

CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

An Ecumenical Approach

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By now Christians have, chiefly through the influence of their educational institutions and hospitals, become an accepted part of Indian society. When one remembers the problems that confronted Christian evangelists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one is able to appreciate the magnitude of the change that this implies in the country's outlook. But there still remains the essential task of convincing India that it is God's plan to unite all men in a divine fellowship through Jesus Christ. The degree of dedication which our young men and women bring to this task will be a measure of how earnest their own religious conviction is.

On the one hand this survey provides a sad glimpse here and there of how divisions arose among Christians in the past, but on the other it takes note of the hopeful signs of re-union in our own day. To this end, considerable space has been devoted to the sincere efforts of other Christian bodies to make Christ known and loved in India; a truer understanding of them can only make Catholics intensify their quest for re-union. But at the same time some of the basic differences that separate us from each other have also been clearly stated. For true re-union cannot result from merely human bargaining; it consists first and foremost in all Christians identifying themselves with the mind of Christ as communicated by him to the Apostles and transmitted by these to the Church. Knowledge of the differences will serve as a guide to the questions which demand special study in this regard.

In the fifth century there occurred two divisions in the Church which have lasted till our own days, and closely concern the history of Christianity in India. The first of these was caused by Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, who taught that Christ was just a man in whom God dwelt in a special way. The second was caused by Eutyches, a clergyman of Constantinople, who held that though Christ was God he was not truly man. The latter view, called Monophysitism, was adopted by a section of the Patriarchate of Antioch whose control extended over the Church of Persia.

In the sixth century the Monophysites were firmly organised by Bishop Jacob Baradai, and hence their name 'Jacobites'. But before that, the Persian Church had broken away from Antioch. For Antioch formed part of the Byzantine Empire, which was frequently at war with Persia, and that exposed the Christians of Persia to having their loyalty suspected. Whatever the ultimate reason, at the end of the fifth century the Church of Persia made itself autonomous by establishing its own Patriarchate at

Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and adopted Nestorianism in opposition to the Monophysitism of Antioch.

I

Christianity Comes to India

In the sixth century we have from the Alexandrian traveller Cosmas Indicopleustes the first unequivocal reference to the existence of Christians in Kerala, and at Kalayan near Bombay. Several Christian writers of the fourth century say that St. Thomas, one of the original disciples of Jesus, preached the Gospel in India. Their references to conditions in India, brief and vague though they are, sometimes make it clear that they have our India in mind. There is also the Indian tradition, attested in the Middle Ages by Marco Polo and some Franciscan friars, that a church on the East Coast was the tomb of the apostle St. Thomas, so that the indigenous Christians called themselves after him. At any rate, Christianity was already established in India by the time of Cosmas Indicopleustes, and the St. Thomas tradition indicates that its origin went further back, for it was precisely a characteristic tendency of early Christian Churches to claim apostolic origin. A Syriac text of the early third century actually speaks of St. Thomas's apostolate in the land of King Gundaphor and of his death in the land of King Misdai. Numismatic finds in North-West India have now revealed the existence of the Sáka king Gondopharnes A. D. 19—45. Several scholars see in this a strong argument to prove that St. Thomas did in fact come to India.

Our information about these Christians is very scanty. They received their bishops from Chaldea, their liturgical language was Syriac, and their sacred texts embodied the doctrine of the Chaldean Church. They were reinforced on a few occasions by immigrants from the Middle East, but at the same time that gave rise to new social divisions. They held an influential position by their control of the pepper trade, and in course of time by their becoming suppliers of loyal soldiers to the king of Cochin. The Hindu kings made them grants of land and conferred privileges on their leaders. Under the influence of their Hindu environment, caste distinctions came to be emphasized to the extent of setting up separate churches for certain castes. According to the Synod of Diamper (1599), they even adopted the idea of transmigration and the view that each one must be faithful to the religion of his birth.

II

India Meets the Latin Church

The friars who came to India in the Middle Ages represent the first meeting between India and the Latin Church that we know of for certain. Four of them, who were actually on their way to China, met their death

at Thana in the neighbourhood of Bombay in 1321. As a result of the campaigns of Ala-ud-din Khalji (1296—1316) Bombay was then included in the Muslim empire of Delhi. The friars had to appear in court as witnesses in a private quarrel, and were questioned directly about their religion. It was an age still far from that respect for another's personal sincerity which has gradually come to be the mark of culture. They replied according to their honest conviction, which was hurtful to Muslim sentiment; and, equally according to his honest conviction, the judge sentenced them to death.

With them had come the Dominican Jourdain Catalani de Séverac, who was not on the scene at the time of the tragedy. On his return to Thana, he was permitted to gather the remains of his companions. He remained on to preach on the West Coast, from Gujarat to Kerala. Neither the Hindu nor the Muslim authorities appear to have put obstacles in his way, and he found the response of non-Christians as well as local Christians encouraging. He returned to Europe in 1328 to give an account of his experiences, and such was the impression made in Avignon, which was then the seat of the Papacy, that Pope John XXII created the bishopric of Quilon with Friar Jourdain as bishop. Quilon was thus the first Latin bishopric of India. However matters ended there, and we do not even know whether Friar Jourdain ever occupied his see.

As for the Syrian Christians of Kerala, though some of the Latin friars just mentioned moved in their midst and were welcomed hospitably by them they failed to record the presence of any bishop. When in 1490 bishops were sent from Chaldea, we learn that Kerala had seen no bishop for a long time. Indeed, as a result of a change in the attitude of the Mongol rulers of Persia, the Chaldean Church had previous to this passed through a period of great trials, which must have prevented it from attending to the needs of India. In 1504 one of these recently arrived Chaldean bishops informed his Patriarch that 'the Franks our brethren' had arrived on the West Coast of India and had established themselves at Cannanore.

