

## **TRUTH TRIUMPHANT: CHAPTER 22**

### **Marcos Of Peking**

These historical facts suffice to prove the existence of the land bridge between China and the Roman Orient; and that ancient China had overland communication with Mediterranean countries as well as with India. The route may have been by way of Khotan and Turkestan, to northern India, Afganistan, etc. It would be very strange if the energetic Syrian Christians, full of true missionary zeal, did not proceed to China after reaching Persia about the middle or end of the second century.<sup>1</sup>

AN OUTSTANDING figure during this period of expansion in China was Marcos. From obscurity this lad in China rose to be supreme administrator over the Church of the East.

During the three centuries of stormy wars and many dynasties between the fall of the Tang emperors and the ascendancy of the Mongol rulers (A.D. 1204), there is little in the way of reports concerning the growth of Christianity in China. For that interim, recourse must be made to the records of the church headquarters at Bagdad, or to histories of central Asia, or of those countries bordering on China.

With the rise of the Tartar supremacy over the yellow race, however, the situation changes. The world revolution which accompanied the Mongol conquests of Asia and eastern Europe brought to light the enormous gains made by the Church of the East in China, central, and farther Asia. Genghis Khan unified the Oriental nations, while at the same time he opened the way for their advance in civilization.<sup>2</sup>

The careers of Genghis Khan and his son, Ogotai, and their friendly relations to the Church of the East, belong more to the history of Asia as a whole. This story has already been told. The story of the three nephews of Ogotai - also emperors and conquerors; namely, Mangu, Kublai, and Hulagu - are prominently connected with the triumphal hours witnessed by the Church in China. Emperor Mangu and his father, Tule, completed the conquest of China. Kublai, succeeding Mangu, removed the capital of the Scythian world from its ancestral center in Siberia to Peking, called in those days Khanbalig. When Kublai mounted the throne of the Mongolian world, he appointed his brother, Hulagu, to be independent emperor, or viceroy, over territories bordering on Europe, with his palace in Persia. King Frederick of Saxony gave no stronger support to Luther than these three sons of the victorious general Tule gave to the Assyrian catholicos of Bagdad and his far-flung churches in India, Asia, and China. In the writings of an author who lived contemporaneously with Mangu, the Christian convictions of that emperor are clearly set forth in the following words: "a follower and a defender of the religion of Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Mangu treated Christians, Moslems, and Buddhists with kindness; but he was especially anxious to attract the communities of the Church of the East to his country, because he found their medical learning and great business ability to be beneficial to his subjects.<sup>4</sup>

The kings of Germany, France, and England, as well as the pope, feared a return of the conquering armies under the Mongolian rulers. They relied upon the influence which Assyrian Christians exercised in Asiatic realms to give weight to their negotiations. Many embassies went back and forth between England, France, Germany, and the pope and the courts of Mangu, Kublai, and Hulagu. These western powers hoped to wrest Palestine and Jerusalem from the subjection of the hated Mohammedans

through the assistance of Emperor Kublai Khan of Peking and his brother Hulagu, viceroy of Persia. In these negotiations the two young pastors who had traveled from Peking to Bagdad were counted of great use because of their standing with Kublai Khan, their knowledge of the Mongolian and Chinese tongues, and their acquaintance with the people and customs of their mother country.

At this point it will be fitting to recount the story of the two young pastors who in 1284 made their famous journey from Peking to Persia on their way to Jerusalem. It was astonishing how many large communities belonging to the Church of the East welcomed them in different cities on their long journey across the mountains, deserts, and plains. It can be noted with interest that, in addition to the fact that both the youth belonged to the Uigur nation, they were subjects of the Mongolian empire of Kublai Khan under whose protection, if not by whose command, they set out from China to go and worship at Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup>

When these two young pastors, Marcos and Sauma, arrived in Persia, they were welcomed not only by the head of the Assyrian Church and all the leading clergy of that realm, but also by the vice-royal court of Hulagu. Naturally, that court, though living in Persia, spoke the Mongolian as well as the Chinese language. They were delighted with these two proteges of Emperor Kublai Khan because they could speak Mongolian, Chinese, and Persian.

