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W. G. Polack

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Christian Missions in China Before Morrison.

2. The Late Medieval Mission under John de Monte Corvino.

The next entrance of Christianity into China came six and a half centuries after the beginning of the Nestorian missions, when the great Mongolian Empire had been established, when the Roman Papacy was in the height of its power, and when, as a result of the crusades, the interest of Western Europe in the East was still very much alive. Two Italian merchants, Maffeo and Nicolo Polo, succeeded in reaching China in 1260, getting as far as the court of Khubilai. They were requested by him to return to the Pope, "asking that a hundred teachers of science and religion be sent to instruct the Chinese in the learning and faith of Europe." The Dominican friars who were ordered by the Pope to accompany the Polos on their second journey to the East in 1271 (it was on this trip that Marco, the son of Nicolo, went along) were frightened off by war and turned back. The Polos, however, reached the court of Khubilai safely, and Marco Polo entered his service. When the rumor came back to Europe that Khubilai had been baptized, the Pope sent a party of five Franciscans to China; but these also failed to reach their destination.

The first cleric who successfully made the long and trying journey at this time was the Italian Franciscan friar John de Monte Corvino, sent as missionary into the East in 1289. He was accompanied by Nicholas of Pistoia, a Dominican, and a merchant. Friar Nicholas died on the way, in India, and John went on alone with the merchant. He arrived in 1294, not long after the death of Khubilai.

According to his own account, the Franciscan friar won the favor of the imperial court at Cambaluc (Peking) despite the opposition of the Nestorians, in the course of time acquired a "competent knowledge of the language and character which is most generally in use among the Tatars," and translated the New Testament and the Psalter. By 1300 he had built a church near the imperial palace, with a bell-tower and three bells.

By 1305 he had "baptized about six thousand converts; he had bought a hundred and fifty young boys of pagan parents, had baptized them, had taught them Greek and Latin, and had written out for them psalters, thirty hymnaries, and two breviaries."

The work progressed favorably. He reports "that he had a place at the emperor's court, a regular seat assigned him as representative of the Pope, and that the emperor honored him above the priests of all other faiths. The bounty of the emperor seems to have supplied the financial support of the work, at least to a large extent.

When the report of John's success reached Rome, it created a sensation. The Pope rewarded him with the Archbishopric of

Cambaluc. A number of other Franciscan friars were sent to China to assist him, but only three succeeded in reaching Cambaluc; a number of others, however, followed later. A letter dated 1318 states that at that time Archbishop John and two bishops resided at Cambaluc and in Zaitun Bishop Peregrine and three brothers.

John de Monte Corvino died between 1328 and 1333. He had spent about thirty years in China and had, almost single-handed, planted the Christian religion in that far-off land. After his death the work was carried on by others, prominent among whom was John of Marignolli, until the collapse of the Mongol Empire. With the establishment of the native Chinese Ming dynasty in 1368 an antiforeign reaction set in, and the Christian religion rapidly disappeared from the Chinese horizon in spite of the efforts to keep it alive.

3. Roman Catholic Missions in China after the Reformation.

The missions of the Roman Catholic Church in the East after the Reformation followed on the heels of the Portuguese navigators and the settlements established by them. China, being hostile to all foreigners, did not show much promise of becoming a fruitful missionary field. The intrepid Francis Xavier, who had, measured by the standards of that age, achieved amazing success in other fields, made elaborate plans to found a mission in China, but died before they could be carried out (1552).

Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits traveled eastward to Macao, the Portuguese outpost in China, and to Manila, the Spanish center of activity in the Philippines, hoping to use these cities as bases for missionary activity in China and Japan. Though a few Chinese converts seem to have been won, the efforts as a whole were without permanent results, until Valignani, the Jesuit Visitor to the Indies, arranged to have Father Ruggierius, an Italian Jesuit, sent to China. He made several visits, about the year 1580, to Canton, the only Chinese port through which the Westerners were permitted to trade. The Jesuits who made common cause with the Portuguese were the only order given papal sanction at this time to work in China. In 1583 Matteo Ricci came to assist Ruggierius. Chaoch'ing, then the capital of Kwang-tung, became their headquarters for a time. Dressed in the garb of Buddhist priests, they proceeded, in accord with the Jesuit policy initiated by Loyola, to win the good will of the educated Chinese by means of their scientific attainments and the demonstration of European inventions, such as clocks, which were new to the Orientals. Among other things "Ricci prepared a map of the world which showed the location of the countries of Europe, but discreetly put China in the center and pictured the rest of the earth as decorative fringes." (Latourette) Ruggierius in 1588 went

back to Europe to strengthen the position of the missionaries by arranging for an embassy. He died before he could return. When the missionaries found later that the Buddhist monks were not greatly respected, Ricci and his colleagues changed their dress to that worn by the Chinese scholars. Ricci succeeded in reaching Nanking by 1599, but opposition to the work was so strong that little progress was made until the conversion of a prominent Chinese official, called by the Jesuits Paul Hsü, and his daughter Candida. Their assistance and prestige helped to open doors hitherto closed against Christianity.

In 1601 Ricci was able to establish himself in Peking, where a house was assigned to him and he was given a stipend from the imperial treasury. By 1605 the Peking congregation numbered two hundred souls, including several high officials and an imperial prince. By 1610, the year of Ricci's death, a foothold was obtained also in Shanghai.

Latourette's estimate of Ricci's work is given in these words: "To him, probably more than to any other one man, was due that attempt to adjust the Christian faith to its Chinese environment, which was later to bring about the famous rites controversy. He apparently saw that, if Christianity was ever to have any large place in China, either the culture and institutions of the country must be modified or the Church must in part adjust its teachings and practises to Chinese life. Since the former alternative seemed, at the time, impossible, he chose the latter. Measured by his ability and achievements, Ricci is undoubtedly one of the greatest missionaries whom the Church has had in China."

Meanwhile the other Roman Catholic orders were anxious to work in China also and various unsuccessful attempts were made by the Franciscans and Dominicans, who were under the protection of Spain and had to travel to China by way of Spain, Mexico, and the Philippines; but a mission on the mainland of China was not established until about 1630.

The Jesuits, however, carried their work forward. After Ricci's death, they received official recognition and were given charge of revising the Chinese calendar. In spite of opposition, and even persecution, they maintained themselves and by 1628 had founded an outpost as far west as Hsian-fu, at which time the discovery of the Nestorian stone was made.

Just before the coming of the Manchus, who were to overthrow the Ming dynasty, John Adam Schall became the leader of the Jesuit work at Peking. The war between the Manchus and Mings did not retard the mission-work, as the Jesuits were able to befriend both sides. When the Manchu emperor Shun Chih occupied Peking, he gave Schall official rank and "presented him with a site and a sum of money for a house and a church."

The estimates as to the number of Christians in China at this time vary. One gives 13,000 in 1627 and claims an increase to 40,000 by 1637; another gives 13,000 in 1617, 150,000 in 1650, and 254,980 in 1664. The provinces occupied were Kiangsi, Chekiang, Kiangnan, Shantung, Shansi, Shensi, and Chihli.

With the death of the friendly Manchu emperor Shun Chih the fortunes of the Jesuits met a change. During the minority of the new emperor, K'ang Hsi, regents unfriendly to the Fathers were in power. A persecution arose in 1664. Schall and others were imprisoned. Schall's death sentence was not carried out, due perhaps to the intervention of the emperor's mother. He died soon afterwards, however.

When the young emperor took charge of his own government, in 1669, he allowed the Jesuits to practise their religion again, although they were forbidden to proselytize. Schall's assistant Verbiest, who had been in Peking since 1660, was given charge of the calendar. He also became the emperor's tutor. Soon the Church prospered once more.

