; he met with them in the country of Karakhata, where he noticed that the Turkish people, called Mayman, had as king a Nestorian.<sup>26</sup>

The Nestorians, he said, were in those parts inhabited by the Turkomans. They conducted their services in the latter's language and wrote books in their alphabet; in all their towns was found a mixture of Nestorians.<sup>27</sup> He relates that in fifteen cities of Cathay there were Nestorians possessing an episcopal see. The grand secretary of the emperor Mangu, Bulgai by name, was a Nestorian, whose advice was nearly always followed and who was the imperial interpreter.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Doctrines of the Christian Mongols**

The long and predominating favor with which the Mongol rulers treated the Church of the East indicates that the doctrines of the Christian Mongols were those of the Assyrian Church. This will

appear to be more the case when the later histories of this remarkable people are considered. The beginning of their power, however, is connected with a significant fact from which conclusions can be drawn respecting the type of Christianity that they fell in with during the first years of their dominion.

Again we consider that celebrated personage, Prester John. The name Prester John is connected with a great revolution which took place in Asiatic Tartary about 1000. Many writers of sincerity who are worthy of credit relate that a king of the Keraits had been converted to Christ. He had taken the name of John, and he with thousands of his people was baptized by the Church of the East. His empire grew; each successive ruler was also called John. After about two centuries, Genghis Khan conquered the last king. Since the victorious Mongol chieftain married the daughter of the slain priest-king, the doctrine of the Church of the East rose to great influence among the Mongols.<sup>29</sup> Mosheim says that Europe was deeply stirred at the report concerning the wealth, strength, and happiness of this Christian realm. The king of Portugal sent an embassy to Abyssinia because he concluded that the doctrines of Prester John were those of the Abyssinians.<sup>30</sup> The legation discovered many things among the Abyssinians that were analogous to those reported of Prester John.

### **The Church of the East in Its Wide Extent of Missions**

The organization of the Oriental believers is equally as interesting as the stirring events in the midst of which they labored. From the days of Timothy the believers in all Asia had been divided by the church into from twenty-six to thirty grand divisions. Over each of these there was the metropolitan or presiding officer. From time to time, possibly annually, these clergy assembled under their sub-province president to report the condition of the faithful in their parishes and to consider with one another the problems with which they were similarly confronted. Then occasionally there would be a large convention under the chairmanship of the metropolitan with delegates from the different provinces. When the distances were too great to communicate easily with the catholicos, the head at Bagdad, then the metropolitan was expected to hand in a report at least once every six years.

An account has already been given of the purity of doctrine and practice of the Church of the East, which is often wrongly styled Nestorian after Nestorius. M'Clintock and Strong regards them as the Protestants of Eastern Christianity. "The Christians of Saint Thomas, in East India, are a branch of the Nestorians. They are named after the apostle Thomas, who is supposed to have preached the gospel in that country."<sup>31</sup>

They were entirely separated from the church at Rome. Edward Gibbon shows that the St. Thomas Christians as well as the Syrian Christians were not connected with Rome in any way. He says that when the Portuguese in their first discoveries of India presented the image of the Virgin Mary to the St. Thomas Christians in the sixteenth century, they said, "We are Christians, not idolaters."<sup>32</sup>

Here is a list of the doctrines of that branch of the Assyrian Christians in India which is called the St. Thomas Christians. Those believers -

1. Condemned the pope's supremacy,
2. Affirmed that the Roman Church had departed from the faith,
3. Denied transubstantiation,
4. Condemned the worship of images,
5. Made no use of oils,
6. Denied purgatory,

7. Would not admit of spiritual affinity,
8. Knew nothing of auricular confessions,
9. Never heard of extreme unction,
10. Permitted the clergy to marry,
11. Denied that matrimony and consecration were sacraments,
12. Celebrated with leavened bread and consecrated with prayer. 33

The remarkable fact is that in the face of titanic difficulties the Church of the East was able to maintain through ages such wonderful unity of belief and soundness of Biblical living. "In the first place," says Etheridge, speaking of one branch of the Church of the East, "the Nestorian church has always cherished a remarkable veneration for the Holy Scriptures. Their Rule of Faith has been, and is, the written word of God."<sup>34</sup>

Widespread and enduring was the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath among the believers of the Church of the East and the St. Thomas Christians of India who never were connected with Rome. It also was maintained among these bodies which broke off from Rome after the Council of Chalcedon; namely, the Abyssinians, the Jacobites, the Maronites, and the Armenians. The numbers sanctifying the Sabbath varied in these bodies; some endured longer than others. Noted church historians, writing of the Nestorians in Kurdistan, say, "The Nestorian fasts are very numerous, meat being forbidden on 152 days. They eat no pork, and keep both the Sabbath and Sunday. They believe in neither auricular confession nor purgatory, and permit their priests to marry."<sup>35</sup>