### **Early History of Two Young Clergymen**

The manuscript containing the account of the joint travels of Sauma and Marcos was originally written by the latter in Persian, but the Syriac abridgments, in which language the story is accessible, were made by an unknown author. Scholars are indebted to Priest Paul Bedjan of the Roman Catholic Church for the presentation of the Syriac text. Consequently, the rendition of the original into English, wherein general terms are used which can be given a religious slant, may be colored by the point of view of those through whose hands the story passed. This should be kept in mind while meeting such terms as "monk," or "bishop." The early history of these two young men in China throws light upon the growth and standing obtained there by the Church of the East.

Sauma, who was later called Rabban Sauma (the title "rabban" carrying the idea of supervisor), was the son of a well-to-do Assyrian Christian who held an important office in the church at Peking. The boy was carefully educated and well instructed in the history of his church. When he was of age, he was betrothed to a maiden; and his father secured for him the position of keeper of the central church building in Peking. At the age of twenty, however, he refused to marry because he desired to give himself to religious studies. He retired from his parental city to a private domicile of his own about a day's journey west of the capital. This brought about his ordination to the ministry by Mar George, metropolitan of Peking. His fame soon spread abroad, and people came from afar to listen to his sermons.

About this time there was another young man who lived many days' journey away. He was also an Assyrian Christian, whose father held the office of archdeacon in his home city. The name of this young man was Marcos. Renouncing the world and consecrating himself to the advancement of the gospel in those rough and troublesome times, Marcos joined himself to Sauma whose fame had previously reached him. Sauma endeavored to persuade him to return to his parents; but failing in this, he had Marcos ordained to the ministry by Mar Nestorius, who was then the metropolitan of Peking.

These two, in deciding to go to Jerusalem, resisted the entreaties of parents and friends to remain in their native country. They sold all their possessions and set out to join a caravan that plied its commerce between China and the lands to the west. Undoubtedly, the metropolitan of northern China, whose seat was Peking, gave them letters of introduction to the brethren whom they would meet on their journey. When they reached Kawshang, the home of Marcos, they were welcomed with open arms. The Tartar princes of that place heard of their arrival. Failing in their endeavors to have the two missionaries settle down in Marcos' native country, they bestowed upon them horses, rags, clothing, money, and an abundant supply of provisions for their long journey.<sup>6</sup>

The first place they reached in their westward journey was Tunhuang, famous as the gateway between China proper and Turkestan. This locality is well known for its caves of the thousand Buddhas.<sup>7</sup> It was then an influential city of the kingdom of Tangut, which realm authors today usually claim included the modern China province of Kansu. There were many Assyrian Christians in this kingdom. The brethren in Tun-huang, in which city Marco Polo said there were three large churches, hearing of the arrival of the youth, went out in a reception committee to give them a hearty welcome.

From here, after two months' traveling over the sands of the eastern Turkestan desert, they came to the city of Khotan, famous for the production of Jade. Former cities of great renown in this region have been overwhelmed by the shifting sands of the desert which appear to have been advancing for ages.<sup>8</sup>

However, in the days of Marcos and Sauma this was a region dotted with well-populated and flourishing centers. In the city of Khotan itself dwelt the director over the Assyrian churches in that province, so that one may be well assured that there was a public welcome to the two young men upon their arrival. As war was raging at that time between a chieftain and the great khan against whom he had rebelled, the two travelers were compelled to remain in Khotan for six months.