III

The Epoch of St. Francis Xavier

With the arrival of the Portuguese — for it is to them that the bishop referred — begins a new chapter in the history of Indian Christianity. Within fifty years of their appearance, by agreement with the local rulers or by conquest, they established footholds along the Indian coastline, the most important of these being Goa which in 1530 became the capital of Portugal's eastern empire. Thereafter the Portuguese settled down to a policy of maintaining their acquired positions, renouncing all territorial extension at the expense of peace.

In accordance with the principles of the *Padroado*, in areas of

Portuguese sovereignty temples and mosques were pulled down; laws were passed severely forbidding public non-Christian worship and protecting those who became Christians from the social disabilities they would incur under Hindu law; it was laid down that Christians should be preferred in Government appointments; at certain periods Hindu intellectuals were here and there obliged to attend religious discussions; and the Inquisition was established at Goa in 1560 in order to prevent deviation in doctrine among Christians. But all this does not explain sufficiently the movement towards Christianity. This was mainly due to the preaching and charity of the evangelists, foremost among whom was Francis Xavier. By his holiness, kindness towards the poor in their difficulties, and care in providing for the continuous instruction of the Christians, Xavier became the inspiration and model of those who came after him. We have a touching illustration of the effect of Christ's message in the person of an old Hindu woman of Goa who in 1564 at the approach of death sent for a priest and asked for baptism. When questioned as to who had suggested it to her, she replied that through good health and bad she had constantly invoked the names of Jesus and his Mother, and now felt their irresistible promptings in her heart. The contemporary account which has preserved this episode concludes: "We have daily many such examples, which manifestly show how God has care of his chosen ones." It is also to be noted that Xavier accepted on behalf of the Jesuit Order to which he belonged, the charge of a seminary at Goa for training Indian boys to the priesthood. Four Religious Orders, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Jesuits, and the Augustinians played a part in establishing the Catholic Church in India in this period. The Franciscans for a time conducted a seminary for Syrian Christian boys at Cranganore.

Special significance attaches to the Portuguese layman Miguel Vaz, who was versed in Canon Law and from 1532 till his death in 1547 filled the post of Vicar General of the diocese of Goa, which then stretched from the Cape of Good Hope to Indonesia and Japan. No doubt he contributed to the demolition of temples in the Goa Islands in 1540. But we also learn that when he died, Hindus and Christians lamented that they had lost their best friend. The reason is that he incessantly strove to ensure social justice by protecting the fisherfolk of Tuticorin against the unjust demands of Portuguese captains, by protesting against the custom of forced labour, by advocating the abolition of monetary fines, since they meant a great hardship for the poor, by insisting that prison conditions should conform to standards of sanitation, and by obtaining for Hindu wives and daughters a share in the property of a man dying without a male heir, since according to Indian custom women could not inherit. This little known lay Vicar General was therefore a pioneer of Indian social reform.

IV

Under the Mughals

Beyond the Portuguese coastal enclaves there lay the Mughal Empire, the Muslim Sultanates of the Deccan and the Hindu Kingdoms of the South. The opportunity for Christianity to enter the heart of the Mughal Empire under Portuguese influence was provided by the religious curiosity of Emperor Akbar (1556—1605), who in 1579 requested priests from Goa saying, "I wish to learn the Law, and what is best and most perfect in it". Jesuits were sent, and over the years small churches and Christian communities sprang up at Lahore, Agra, Patna and Ahmedabad. Among the Jesuits who moved in the circle of the Moghul court, Jerome Xavier, grand-nephew of St. Francis, has to be singled out for mention. At Akbar's own request he learnt Persian, which was the literary language of the Mughal Empire, and, with native help, produced a life of Christ which he dedicated to the Emperor. He also brought out a Persian translation of the psalms. From Franciscan sources we learn that that Order laboured at Agra, Surat, Raichur, Tanjore and even entered Central India in the company of the Christian contingent serving under the Maratha flag. The Augustinians laboured in or near the city of Golconda.

Mughal policy towards Christianity depended very much on how strictly the Emperor adhered to orthodox Islam, but at the same time the Emperor could not disregard the strength of orthodox Islam if he wished to avoid civil dissensions. Thus Akbar, though personally on friendly terms with the Jesuits, maintained throughout an attitude of benevolent reserve. When he accorded permission to build a church first at Lahore (c. 1595) and then at Agra (c. 1603), on both occasions it was due to the intervention of Prince Salim, who was to succeed Akbar as Emperor Jahangir. Again, Akbar indeed expressed by word of mouth as early as 1580 his willingness to see Christianity preached; but written permission to do so was given only in 1602, and even then only at the request of a friendly noble. Akbar himself summed up the result of this combination of reserve and benevolence when he told Jerome Xavier that, because of it, Christian could now profess their faith in Christ's divinity "in all security and without danger".

Jahangir (1605—1627), though devoid of his father's intellectual curiosity, continued the policy of benevolent reserve, with the exception of the years 1613—1615, when strained relations between the Empire and the Portuguese brought forth measures against the Christian establishments at Lahore, Agra, and Ahmedabad. Emperor Shah Jahan (1627—1658) was a stricter Muslim than his two predecessors. Accordingly, a justified punitive expedition against the Portuguese settlement at Hugli became the occasion for subjecting Christian captives to sufferings in order to make them change over to Islam. At the same time it was forbidden to preach Christianity to Muslims. To that, Emperor Aurangzeb

(1658—1707), whose orthodoxy was stricter than that of Shah Jahan, added in 1679 the 'jizya', a capitation tax imposed on all non-Muslim adult males. At the request of the Portuguese Viceroy, the Emperor in 1686 granted relief to the Christians throughout the empire, but his subordinates restricted the concession to Agra alone.

