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BUILDERS OF THE INDIAN CHURCH

PRESENT PROBLEMS IN THE LIGHT OF THE PAST

BY

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PREFACE

THIS is not by any means the book which I intended to write. I embarked on a general history of the Church in India and completed five chapters, but with ceaseless demands for sermons and lectures the larger task became impossible, and eventually this little book emerged. I hope that, such as it is, it will serve to give the reader some idea of the greatness and glory of God's work in India, and to whet his appetite for the book which I still hope some day to write. The historian of the Church in India is constrained over and over again to lay down his pen, and to cry aloud with the Psalmist such words as these: "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. The Lord hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice." But with this note of triumph there is also an undertone of sorrow. The Churches of Europe and America seem never yet to have taken seriously the work of winning the world for Christ. Their efforts have always been inadequate and intermittent. To-day the Church in India is making progress as never before, but it is not yet evident that the men and money needed for its support will be forthcoming from the Churches of the West.

Out of Bondage was planned during a very happy

year of furlough spent at Cambridge. This book has been written during an equally happy year at Oxford. I have tried to weigh again impartially the claims of work at home and work abroad, and on the eve of returning to India for the third time I may place on record my conviction that the needs of the mission field are always far greater than the needs of the Church at home, that no human qualifications, however high, render a man or woman more than adequate for missionary work, that there is no other career which affords such scope for enterprise and creative work, and that in comparison with the slight sacrifice demanded, the reward is great beyond all measuring.

STEPHEN NEILL

St Peter's Hall, Oxford
April 1934

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BUILDERS OF THE INDIAN CHURCH

CHAPTER I

MULTITUDES, MULTITUDES

India and its Church

Who smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever;
Yea, and slew mighty kings: for his mercy endureth for ever;
Sehon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever;
And Og the king of Basan: for his mercy endureth for ever.

THE congregation wonders what it is all about, and when it is going to end. They do seem remote from reality, those historical psalms; yet they have their place in the record of revelation. Israel's religion is Israel's history; prophets and psalmists and teachers turn the eyes of the people back to consider their past, to the days of Moses and Joshua, and the great deliverances which God wrought for them. From history they learn that God is a God of action, bringing great purposes to fulfilment in the world. Brooding upon His doings of old, they come to understand the principles which are to guide God's people in a perplexing present. The great men of the past show by their achievements what God can accomplish through men who are obedient to His will.

Many Christians make the mistake of thinking that revelation ends with the Book of Revelation in the New Testament; they have not learnt to see the continuing operation of God's spirit in the world, still bringing great plans to fulfilment

through the men of His choice, still leading mankind towards a fuller knowledge of Himself. The picture gallery of the heroes of the Church does not end with prophets and apostles; through all the centuries it has been constantly enriched. The golden succession passes on from Paul and Peter to Origen and Athanasius, to Benedict and Augustine of Canterbury, to Francis and to Raymond Lull, to Xavier and Matthew Ricci, to Zinzendorf and John Wesley, to Canon Apolo and Sadhu Sundar Singh. Rightly read, the story of the Church is full of encouragement in its witness to the constant working of the power of God among the sons of men.

This book deals only with one corner, but a large corner, of the field which is the world. The surface of India is about a million and a half square miles, mountain and forest and jungle, fertile valley, barren desert, and teeming plain. It is inhabited by three hundred and fifty million people. They speak, according to the linguistic survey, a hundred and seventy-nine languages and more than five hundred dialects. Every stage of civilization is found among them. When the ancient Britons were painting themselves with woad, the sages of India were dealing, in books still memorable, with the profoundest problems of God and the soul; they have their successors in the priests and scholars who still speak among themselves the sacred Sanskrit, a language which was already old when Latin was young. English culture has been added to the ancient traditions of India; in 1933 a Tamil Brahmin was elected Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. In the re-

mote jungles lives a tribe whose people wear no clothes except skirts made of forest leaves. The outcaste knows nothing of the world beyond his village, and beats his drum and clashes cymbals at the time of an eclipse to frighten the dragon which is swallowing the sun.

In almost every corner of the country the Christian Church has gained a footing, and has touched every stratum of society. The Brahmin convert, now a respected minister of the Church, comes to England to important conferences, and delights English congregations by his perfect mastery of the English tongue. Outcaste Christians meet to praise God under the shade of ancient trees, or in a church building put together in a night of poles and palm-leaf mats. The ancient aboriginal peoples have been sought out in the recesses of the mountains and have been won in great numbers into the Church of Christ; peoples and languages unknown by name to well-educated Christians in England have made Him their own. The Khasis in the hills of Assam have a Church of more than eighty thousand, ministered to almost entirely by clergy of their own race and supported by them. When in 1928 the New Testament was completed in the language of the Ao Nagas in the Himalayan border land, we are told that it was warmly welcomed by the Christians, then over eight thousand five hundred in number. The beautiful little church of All Saints, Tho Mund, in the Nilgiri Hills, has been built for the worship of the Toda Christians, drawn from an ancient aboriginal people, numbering less than six hundred in all. There is now a great solid middle

class of Christians all over India, teachers, Government servants, clerks, lawyers, doctors; there are few towns in which there is not at least one Christian family. The Church is increasing rapidly. Apart from natural increase by birth, about a hundred thousand converts are added every year; this means that on an average a convert is baptized every five minutes throughout the year.

The present wonderful progress of the Indian Church has been made possible only by centuries of prayer and effort and suffering in the past. The history divides itself readily into four great periods:

I. Until the end of the fifteenth century the Church lived its life in obscurity. We know that there was a Church in India in the fourth century, possibly much earlier. We get from time to time glimpses of its life and increase. But for the most part, it is impossible to go beyond the uncertainty of conjecture. All that we know without doubt is that the light was never allowed to go out; isolated from all other Christians by the Moslem domination in the near East, the Christians kept their watch and preserved their faith. When at the end of the fifteenth century the Portuguese broke through and contact between India and Europe was restored, the Church in India was waiting to greet them, still, though ignorant, a recognizable part of the living Church of Christ.

II. For the next two centuries the Portuguese were masters of the field. Their missionaries made amazing journeys through the whole country and into the fastnesses of Tibet. But they depended far more than was wise on the power of the secular arm; many of their methods have

been condemned by the wider experience of later times; much of their work was superficial and in course of time has disappeared. They left behind three permanent blocks of Christianity—the Roman section of the Syrian Church on the south-west coast, the fisher Christians of the south-east coast, and south of Bombay the arch-diocese of Goa, even now a Portuguese possession.

III. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the non-Roman Churches entered into the field with the coming of the Danish mission to Tranquebar. The Romans continued their work, but the personnel was now mainly French or Italian. There are some great achievements to record in this century, and a few outstanding personalities; but it was a time of extreme disorganization in India, distracted by the fall of the Moghul power and the rivalries of the European nations, and missionary work was seriously hampered by wars and rumours of wars. Religious zeal was dying down in Europe, the effects of the great revivals were felt only at the end of the century, missionary forces were inadequate for the work, and by 1800 much of the ground that had been gained was lost again.

IV. The nineteenth century was the great age of missionary work in India. The rise of the English power brought peace and order out of chaos; for the first time the whole country was opened up to the work of the Church and progress was ordered and assured. For the first time, too, England and America entered seriously into the field; other nations followed, and to-day there is hardly a Church in Christendom which has not its share in the task of winning India for Christ. It

was a century of great personalities, of long unbroken periods of work, and of invaluable service given in obscurity by those who were not leaders but helpers in the Church. In this century the main lines of the occupation of India were laid down; every province and almost every city of importance was staked out in the name of Christ. The numbers of Christians grew steadily, towards the end of the period even startlingly. The Church began to strike roots of its own into the life of India, and to assert its independence of the foreign ministry.