From Khotan these enterprising missionaries journeyed northwestward to Kashgar. Marco Polo, who had traveled over this route only a few years before, but in the opposite direction, wrote: "There are in the country many Nestorian [Assyrian] Christians, who have churches of their own. The people of the country have a peculiar language, and the territory extends for five days' journey."<sup>9</sup> The town was an important center of trade, and formed the terminus of many caravan routes from east to west; the country round about was very fertile, and the merchant and farmer classes were well-to-do.<sup>10</sup>

From Kashgar the adventuresome theological students passed over the high mountains of The Pamirs as they entered into Khurasan, the powerful northeastern province of Persia, where they arrived after the greatest difficulties and in a state of mental and physical exhaustion. But they comforted themselves at this time because God had delivered them from every affliction, and had allowed no calamities to befall them by highway robbers and thieves.<sup>11</sup>

They came to a military camp in a place called Talas. King Kaidu, who had descended from one of the oldest sons of Genghis Khan, never accepted the fact that his own grandfather had not been made supreme in imperial authority. At this time he was waging war with Emperor Kublai Khan because of contentions over matters of inheritance. The travelers went to King Kaidu; and having bestowed upon him their religious blessing, they requested him to give them a written permission to pass through his country.

Then they went to one of the spiritual training centers of the Assyrian Church located in or near the great city of Tus, capital of Khurasan, where they were received with hospitality by the provincial

director of the churches and his associate clergy. Here, like the apostle Paul when he arrived at Rome, they "thanked God, and took courage."(Acts 28:15.)

### **The Pastors Meet the Catholicos**

It was their intention to proceed from Khurasan to the frontier province in the northwest of Persia near the Caucasus, that they might reach the capital city of Bagdad in which was located Mar Denha, the catholicos of the Church in the East. However, they encountered the catholicos in Maragha, the city which Hulagu had made the provincial capital. At the sight of him, their hearts swelled with joy; they fell down on the ground before him and wept as they paid respect to his position as supreme director over the Church of the East. The membership of this great church, plus the Jacobites, surpassed the membership of the Greek and Latin churches.<sup>12</sup> The catholicos was astonished when he learned that they had come from the king of kings, Kublai Khan. They said that they had come to be blessed by the father of fathers, and by the clergy and holy men of this quarter of the world. And if a road were opened to them, they continued, and God had mercy upon them, they would go to Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> The catholicos was moved to tears and spoke words of comfort to them.

Since they were so well acquainted with the city of the great king and could speak in the Mongolian tongue, the catholicos requested that they repair to the emperor of the west, who may be called the viceroy of the western Mongolian dominion, to request the emperor to ratify the choice of himself, Mar Denha, who had been elected catholicos by the western clergy. In this mission they were successful. In return, the catholicos wrote a letter of introduction for them, since they intended to visit the western religious centers of renown connected with the Assyrian Church. At that time, Abagha, the son and successor of Hulagu, and great-grand-son of Genghis Khan, was on the throne of Persia. When they came to his camp and were brought before him, he received them graciously and commanded the nobles of his kingdom to grant their petition in behalf of the catholicos, Mar Denha, and gave them the written orders necessary to ratify that which they were requesting.

Upon returning to the catholicos, he told them that this was not the time for them to journey to Jerusalem because the roads were in a disturbed state. He passed on the startling news of the death at Peking of the provincial director of the church, and had therefore decided to ordain Marcos in his stead as metropolitan for China and to consecrate his companion, Sauma, as visitor-general of the churches in the west. They both endeavored to be freed from his proposed appointments; but when they saw that he was not willing it should be so, they said, "The will of our Father be done."

Marcos was well received and highly honored in different regions even though he was a foreigner, because he held Bible truths in common with the Church of the East. Not least among these doctrines generally held was the seventh-day Sabbath. Since the Christians of China, the homeland of Marcos, observed the seventh-day Sabbath, as pointed out in a previous chapter, here was a bond of union among the medieval church members in Asia.<sup>14</sup>

There was greater responsibility in store for these enterprising pastors. Shortly after their appointment, Mar Denha himself died. The directing clergy of the west easily discerned that Marcos stood high in favor with the viceroy of Persia and the supreme emperor, Kublai Khan. After counseling with one another, they decided that Marcos should be elected catholicos. This was satisfactory to King Abagha, who bestowed upon the new catholicos large gifts, ratified his election, and fostered an

increase in church training centers and general facilities for the growth of the work. Shortly after this, King Abagha died.