V

In the Hindu Kingdoms

In the far South, the Jesuit Roberto de Nobili renounced all Portuguese protection and established himself at the Hindu university centre of Madurai. He lived like a sannyasi in an āśram, mastered Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, and made an effort to understand Hindu thought and customs. He became convinced that caste rules and many domestic ceremonies were compatible with Christianity. This sympathetic approach to Hindu culture gradually led many Brahmins to respond by seeking to know his religious message. Other members of the intelligentsia from time to time created difficulties for him, but on the whole the Nayaks of Madurai maintained an attitude of benevolence. More serious was the opposition from within the Church. However, in the matter of the specific points in debate, de Nobili's method was approved by the Pope.

And so at Madurai there sprang up a Christian community whose social habits in the main continued to be those of their ancestors, and whose European priests divided themselves along lines prevailing among the Hindu priesthood. From Madurai the movement spread to Tiruchirapalli, Salem, Tanjore and Mysore. De Nobili has been variously judged by historians. However, his own disciples appreciated him for having taught them to make allowance for European habits which used to repel them. He is therefore not without social significance in Indian history. For, more than others before him, he came to learn, and thereby showed that cultured Indians would reciprocate understanding with understanding.

Among the successors of de Nobili were John de Britto and Constantius Beschi. Britto came in 1673 and evangelized the regions of Tanjore and Ramnad. In 1693 a feudatory of the Raja of Ramnad proved the sincerity of his desire to become a Christian by conforming to the Christian teaching on monogamy. Britto, who had already consulted his Christians and found them prepared to face the consequences of their obligation to admit to their fellowship one who sincerely desired to be a Christian, thereupon baptised him. One of the women dismissed was the niece of the Raja himself, who in anger subjected some Christians to torture and had Britto executed. The impression Britto made on his people is touchingly illustrated by an incident which took place in the Andhra country about the year 1735. It was a time of dire famine, and a rich Hindu offered help to the Christians if they would give up their Faith. One of these had been baptised by John de Britto, and he now

replied to the man: "I consider your invitation a gross insult. We... shall rather die today, if that must be, than accept your rice... The great man who baptised me has been martyred by order of an Indian prince. Happy should I be if, together with my family, I could share that lot with my father in Jesus Christ."

Beschi came to India in 1710 and till his death in 1747 ministered most of the time to the Christians of Tamilnad. It was no easy task, for the region was then the battleground of Hindu chiefs and Muslim nobles, and not even places of worship were safe from the warring armies. Beschi secured the favour of the Muslim nobles, so much so that later a legend grew up that he had been made a *diwan* or chief minister by one of them. He mastered Tamil and wrote a classic work called *Thembavani*, with St. Joseph for its hero. He also composed a dictionary and grammars of Tamil. He is therefore ranked high in the history of Tamil literature.

In 1674 the French established a settlement at Pondicherry, which was at that time included in the Sultanate of Bijapur. From here French Jesuits moved forward to preach in the area then known as the Carnatic, comprising the region where the present States of Madras, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore border on each other. Following de Nobili's school, they modelled their lives on that of Brahmin sannyasis, and in the course of their journeyings through areas in which there were no Christians they experienced the hospitality of Hindu temples and Hindu homes. Their message met with a fair response, so that by 1733 there were 10 000 Christians and sixteen churches. Here and there influential Hindus generously stood by the Christians when there were signs of trouble. One of these was the Raja of Anantapur who even declared his wish to become a Christian had it not been for fear of losing his caste.

To the south of Goa lies the coastal tract of Kanara. After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire (1565), the Nayaks of Ikkeri in the Western Ghats made themselves independent and gradually extended their sway over this area. The Portuguese here possessed some trading ports and controlled the seas. The Nayaks therefore needed to be on good terms with the Portuguese in the interests of their maritime commerce. But the Portuguese too stood in need of the Nayaks, for Kanara supplied them with rice for Goa and wood for their navy. The establishment of the Catholic Church in Kanara seems to have been due in the first instance to emigration from Goa, which was encouraged by the Portuguese since that meant there would grow up in the region a population bound to Goa by ties of kinship. The Nayaks also welcomed the immigrants because they saw them applying themselves industriously to cultivation. Numbers of the Tulu speaking people of the region also entered the Church. There were moments when relations between the Nayaks and the Portuguese were strained, and consequently the Christians must have been eyed with disfavour. But on the whole, the Christians remained grateful to the Nayaks, who gave them freedom to build their churches,

demanding in return only that none should be made a Christian against his will — a demand that was perfectly in accord with the Christian belief that faith in Jesus Christ must be a free act.