It is very appropriate that a book on Indian Church history should be written at this time. In 1833, at the renewal of the East India Company's charter, the last impediments to free Christian work in British India were abolished;[1] the missionary was free to move where he would and to undertake what work he liked, always, of course, within the limits of ordinary law. The decade 1930-40 contains a succession of centenaries: the foundation of Duff's great college in Calcutta, the death of William Carey, the incomparable pioneer, the foundation of the dioceses of Madras and Bombay, the occupation of city after city, the beginnings of the American Mission in South India.

But this book looks forward as well as back. The fifth great period of Indian Church history is beginning.

V. The mission becomes the Church. In many parts of India it is now possible to draw a line in history, and to say, "Here ends the history of the foreign mission, here begins the history of the

[1] Some Indian states are still closed to missionary work.

Indian Church." It was never the purpose of the wiser missionaries to reproduce in India a pale, dependent copy of their own form of Christianity; they foresaw a Church living an independent life, Indian in thought and worship and in leadership. At the great Edinburgh Conference in 1910, it was recognized that the time had come for the foreign missionary to give up his undisputed authority, and to take a position of equality with his Indian fellow-workers. For twenty years reorganization has been going on; in many places it is almost complete. This is not to say that so great a change has everywhere been completed without strain and misgivings and heart-burnings. Missionaries have perhaps tended unduly to disparage the spiritual capacity of Indians; Indians have perhaps exaggerated the strength and vigour of the Indian Church. But both have accepted the principle that responsibility must be more and more with the Indian, that the leading-strings of the West must be cut, and that the Church must be itself and not a reflection of even the most venerable Churches of older Christendom.

This means that a new and exciting chapter is being written in Indian Church history. "I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it." The educated classes are beginning to look to Christ as the One who may have the decisive word to say in the perplexities of their life. The disinherited are pressing in thousands into the Church. The proud caste people are beginning to be attracted by a new quality of life seen unexpectedly in those whom they had despised. Christian education is being reorganized

to meet the needs of the new day. Experiment is in the air, in new methods of evangelism, in the reconstruction of village life, in plans for the reunion of the Churches, in a more fully Indian expression of worship. The Indian Church in its new freedom cannot do without the help of the older Churches; it needs help more than ever before. The wiser Indian leaders realize that the little Indian Church, six million strong in the midst of three hundred and forty million, is unequal without help to the task which God has set it. But the missionary who goes to-day goes not as one sent by his Church at home, but as one called to its aid by the Church of Christ in India. "And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink."

In ten years' time it will be necessary to rewrite this book. "The past" remains unalterable; all the "present problems" will have changed. Events are moving so fast that the Church of yesterday is scarcely recognizable as the Church of to-day. Modern missions in India started with Carey's great sermon: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." His faith was justified by his own great work of forty years, and by a hundred and fifty years in which the Church has proved over and over again the goodness of God. Now, in this day of opportunity, He calls to fresh faith and fresh adventure. In the new venture of faith the Church will prove again the living power of Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

CHAPTER II

THE WAYS OF OLD

The Thomas Christians of Malabar

"It chanced that there was a certain merchant come from India, whose name was Abbanes, sent from the King Gunda-phorus, and having commandment from him to buy a carpenter and bring him unto him.

"Now the Lord, seeing him walking in the market-place at noon said unto him: 'Wouldest thou buy a carpenter?' And he said to him: 'Yea.' And the Lord said to him: 'I have a slave that is a carpenter, and I desire to sell him.' And so saying he showed him Thomas afar off, and agreed with him for three litrae of silver unstamped, and wrote a deed of sale. . . . And when the deed was finished, the Saviour took Judas Thomas and led him away to Abbanes the merchant; and when Abbanes saw him he said unto him: 'Is this thy master?' And the Apostle said: 'Yea, he is my Lord.' And he said: 'I have bought thee of him.' And the Apostle held his peace."

The reader of the Bible may rub his eyes in astonishment at this passage; for all its New Testament language, it is certainly not in the New Testament. The early Christians, like all sensible people, dearly loved a story; rejecting the ancient heathen legends they built up cycles of tales about the heroes

of the faith, just as later ages sang of Charlemagne and of the Cid Campeador. We have many of these old romances. The *Acts of Thomas* was written probably in the third century. It explains that the lot fell to Thomas to go and preach the Gospel in India, and, since he was unwilling, the Lord devised this stratagem to send him. Then follow wondrous tales of the apostle's success, and of the miracles wrought by him. It is easy to dismiss this as all legend. But when a coin is dug up in the Punjab bearing the name of Gundobar, and when the experts tell us that he reigned over a part of India in the first century after Christ, we may begin to wonder whether perhaps fact and legend are not mixed. There is no necessary reason why an apostle should not have preached in India. Trade was brisk between the Roman Empire and the Coromandel coast, and thousands of Roman coins have been dug up from the soil of India. It is not incredible that the sea which carried Paul to the West may have carried Thomas to the East.

There is still in South India a great Church, the historic and honourable name of which is the "Thomas Christians." With them it is an article of devout belief that the apostle founded and organized their Church, and that he suffered death by martyrdom in the year A.D. 58. The very place of his death and burial are shown at Mylapore near Madras. Evidence will not allow us to accept this tradition as more than a bare possibility. What we can say with absolute certainty is that there were from a very early date Christians on the south-west coast of India, and that they have preserved their continuity until the present time.

We get glimpses of this Church from time to time in ancient history, enough to whet but not to satisfy our curiosity. A Greek traveller, Cosmas, made his way to India in the sixth century and earned the name of Cosmas Indicopleustes; but though he was a Christian he tells us hardly anything of what we want to know. "There is a Church of Christians in the land called Male [Malabar], where the pepper grows. And in the place called Kalliana [perhaps Kalyan near Bombay] there is a Bishop appointed from Persia. . . . There are clergy there also, ordained and sent from Persia to minister among the people . . . and so likewise among the rest of the Indians . . . there is an infinite number of Christians with Bishops." What would we not give to be able to have Cosmas back, and to question him directly as to what he saw! From about the eighth century we have our first real relic, an ancient cross with an inscription in old Persian. The story of the recovery of the meaning of the old letters is as interesting as a detective tale, the detective in this case being Mr Winckworth of Cambridge. We now know that the words are, "May the Lord Christ have mercy on the soul of Afras, son of Chakarbukht, who carved this"; and perhaps Afras is the same as a prelate Mar Prodh, famous in the memory of the Thomas Christians.

We get another glimpse in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It was the great age of the Friars; Franciscan missionaries were spreading themselves over all the East, and some of them, making the adventurous journey to Cathay (China) passed by South India. They found the ancient Church still in existence and apparently prosperous;

they gave it such help as they were able, but their mission carried them still farther east, and they were little more than passing visitors. It was not till the beginning of the sixteenth century that the Thomas Christians became generally known in Europe.

In 1498, Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and reopened India to the West. Europe had known much of India in ancient days, but the conquests of the Moslems had barred the way, and almost all that old knowledge had been lost or obscured by legend. One of the most persistent of these legends was that of John the Presbyter—Prester John—and a Christian kingdom somewhere in the interior of Asia. So when the Portuguese did reach the shores of India, they were much less surprised than we might have expected at what they found. There was, indeed, no Prester John, nor was there a Christian king. But there was a Church a hundred thousand strong, and the Christians still spoke of their last king, who had but recently died, and whose sceptre was shown to the explorers as evidence.

