

## CHAPTER 21

Picking up his remote control, Mr. Dell projected the first picture. “Let's take a little trip through the ancient country of China. This of course is a picture of the fabled 'Great Wall of China' - built over 2,000 years ago. This incredible man-made structure stretches 4,000 miles across a large part of northern China. This massive construction project took place in stages over the course of twenty-one hundred years. It offered protection to the ancient Chinese empires from marauding Mongol tribes and other nomadic invaders that threatened their security.



[www.destination360.com/asia/china/great-wall-of-china](http://www.destination360.com/asia/china/great-wall-of-china)

“And here,” Mr. Dell showed another picture, “are a few of the famous terra cotta warriors dating from 210 BC. If the Egyptian Pharaohs were concerned with their afterlife, I wonder what this burial chamber says about the First Qin Emperor. This immense army of over 8000 pottery soldiers, along with officials, acrobats, musicians, horses and chariots was discovered near the Emperor's mausoleum in the 1970's. What is so amazing is that each pottery figure is unique – they have varying heights, faces, clothing, gestures etc.



[http://ww1.huntingdon.edu/history/jalbritton/Terra\\_Cotta\\_Warriors03\\_f.jpg](http://ww1.huntingdon.edu/history/jalbritton/Terra_Cotta_Warriors03_f.jpg)

“Of course you know that the Chinese were the first to unlock the mystery of spinning silk into cloth. In 2640 BC, or so tradition says, a Chinese princess dropped a cocoon into her cup of tea and watched as a fine thread of silk unwound from the cocoon. We don't know if this story is true, but we do know that for nearly 3,000 years the silk roads linking Japan, China and India with the West were very busy indeed. Here are a couple example of traditional Chinese clothing for all you fashionable young ladies to enjoy!



[www.finechineseclothing.com/BACKEND/Resource/ProductPic/420\\_680/WHF-6052.jpg](http://www.finechineseclothing.com/BACKEND/Resource/ProductPic/420_680/WHF-6052.jpg)



[http://farm1.static.flickr.com/54/141531453\\_521b0fcdd9.jpg](http://farm1.static.flickr.com/54/141531453_521b0fcdd9.jpg)

“And we don't want you to feel left out,” Mr. Dell winked at the guys, “so here is a picture of what a handsome, and debonair young man might wear. Do we have any takers...?” The boys groaned in unison while the girls giggled and smirked.



<http://www.china-cart.com/bookpic/20058/2005815175017.jpg>

“One of China's early achievements was the production of porcelain and pottery. While the citizens of some countries were using jungle leaves for plates, or perhaps eating off a crude wooden charger with a wooden spoon, the Chinese were creating gorgeous bowls, vases, plates and urns. For those of you in ceramics class perhaps the following pictures will inspire your next masterpiece. This particular piece is from the Shang Dynasty, 1600 – 1100 BC. Notice its beautifully carved geometric pattern.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shang\\_Dynasty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shang_Dynasty)

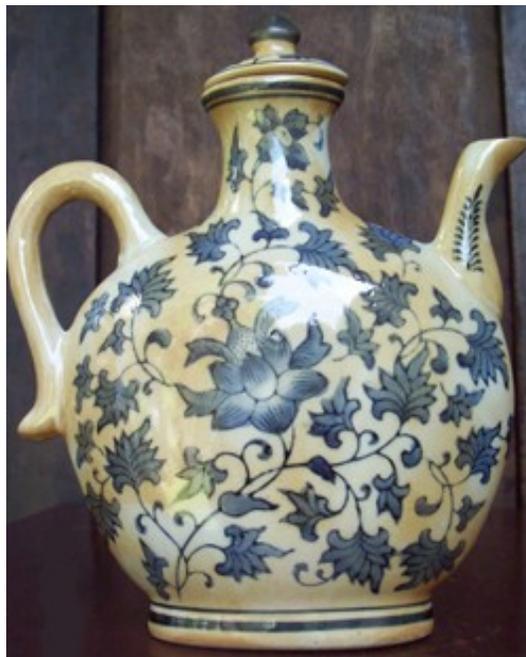
“And here is an amazingly well preserved vase from AD 618 – 907. This was done in the Sancai (which means three-colors) pottery style. Notice the way the glaze ran during the firing process,” pointed out Mr. Dell.