VI

Syrians and Latins

There remain the ancient Christians of Kerala. Their meeting with the Catholic Church through Lisbon is a subject of much controversy. Throughout the greater part of the sixteenth century they welcomed the Latin priests in their midst in the same way as they had the friars of the Middle Ages. They accepted their ministrations, and were even willing to let them train their priests. But all the while, in spite of the Pope's wish that they should continue to receive bishops from Chaldea without any Portuguese interference, it was the steady policy of Lisbon and Goa to claim for the Crown in virtue of Padroado the right to appoint their bishops. A study of their liturgical texts resulted in the charge that they contained doctrinal errors. The Archbishop of Goa, Aleixo de Menezes, personally visited Kerala in 1599, and at the Synod of Diamper secured from the Syrians a promise under oath to accept a bishop only from the Pope. They received in succession several Jesuit bishops, and relations between these and the Syrian clergy were strained from time to time. At length in 1653, by what has come to be known as the Coonen Cross Revolt, the Syrians broke with the Jesuits. But many wished to continue as members of the Catholic Church, and so the Pope independently of the Portuguese sent them a Carmelite ecclesiastical superior. But a section remained separated, and in 1663 entered into union with the Jacobite Church of Antioch which had, like the Nestorians, separated itself from the Catholic Church in the fifth century.

VII

The Coming of the Protestants

In the meantime Western Europe had experienced an upheaval similar to that which had given rise to Nestorians and Monophysites centuries before in the East, and which was to be of greater consequence to India than the earlier divisions. In Europe there was a long period of strife between Protestants and Catholics, till the conviction emerged that mutual toleration was the only alternative to continued unrest. The strife in a measure affected India, for in the latter half of the seventeenth century the Dutch Calvinists dislodged the Portuguese from Malabar and obliged the European Catholic priests to leave. It is this that afforded a section of the Syrian Christians the opportunity of establishing a link with the Jacobite Church of Antioch. Between the English Protestants and Catholics there was better understanding at times, even though in

England itself Catholics were subject to severe disabilities. Thus, when in 1610 Emperor Jahangir for reasons of political expediency temporarily permitted three of his nephews to be brought up as Catholics, the English ambassador William Hawkins, a Protestant, rode at the head of the baptismal procession carrying aloft the flag of St. George.

It was not till the end of the seventeenth century that the Protestant bodies experienced the impulse to propagate their particular beliefs. At this time, two missionary associations, the *Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge* (1698) and the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* (1701), came into existence within the Anglican Communion. Others followed at the end of the eighteenth century among different Protestant bodies both in Europe and America. But the British *East India Company* decidedly opposed the propagation of Christianity in its territories for fear it would create unrest among Indians. So it was in the Danish settlement of Tranquebar, on the South-East Coast, that the Protestant effort began with the arrival in 1706 of two Danish Lutherans, of whom Bartholomew Ziegenbalg was one. His name deserves to be singled out, because owing to his gift for languages he was able to announce the Christian message in Tamil. We have seen how Jerome Xavier rendered the psalms into Persian. But on the whole the Catholic Church was not too particular about placing alone the text of the Bible in the hands of her members. Instead she emphasized the translation and teaching of the catechism, in which the main articles of belief and norms of conduct are set forth briefly in an organised form. In contrast to that, Ziegenbalg, believing as he did that the text of the Bible alone is the source of the Christian faith, thought it his immediate duty to translate the Bible into Tamil, and it was one of the chief concerns of the Protestant evangelists after him to make the Christian Scriptures available to Indians in their own languages. Today the Churches possess a number of presses which continue to produce Christian literature in Indian languages as well as in English.

From Tranquebar the work extended to Tanjore, Tiruchirapalli and Palamcottah. Orphanages and free schools were established, and, before long, Indian ministers were ordained. The mission's most flourishing period was between 1750 and 1798, when C. F. Schwartz by his transparent sincerity and spirit of self-sacrifice won respect for the Christian name. Haidar Ali the ruler of Mysore, on being told at one time of the intentions of the English to enter into negotiations with him, is reported to have said of Schwartz, "Let them send me the Christian, he will not deceive me".

English Protestant apostolate may be said to date from 1800 when, because of the East India Company's continued opposition to the preaching of the Gospel, a small band of Englishmen started a mission centre in the Danish settlement of Serampore in Bengal. Among them William Carey stands out by his spirit of enterprise and wide vision. "Expect great things of God, attempt great things for God", was his

high-souled motto. Because of his knowledge of Bengali he was in 1801 appointed to teach that language at the College of Fort William, founded just then by the Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, to train European officials. Pandits of the regional languages were brought here from all parts of India. The presence of all this talent enabled Carey, who had already published his Bengali translation of the New Testament, to set afoot translations of the Bible into Persian, Panjabi, Marathi, Oriya, Telugu and Kanarese. In 1819 the Serampore College was opened where Indians could widen their horizon by joining the knowledge of Western science to that of classical Indian culture, and where Indian Christians could prepare themselves for the ministry and for leadership by acquiring the necessary secular and religious culture. Through his letters Carey communicated his enthusiasm to people not only in England but also in the United States. And it was due to him that the first American missionary association, the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, came into existence in 1810.

In 1813 the British Parliament, disregarding the fears of unrest, reversed the East India Company's policy and established the Anglican Church in India by appointing a bishop at Calcutta and an archdeacon at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. Parliament also obliged the Company to permit persons wishing to preach the Gospel to enter the country. The result was that the centre of Serampore extended its activities to Central and North India, and other Protestant bodies not only from England but also from Europe and America established themselves in various parts of India: American Presbyterians in the Panjab and Uttar Pradesh, German Lutherans in Bihar and Tamilnad, American Congregationalists in Maharashtra and Tamilnad, Irish Presbyterians in Gujarat, American Baptists in Assam and Andhra Pradesh, American Lutherans in Andhra Pradesh, the Swiss *Basel Mission* in South Kanara, the *Church Missionary Society* (Anglican) in Kerala.