Our early witnesses speak very favourably of the character and position of the Thomas Christians four hundred years ago. They were a grave and dignified people, distinguished by the courtesy of their manners, and by their honesty of speech and action. Although they lived in the midst of a heathen population far more numerous, they had made for themselves a position of respect and honour. The trade in pepper and spices, most important in those days of bad and monotonous diet, was almost entirely in their hands, and they

produced with pride the charters recording the privileges and immunities granted to their leaders by earlier kings. Though generally peaceful by nature they were all brought up to the use of weapons, and it was no uncommon thing for all the men of the community to appear fully armed. They had many churches, some of them large and fine; and, though the level of knowledge seems to have been low among them, all were passionately devoted to their Church. It is not clear whether there was any bishop living among them at the time when the Portuguese arrived.

At first, relations were very happy. The Thomas Christians were delighted with "their brothers from the West" and desired to be taken under their protection. They had recently suffered from the aggressions and caprices of the local kings, and felt that they would be safer under the shadow of the great king of the West. The Portuguese on their side were not slow to perceive the great advantage that it would be to them to have scattered through the rich coast lands of Malabar this powerful body of allies. It was ecclesiastical rancour which undid the work of political goodwill. The Thomas Christians had never had a bishop of their own race, but from time to time received bishops from the Patriarch of Babylon. Now this Patriarch was a follower of Nestorius, whose doctrine of the mystery of the Person of Christ had by later ages been declared to be erroneous and heretical. Moreover, the Church of Rome had by now come to hold the doctrine, unknown in primitive times, that union with the Pope of Rome is a necessary mark of a true Church. It therefore became an

object with the Portuguese to bring back the Thomas Christians to an allegiance from which, it was felt, they must at some time or another have ignorantly departed. A hundred years of desultory intercourse and negotiations had led to no result when there came on the scene the man who was to change the whole course of the history of the Thomas Christians.

In 1595 Alexius de Menezes was appointed by the King of Portugal Archbishop of Goa and Primate of the East. Young, ambitious, determined, unscrupulous, he was an almost ideal instrument for the work of subjugation. Scarcely had he taken possession of his See when he made the voyage to the south, and set to work on the reduction of the Thomas Christians. There had been several bishops lately among them, but death or the force and fraud of the Portuguese had removed them all, and Menezes found himself the only bishop of any Church in the country. This was of great service to his cause, since the Thomas Christians have always been passionately attached to the episcopal form of government. The magnificence which attended Menezes, his personal charm and subtlety, the confidence with which he put forward the novel doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope made a profound impression upon them. The Archbishop had made an agreement with the Archdeacon, the head of the Thomas Christians, to perform no episcopal act until the whole state of the Church and its relation to Rome had been determined. He so far departed from his pledge as to hold three large ordinations, drawing many to him by undertaking to ordain them without the

heavy fee customarily demanded by the Eastern Bishops. When votes were taken it was found that more than half the priests of the Church had been ordained during the five months' visit of Menezes, and were naturally attached to his party.

On 20th June 1599, a great Synod opened in the Church of All Saints at Udiyamperur, commonly called Diamper. It was attended by a hundred and fifty-three priests and over six hundred lay representatives, as well as by all the leading Portuguese of the Court. The sessions lasted for nine days. It was not the intention of Menezes that the Thomas Christians should discuss or disagree; they were to assent and to obey. To this end the whole of the decrees of the Synod, a hundred and fifty closely printed pages, had been drawn up in Portuguese and in the language of the country; hardly any discussion was allowed, and opposition was ruthlessly suppressed. At the end of the nine days, this ancient Church of the East was brought into complete subjection to the Church of Rome, to which never at any time had it belonged. The Church had for centuries been isolated; its people were ignorant, and had become in many ways affected by heathen superstitions. Some at least of the reforms of Menezes were necessary and beneficial. For the most part, they were an extreme example of ecclesiastical aggression and intolerance. It had always been the custom of the Church that its priesthood should be married, but Menezes would have none of this. All priests, except a few very aged men, were required to separate themselves from their wives on pain of dismissal. The Church had prayed for centuries

for the Patriarch of Babylon; now even to mention his name in prayer was to be a grievous crime. The Synod had taken place in the stormy weather of the monsoon. As it ended, and the solemn procession of thanksgiving began to wend its way out of the Church, the rain ceased and the sun burst brightly through the clouds. Menezes took this as a great omen of the divine favour, and departed in triumph at what he believed to be a completed work.

He had underestimated, however, the national and independent spirit of the Thomas Christians. Outwardly they were now children of Rome, but their love for their own Church and customs had only been driven underground. The people had still their Archdeacon, the natural head of their Church. They were incensed and indignant at the arrogance of the Jesuits who had overrun their country. Only a spark was needed to set them ablaze.

In 1652 a rumour went round the country, whether true or false cannot now be certainly determined, that a Persian Bishop had come to care for them, but had been apprehended and murdered by the Portuguese. The Church rose almost as one man. On a fixed date an immense crowd met at the Cross before the Church of Mattanchery, hardly a mile from Cochin, the head-quarters of the Portuguese, and took a solemn oath to drive all the Jesuits out of the country, and never again to admit to their Churches a bishop sent from Portugal. As they had no bishop of their own, and could not at the moment obtain one from elsewhere, they took the unprecedented step of creating a bishop for themselves. On

22nd May 1653, twelve of the leading priests laid their hands upon the head of the Archdeacon Thomas, and consecrated him as Bishop and ruler of the Church. From that day to this, the history of the Thomas Christians has run in two channels—on the one side, those who have remained faithful to Rome; on the other, the ancient, independent Church, which traces back its origin to St Thomas.

Many changes took place in the state of the Churches in the succeeding century and a half. The Romans would not give up easily what they had so hardly won. It is said that, at one time, hardly four hundred of all the Christians remained faithful to them, but by driving out the Portuguese Jesuits and substituting for them Spanish Carmelites, by a somewhat more complaisant management of the Church's affairs, and later by appointing Indian bishops as Vicars-Apostolic, they gradually succeeded in winning back the greater part of the Church. They were strongly established all along the coast, while the true Thomas Christians were pressed back farther inland and into the mountains. The latter could not remain for ever in complete isolation from all other Christians; their irregularly consecrated Archdeacon would not be recognized as Bishop by any other Eastern Church, and it is not surprising that they came to feel the need of more regular organization. They were visited by various wandering ecclesiastics, and eventually, some time in the seventeenth century, in circumstances which are not at all clear, they put themselves under the patronage of the so-called Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch. This was a very remarkable revolution. The Patriarch was not a Bishop of

the great Eastern Church, but was what is called a Monophysite. Now the errors of the Monophysites are the exact opposite of those errors of the Nestorians held by the Patriarch of Babylon, to whom earlier the Thomas Christians had professed allegiance. But in their remote mountains they were not greatly troubled by these theological subtleties—bishops they needed, and now bishops they had received, and that was enough for them. In isolation, far from the great centres of the world's life, the ancient Church lived on, sternly tenacious of its ancient customs and confident of the truth of its Apostolic origin.