“Cool,” agreed the students.



[http://www.chalre.com/csr/collection/tang\\_chinese\\_ceramics.htm](http://www.chalre.com/csr/collection/tang_chinese_ceramics.htm)

“And for our last example of beautiful Chinese pottery let me show you a teapot from the Qing era (sometime between 1723 – 1735). It was during this time that the craftsmen discovered how to make opaque enamel which allowed them to layer colors to create beautiful multi-hued artwork. I can't help but think that this design is so classic that it would look great in almost any modern kitchen today.



[http://www.chalre.com/csr/collection/qing\\_dynasty\\_porcelain/mc-020108.htm](http://www.chalre.com/csr/collection/qing_dynasty_porcelain/mc-020108.htm)

“But China is not just about historical museum pieces,” Mr. Dell said as he clicked on his next picture. “No trip to China is complete without at least a few trips to China's numerous markets. There are of course the tourist markets like this one...



[commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Market\\_china.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Market_china.jpg)

“...and amazing flower markets, like this one.



<http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/3620500.jpg>

“And many people find the fish market to be quite an unforgeable experience with its huge array of sea creatures ready to buy and take home. Remember, in China anything that jumps, flies, walks, swims or crawls is considered food,” commented Mr. Dell as the girls chorused, “Gross!”



<http://visualgluttony.files.wordpress.com/2007/04/49-fish-market.jpg>

“And now,” commented Mr. Dell as he laid down his remote control, “it is time for a lesson in Chinese writing. As I'm sure you know, the Chinese claim that their civilization stretches back almost 5,000 years. That would mean that soon after the flood a group of people relocated to China and began developing a new nation.

“The early Chinese didn't use cuneiform writing, but rather communicated through pictograms – pictures which conveyed a thought. The earliest radical characters are known as Bronzeware because they were cast in bronze vessels, bells, tripods and such. The other early form of writing is known as oracle bone inscriptions which were incised on animal bones or turtle shells. What is fascinating is that Chinese characters have changed very little over the intervening years. Because of this important detail, it is possible for scholars to read with accuracy all of the Bronzeware and oracle bone inscriptions.

“A few years ago I was introduced to several books written by a medical doctor, Ethel Nelson, who was a missionary in Thailand. As she learned to read the Chinese language she became fascinated with the scriptural meanings behind China's radical characters. As she studied she became convinced that at one time the ancient Chinese had been followers of the true God in heaven. She (along with others) has written several books explaining the meanings of the early Chinese pictograms,” said Mr. Dell as he picked up a book from his desk. “This one is called *The Beginning of Chinese Characters*.

“Dr. Nelson studied the most ancient radical characters (the ABCs of Chinese writing) and found that they showed a knowledge of the Creator. In fact, Dr. Nelson found that 70% of the radical characters related to the ancient Chinese people's understanding of creation, Adam and Eve's fall and the flood story.”