Among the better known evangelists of this period is the Scotsman Alexander Duff. Arriving in Calcutta in 1830, he was befriended by Carey, who also encouraged him to found a school with English as the medium of instruction. The plan received the support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, one of the makers of modern India. The willingness with which Indians availed themselves of this opportunity of giving English education to their children is said to have decisively influenced the Government when in 1835 it espoused the cause of English education. Thus Duff contributed towards giving this multi-lingual country what in the latter day has come to be called its 'link language'. But Duff was not interested in secular education for its own sake; for him it was a means of spreading the message of Jesus. Hence, Bible classes were made obligatory at all levels. Duff's lead was taken up by other Protestants in Bombay and Madras, which witnessed the establishment of the institutions which later developed into the Wilson College and the Christian College

respectively. When the need for rest obliged Duff to go on leave in 1850, he took the opportunity to visit the United States and Canada and promoted there interest in evangelization.

The response to Christ's message has been particularly wide among the tribes of Assam and Central India, and among the socially weaker groups of Andhra Pradesh. American Baptists first entered Assam in 1836, in the hope of entering China from there. But the attempt to establish the Church here had to be given up for the moment, and was resumed only in 1905. The variety of dialects presented a challenge which was boldly taken up, and very soon schools were started and books printed. The German Lutherans commenced evangelization in Chota Nagpur in 1844, and the extent to which Christ's appeal fell on willing ears may be estimated from the fact that at the turn of the nineteenth century the membership of their Church, including those who were preparing for baptism, stood at well beyond 100 000. And this, in spite of considerable numbers having left to unite themselves with the Catholic Church. The American Baptist evangelization of Andhra Pradesh where the language spoken is Telugu, dates from 1840, when a centre was established at Nellore. The big movement towards Christianity began first among the weavers and leather workers in 1870, so that in the beginning of the twentieth century their Church numbered 60 000 communicants. The birth in 1891 of an Indian missionary association, the *Telugu Baptist Convention*, is evidence of the vitality of this Church. The association soon issued Christian publications at its own cost, and even sent forth evangelists to the Telugu indentured labourers of Natal.

The coming of the *Church Missionary Society* to Kerala has an interest of its own. It will be remembered that after the Coonen Cross revolt a section of the ancient Christians entered into union with the Jacobite Church of Antioch. Now the *Church Missionary Society* entered Kerala in 1816 first of all in order to associate itself with the Jacobites. It expressly instructed its evangelists just to explain the Scriptures without openly seeking to change the beliefs and liturgy of the Jacobites. However, the British Resident Colonel Munro (1810—1819), who had taken the initiative in inviting the Society to Kerala, did aim at bringing the Jacobites into the Anglican Communion. The Jacobite bishops were cautious, but welcomed Anglican help and even permitted the Society to take charge of a new seminary of theirs. But relations became strained when an attempt was made in 1818 to introduce the Anglican liturgy. Eventually in 1837 the majority of the Jacobites, following the lead of their bishop Mar Dionysios IV (1825—1855), officially broke with the Anglicans. A minority however now formally entered into the Anglican Communion.

Anglican influence continued even after the break, for several of the Jacobite clergy and laity retained what they had learnt from the *Church Missionary Society*. They found a leader in a priest called Abraham

Malpan who employed a liturgy revised in accordance with Anglican ideas. He and his associates were therefore excommunicated by Mar Dionysios. However, he secured the consecration of a nephew of his as bishop by the Patriarch of Antioch. With the support of the Government the new bishop established himself as the head of the Jacobites of Kerala, and in 1868 he consecrated a coadjutor bishop with the title of Mar Thomas Athanasios. However, those who were opposed to the changes in their turn appealed to the Patriarch of Antioch, who personally visited India in 1875 and convoked a synod in which those who favoured Anglican ideas were not represented. In 1877 Mar Thomas became the head of the anglicanizing group, which separated itself from the Jacobites and constituted itself into the Mar Thoma Syrian Church.

VIII

Troubles Within

Meanwhile the Catholic Church was passing through a troubled period, for Portugal's ecclesiastical policy opposed any change which would limit the wide claims made on behalf of the Crown in the name of Padroado — the privilege accorded by the Popes in the age of discovery. But in the meantime, in the wake of the religious divisions in the West, the Papacy had emerged from the Tridentine Reform as more than ever the effective centre of the Catholic Church. It followed from this that the Papacy itself should now assume direction of the Churches of the East and of evangelization. For this purpose the *Propaganda* was set up in 1622. But Portugal's ecclesiastical policy failed to take note of this development, and opposed Rome when in 1637 it appointed the Goan priest, Matheus de Castro, Vicar-Apostolic of the area covered by the Deccan Sultanates. The difference between a bishop and a vicar-apostolic is that a bishop rules in his own name, whereas a vicar-apostolic is a person with episcopal powers but acting as a delegate of the Pope. This device technically respected Portugal's claim that no new bishopric could be created except under the Padroado system, but at the same time it enabled the Pope as Supreme Pastor to act independently for the good of the Church. Sections of Goan Catholics, too, failed to understand this development in the position of the Papacy and refused to acknowledge the authority of ecclesiastical superiors appointed by Rome. This led to unedifying divisions, strifes over the possession of churches, and appeals to courts of law. Rome on its part followed up Matheus de Castro's appointment of 1637 by setting up vicariates apostolic all over India.

Finally in 1886 Portuguese ecclesiastical policy accepted Rome's action, and agreed to have the rights of Padroado confined to the dioceses of Goa, Cochin, Mylapore and Daman — the only four then extant out of those that had been set up at Padroado initiative, since that for the Syrian Christians became extinct after the Coonen Cross Revolt. After India

became independent there was another agreement in 1950 by which Portugal relinquished its Padroado claims over Cochin and Mylapore, retaining only Goa and Daman, which had been constituted into one diocese in 1927. After Goa's merger with the Indian Union in 1962, the Archbishop of Goa left for Portugal, and the diocese is actually ruled by his Auxiliary Bishop. We have seen how in the past good sense at length prevailed; it will surely do so again.