In 1806 Claudius Buchanan, Vice-Provost of the College of Fort William in Calcutta, made an adventurous journey through the south of India, and penetrated the fastnesses of the Thomas Christians. At first they were very suspicious of him, as probably yet another of those Roman emissaries who had so often harried them, but gradually they came to trust him, and in the end were as much delighted with him as he was with them. A year or two later, his *Christian Researches* was published, and aroused immense interest in England for this fragment of a long-forgotten Church. Ten years later the English Resident at the court of Travancore asked the Church Missionary Society to send a mission of help to educate and uplift the Thomas Christians. In 1816 the first English missionaries arrived in Travancore.

The task set them was difficult in the extreme. They were to work in a Church not their own, of widely different customs and traditions; they were not to proselytize, or make the Syrians into

Anglicans; they were to work patiently in harmony with the rulers of the Church for a reform of the ancient Church from within. At first all went very well; the Bishop was favourable and welcomed everything that the missionaries did. There were three lines of action immediately open to them.

The Scriptures and if possible the liturgy must be translated into Malayalam, the vernacular of the country. Up till this time everything had been carried out in Syriac, the language which, as the Syrians claim, was spoken by our Lord Himself, greatly venerated but not understood by the common people. Not a single chapter of the Bible had ever been translated into Malayalam. The first ten years were given largely to this task. One of the missionaries, Bailey, himself built and worked a printing-press, still preserved in Kottayam. The old translation has long since been superseded by others, but in its time it was a gift of priceless value to the Church; for the first time the common people heard the Word of God in their own tongue. It is hardly too much to say that all the new life which has come to the ancient Syrian Churches is traceable back to this first translation of the Bible.

Then the Syrian clergy needed to be educated. A generous endowment was granted by the Government, and a college came into existence in Kottayam. It had been the practice for mere boys to be ordained deacons without any kind of training; this was now to be stopped, and all the clergy were to pass through the hands of the missionaries. There are to-day many good schools in Travancore. But for years Kottayam College was unique; most of the

leaders of the Churches have been trained there, and it still numbers among its students some of the deacons of the " Jacobite " Church.

Then everywhere were to be found the masses of the unevangelized Hindus. The Thomas Christians have never been missionary-hearted. At a very early date they separated themselves into a closed community, jealous of their privileges as a high caste, keeping slaves of the untouchable communities, who were never admitted to their churches. Missionary work has been very successful in Malabar, but it has not been the work of the Thomas Christians. The English Congregationalists have built up a Church of 120,000 in South Travancore, the Basel Mission has evangelized British Malabar, the Anglicans and the Romans have gathered in a great multitude mainly of the lower classes in Northern Travancore and Cochin. The " Syrian " Churches have remained almost as they were. In 1820, when the missionaries of the C.M.S. began to receive converts, they made perhaps their first mistake. Instead of joining them to the existing Church, they translated the English Prayer-book and started a Malayalam-speaking branch of the Anglican Church. They acted in perfect good faith, but this action contained the seeds of schism.

In 1834 there arose another Bishop among the Thomas Christians, who knew not Joseph. He withdrew his countenance from the missionaries, and set his face against all reforms. Various attempts at compromise were made, but in vain. In 1837 the missionaries withdrew from all connection with the ancient Church, but remained to

shepherd their converts from Hinduism. The reforming leaven was working deeply in the ancient Church, and many of the Syrians were more attached to the evangelical faith of the missionaries than to Antioch and the old ways. About eight thousand of them left the Syrian Church and joined the missionaries. Divisiveness has always been the curse of the Eastern Churches, and this was only the beginning of schisms. Fifty years passed, and another much larger evangelical group, nearly a hundred thousand strong, were cast out of the Church with the one Bishop who supported them. A section of the Roman Catholic branch broke off, and took to themselves a Bishop from the Nestorian Patriarch of whom we have already heard. And now, in recent years, the old stock of the Jacobites has been split into two hostile sections, one holding to the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch over the Church, the other claiming autonomy for the Church in Malabar.

Here is the tragedy of the ancient Church of St Thomas. It numbers nearly a million members, and is by far the oldest branch of the Church in India. The Syrians are fairly well educated, they have great traditions, and instincts of independence and leadership. It seems that they ought to be the strongest instrument in the hand of God for the conversion of India. As it is, they are crippled by division; high moral standards are not easily maintained in the midst of ecclesiastical controversy; their witness is immeasurably weakened by clannishness. It was depressing to be told by a leading Hindu official of the state, "You know, these Christians are always fighting like cats."

What is to be the future of these Churches? Is there any prospect of greater unity among them? Are there real signs of spiritual life, and of the growth of a missionary spirit which will drive them out to bear witness to Christ in the length and breadth of India? We are still at the beginning of things, but there are already signs of the working of the Holy Spirit with power.

It is inspiring to visit the great annual convention of the Reformed Syrian Church. The almost dry bed of a river has been transformed into a miniature town; the most conspicuous feature is the large *pandal*, a temporary structure of poles and leaf mats, under which an immense audience can assemble. The white-robed Syrians are streaming in from all sides, through the greenery which fringes the banks, and along the river-bed itself. It looks as though all the umbrellas in the world were going on pilgrimage to Maramannu. A splash of colour downstream tells us that the Metropolitan, magnificent in puce silk cassock, is crossing the river from his house. Bishop Abraham, the junior Bishop, wearing purple, is already in his place. Perhaps twenty thousand people are gathered in silence under the low roof. The clergy are gathered round the Bishops, the older men bearded like apostles. The speaker rises. He may be Anglican or Methodist or Lutheran; he has been called for just one reason, that he has a living message about Jesus Christ. For an hour the level voice goes on; the interpreter catching up each sentence without a pause, his magnificent voice carrying every word to the very limits of the crowd. Then one of the old priests, with a look of heaven on his face, lifts

the assembly in prayer; he is going over the points of the address, turning them into adoration and supplication; his voice rises higher in passionate pleading with the Lord of Glory for His people. The Metropolitan pronounces the blessing, and the people stream out into the sunshine. They are so orderly that no policeman is ever needed at Maramannu.

What is it that brings the people? There is no outward attraction in the convention; no special eloquence. They come because they have a thirst for the word of God. The message is simply the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins through the Cross of Christ, and the power which comes through Him to lead a life set free from sin. There is no doubt that gradually the spirit of Maramannu is penetrating the whole Church, and setting it free from old bondage into a new liberty of service. The four mission fields of this Church are convincing evidence of new life.

Division is the greatest evil of the Syrian Churches, and therefore a special interest attaches to anything which makes for union among them. The Union Christian College, Alwaye, is the only enterprise in which all the Syrian Churches (except the Roman) co-operate. It was founded some years ago by a small group of Syrian graduates with the two-fold purpose of drawing the Churches together and leading them out into missionary service. This is the only college in India which is controlled and managed by Indian Christians; it is a real fellowship, in which Europeans have joined and served happily under the Indian Principal. The college is maintained in the spirit of prayer, and nothing

is decided by the fellowship except as the Spirit of God leads them into unanimity. The work is still in its beginnings. The Churches are far behind the college in the spirit of unity, and Christian students have to be welded together in the spirit of the fellowship. Hindu students have to be won from their suspicion of everything Christian into sympathy and understanding.

But, though much remains to be done, things are already happening. Every Sunday Christian students go out into the country round, to visit the houses of the poorer people with the message of the Gospel; suspicion is gradually being changed into friendship. From time to time groups of Hindu students meet quietly for a day's retreat in the old bungalow on the other side of the river. Hardly any Christians are present, except the one or two members of the staff who are speaking. Every address ends with a short time of silence and a time of prayer in the name of Christ. Would these students come and listen so responsively, would there be the attitude of real expectancy in prayer, if there were not in their hearts a breaking down of old barriers, and at least a beginning of the realization that in Christ is to be found all that they need, and are dimly seeking?