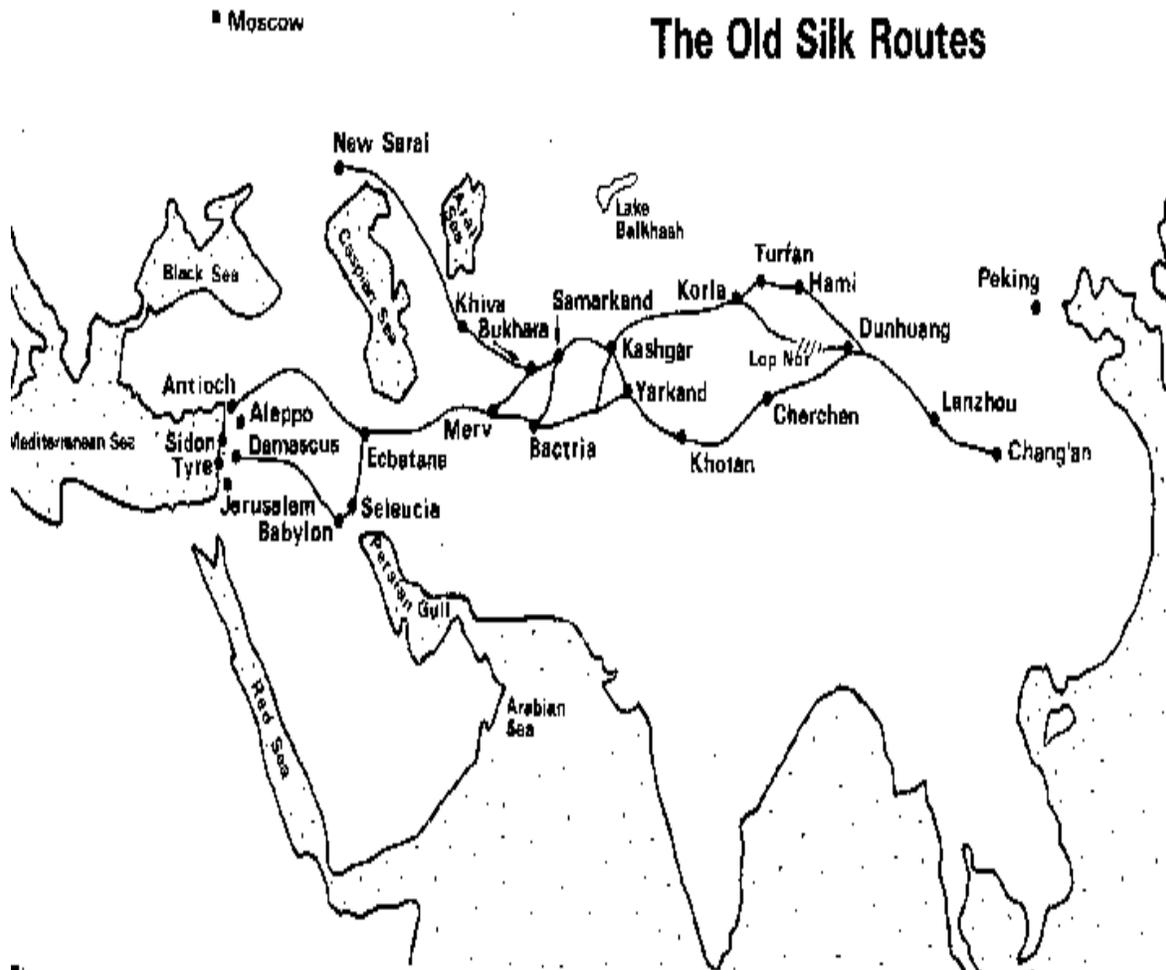
“You mean the stories we know from the Bible?” questioned Jeremy. “How did they learn them?”

“The story goes like this,” explained Mr. Dell. “The Chinese maintain that their first ruler was

Shun. Is it just me, or do you think that name sounds a lot like Noah's son, Shem? The records show that Shun offered sacrifices to ShangTi (also spelled ShangDai). That name sounds a lot like a Hebrew name for God – El Shaddai. ShangTi means 'Emperor above' and in ancient Chinese records we are told that ShangTi was the One who 'called into existence heaven, earth, and man.'

"The ancient radical characters (pictographs) that made up the Chinese language told a story. If two or more pictures were put together then you could express a new idea. The ancient Chinese would have known the meaning and stories behind the radical characters. That history has now been lost, but Dr. Nelson and others are hoping to re-introduce the Chinese people to the beginnings of their written language. That's why they wrote these books," Mr. Dell said as he pointed out the stack of books on his desk.

Asking Cory to pass out the maps on his desk, Mr. Dell continued, "Here is your handout for today. As you know, China is the third largest country in the world – right behind Russia and Canada. Over her long history China's borders have changed, but this map shows the silk trade roads all the way from Chang'an, China in the Far East, through Babylon, Damascus and on to Antioch in Syria. I like this map because it uses the old names for each city and it shows you the vast network of roads linking Chang'an with the Mediterranean Sea.