Ahmad, a brother of Abagha, succeeded him on the throne; and lacking education or knowledge, he persecuted the Christians because of his considerable association in the past with the Mohammedans. However, his reign was short, not lasting more than two years; and he was followed on the throne by the son of Abagha, whose name was Arghun. The name given to Marcos after he had been consecrated to his new position was Yabhalaha. God blessed him with good health, and he lived to see six different kings as viceroys upon the imperial throne of the west in Persia. Passing over the many stirring incidents of his life, it will be sufficient to say that the splendid devotion of the church, which had done such a marvelous work until the time when Marcos (Yabhalaha) arrived at the patriarchate, still continued. Thus the story of these two young men illustrates the vast extent to which the Church of the East had spread in the Orient, as well as its power and influence.

### **Marco Polo and the Assyrian Church**

The same century in which Marcos and Sauma traveled from China to Persia witnessed five other journeys which have been recorded. They give us remarkable pictures of the Mongolian world from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, from Siberia to the Indian Ocean. The most outstanding of these travels were the voyages made by Marco Polo, an Italian from the city of Venice and a devout Roman Catholic. How his education in Catholicism colored his interpretation of the situations he encountered is seen in the following description:

Mosul is a large province inhabited by various descriptions of people, one class of whom pay reverence to Mahomet, and are called Arabians. The others profess the Christian faith, but not according to the canons of the church, which they depart from in many instances, and are denominated Nestorians, Jacobites, and Armenians. They have a patriarch whom they call Jacolit, and by him archbishops, bishops, and abbots are consecrated and sent to all parts of India, to Baudas (Bagdad), or to Cathay (China), just as the pope of Rome does in Latin countries.<sup>15</sup>

When John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck set out to interview the Tartar emperors, the capital was still at Karakorum in Siberia amid the nomadic tribes of the Asiatic plains. The journey made by Marco Polo, however, brought him to Peking, the new capital of the Mongolians under Emperor Kublai. The following description of Peking at the time of Marco Polo's arrival is given by Manuel Komroff:

Two outstanding engineering marvels had already been completed before Marco Polo arrived. One was the Great Wall of China and the other the Grand Canal, the last 600 miles of which was finished by Kublai Khan. This canal runs from Peking to Canton and to this day remains the longest waterway constructed by man. Land communications by post-riders were developed to a high degree and are fully described by Marco Polo. In the various arts China was already mature. Painting, engraving, bronze casting, sculpture, and the making of porcelain and architecture were already very highly developed. Literature, too, was greatly respected. The invention of paper came as early as A.D. 105 and books were printed from wood blocks in 932. About fifty years later the large encyclopedia, consisting of a thousand different sections, was ordered printed under the personal supervision of the emperor. Marco Polo could have found books already in circulation dealing with political economy, philosophy, religion, warfare, agriculture, painting, music and other arts. Movable type first made its

appearance in China in the form of baked clay blocks at the early date of 1043 and paper money, spoken of with such wonder by Marco Polo, was the currency in many sections of the empire. Mechanical devices were not lacking. Water clocks were found on bridges, astronomical instruments were in constant use, metals and coal were mined and salt extracted from brine. It was in this world of wonders that Marco Polo, an impressionable youth of twenty-one, found himself.<sup>16</sup>

When Marco Polo, a lad of nineteen, journeyed with his father and uncle, he took practically the same route from west to east which Marcos and Sauma had traversed from east to west. He, too, noted how strong the Church of the East was in Yarcan (i.e., Yarkand), which is in the western part of Turkestan, in these words: "Yarcan is a province five days' journey in extent. The people follow the law of Mahomet, but there are also Nestorian and Jacobite Christians."<sup>17</sup>

When he reached Tangut, one of the places mentioned by Sauma, Marco Polo noticed the existence of Assyrian Christians,<sup>18</sup> and also in Tun-huang, a city which he calls by the name of Chingintalas.<sup>19</sup> From there on he brings to view about ten other places where he tarried on his journeys to and fro in the empire. Writing of the city which is known today as Suchow, he says: "At the end of those ten days you come to another province called Sukchur." He indicates that part of the people in this place were Christians and part were idolaters.<sup>20</sup> From there he traveled to the city of Campichu (now, Kanchow) in which place, he says, the Christians have "three very fine churches."<sup>21</sup>

From Campichu he went still farther east to the kingdom of Erguiul with the capital of the same name, which evidently is the modern city of Liangchow. Marco Polo says: "It is one of the several kingdoms which make up the great province of Tangut. The people consist of Nestorian Christians, idolaters, and worshipers of Mahomet."<sup>22</sup> At this point Marco Polo mentions another city directly south from Liangchow, evidently the modern city of Ining, which he credits with being the home of Assyrian Christians.