But the most striking work of the college so far is the Alwaye Settlement. This owes its origin, not to a Syrian, but to a young Cambridge man, Lester Hooper. The important thing about him is that he was not a specially distinguished man. The gifts he brought to the cause were not those of splendid intellect or of great physical strength. His power came from unvarying cheerfulness, per-

fect trust of others, and an undying passion to champion the cause of the under-dog. In all he spent less than five years in India. But in that short span of life God enabled him to accomplish a perfect piece of service.

The outcastes of Travancore are among the poorest and most depressed in the whole of India. They do not attempt to close their little huts, because there is nothing in them that any man could wish to steal. They receive their wages in kind, and few of them ever touch money. Many of them have become Christians, but they have risen only a little in the scale of life. It was Hooper's ambition to set free the resources of the Syrians to serve these disinherited children of God. Land was secured near the college, and a little school came into being. Each year a small group of outcaste boys is taken in. They come, half-starved, shy, suspicious, full of dirty habits. The principle of the school is that everything is shared. The staff, Syrian graduates of the college, with all their centuries of pride behind them, come down to the level of their small charges, live with them, play with them, eat with them, pray with them. It is very much to ask of any man; the life is hard and full of sacrifice. It is the clearest proof that the Spirit of God is working among the Syrians that there is no lack of men to give up all in this service. Already the work has borne much fruit in the changed life and character of the boys in the settlement. Hooper's death was a sad blow, but God's providence has overruled even that for blessing.

Interest has been aroused in England and in

India; Government is standing behind the work. In a few years' time the settlement will begin to send into the world men trained to work with their hands for their living, to stand up for themselves, to live as self-respecting citizens in the fear of God. A new door of hope has been opened for the outcaste, a new door of service for the Church.

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed . . . Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." The Syrian Churches have been for centuries like the garden of the Song of Songs. We are beginning to see the breathing upon them of the wind of God. If all this great tradition of Christian life and faith can be set free to flow out into the life of India, we may set no limits to the work of transformation that may be wrought.

CHAPTER III

THEY WERE FISHERS

Francis Xavier and the first Mass Movement

First Reformation, then Counter-Reformation. In the year 1540 the Roman Catholic Church seemed to be fighting everywhere a losing battle. The whole of Germany was in revolt; England, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Italy itself had been penetrated by the new teaching. By 1600, the frontier of Reformed and Papal Europe had been drawn much farther north than could have been expected. The Reformation had been completely stamped out in all the countries of Southern Europe; half of Germany, Switzerland, and the Low Countries had been recovered. Spain was the country which had rallied to the support of the old religion, and had saved half Europe for the Pope. The Spanish character seems to be rich in all the virtues except moderation. The long agony of the struggle against the Moslems impressed upon it that disciplined intensity of passion which shows itself in the Inquisition, in the pictures of El Greco, in the mysticism of St John of the Cross, and most clearly of all in Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

While Ignatius, already middle-aged, was studying at the University of Paris, he was thrown in contact with another Spanish noble, fifteen years

younger than himself. Francis Xavier was a Basque from the region of the Pyrenees. When he lay dying on an island near the coast of China, he babbled in a language unknown to any of those who stood by; it is probable that, in his delirium, he had returned to the Basque dialect of his early childhood. In his early student days he had been attracted by the Lutherans, finding among them an earnestness which was lacking in those of his own Church. But gradually the power of Ignatius mastered him, and when, in 1534, the first group of Companions took their vows in Paris, Xavier, then aged twenty-eight, was among them. When the Company of Jesus was formally recognized by the Pope in 1540, Xavier was the third among its members.

It was the aim of Ignatius to bring into existence a militia of Christ, an order bound by the principles of Spanish chivalry, which, in obedience to the Pope, should fight anywhere and everywhere in defence of the faith of the Church, and for its establishment throughout the world. The Reformed Churches, faced by all the powers of Rome and already beginning to waste their strength in bitter internal controversies, had little thought for the spread of the Gospel overseas. Spain and Portugal had, by commission of the Pope, divided the world between them, with the express charge that they should concern themselves with the Christianizing of their new subjects. The Jesuits were to be the chief instrument in their hands for this great work. Within a century the remotest countries of the world, Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, Siam, Tibet, were marked with the graves of

Jesuit fathers, some of them martyrs for the faith. In 1603, Father Benedict de Goes walked from India through the heart of Central Asia and died on the confines of China, where his tomb can still be seen.

In the year after the Company was formed it was decided to send a mission to India, and Xavier was chosen for the work. He went out as head of all the Jesuits in the East, and as Papal Nuncio for the diocese of Goa, at that time the largest diocese in the world, including the whole of India, Malay, the islands, China and Japan.

The disastrous voyage began on 7th April 1541, and lasted thirteen months. Passengers and sailors were horribly overcrowded, food was inadequate, and very soon disease broke out. In this crisis Xavier showed something of his quality. He gave up the special accommodation to which he was entitled; he lived with the sick, shared his food with them, did what he could for their diseases, and brought to their dying moments the consolations of religion. When at last the ship cast anchor at Goa, he had already earned the reputation of a saint.

Goa, the centre of the Portuguese power in India, was a city of palaces and great churches. It was also a place of abominable corruptions. There were three classes among the population. First were the Portuguese soldiers, mostly of the lowest of the people, many of them having been banished from Portugal for their crimes. The great Viceroy, Affonso d'Albuquerque, had encouraged them to intermarry with the Indians, and there was growing up the mixed race of their children, thus described

by a contemporary: "The second class are ill-educated, extremely effeminate, and abandoned to all kinds of sensual indulgence." Then there were the Indians themselves, reduced to slavery by the Portuguese: "a wild race, totally incapable of instruction and ferocious in the extreme. Such is their immodesty that we cannot venture to describe it." The priests had not escaped the influences around them, and religion seemed as dead as morality.

Xavier's first task was to bring some order into this chaos, by any means in his power. He was unwearied in visiting the hospital. He would walk through the streets ringing a little bell and crying out: "Faithful Christians, for the love of God send your slaves and children to the Sancta Doctrina." Having by this means collected a crowd of children he would lead them to one of the churches, there to teach them hymns and litanies and impress upon them the elements of Christian faith. From the children the interest spread to the grown-ups. Soon they began to come in crowds to hear this strangely earnest and passionate preaching. Before long the most familiar figure in Goa was the saint in his threadbare black gown and worn shoes. He would drink no wine and ate only the plainest food, but was equally at home in the houses of the nobility or with the sailors on the wharf. Xavier remained in Goa little more than a year, but it is recorded that in that time there was a definite change in the moral tone of the city.

It was not Xavier's commission to remain long in one place. He had the affairs of half the world to consider. He was to be the pioneer, surveying

new countries, marking out the ground, laying down principles and methods of work, leaving it to others to develop them and carry them out in detail. He had not been long in India before he learned of a great work which urgently needed his presence and attention.

In the extreme south of India a great mass movement to Christianity had taken place. The Paravas, the fishing caste of the Coromandel coast, had found themselves almost literally between the devil and the deep sea. On the one hand they were harried by the Mohammedan sea-rovers, on the other by the Vadukkars, land robbers who came sweeping down upon them from the north. Unable to bear their troubles they had begged for the protection of the King of Portugal. This was gladly given, on condition that the Paravas should pay an annual tribute and accept Christianity. They agreed; and in a very brief period about twenty thousand people were baptized, having had no instruction of any kind. The Portuguese then left them without any spiritual ministrations at all, except that a few boys were taken into school at Goa.