There was also a revival of the dispute of de Nobili's days. The Jesuits who carried on his tradition and established the Church in Salem, Tanjore, Mysore, and the Carnatic, had adapted the liturgy to Indian etiquette and permitted usages not envisaged in the approval that had been granted by the Pope to de Nobili. In 1704 the papal legate, Mgr. Maillard de Tournon, who was on his way to China to inquire into the affairs of the Church there, halted at Pondicherry and issued an order forbidding these practices. The Jesuits appealed to the Popes, who approved at first conditionally, and then in 1744 definitively, Tournon's order. The dispute disturbed the Christians for whom the impugned practices were a matter of caste and social etiquette, and possibly even caused some to dissociate themselves from the Church.

Next, the Jesuits became the object of the combined attack of the Governments of France, Spain, and Portugal, in whose affairs they had been not seldom involved as spiritual advisers. They were expelled from Portuguese territories in 1759, and at the insistence of these three Powers the Pope suppressed the Order altogether in 1773. Portugal's action of 1759 meant their departure from Portuguese areas in India, and the papal suppression of 1773 meant that they could no longer continue evangelization corporately in other parts of the country. Diocesan priests from Goa replaced them specially in Portuguese areas. By commission of the Pope, the *Foreign Missions Society of Paris* took their place in the South, and the Carmelites and Capuchins in the North. However, a Carmelite report of the end of the eighteenth century painfully shows that many churches were left without pastors. In the South some of the Catholics turned to Schwartz and the Lutherans of Tranquebar in their need.

Lastly, the death of Haidar Ali of Mysore (1782) and the accession of his son Tipu brought great trial for the Christians. In the wars between the English and Mysore, some Christians of Kanara had helped the English with provisions. Haidar had contented himself with punishing some of them. But Tipu in 1784 expelled the priests, did damage to churches, and deported about seventy thousand Christians from Kanara and other parts of his kingdom to Seringapatam. The men were required to profess Islam and submit to circumcision. A large number seem to have done so without any outward protest. But they continued to meet in secret for Christian worship, and when later they found themselves free they expressed bitter regret at their conduct declaring that, deprived as they were of spiritual guidance, they had acted out of ignorance. However

when the English troops, now joined by the Marathas and the Nizam, once more advanced against Mysore in 1789, Tipu sought to conciliate the Christians and even wrote to the Viceroy of Goa asking that the priests should return to Kanara and promising to rebuild the churches. But the very next year Tipu's troops irrupted into Travancore, whose Hindu ruler had allied himself with the English. Jacobite and Catholic churches alike were destroyed and adult Christians subjected to circumcision.

After the fall of Tipu in 1799 the Abbé J. A. Dubois of the *Paris Foreign Missions Society* settled the Christians in agricultural colonies. He also earned for himself a place in India's social history by persuading the people to submit to vaccination against small-pox. In the manner of de Nobili he lived like an Indian ascetic, and the Hindus reciprocated by admitting him freely into their homes. He recorded his observations of Hindu manners and customs in a book which is still regarded as a valuable source of information by indologists. It must however be added that at the end of a 30 years' sojourn the Abbé came to rather pessimistic conclusions about the future of Christianity in the country.

IX

In the Footsteps of the Good Samaritan

We have seen how in the early nineteenth century the British Parliament reversed the East India Company's policy and adopted the principle of giving India the opportunity to hear the message of Jesus. That enabled other Catholic associations to take up evangelization alongside the Carmelites, the Capuchins, and the *Foreign Missions Society of Paris*, who had borne the burden since the eighteenth century. Among the newcomers were the Jesuits, whose Order was restored by the Pope in 1814. Similar to the mass movements towards the Protestant Churches there occurred one towards the Catholic Church in Chota Nagpur. The Belgian Jesuits entered here in 1869, but nothing remarkable happened till the arrival of Father Constant Lievens in 1885. It was some Indian Lutherans who first approached him for help in their difficulties. The Father decided that the best remedy was to appeal to the courts of law for redress of what he believed to be injustices. His willingness to help and his success in the courts prompted a number of Lutherans to seek union with the Catholic Church. Desire to be similarly helped soon moved large numbers of non-Christians to ask for admission into the Church, so that by the end of 1889 the Catholics numbered 80 000. The encouragement given by Lord Curzon's Government in 1904 to cooperative credit societies as a means of freeing the peasantry from the money-lender was availed of to launch a *Cooperative Credit Society*, a *Cooperative Stores Society*, and a *Grain Savings Bank*. These institutions enabled the people to improve their condition through their own thrift and industry.

A rapid sketch such as this can only give a passing hint of the witness, heroic for all its unobtrusiveness, of Christian women. They comprise those who renounced family ties, as well as those who did not. The former class brings to one's mind Catholic nuns, but similar generosity has not been lacking in the Protestant Churches. The first nuns in India were those established at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Goa by Archbishop Aleixo de Menezes. He built for them the monastery of St. Monica, by which name they came to be known. In the middle of the eighteenth century was established at Pondicherry the *Congregation of St. Aloysius Gonzaga*, which still exists and devotes itself to education of children and the care of homeless girls. Among the women who have promoted evangelization without renouncing family ties, one thinks in the first place of the wives of the many Protestant evangelists. It was often through them that Indian women first gained access to the message of Jesus. Especially by their patience and understanding in relieving distress specially, all these Christian women have been embodiments of Christ's teaching about the Good Samaritan.