Starting again eastward from Liangchow, Marco Polo came to a province whose capital city was Calachan. He credits this region with containing numerous cities and villages in which there are fine churches belonging to the Assyrian Christians.<sup>23</sup> From there he proceeded eastward until he entered another province whose rule was in the hands of the Christians. To this next province he gives the name of Tenduc, of which he says,

The rule of the province is in the hands of the Christians, as I have told you . . . The king of the province is of the lineage of Prester John, George by name, and he holds the land under the Great Khan; not that he holds anything like the whole of what Prester John possessed. It is a custom, I may tell you, that these kings of the lineage of Prester John always obtain to wife either daughters of the Great Khan or other princesses of his family.... The rule of the province is in the hands of the Christians, as I have told you.<sup>24</sup>

Shakespeare wrote about Cathay, the next kingdom into which Marco Polo and his company rode. For centuries China was in the west called Cathay. The great emperor soon discovered the abilities of Marco Polo and chose him for an imperial officer. As such, he made many journeys throughout the realm and reported concerning the numerous towns and villages in which he found Nestorian Christians.<sup>25</sup>

As an officer of Emperor Kublai Khan, he went to the southwest part of China and noticed the existence of Assyrian Christians at Yunnanfu, the capital city of the province of Yunnan.<sup>26</sup> Of the city of

Yangchow, over which Marco Polo was placed for a time as governor and which had twenty-seven other wealthy cities under its administration, it is related that it had three such church buildings.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, there are famous witnesses who saw with their own eyes the flourishing churches in the empire of China from 600 to 1300. These churches are not there now. What has happened since then? Another revolution embracing Asia and Europe in its sweep overthrew the Mongols and made the Turks dominant.

### **Rise of Tamerlane**

The question naturally arises, What became of the widespread Christianity in the Orient, the fruit of labor carried on by the Church of the East? This leads to new scenes involving Tamerlane, the Jesuits, and the ever-changing desert sands.

Tamerlane (c. A.D. 1333-1405) was another world conqueror.<sup>28</sup> Many famous men of military genius look like pygmies compared to Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. With the exception of southern India, Genghis conquered all of Asia and most of eastern Europe. It has been thought that had it not been for the Christian influences exercised by the Church of the East on the successors of Genghis Khan to spare certain Christian nations, all of them today might be speaking the Mongolian tongue. Tamerlane won dominion over all the lands subjected by Genghis, with the exception of China. Genghis was a Mongolian, displaying throughout his empire a religious liberty wonderful for his day.

Tamerlane was a Turk, a fanatical Mohammedan, who slew Christians by the hundreds of thousands, if not by the millions, and destroyed Christian churches and training centers. His violence is one of the reasons for the ruin of Assyrian Christianity in far Asia. The other reason was the coming of the Jesuits, supported by the guns of Spain and Portugal, of which more shall be written later.

Tamerlane has been unrivaled in world history for ferocity and cruelty. Wherever he passed, provinces became deserts and the inhabitants were either slaughtered or enslaved. He came to power about the time the Mongolian Empire had been weakened by being parceled out among the grandsons of Genghis Khan. He possessed abilities of the highest order as a general. In thirty years of constant warfare he subdued central Asia and Persia. At Ispahan alone, seventy thousand heads were made into a pyramid. He marched into Asia Minor and Georgia, then a very powerful country, and struck a terrifying blow at Russia. He sent his armies into Siberia, subduing northward as far as the Irtysh River and eastward to the boundary of China. His conquest of northern India was a notable campaign. Tamerlane was more than sixty years of age when he forced a passage of the Indus River, marching forward to destroy the houses and to massacre the inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> The Tartar army had taken one hundred thousand prisoners before they reached Delhi. An order was issued for their slaughter, and terrible vengeance was denounced against any person who should attempt to evade the bloody mandate; it is believed that not one condemned prisoner escaped.<sup>30</sup>