For many missionaries their first sight of India is the low and rather forbidding coast-line of Tuticorin, relieved on a clear day by the noble outlines of the Western Ghauts fifty miles away. The palmyra forest comes down almost to the coast, and to-day in places where fresh water is available there are cool groves of coconut palms and gardens. But the Paravas were not cultivators; their livelihood was in the sea. They lived scattered in more than fifty villages along a hundred miles of coast;

there was no communication between the villages except on foot over the burning sands, or by open boat, exposed to the violence of storms, along a coast which has no real harbour. Their boats, then as now, were *catamarans*, three logs tied together with a mast and one large sail. Every morning the little fleet would set out from each village, and then lie out for long hot hours until the afternoon breeze from the sea would easily bear the boats back to land. The hard open-air life had made the Paravas physically immensely strong. They are a wild and turbulent folk, not easily amenable to discipline, and not reckoned high in the scale of Hindu castes. At the time of Xavier it seems that they were almost wholly illiterate.

The saint's first impressions of his congregations were not very encouraging. He writes from Tuticorin on 28th October 1542 :

> We passed through villages of Christians, who became Christians eight years ago. There are no Portuguese living in those places, as the land is very barren and poor. As there is no one to teach them our faith, the Christians of these places can say no more than that they are Christians. They have no one to say Mass for them, still less to teach them the Creed, the Pater Noster, Ave Maria and the Commandments.

He adds, however :

> I found in them great intelligence, and I am certain that if they had anyone to teach them they would be good Christians.

The difficulties of the work were immense. There was no priest who knew Tamil ; and Xavier, already making plans for his work farther east,

had no time to learn a language in which after two years' hard study men are still beginners. There was at that time no printed book in Tamil, and no Christian literature of any kind. The only thing which made a beginning of work possible at all was that Xavier had with him some of the Tamil boys from Goa, who knew Portuguese and could serve as his interpreters.

He decided rightly that the first step was to institute daily worship in every village, and through that worship to teach the elements of the Christian faith. Since there were no qualified teachers, at first everything must be learned by rote. But before this could be begun, translations must be made of everything that was required. Here is Xavier's own account of how this was done:

> Since they could not understand me nor I them, because their language is Malabar[1] and mine Biscayan, I sought out those among them who were more intelligent and knew both our language and their own; after association with them for many days, with great labour we translated the prayers from Latin into Malabar, beginning with making the sign of the Cross, confessing the three Persons to be one God only; then the Creed and the Commandments, Our Father, Hail Mary, Salve Regina, and the General Confession. After having translated them into their language, and learnt them by heart, I went through the whole place with a bell in my hand collecting as many boys and men as I could, and after having collected them, I taught them twice every day. In the space of a month I had taught the prayers, giving such orders that the boys should teach their fathers and mothers and to all in the house and to the neighbours all that they had learned in school.

[1] Malabar is a geographical term. This is the language now always called Tamil.

In Sunday worship the Creed and the Commandments were to be read out clause by clause and repeated by all the people; and responses were added, in order to give them a full share in the service. For instance, after each commandment the people were instructed to answer, "Holy Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, obtain for us grace from thy Son that we may be able to keep this commandment."

At first, all went very well. The Christians, delighted at the care which was being taken of them, were docile and obedient. The children especially seem to have been fascinated by Xavier, and sometimes spent the whole day with him, not even giving him time to say his own prayers. As soon as possible the missionaries separated, Xavier making his headquarters at Manappadu, his companion, de Mansilhas, at Punaikayal about twenty miles north. They toured constantly among the people, preaching everywhere, and coping as best they could with the constant demands for baptisms and marriages, and for visits to the houses of the sick. But it was not long before difficulties began to appear. De Mansilhas, young and inexperienced, desperately lonely among an uncivilized people whose language he did not know, seems to have been always on the point of giving up in despair. Xavier had to write over and over again to encourage him. "Do not weary on account of the many evils that you see. . . . Do not weary. You are gaining more fruit than you think. And if you do not do all you wish, be content with what you do, for the fault is not yours."

The coast was still exposed to the incursions of

the robbers. At one time the whole strength of the missionaries had to be thrown into famine relief and first aid for their harassed and starving flock. The Portuguese on the coast were far from being helpful. They were irreligious and depraved; worse still, by their arrogance and overbearing conduct, they embroiled themselves with the local chieftains, and brought down their vengeance on the helpless Paravas. The Christians themselves were the cause of many troubles. The missionaries, deceived by their first successes, began to be disillusioned when they discovered how hard it is to bring about real change of heart and life in a people who have grown up in heathenism. Then, as now, drink was an inveterate evil. "I am sending you a bailiff who will serve till I come. I will give him a fanam [about 4d.] for every woman he catches drinking arrack. Also she may be imprisoned for three days. . . . Tell the headman that if in the future I hear that arrack is being drunk in Punaikayal, they will have to pay dearly for it." At times, under the influence of drink, the Paravas grew violent, and would pay no heed either to their own headmen or to the missionaries. As Church discipline gained in strength, their heathen practices were driven underground, but they were not given up and continued to flourish in secret.

Yet, with all this, the work of Xavier was not a failure. He left behind him an imperishable memory of holiness. No one who saw the spare figure, in worn black cassock, trudging wearily over the sand dunes, and the bright smile always ready for any of the flock, especially for the children, ever

forgot it. They knew that they had among them a man whose life was lived in the heavenly country, and they easily understood the doctrine of the Cross because it was lived out before them day by day.

Xavier spent less than three years in South India ; his successor remained for more than half a century. During this time the fruit of Xavier's work was seen. At the end of the century there were seventeen Jesuit fathers and two brothers on the coast ; the Christians had been divided into sixteen parishes, and the Church was still growing both in numbers and in the Christian life. The Parava Church has now stood for just four centuries. It has seen hard times, especially in the ceaseless wars and disorders of the eighteenth century, when for years it was left almost without shepherds after the dissolution of the Jesuit order in 1773. Even now the life of the Church is very far from perfect. But there the Church is, and there it remains. The completion of Xavier's work was seen when in 1921 the Coromandel coast was separated from the diocese of Trichinopoly, and formed into the new diocese of Tuticorin. The Right Reverend Francis Roche, the first Indian Diocesan Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, is himself a Parava, a descendant of the Christians for whom Xavier prayed and suffered.

This first mass movement to Christianity has been followed by many others. At least three-quarters of the Christians in India have come, not as individuals, but in groups. In England, conversion is so very much an individual affair ; it is the meeting of a man's own soul with God. In India,

a man usually acts not as an individual, but as a member of a community. He is born a member of a caste, a closed community which watches jealously over his every action. It determines exactly how a woman should wear her sari, and exactly what kind of jewels she may put on. It settles what careers a man may and may not choose. Marriage is an affair of the whole family. The elders settle everything, and, except where liberal ideas have made some progress, it is unlikely that the bride and bridegroom will see one another until they meet at the ceremony itself. Above all, caste settles every detail of religious ritual and observance; a man's private beliefs may be what he likes, but his outward practices are determined by the customs of his ancestors. Woe betide anyone who brings down on himself the penalty of excommunication from his caste. He becomes homeless, friendless, and a wanderer. Now this is exactly what befalls the individual who becomes a Christian. All over India are scattered mission villages created for the reception of those who, with exceptional courage, have acted as individuals, and have braved the contempt of their fellows in order to follow Christ. The experiment has only rarely been a success. The Christian village has tended to live an enclosed separate life of its own. Its people have been dependent on the mission for everything, and have grown subservient. They have shown little inclination to take the Gospel to their own people outside. It is hardly too much to say that, in a land where family and community count for so much, the accession of groups and not merely individuals is the natural God-appointed means for the spread of the

Gospel. When several families or the members of a whole village are baptized there is no complete break of continuity; the old life merges immediately in the new life of the Church.