Mention of the Good Samaritan calls for at least a brief reference to the Christian hospitals, dispensaries and homes for those who suffer from afflictions which render them unwanted by their own families. The first hospital for Indians, where Western surgery was applied, was established in Goa about 1542 and put in charge of the Jesuits. Appreciation of this evangelical activity was not limited to Goa, so that when later in the century a Bijapur army invaded Goa it left the hospital intact. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century the Churches have increasingly witnessed to Jesus' healing sympathy towards his fellow-men by multiplying such institutions. The more outstanding of them are the Protestant institutions at Ludhiana, Miraj, Vellore, and the Tuberculosis Sanatorium at Arogyavaram.

Meanwhile the rising of 1857, till recently known as the Sepoy Mutiny, had revived the controversy as to the wisdom of permitting evangelization. The soldiers of the Bengal army in seeking to throw off British control killed some European evangelists and Indian Christians. To the latter, choice was sometimes offered between renunciation of Jesus Christ and death. Some took this as proof that fear of the spread of Christianity was the cause of the rising. John Lawrence, who as Chief Commissioner of the Panjab had endeared himself to the people, questioned the argument and expressed his considered opinion as follows: "Christian things done in a Christian way will never . . . alienate . . . It is when unchristian things are done in the name of Christianity, or when Christian things are done in an unchristian way, that mischief and danger are occasioned." In the midst of the disturbance other European evangelists lived unmolested among the people without any British protection, and an English eye-witness has recorded that "if any Europeans are trusted, the missionaries are at present." There was no return to the early days of the *East India*

Company, but there was a firm assurance from Queen Victoria that "We disclaim alike the Right and the Desire to impose Our convictions on any of Our subjects".

X

Towards Reunion

The twentieth century is characterised among the Protestant Churches by a movement towards unity, born of the conviction that only through union can Christians witness adequately to Christ. As the Anglican Bishop of Bombay, H. A. Douglas (1868—1876) said, "... our divisions are not only our worst scandal, but our deadening weakness". And he prayed for an end to "that spirit of division and self-will which is not from above". Thus came into existence the *National Christian Council* which fosters discussion and mutual sharing of experience through the *National Christian Council Review*. This has led to increasing practical cooperation, and institutions like the Christian Medical College at Vellore, financed by several bodies, are the result of it. But there is more than that. This drawing closer together of the Protestant bodies is part of a world (ecumenical) movement for healing divisions among Christians, and in India it has actually led to the formation of two unified Churches: the *Church of South India* and the *United Church of North India*. Both began as unions of bodies which do not admit the authority and ministry of bishops (Presbyterians and Congregationalists), but the former in 1947 went a step beyond and admitted Anglicans as well, on the understanding that ministers of the constituent bodies can conduct services anywhere, unless objected to by the local congregation.

The Catholic Church welcomes the movement for healing divisions, but sees no way of entering into organic union with bodies which do not share with it the original Christian conviction that the unity of the Church is the fruit of the unreserved acceptance of the principles of Christian fellowship deriving from Christ, not the result of human compromise. The appreciation of this position by members of the Jacobite section of the ancient Christians of Kerala has since 1930 led to the re-union of many of them with the Catholic Church. In that year their bishop Mar Ivanios gave the lead, and today the uniats exceed 90 000. At the same time the various dioceses have become more closely knit through the *Catholic Bishops' Conference* of India, established in 1944, which ensures unity of action on common issues, St. John's Medical College at Bangalore being a tangible manifestation of such cooperative effort. On the other hand the Church's understanding of the nature of Christian fellowship — she has always held that the baptism of the various Christian bodies, when duly administered, is valid — has permitted her to participate in joint meetings with Protestants and others in a common prayer for unity.

XI

National and Universal

At the time of the advent of the Portuguese, Christianity was mainly confined to Kerala and counted about 30 000 families. We have seen how since then West European and American Christians promoted the spread of the message of Jesus and organised and directed Churches, so that today Christians number about 10 000 000. That this was not unconnected with Western colonialism will be readily admitted. But they also showed concern, as the example of Francis Xavier on the Catholic side and that of Ziegenbalg on the Protestant side shows, for the formation of Indian ministers. The latest developments, marked by the devolving of responsibility for Church affairs on Indians, were no doubt hastened by the country's independence, but it would be ungenerous not to see in these developments the fruit of the long and patient labour of Western Christians. Indeed the process had begun some time before independence, for the first Indian Catholic Latin bishop was created in 1923 in the person of Mgr. Tiburtius Roche of Tuticorin, and the Protestant Churches were moving in the same direction about the same time. In the Catholic Church this process has further brought with it the appointment of Mgr. Valerian Gracias as the first Indian Cardinal. There is now no more room for the charge that Indians are just subordinate partners in the Christian fellowship; and ministers from abroad are to Indians not foreigners but their equals and companions in bearing witness to Jesus' gift of universal divine fellowship to mankind. The almost universal goodwill manifested towards Pope Paul VI, when at the invitation of the Indian Government he attended the XXXVIII International Eucharistic Congress at Bombay in 1964, was expressive of the country's refusal to be suspicious of Jesus and his message, thus conclusively belying the fears of some early British administrators.