During this time the Spanish Franciscans and Dominicans were also making some headway in China, although not without difficulties, including the opposition of the Portuguese bishops. When the Dominican Capillas, who had been preaching in Fukien was martyred (1648), his death inspired others to make the attempt to enter China. Churches were built in Foochow and Tsinanfu and elsewhere. By 1665 the Dominicans had eleven residences, about twenty churches, and about 10,000 Christians in Chekiang, Fukien, and Kwangtung; and the Franciscans had 4,000 neophytes in Canton. The Augustinians, who also came from the Philippines, first effected an entrance into China in 1680 and by 1687 had about 12,000 adult converts.

The French Société des Missions which at first had centered its efforts in Siam and Indo-China, under the leadership of Pallu, came to Fukien about 1684.

The next year saw a party of French Jesuits set sail for China. Five members arrived at Ningpo in 1687. Through the influence of Verbiest, who died, however, before they could see him, they established themselves in Peking, Shansi, Shensi, and Kiangsu. Their favorable reception by Emperor K'ang Hsi caused Bouvet to journey back to France for reinforcements. When he returned, in 1699, he brought along, besides more missionaries, a representative of Louis XIV. The emperor now donated the ground and some of the funds for a church, and Louis XIV gave money, vessels, and furnishings. This church, the Pei T'ang, or North Church, was dedicated in 1703. "The French Jesuits," says Latourette, "had not only borne the name of their nation to Peking; by their scholarship

they had enhanced the prestige of their faith and had aided in obtaining for all Catholic missionaries a hearing throughout the empire."

Finally, in 1692, an imperial decree was obtained which gave the Christians the right to worship, as a reward for the services which the missionaries had by their scientific attainments rendered the empire. While the privilege of teaching and baptizing was not explicitly granted, it was a declaration of toleration for the Church.

The next fifteen years were years of quiet and steady growth. The imperial patronage increased. Just how many missionaries were active at a time is difficult to ascertain. Missionaries or native Christians were to be found in all the provinces except Kansu. By 1705 the total number of Christians in all China was said to be about 300,000. This number does not show much advance over some of the previous figures given above, and only emphasizes the unreliability of those estimates. At the same time there were many, especially among the educated and official classes, who looked upon the missionaries as foreigners and upon their work as being inimical to the best interests of China. This opposition was bound to assert itself as soon as the right opportunity arose.

Another obstacle to the continued success of the missionaries was gradually assuming serious proportions within the Church itself. This was the question as to the proper Christian attitude toward Chinese rites and nomenclature, a matter on which there was no unanimity among the various orders.

Already before 1615 the question had been raised as to the proper Chinese term for God. Should the terms *Shang Ti* (Supreme Ruler) and *T'ien* (Heaven) of the classics be used (with Christian connotations of course)? The Nestorians, Mohammedans, and Buddhists had asked the same question, and the Protestants later were to have their own difficulties in this regard. Matteo Ricci had used the term *T'ien Chu* (Lord of Heaven), employed by Taoists, Buddhists, and in Confucian literature; but he believed that both *Shangti* and *T'ien* could be properly adopted by Christians and that the use of known terms would make Christianity less strange to the Chinese.

Then there was the question of the ceremonies observed in honor of Confucius and of the ancestors. Should they be condemned? held to have no religious significance and tolerated? Could Christian converts perform them with certain modifications? Ricci took the moderate position that these rites had only civil significance and that his converts could perform them in so far as the laws of the empire required. He hoped the day would come when the Church's mode of honoring the dead would take the place of that of the heathen all over China.

These and other questions brought on a controversy that lasted a hundred years. As the Jesuits themselves were not unanimous in supporting Ricci's views, although the majority in China apparently followed him, it was only natural that, when the other orders began active work in Chinese missions, the situation became still more involved.

Morales, a Dominican, who led the opposition to the Jesuit practises, in 1645 received from the Propaganda a decree, approved by the Pope, tentatively prohibiting them, "until it shall be decided otherwise." Upon the Jesuit charge that they had been misrepresented by Morales, the Holy Office issued a decree in 1656, also tentative, allowing them to continue their rites. This decree did not cancel the first and the controversy went on, waxing hotter as it grew. It is interesting to note that the native Chinese Dominican, Gregory Lopez, the first Chinese appointed to a bishopric, sided against his own fraternity and with the Jesuits, even to the extent of writing several treatises in defense of Ricci's position.