Tamerlane's victories over the Ottoman Turks after his return from India were rendered notable by the capture of Bagdad, Aleppo, and Damascus, and also by the seizing of the sultan. Tamerlane was attacked by fever in the midst of a gigantic campaign for the extirpation of China.<sup>31</sup>

The on-sweep of the savage Tamerlane was the last storm to uproot the stable foundations of the Asiatic civilization. All chance was now removed that central or far Asia would ever become a great contributing factor to the upbuilding of a better world. The days of prosperity and energy gave way to

ignorance and poverty. As a missionary objective, those lands presented a hard and difficult problem for the success of high standards such as Christianity seeks to implant. The Savior taught His disciples that when they were persecuted in one city, they were to flee into another. From the days of Tamerlane on, one must seek in other lands for the growth of a dominant and fruitful Christianity. For fifteen centuries the Church in the Wilderness had done a glorious work in the countries eastward from the Mediterranean. It remained now for a continent newly discovered by Columbus to take up the Christian leadership at a time when the Church of the East was laying it down. America would arise in power to give the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Sahara would be as alluring a prospect for missionary endeavor as would be Siberia, Turkestan, or northern China when inundated by swirling clouds of sand. The laborious years spent in erecting cities came to nought before the encroaching storm. Man with all his weapons of defense was unable to stand before the avalanches of the desert. A glance at the modern *Atlas of China* prepared by A. Herrmann will reveal a map locating mined towns near Turfan in eastern Turkestan.<sup>32</sup>

Between Khotan and China the moving sands of the desert have covered uncounted cities in eastern Turkestan which anciently were the seats of flourishing commerce and prosperous communities.<sup>33</sup> W. H. Johnson is authority for the statement that on one occasion three hundred sixty cities were buried in twenty-four hours.<sup>34</sup>

The researches of Sir Aurel Stein amid the mined cities of Cathay, and the interesting books of Sven Hedin on the ancient remains of Lop-nor give other interesting facts concerning the burial of once flourishing and populous centers in farther Asia.<sup>35</sup> Sven Hedin shows that amid the ruins of Lou-lan in northwestern Turkestan, the finds unearthed, such as strips of paper with writing, tablets of wood, coins, cups, and bowls, and other data, point to a period between the middle of the third century and the beginning of the fourth. One document speaks of a military expedition, another of a government visit in which the city welcomed forty officials from the army of the frontier. There were also indications of numerous farms.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Coming of the Jesuits to China**

There was another factor, more powerful than Tamerlane, more powerful than the shifting sands of the deserts, which contributed to the weakening of the Assyrian Church in China, and to its disappearance from leadership. This factor was the Jesuit organization.

With the arrival of the Jesuits in China, the battle for the faith was transferred to new soil. The devastating effects on the Church in the Wilderness by the newly arrived Jesuits in India, bringing with them the Portuguese Inquisition, have been previously pointed out. "The downfall of the Nestorian Church in India," writes William W. Hunter, "was due, however, neither to such reversions to paganism nor to any persecutions of native princes; but to the pressure of the Portuguese Inquisition, and the proselytizing energy of Rome."<sup>37</sup> The same results were produced in China and Japan by the Jesuits.