“Come with me now on a journey to the world's most heavily populated country,” Mr. Dell made himself comfortable as he prepared to read.

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## China and Christianity

China is a fascinating country. The Chinese claim to having the longest, continuous history in the world. They are responsible for many “firsts” including the spinning of silk cloth, the invention of firecrackers, the use of a resin for lacquer and the making of porcelain. The industrious and innovative Chinese people have built a remarkable civilization over the last four thousand years.

Most people do not think of China as having a Christian past. Yet, one of the earliest missionaries to China was an Abyssinian Christian (from what is present-day Ethiopia) named Museus. Historians tell us that before AD 400 this man had “traveled almost everywhere in the country of the Seres [China]” (*Truth Triumphant* 52).

To follow our continuing story of the Church of the East we will fast forward to the year AD 781 when Adam was the Metropolitan for China. His story gives us an impressive witness of the strength of God's true church. While the Roman Church busily worked to destroy Celtic Christianity in Europe, the Church of the East energetically spread the gospel farther and farther eastward. As Metropolitan, Adam knew many of the powerful men ruling at that time. He not only was well liked by the Chinese emperor, but he also had the respect of Buddhist leaders, Japanese intellectuals and Arabian emperors.

Adam and his fellow Christians looked for ways to reach the minds and hearts of their neighbors with the truths found in God's Word. As we trace the spread of Christianity into China you will see how the wise sayings of Confucius and other sages helped prepare hearts for the truths the missionaries brought to China – then called the Middle Kingdom.

As the early Christian missionaries opened the Scriptures to their Chinese hearers, they no doubt also quoted the words of the Chinese sages which contained similar concepts. For instance, Zeng Zi was quoted as saying, “The doctrine of our Master is to be faithful [to the decree of Heaven] and forgiving to others – this, and nothing more.” Christians could then read from the Bible the words of Jesus: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14, 15).

Missionaries would have taught the words of Christ from Matthew 7:12, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” and the Chinese would immediately remember Confucius' saying, “Do not do to others what you would not wish done to yourself.”

Mencius is quoted as saying, “Great is the man who has not lost his childlike heart.” The Christian could then quote from Matthew where Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Another wise saying of Confucius taught that “to subdue one's self and return to propriety [law] is love. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety [law], all under heaven will ascribe love to him.” The Christian could then point out Matthew 16:24 which says, “If

anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

It must have been exciting for the Church of the East to evangelize the Middle Kingdom. Adam lived during what most Chinese scholars agree was China's most brilliant era - the Tang Dynasty (AD 618 – 907). The most civilized Chinese city at that time was Chang'an. It had been a thriving and celebrated city two thousand years before Christ's birth and was known far and wide as “the well-watered city.”

One day in AD 781 there was great excitement among the Christians of Chang'an. By the emperor's order Metropolitan Adam had carved a huge marble monument. On the ten-foot tall stone were engraved 1,900 Chinese characters, 50 Syriac words and 70 names in Syriac. At the top of the monument, written in Chinese characters, was the inscription, “A Monument Commemorating the Propagation of the Ta-Chin (the Chinese name of Judea) Luminous Religion (the term used for Christianity) in the Middle Kingdom” (*Truth Triumphant* 343). It also included the name of the Patriarch of Baghdad and the date the monument was erected.

You might be interested in some of what was translated from Syriac, the official language of the Church of the East. It said, “In the day of our Father of Fathers, My Lord Hanan-isho, Catholicos, Patriarch...In the year one thousand and ninety-two of the Greeks (1092 – 311=A.D. 781)” (*Truth Triumphant* 334). It goes on to identify Adam as “Pastor, Vice-Metropolitan and metropolitan of China” (*Truth Triumphant* 343). The carved characters tell us that Christianity had influence not only on the Chinese emperor and his people, but other “High Asia” countries as well.

Although we do not have many written documents to verify the teachings of the Church of the East, we do have preserved a hymn of praise called the Teshbokhta, which was written by Mar Babai – a great Assyrian Christian theologian. Although he died in AD 628, this poem will give you an idea of the beliefs taught by the Luminous Religion.