For the last fifty years, in almost every part of India, missions have been almost overwhelmed by one mass movement after another. In the Punjab the Methodist Episcopal Church grew in thirty-two years from practically nothing to three hundred and forty-six thousand. In the Telugu country in the South, where the movement began fifty years ago among the two great sections of the outcastes—the Malas, agriculturists, and the Madigas, leather-workers—the Indian Bishop of Dornakal now presides over a Church of one hundred and seventy-four thousand, of whom thirty-eight thousand appear to be catechumens not yet baptized. Other Churches are also represented in this area, including a numerous Baptist community. The Methodist Church in the Nizam's Dominions has grown from a handful in 1890 to more than ninety thousand in 1934. The Church is faced once again with Xavier's problem. It is easy enough to baptize these people when they come clamouring for baptism. Is it possible to make Christians of them? Is it possible to build up Churches strong enough to stand the test of time?

Everyone probably will agree with Xavier that it is essential to begin with the children. Any missionary who has camped in the villages is familiar with Xavier's experience. No sooner is the tent up than the children begin to crowd round, usually at a safe distance of ten yards or so, and in perfect silence; a sudden movement is quite sufficient to

disperse them, all too experienced as they are in blows and threats. But any sign of interest in them quickly wins their confidence. A word or two in their own language, and a flood of animated conversation is released. Then—" they would hardly give me time to say my prayers." These unkempt, shy creatures must be caught and tamed. They are the churchmen of the future, and from them we are to draw the teachers and ministers and elders needed for the building up of the Church.

Most village missions start with the idea : only primary education and no big schools ; this is a strictly evangelistic mission, and education is only valuable in so far as it is of service to Christian living. An admirable principle ; but in practice the old antithesis between evangelistic and educational missions is a thing of the past. Even the smallest primary school demands a teacher, and experience shows that it is simply wasteful to appoint as teacher a man who can read and write, but who has had no training in his craft. No evangelistic missionary can object to the village boarding-school. Every mission station will have its schools for boys and girls ; especially when dealing with outcastes and the beginnings of Church life, we must get some of the boys and girls out of their own villages into an atmosphere where they will be reasonably safe from temptation and where they can learn habits of cleanliness and order and reliability. Excellent. But who is going to teach in these village boarding-schools ? Who is going to train our future teachers ? Must we not have men and women who have themselves gone far beyond the village standard, and whose skill and ideals can be trusted to do their

work, even when the missionary is away or too busy to watch the schools closely? We cannot be content that all our higher grade teachers should be taught and trained in non-Christian schools, where there is no religious teaching at all, and where the prevailing atmosphere is one of materialism and restless ambition. Reason compels us sooner or later to found a Christian high school. A school cannot be Christian unless all or nearly all its masters are Christians, and where shall we train the men we need except in a Christian college? Starting from the meanest, rawest, most inefficient jungle school, we are driven on step by step to the highest levels of Christian education. Perhaps there was some use after all in that Christian college in a distant city, of which we were jealous because it swallowed up so much of our scanty funds, and contributed, we thought, so little to our village work. Perhaps if Xavier starts at the bottom and works up high enough, and Duff starts at the top and works down low enough, we shall find that they meet in the middle after all.

But what of the older people? They cannot go to school, and we cannot wait till the children are grown up before we start the Christian community. Illiterate grown-ups find it terribly hard to learn, especially when the words are unfamiliar. The Lord's Prayer is not easy in any Indian language; if we insist that all candidates for baptism must know it by heart it is quite likely that some of the older women will never be baptized at all. Here Xavier's first method of public worship gives a clue to what can be done. Grown-ups as well as children learn best when they do not know that

they are learning. If we set them down to learn the Lord's Prayer, their minds will become a perfect blank and their faces will set in an expression of abject misery. Let them learn by coming to church. The constant repetition of the essential things, Creed, Commandments, Lord's Prayer, first said slowly by the teacher and then by the congregation all together, is bound to make an impression in time on the slowest minds. But more than this can be done. The wise teacher does not preach, but keeps up the interest by a steady flow of questions; the older people learn by doing their share in finding the answer. Christianity is fortunately not a teaching but a life, and stories are far more easily remembered than doctrines. One experienced mass movement missionary, working in an area which had been neglected for years, drew up a syllabus of twelve lessons on the life of Christ, and gave strict orders that every teacher should teach each lesson every day for a month. At the end of the year, not merely had the people learned the elements of the faith, but lives had been changed from sin to righteousness.

There is still a more excellent way. If people find it hard to learn the life of Christ, let them sing it. This was the sublime wish of Erasmus, "that the ploughboy might sing these stories at his furrow, and the weaver croon them over to the sound of his shuttle, and the traveller beguile therewith the tedium of his journey." In several of the languages of India the life of Christ has been turned into lyrics and action songs of the very simplest kind. Children learn them in the schools and carry them to their homes. Christian visitors sing

them in the houses of their heathen relatives. The Gospel is being sung in places where it has never been preached, and is finding its way into the hearts of the common people. A Church which can create the popular songs of a music-loving people is certain in the end to control the most intimate details of its life.

Of every mass movement one urgent question has to be asked: how far will it spread? Will it overleap the barriers of a single caste? It is almost impossible for those who have not lived in India to understand why this problem of caste meets us at every point in our story. Life in India is largely lived in the open air. Men of diverse castes will meet on the bathing ghat, at market, in the village *panchayat*. But there is another hidden life—the life within the house, and in that life caste reigns supreme. No man of another caste will ever penetrate the inner rooms, he will never be invited to share a meal with any of the family. Even among the outcastes there are many divisions and gradations; the Paraiyan will not sit down with the Pallan, the Mala will not eat with the Madiga. In one way, Xavier's movement solved the problem of caste completely. The whole of the Parava community came over; and therefore the long slow business of adjustment between the new Christian remnant and the old heathen community never had to take place at all. But, as regards extension, the movement was a failure; it was enclosed within the walls of one community and never overleaped them. There were other Christians in the area where the Paravas lived, but they were the result of separate Jesuit activity and not a growth from the life of the

Indian Church. In the dark days the Parava was the one community which held fast. When the Roman Catholic work was reorganized a hundred years ago it was practically the Paravas alone who were found faithful. To-day there are many Roman Catholics in the diocese of Tuticorin who are not of Parava origin, but these are the fruit of later missionary work; the missionaries have been French or Belgian, not the Christians of the coast.

Very much the same limitation of growth has been observed in later mass movements. Once a caste is touched, word of the new religion will very quickly spread abroad through the secret life of the caste. The outcaste Christian is rarely, if ever, extruded from his community; he has access to the houses of his relations, and by his simple witness the Good News can be spread and become widely known. But it is within the community that this takes place, and not beyond it. It happened that the first movement among the Madigas of the Telugu field took place in the territory of the American Baptist Mission, whereas the corresponding movement among the Malas was in the area where Anglicans were working. A time came when the American would be known as the Madiga missionary, the Englishman as the Mala missionary. If in any village it happened that all the outcastes were Christians, probably there would be two churches, a Mala church and a Madiga church. Progress was steady, but it was almost entirely along one line, with very little crossing over from caste to caste.

