

**CHRISTIANITY IN
CHINA; A
FRAGMENT**

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Christianity in China; a fragment by T. W. M. Marshall

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T. W. M. MARSHALL

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A Fragment.

BY

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE writer desires to explain, that the following pages form only the first chapter of a work in which it is proposed to compare, by a similar method, the results of Catholic and Protestant Missions, not in China alone, but in all parts of the world. As a few months may elapse before the whole mass of evidence collected with this object, and scattered through many volumes, can be finally classified and arranged,—and as special interest attaches at this moment to China, and to the progress of religion in that empire,—it has been suggested by competent authority that this chapter should be printed at once, in a separate form. This is the only explanation which the writer has to offer of so unusual a proceeding.

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA.

ON many accounts China claims our first attention. Here more than one third of the whole human family have their dwelling. Here a mixed population, of Tartar and Mongolian races, more than eight times greater than that of France and England combined, retain the usages which their fathers followed before a Roman foot had touched the soil of Britain, and while all the proud thrones of Europe were still in the womb of time. Here four hundred millions¹ of the children of Adam reject, as their ancestors did during thirty centuries, the gifts and promises of God; and cease not to say, with arrogant disdain, to the rest of the human race,—Stand off; we have no need of you.² Here is revealed to us that

¹ *China, Political, Commercial, and Social*; by R. Montgomery Martin, Esq., *Preface*. This is his estimate for China Proper and its dependencies.

² "China never figured in the history of Western Asia or Europe, and had no connection whatever with their inhabitants;

almost fabulous realm, planted on the confines of the world, in the remotest regions of the East, which perplexed the thoughts and baffled the curiosity of the ancients; the mystic Cathay, which Columbus fondly thought he had reached, when his foot first rested on the American shore.¹

It has been reserved to us, and to our day, to see the gates of this fantastic empire thrown open, by unwilling hands, and every prohibition removed, after so many ages of obstinate isolation, which forbade access to the detested "foreigner." Already many begin to speculate on the probable issues of so portentous an event, and seek to forecast the designs of Providence in this the greatest fact of modern history. But our business is with the past rather than the future. What China may become hereafter, we know not; what she has been, we have

but this great country has ever stood apart, like a world within itself, in the remote unknown Eastern Asia." *The Philosophy of History*, F. von Schlegel, Lecture iii.

¹ So little was known of China, that even Rome, in the plenitude of her imperial power, "did not so much as suspect that there existed in the remote regions of the mysterious East a colossal empire, teeming with vast and wealthy cities, and thronged with innumerable inhabitants, skilled in the arts, in manufactures, in agriculture, and in commerce." Hue, *Le Christianisme en Chine*, tome ii. p. 2.

learned from men who did not wait for a haughty and reluctant sanction to tread her forbidden soil. Others, indeed, moved by the lust of gain, with infinite precautions, and often at the price of shameful humiliations, had ventured to dwell in one or more of her sea-port towns; but the Missionaries of the Cross alone,¹ in defiance of every menace, of torture, and of death, had braved the capricious fury of her rulers, penetrated her most distant provinces, ascended her mightiest rivers, and traversed in their apostolic course the whole extent of her vast empire, from the Sea of China, across the great wall, to the plains of Tartary and Thibet, and from the Gulf of Siam on the south to the borders of the Sea of Okhost in the north. What they did and suffered, how they toiled and how they prospered, we are now to relate.²

¹ "Where neither merchant nor traveller has penetrated, the Roman Catholic missionaries have found their way." *China Opened*, by Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, vol. i. ch. vi. p. 180.

² Even the patriarch of human science is obliged to confess that Catholic missionaries have surpassed all other men in courage. "Je rappelle ces traits historiques épars, parce qu'ils ont rapport à la partie la plus centrale de la Haute Asie, à celle que depuis la courageuse expédition du jésuite portugais Benedict Goës, de Kachgar à Sotcheou, en 1606, et le voyage astronomique du jésuite allemand Hallerstein, avec ses aides les pères

It is not, however, necessary to the immediate purpose of this book that we should trace with minute detail the early history of Christianity in China.¹ Whether St. Thomas the Apostle, as some have deemed, passed from India into China, is a question which, however full of interest on other accounts, need not detain us; nor do the early Nestorian missions, once so active and energetic, but of which every trace has long since been obliterated, merit our attention.² It was the irreparable misfortune of a large part of Asia to be visited in the early ages by false apostles, deeply tainted with heresy; and to this fact is perhaps to be attributed a large share of the multiplied disasters which, during many ages, marked the course of religion in these remote countries. But these are subjects altogether foreign to the special inquiry which we are about to pursue.

Espinha et Arocha, aucun Européen n'a pu visiter." *Asie Centrale*, par A. de Humboldt, tome i, p. 27.

¹ The Abbé Hue, in his last work, entitled *Le Christianisme en Chine*, has recorded every fact which history has preserved from the apostolate of St. Thomas to the death of Cang-hi. See also Du Halde, *Description de l'Empire de la Chine*; and, for Protestant testimony, Gutzlaff, *History of China*.

² *China; its State and Prospects*; by W. H. Medhurst, p. 224. See also Henriou, *Histoire des Missions Catholiques*, tome i. 2d partie, ch. xxxvi, p. 377.