*One if Christ the Son of God,  
Worshiped by all in two natures;  
In His Godhead begotten of the Father,  
Without beginning before all time;  
In His humanity born of Mary,  
In the fullness of time, in a body united;  
Neither His Godhead is of the nature of the mother,  
Nor His humanity of the nature of the Father;  
The natures are preserved in their Qnumas,  
In one person of one Sonship.  
And as the Godhead is three substances in one nature,  
Likewise the Sonship of the Son is in two natures, one person.  
So the Holy Church has taught.*

As the Tang Dynasty drew to a close the Chinese Christians experienced great changes. Persecution and hardships of various sorts fell heavily on the believers. When the Buddhists and Taoists took control of the government they began to persecute the Church of the East. Fearing damage to their treasured monument, the Chinese believers in Chang'an buried it in order to protect it from harm. This proved to be a wise action.

Over the next several centuries, Chinese Christians had to cope with everything from brutal persecution to extreme weather changes. Tamerlane, a fanatical Muslim Turk who hated

Christians, killed hundreds of thousands of God's people and destroyed their churches and schools in the fourteenth century. Desert sands were also destructive. They came swirling through populated towns and cities and covered all traces of them. W. H. Johnson said that 360 cities were buried in twenty-four hours by the shifting sands of eastern Turkestan (see *Truth Triumphant* 359).

Another tremendous crisis for the Luminous Religion came centuries later when the Jesuits arrived. The Jesuits originally began their work in China in the mid 1550's, but met with little success. However, in 1610 the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci gained acceptance in Peking through his skill in not only math and astronomy, but also the building of war engines. Using Portugal's military power and Rome's money, the Jesuits quickly won the approval of the Chinese rulers and the scholars of Peking.

Moving quickly, the Jesuits worked to undermine the Church of the East. An interesting discovery in 1625 contributed to Rome's increasing power. The huge stone monument, buried almost 800 years earlier, was unexpectedly discovered in Chang'an. The story surrounding that remarkable discovery highlights the Jesuits' tremendous power of deception.

As soon as the immense stone was uncovered, the Jesuits and their educated friends immediately took possession of the monument. Quoting from Jesuit authors, Dr. Wilkinson proves that orders were given to make an exact replica of the stone. Martin Martini, the Jesuit leader in China tells the official Vatican story: "The governor was no sooner appraised 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" (quoted in *Truth Triumphant* 362).

You may perhaps wonder why the Jesuits went to so much trouble and expense to carve a duplicate stone. The answer is simple: They quickly saw that this rediscovered monument was proof of the vast territory covered by the Church of the East, the hated enemies of the Church of Rome. Here was their chance to literally wipe away the history of their rivals! Those who study the Chinese language know that its written characters have changed little over thousands of years so we know the rewriting of the Chinese characters was done to deceive. Unlike the Chinese language, the Syriac characters had changed dramatically since the original stone had been carved. The Jesuits had to copy the Syriac writing exactly as it was written because they did not have the training to know just what the original Syriac language said.

So what was carved into the new monument? Today, if you could read it, you would find that the Chinese characters extol many Roman Catholic practices which the Church of the East did not follow. Images are exalted, original sin is upheld along with prayers for the dead and worshiping toward the east (the rising sun). Christians were depicted as wearing beards and shaving the crown of their head (the tonsure), and the carved words claim that pictures of the emperors were placed on church walls. Obviously the "translators" of the new monument stone creatively changed the original Chinese characters to harmonize with Roman Catholic traditions.

It wasn't until many years later that scholars were finally able to decipher the Syriac writing on the replica monument. Translators found carved in Syriac letters the year the stone was erected - AD 781. It correctly names Adam as the head over the Church of the East in China and it gives the name of the Catholicos of Baghdad. According to Dr. Wilkinson it "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” (*Truth Triumphant* 364).