Sabbathkeeping among the Abyssinians is especially worthy of notice. Of them the historian Gibbon fittingly remarks, "Encompassed on all sides by the enemies of their religion, the Ethiopians slept near a thousand years, forgetful of the world, by whom they were forgotten."<sup>36</sup> When in the sixteenth century Europe again came into contact with the Abyssinians, the seventh day was found to be their weekly rest day; Sunday was only an assembly day. Sorely pressed by Mohammedanism, they made the same mistake which was made by the St. Thomas Christians of India in that they appealed for help in 1534 to the Portuguese, the greatest naval power of Europe in that day. The following argument was presented to Portugal by the Abyssinian ambassador when asked why Ethiopia sanctified the seventh day:

On the Sabbath day, because God, after he had finished the Creation of the World, rested thereon: Which Day, as God would have it called the Holy of Holies, so the not celebrating thereof with great honor and devotion, seems to be plainly contrary to God's Will and Precept, who will suffer Heaven and Earth to pass away sooner than his Word; and that especially, since Christ came not to dissolve the Law, but to fulfill it. It is not therefore in imitation of the Jews, but in obedience to Christ and his holy Apostles, that we observe that Day.... We do observe the Lord's day after the manner of all other Christians, in memory of Christ's Resurrection.<sup>37</sup>

When the Portuguese made a gesture of sending help to the Abyssinians, a number of Jesuits were included in the mission, and they immediately began to win the Abyssinian Church to Roman Catholicism. In 1604 they influenced the king to submit to the Papacy. One of their first efforts was to have a proclamation issued by the king prohibiting all his subjects upon severe penalties to observe the seventh day any longer.<sup>38</sup> Civil war followed. The Jesuits were expelled and their laws were rescinded.

With respect to the Jacobites, there is the statement of that well-known and learned Samuel Purchas, who, having visited them in the beginning of the seventeenth century, writes: "They keep Saturday holy, nor esteem Saturday Fast lawful but on Easter Even. They have Soleme Service on Saturdays."<sup>39</sup>

Another authority, Josephus Abudacnus, writing in the eighteenth century in his history of the Jacobites, stated that they assembled every Sabbath in their temples, to which statement the later editor, J. Nicholai, adds the following footnote:

Our author states that the Jacobites assembled on the Sabbath day, before the Dommmical day, in the temple, and kept that day, as do also the Abyssinians as we have seen from the confession of their faith by the Ethiopia king Claudius.... From this it appears that the Jacobites have kept the Sabbath as well as the Dommmical day, and still continue to keep it.<sup>40</sup>

Alexander Ross writes that the Maronites likewise observed the Sabbath as well as Sunday.<sup>41</sup> Thus, we see how these four Eastern communions, three of which never walked with the Papacy, continued to honor the Sabbath.

As one looks upon the approximately five centuries of Mohammedan rule in Asia, three things are worthy of notice. In the first place, the comparatively tolerant attitude of the rulers is comforting. This is not to say that at times there were not periods of persecution and fierce opposition. However, one does not witness a persistent, determined purpose to root out Christians by cruel, bloody wantonness. The supreme motive of the Moslem conqueror was the lust of power rather than a fanatical passion to kill and to ruin other faiths. The leaders of Islam were so continuously occupied by war among themselves that they had neither time nor desire to frame within their own ranks an organization of the clergy tied firmly to absolute obedience, as was seen in the papal hierarchy. Dynasties rose and fell, but the Church of the East grew and extended its missions over all the lands of Asia.

Secondly, one is surprised by the splendidly balanced organization which energized the Church of the East. Rejecting the polygamy of the Moslems, it was not distracted by domestic broils. This same church refused to emphasize an unmarried life for its clergy, the rule which prevailed in Buddhism and in Western Romanism. As marriage was designed of God not only to increase love, but to purify love, the Church of the East was safeguarded against such degradation of standards as was seen in the Buddhist priests and nuns. Their thoughts ever turned toward their Sabbath home, dearer to them than any palace halls. In other words, they obeyed the four divine policies laid down in the first chapter of Genesis: Namely, the worship of the Creator, Sabbath observance, family life, and proper diet and temperance.

Lastly, the members of the Church of the East were not only a church of evangelical activities, but also a people of sound doctrines. It is difficult to say which is the more dangerous - sound doctrines without evangelism, or evangelism without sound doctrine. The first leads to coldness in religion; the second produces vaudeville in preaching. Both these extremes were avoided by the Church of the East. It was able to give a reason for the faith, and at the same time, it displayed a life of missionary zeal and sacrifice which has seldom been surpassed.