When Maigrot, the French Vicar Apostolic in Fukien, in 1693 prohibited the Christians under his jurisdiction from following the Jesuit practises and removed two Jesuit Fathers for disobedience, angry members of their flocks are said to have attacked and beaten him while he was saying mass.

When the Pope, in 1697, ordered the Inquisition to reopen the whole question, all ecclesiastical circles in Europe were aroused. Even Leibnitz, the Protestant philosopher, joined the many who wrote books and pamphlets on the question by publishing a treatise in defense of the Jesuits. The ultimate result was that Pope Clement XI approved the statement issued by the Inquisition in 1704, forbidding the Jesuit practises. The Pope also sent Charles Maillard de Tournon as special legate to the Far East to settle the controversy. His efforts in that direction were seriously hampered by the fact that Emperor K'ang Hsi upheld the Jesuit position. When de Tournon finally threatened the disobedient missionaries with excommunication, the emperor had him deported to Macao, where he was kept in semi-imprisonment. The Pope, probably in order to give de Tournon greater prestige, made him cardinal; but that faithful servant died soon after his investiture, in 1710. The bull *Ex illa die*, issued by Clement XI in 1715, upheld the decree of 1704 and de Tournon's edict of 1707. Still the Jesuits held their ground.

The next step taken by the Vatican was to send a new legate to China for the publication of the bull there. Jean Mezzabarba was chosen for the task.

He was more politic than de Tournon had been, but was opposed by Emperor K'ang Hsi nevertheless. This learned ruler was gifted

with a real sense of humor. When Mezzabarba insisted that the papal bull which he was publishing was divinely inspired, the emperor remarked that "Maigrot must be the Holy Spirit, for the document corresponded with Maigrot's position."

Mezzabarba at last compromised with the Jesuits by allowing eight "permissions" if the papal bull would be accepted by them. Some of these "permissions" were as follows. The Chinese Christians "were to be allowed to have in their homes tablets to the dead inscribed with the names of the deceased, provided there was placed beside them a statement of the Christian belief about the soul and a disavowal of any superstition that might become a subject of scandal; all ceremonies of the Chinese in honor of ancestors which were neither superstitious nor suspected of superstition were permitted; honor to Confucius in so far as it was purely civil was allowed, provided that the tablet be purged of any superstitious inscription and that a declaration be made of the faith of the Church," etc.

Mezzabarba's report concerning this action did not please the Pope, Innocent XIII, who commanded the General of the Jesuits to bring his order into line. Then Benedict XIV, who was no friend of the Jesuits, in 1742 issued the bull *Ex quo singulari*, in which he annulled the eight permissions, commanded the disobedient missionaries to go back to Europe, and "purified the form of the oath of obedience to the papal decrees, which must be taken by all missionaries." *Roma locuta, causa finita!*

The days of formal toleration of Christianity were at an end, however. Persecutions which began during the closing years of the reign of K'ang Hsi, who had been so favorable to the Jesuits, continued under his successors in increasing degree, although the laws against Christianity were not always enforced with equal vigor in all parts of the empire. From 1707 to 1837 we have therefore a period of retarded growth of the Roman Catholic Church in China. When the Jesuit order was dissolved in 1773, the Lazarists (the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission) were given charge of their field in 1783; but the turmoil in Europe due to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars cut off both workers and monetary support in a great measure. The persecutions continued from time to time, and though there were Roman Catholic Christians in about eighteen provinces, the total number of these in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Protestant missions in China began, did not exceed a quarter of a million. W. G. POLACK.

Corrigendum: Kwanyin, female principle, goddess of mercy, sometimes called the Mother Mary of China. (See Vol. III, No. 4, p. 280.) W. G. P.