The story of the Chinese stone monument clearly reveals the reason why so much history belonging to the Church in the Wilderness has vanished. Throughout the centuries manuscripts were destroyed in wars and thousands of ancient books were lost when famous libraries like Alexandria and Ephesus burned. In addition to such legitimate losses many records were purposely destroyed by the enemies of God’s true church. It is a powerful indication of God's protection and preservation that we are able to hold in our hands the uncorrupted, sacred Scriptures.

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“Let me show you a picture of the replica stone that is on display in China today,” Mr. Dell placed the book on his desk and reached for his remote.

“The story, as told by Wikipedia, is very interesting,” Mr. Dell pulled up some text on his computer. “Here, let me read it to you. 'Frits Vilhelm Holm (ca. 1881 – May 1930) was a Danish scholar and adventurer. His books usually gave his name as simply Frits Holm or Frits V. Holm, while US newspapers of the time usually (mis)spelled his name as Fritz von Holm, sometimes claiming that he was a member of the European nobility.

“Frits Holm is best known for his attempt, in 1907, to "obtain" the famous Nestorian Stele - a ancient Christian monument of Xi'an, in Northwestern China, and sell it to a western museum. Alerted to his activities (nicknamed by later writers the "Holm-Nestorian expedition to Xi'an"), the local authorities moved the monument from its outdoor location on the western outskirts of the city, and into the Stele Forest museum. In order not to leave China empty-handed, disappointed Holm had an exact copy of the stele made for him in Xi'an. He had the replica stele taken by cart to the Yellow River, then by small boat down the (not very navigable) Yellow River to the nearest train station at Zhengzhou, and then by train to the major Yangtze River port of Hankou (now in Wuhan).

“Instead of London's British Museum, as he supposedly originally intended, Holm had the replica stele shipped to New York, planning to sell it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The museum's director Caspar Purdon Clarke, however, was less than enthusiastic about purchasing "so large a stone ... of no artistic value". Nonetheless, the replica stele was exhibited in the museum ("on loan" from Mr. Holm) for about 10 years. Eventually, in 1917 some Mr. George Leary, a wealthy New Yorker, purchased the replica stele and sent it to Rome, as a gift to the Pope.

“Frits Holm died in May 1930 from pneumonia.’

“This picture,” Mr. Dell said as he turned toward the screen, “was taken in 1907 by Frits Holm. It shows the original site for the stone before it was moved to the 'Forest of Tablets Museum' near Xi'an – the city formerly known as Chang'an. The Nestorian Stele is approximately 8' x 3' x 1' and is carved into black stone.”



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ec/Frits-Holm-Chinas-Foremost-Monument-the-Chingchiaopei.jpg>

“Perhaps someday one of you will have the opportunity to visit China and view this monument for yourself,” said Mr. Dell as the bell rang to dismiss class.

“I hope that 'someone' is me,” responded Jay as he picked up his backpack and stood to his feet. “It would be awesome to see some of this history firsthand.”

B.G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant: The Church in the Wilderness* (Teach Services, Brushton, New York, 1994) Chapters 5, 22

Charles F. Horne, ed., *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, (Austin, & Lipscomb, New York, 1917), Vol. XII, “Medieval China”, pp. 381-392

[http://nestorian.org/east\\_asian\\_history\\_sourcebook\\_.html](http://nestorian.org/east_asian_history_sourcebook_.html)

Ethel R. Nelson et al., *The Beginning of Chinese Characters* (Read Books Publisher; HCR 65 Box 580, Dunlap, TN)

Ethel R. Nelson et al., *God and the Ancient Chinese* (Read Books Publisher; HCR 65 Box 580, Dunlap, TN)

Ethel R. Nelson et al., *God's Promise to the Chinese* (Read Books Publisher; HCR 65 Box 580, Dunlap, TN)

Ethel R. Nelson and Richard E. Broadberry, *Genesis and the Mystery Confucius Couldn't Solve* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO)

[http://www.nestorian.org/the\\_nestorian\\_monument\\_in\\_chin.html](http://www.nestorian.org/the_nestorian_monument_in_chin.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frits\\_Holm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frits_Holm)

This web page shows some of the oracle bone characters and their meanings:

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v20/i3/china.asp>