The famous pioneer of the order, Francis Xavier, who introduced the Inquisition into India, sailed for Japan in 1549. He built his first church in 1552 at Yamaguchi. How much he assimilated Buddhist philosophy and paganism in his papal preaching may be seen in the following quotation: "He utilized, also, the altar vessels, lights, incense, and some of the images found in their temples - differing as they do so little from those of the Catholic Church."<sup>38</sup>

His stay in China, however, was short. His successors for a time experienced much opposition from the mandarins. It was not until January, 1601, that Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit priest from Portugal, succeeded in obtaining a foothold in Peking, principally through his skill in mathematics, the building of war engines, and astronomy.<sup>39</sup>

Backed by the power of Portugal and Spain, the Jesuits gained great prestige with the lettered class and the imperial court. So successful were they among the learned that at the time of the death of Father Ricci in 1610, the three most celebrated doctors in the corporation of the lettered (the scholars, Paul, Leon, and Michael) were in the ranks of those converted by the Jesuits.<sup>40</sup> In fact, about 1615, two of the principal magistrates of China petitioned the emperor to have all the best European books translated into Chinese by the Jesuits, with a view to enriching the national literature.<sup>41</sup>

About this time there was great strife among the Jesuits themselves, not only in China but also in Europe, over the manner in which Father Ricci was adopting heathen customs, baptizing converts who still held them, and so claiming that Christ and the Roman Catholic Church were not antagonistic to such practices as ancestral worship and other pagan rites. The Jesuit historian Huc, discussing Father Lombard, co-worker and successor to Father Ricci, says:

Regarded from this point of view, the customs of China appeared to Lombard and the missionaries who took his side, as an idolatry utterly incompatible with the sanctity of Christianity - criminal acts, the impiety of which must be shown to the Chinese upon whom, by the grace of God, the light of the gospel had shone, and which must be absolutely forbidden to all Christians, whatever might be their condition.<sup>42</sup>

It will thus be understood how much the Jesuits in China differed from the Church of the East. It will also be seen that they, by offering beliefs and practices which endorsed rather than opposed heathen idolatry, had acquired power sufficient to wreck the New Testament Christianity there as they did in India. Moreover, their acceptance of household gods and prayers for the dead would lead them to utilize the opportunity offered by the unearthing of the famous Chinese stone monument. They would be impelled to corrupt the Chinese characters on this famous stone discovered in the former capital of the Chinese Empire some twenty to twenty-five years after their initial successes. To distort the ancient inscription to teach papal doctrine would offer a decorative screen behind which they could work their machinery of propaganda.

### **The Corrupted Chinese Inscription**

The celebrated Chinese stone monument, as was related in the previous chapter, was dug out of the earth in 1625 at Changan, and its immense importance was immediately recognized. This precious find was at once seized upon by the learned Chinese officials and the Jesuits for their own protection. The first step was to chisel out a duplicate stone in order to get rid of the original.<sup>43</sup> In order to do this, the Jesuits were necessary to the mandarins, and those officials were necessary to the Jesuits. Both needed to protect themselves from the damaging testimony of this revolutionary historical find. At the same time the unearthing of the original had occasioned too much widespread excitement to permit of its being destroyed without a substitute.

Dr. Charles W. Wall maintains that the Syriac inscription upon the stone is genuine. He lays down the following three lines of argument to prove that the Chinese characters chiseled upon the marble are a

falsification: "(1) by the circumstances under which it was communicated to the public; (2) by the nature of its contents; and (3) by the characters in which it is written."<sup>44</sup>

On the first point, that the original was destroyed by the Chinese government, it can be said that this fact is well authenticated. It is claimed that an exact copy was made. D'Athenese Kircher, a Jesuit who was living at the time and who took great interest in the matter of the memorial stone, quoted the following from Martin Martini, an erudite Jesuit, leader of missionary work in China:

The governor was no sooner apprised of the discovery of the monument than by a curiosity natural to the Chinese, he betook himself to the place and as soon as he examined the tokens of its venerable antiquity, he first composed a book in honor of the monument and ordered that a stone of the same size be made, on which he had engraved the contents of the other and had inscribed point-by-point the same characters and the same letters which had been impressed on the original.<sup>45</sup>

Dr. Wall quotes from two other Jesuit priests, Boim and Samedus, also leaders in the same mission field, to prove that the Chinese inscription was wrought upon a second stone of the same dimension as the first, in the wording of which inscription the Jesuit pundits gave their assistance as they were at hand immediately after the stone was disinterred.<sup>46</sup>

What were the motives of both the learned Chinese and the Jesuits in giving to the public a substitute Chinese inscription? The sign language of China had so greatly altered in the centuries during which the stone lay buried that the inscription on the marble was indecipherable. However, the mandarins claim that the strokes and curves of their sign language, as well as the meaning of each sign, have not changed in two thousand years. For this reason the scholars of the Celestial Empire destroy or efface, whenever possible, and as soon as they can, any ancient inscription upon which they may lay their hands.<sup>47</sup> But since the Changan monument had been found near a large and populous city, and had made a great stir, it was necessary to bring back to the public a duplicate in all respects as nearly like the original as possible while destroying the telltale, indecipherable Chinese inscription.