A historical survey of this kind will not be complete unless something is said of the way in which India and Christianity have mutually influenced each other. India has been impressed by the devotedness and self-sacrifice with which the Churches have witnessed to Christ; so much so that when a task demands exceptional effort, non-Christian leaders have been known to issue a call for it to be taken up with 'missionary zeal'. There is appreciation of the ministry of healing through the numerous Christian hospitals and dispensaries; and the example of Christian women taking to the exacting profession of nursing has not been without influence on others. It was the Christian concern for the less fortunate, expressed through orphanages and rescue homes and through criticism of caste segregation and customs like widow burning, that influenced the Indian social reform movements of the nineteenth century to establish similar institutions and to eliminate or modify practices that were being questioned. The Christian initiative in the education of women

enabled India to return to what many consider to be her very ancient ideal of woman as the equal and companion of man in social life. Carey's vision of an educated India combining knowledge of its own culture with that of the West found its fulfilment in the rise of the class which guided India to independence, and in the technological revolution which the country began experiencing from the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Christian educational institutions comprise university colleges, high schools, technical and industrial schools. Non-Christians have often paid generous tributes to the efficiency of these institutions and to the discipline they maintain, and this shows that their contribution to the country is particularly valued. All the present vocational training institutions date from the last century, but the Christian concern for preparing people to contribute to their country's economic welfare can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when the Jesuits established in Bombay, in the region of the present Vihar and Pawai Lakes, a colony where training was given in agriculture and dairy farming.

Western evangelists have also made an important contribution to Indian vernaculars. Accustomed to learn languages through systematic study of grammar, with Indian help they devised grammars and composed dictionaries. Tribal dialects which till then lacked a written literature were thereby the chief beneficiaries. This led to a comparative study of the vernaculars, the first example of it being the sixteenth century Portuguese Jesuit Henrique Henriquez who composed a Tamil and a Konkani grammar, and comparing the two languages wrote: "A few words are similar in both languages, but the construction is very much alike; nevertheless, Konkani is the more difficult of the two."

We have earlier seen Mughal policy towards Christians. Truth requires we admit that difficulties have been sometimes experienced by Christians at the hands of Hindu kings and Hindu organisations. But we have also seen the kindness shown them by the Nayaks of Madurai and Ikkeri, while the sympathy shown by individual Hindus to Christian evangelists in distress would make a touching story. Today, the position of religious freedom in the country is at least partly due to Christian influence. The legal profession, trained as it is in the British Common Law tradition, has been influenced by the Christian social philosophy of the Middle Ages in which that tradition has its source. It is the Christian conviction that the Church is in duty bound to bear witness to Jesus, and admit to its fellowship those who are convinced by his appeal. Jesus does not compete with the claims of race and country on men's allegiance; as the Universal Divine Saviour he identifies himself with these particular natural claims and gives them a place in the divine brotherhood of which he is the fountainhead. Those who give their allegiance to him continue therefore to belong to their race and country just as before, so that religious freedom is for them in no wise at variance with the demands of social order. In keeping with this, the new India is a cooperative effort of

equal citizens who respect one another's conscience. This became significantly clear in a test case in Bombay almost on the eve of the XXXVIII International Eucharistic Congress, when the High Court heard a petition seeking an injunction to restrain the Government from extending facilities to the Congress. The Government argued that it had acted exactly as it had done for similar gatherings of Hindus and Buddhists, and the Court rejected the petition.

On a smaller scale, in the field of art the barroque has influenced the architecture of the Hindu temples of Goa.

On the Christian side, the message of Jesus found newer and richer ways of expressing itself through elements of Indian culture. Thus, certain Hindu ceremonies have been given a place in the Christian liturgy. This is so with some of the rites connected with childhood among the ancient Christians of Kerala, the practice of tying the 'tali' round the neck to signify the sacred bond of marriage in Kerala and Tamilnad, the harvest feast in Goa and other places of the West Coast. The literary form of the 'Purana' was employed in the seventeenth century in a few Portuguese areas to convey Christian teaching by a rich use of Indian comparisons and metaphors, and thus arose the earliest Christian Marathi literature, for whose unearthing Christians owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Hindu savant Anant K. Priolkar. The most widely known Purana is that of the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens. De Nobili in his turn utilised Indian logic for the same purpose, while some of the early Christian Tamil poetry ranks among the classics.

In the field painting, Christian themes were given expression through Mughal technique, and more recently through classical Hindu technique. And a charming old wooden miniature of the Child Jesus, sitting pensively cross-legged in Indian fashion, suggests early attempts to do the same in the field of sculpture. Our own days have witnessed here and there the rise of churches in Hindu and Indo-Saracenic style.

Christian devotion expressed itself through Tamil music already in de Nobili's time. Goa witnessed the development of a unique kind of music, which blends Western and Indian elements. And today a special effort is being made to give a larger place to Indian music in Christian worship, and to convey Christian ideas through the 'kirtan', which is a blend of musical composition and dramatic speech. There have also been notable essays at representing biblical episodes through Indian dance. Christmas joy took over the idea of Divali illuminations and, drawing inspiration from the story of the Magi, expressed itself in the lighted star, which has now begun to figure at the windows of Hindu homes during Divali celebrations.

The paradox of the 'aśram' whereby the sage diffuses his message by a life of simplicity retirement and prayer, has found a rightful place in Christian spirituality. It moulded the apostolate of de Nobili, and in our own days it has given rise to Christian monastic establishments and

indigenous Religious Congregations modelled after it. And in Goa there is a charming custom that the youngest child of the family should come forward to give a measure of rice to a person who stands on the doorstep praying for alms, after which the child in turn prays for the person's blessing — perhaps a continuance of the veneration once shown to the wandering ascetic as he went from door to door with his begging bowl, but now deriving a new meaning from Jesus' teaching that in the person of those in need he himself comes to enrich the giver.

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