Now, what was the motive of the Jesuits in being accomplices in this imposition? Why was it necessary for the mandarins to depend upon their help? The Jesuits saw quickly that the historic monument proclaimed the early advent into China of the Church of the East, which had been excommunicated about A.D.200 by the bishop of Rome.<sup>48</sup> Here was a chance to write the doctrines of the Church of Rome upon this part of the stone, taking care that the other facts did not clash with the part of the marble incised in Syriac. As the lettered class were totally ignorant of church history and of Christian doctrines, they were obliged to have recourse to the Jesuits to fabricate a story which would not suffer exposure by conflicting with what was written upon the Syriac part of the stone.

Taking up the second point, one can see that the nature of the doctrines presented in the Chinese part of the inscription also proves a Jesuit fraud. These reference in the present Chinese text relating to the use of images in Christian worship and to prayers for the dead were declarations of doctrine which had never been taught by the Church of the East. Yet the Jesuits were compelled to recognize from the Syriac part of the inscription, which they could not alter, that the monument was erected to the glory of that great missionary body. As the Chinese characters with their interpretations can be found in any standard work on the subject, the fraudulent passages will not be quoted here. Furthermore, the Chinese characters on the stone do not stress an evangelical program. There is no reference to the miracles of Christ and nothing regarding His death, resurrection, and ascension.

There is, moreover, fulsome praise given to the Chinese emperors and the endorsement of their practice of hanging the portraits on the walls of the churches. Other teachings differing widely from those of the Church of the East which were rejected by that body appear in the Chinese part of the inscription.<sup>49</sup>

As to the third point, Wall produces a masterly argument to claim genuineness for the Syriac writing on the stone and hence for the original find itself, and to prove that the Chinese inscription was a counterfeit. In his books, by presenting plates which compare the characters of both languages on the monument with those used at different eras throughout the centuries, he convinces the reader of the genuineness of the Syriac and the falsity of the Chinese.<sup>50</sup>

A full presentation of the inscription in Syriac on the monument would show that it gives definitely the year in which the stone was erected. Secondly, it states clearly and correctly the name of the head over the Church of the East in China. It gives also clearly and correctly the name of the father of fathers, supreme head over the Church of the East throughout the world, allowing no doubt that the monument was a memorial to that church and to its triumph in China. The Syriac also states definitely that on this stone was the doctrine of Him who was our Redeemer and the teaching that was preached by their forefathers to the kings of China.

Philology has shown clearly how the meaning of Chinese characters changes from century to century. Their sign characters, usually employed in writing, do not convey a word; they express an idea or a picture. The official reason given for destroying the original stone and substituting one newly carved was that the Chinese characters were badly damaged upon the unearthed monument. It is therefore to be concluded that the literary class of Changan wished to reproduce more beautiful and acceptable Chinese characters.

The reason why the authenticity of the Syriac characters is acceptable is readily apparent. In the first place, neither the Chinese nor the Jesuits of the seventeenth century in China were acquainted with the Syriac language of the seventh century. When, however, the Syriac characters of the stone were submitted to Syriac scholars, they tallied well with the records of the church headquarters. They tallied also with the history written about the Church of the East, whether by church members or by disinterested historians.

From the statements chiseled centuries ago in the Syrian language upon this remarkable table, the story of the outstanding work accomplished by the Church of the East in China is continued. An unnumbered throng who have been converted to Christ in China through the efforts of the Church of the Wilderness will stand victorious on the sea of glass redeemed from the earth.