About ten years ago it became apparent that the power of the Gospel was proving too strong for the

ancient barriers. The outcaste Christians lived out their lives under the eye of their high caste neighbours; with few opportunities of witness by word, they could, if they would, bear witness at all times by their lives. Gradually their influence began to tell. The reaction of the caste people in many villages followed this graph: resentment, persecution, astonishment, inquiry, acceptance. The Church rejoiced in the quite unexpected triumph of seeing caste men led to the feet of Christ by the witness of the outcastes.

It was in the Methodist mission that steps were first taken to meet this new need. In 1929 it was decided to hold a summer school for the caste men who were interested. A hundred and fifty caste inquirers gathered for several days, and the claim of Christ was clearly put before them. After the school was over, fifteen villages asked for baptism. One of the inquirers bore this testimony: "Wherever this God of yours has set His foot we see joy and liberty." The following year the school was repeated, and an even larger number assembled. At the concluding service eighteen of those present were baptized. One of them as he left said, "Before a year is past, I will bring one hundred of my people." He was as good as his word, for in less than that time one hundred and twelve were baptized as a result of his influence.

Life is not at all easy for the caste man who renounces his caste. He is called, more even than the outcaste, to suffer reproach and loss and violence for the sake of the faith. In the testing some have fallen away, but the majority have stood firm. After endless persecution of every description the

leading farmer of one village boldly declared, " Let all my lands go, let all my cattle perish, let all my property be confiscated, let all my kith and kin disown me, let my flesh be torn from my body, yet I for my part will not leave my Lord Jesus. He only is my God." Where this spirit is alive in the Church, there is no doubt of final victory.

The Bishop of Dornakal calculates that twenty-eight thousand caste converts have been received into the Church in the last ten or twelve years. At least sixteen communities have been touched, and some Brahmins have been baptized. Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, and Baptists have shared in the gains. In the nineteenth century the great movement was among the Tamils in the extreme south of the peninsula. In the twentieth God's favour seems to be resting specially on the Telugus. Now all the Churches are asking to what great purpose God is leading them forward through this new movement. The need of the hour is that God should raise up many men and women of the spirit of Xavier, with his dauntless faith, his unquenchable love for Christ, his restless zeal in labour, his willingness to spend and be spent to the uttermost, if by any means even one soul might be brought into the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.

CHAPTER IV

TO THE JEWS AS A JEW

Robert de Nobili: An Indian Church for India

No one who has ever entered the great temple at Madura will forget the experience. The four great gateway towers are seen far off over the plain. The high wall frowns upon us as we go inside. Even we, who are aliens and have not access to the inner sanctuaries, are free to wander through the great courtyards, through echoing colonnades and apparently endless corridors. Streams of worshippers meet us, not ordered, but just as they happen to stray. A sudden flare lights up a minor shrine, where before the deity the ministrant is making the daily offering of flowers, with muttered charms and spells. Elsewhere an idol is being moved from place to place, borne in state on the shoulders of men; this is always sad to see—men's bodies were made for something nobler than to serve the gods of wood and stone. Here is Hinduism, immemorial and unchanged. Much of it is crude, some of it is horrible; yet underneath is a deep longing after God. But the prevailing impression is that of strength. The words which come unbidden to the mind are those of the spies of old, "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers." Or we may paraphrase the words of the prophet, "O great mountain, when wilt thou become a plain?"

There is no place in the world harder for a missionary than Madura. So the young Robert de Nobili found it, when he arrived there in 1605, the year of the Gunpowder Plot in England. But hard as it was bound to be, he found that the Portuguese by their unwisdom had made it very much harder. They went on the general principle of making their converts to Christianity as much like Portuguese as possible: they gave them Portuguese names, which sounded ridiculous in Indian ears, they forced them to wear western clothes, they even tried to introduce the eating of flesh, though all the higher castes of India are vegetarian. By these means the true nature of Christianity was completely concealed; it appeared to consist in following Prangui (European) customs, and renouncing everything that India honours. This would not have been so bad if Portugal and Christianity had been well represented; but in Madura they were known only through the lowest and basest of the Europeans in the East. They were unclean in person, treacherous in their dealings, without the rudiments of culture. "It is not surprising that the word Prangui is expressive of the profoundest contempt." So wrote de Nobili. There was already a mission in Madura, but the black-robed priest was classed with the despised Prangui; none of the upper classes would have anything to do with him, and the labour of years had not resulted in a single convert. De Nobili was resolved that all this must be changed.

This young man of clear vision and high aims came of noble family in Tuscany. His uncle was the famous Cardinal Bellarmine, the hammer of

the Protestants and chief defender of the cause of Rome. He was thus born into the full tide of the Counter-Reformation, and of that devotion which was driving so many into the hardest service of all, that of the Society of Jesus. When he reached India, he was twenty-seven years old. He had read in the New Testament how Paul had written, "To the Jews I became as a Jew." He had read of the wonderful Matteo Ricci, who at a time when access to China was forbidden to foreigners had turned himself into a Chinese, and so had managed to live and preach the Gospel at the very heart of the empire. First impressions, first actions are often best. De Nobili's decision was quickly taken: he must become an Indian to the Indians in order that he might by any means save some.

From the gay apparel of an Italian noble to the long black robe of the Jesuit—that was a great change. From the Jesuit to the Brahmin—this was a change far greater still. From this time on he must forget the speech of his fathers, he must renounce all accustomed food and dress and manners; he must learn no longer even to think his own thoughts, but to accommodate himself in all ways to the mind of the people of the land. He appears now with his head completely shaven, except for a tuft of hair at the back; he wears the orange robe of the ascetic; over his left shoulder is slung the sacred thread, the mark of the twice-born (he makes his differently from that of the Brahmin, but at a little distance it is not distinguishable); in colour, he is probably not very different from the fairer among the Brahmins, though it may be that he uses dyes to make the resemblance greater. To

the casual eye he is now inconspicuous, as one of the holy men of India.

There follow long and patient years of language study. Tamil is the hardest of the spoken languages of India; its classical form is very different from the language of every day. Very few of the Roman Catholic missionaries had troubled to learn an Indian language; there were no regular grammars or dictionaries, and hardly any printed books. All had to be learnt from native teachers, using books written on strips of palm-leaf—a heart-breaking process. It was not long before de Nobili was able to talk with fair fluency in Tamil. Then he set himself another and yet more difficult task. No European had as yet mastered Sanskrit, the classical language of India; very few were even aware of its existence. Even with all modern aids there is no short cut to its mastery; it is a slow, laborious task, not to be attempted by any except those who have a real delight in languages. But de Nobili was not to be defeated. He was not technically a first-class scholar; and he left no grammar or written aid to those who should come after. Language as such did not delight him; knowledge of the languages of India was simply a tool needed for the work to which he had set his hand, and therefore he applied himself with unwearied zeal to gain it. The patience of a Dutch scholar has identified most of the Sanskrit quotations in de Nobili's writings. These show that he had a wide and accurate knowledge of some of the most important works; it seems that he paid special attention to the Laws of Manu, the great law-book of the Hindus, a most useful study for one

who was trying to understand the inmost mind of the people, and himself to live among them after their customs.

At last real work could begin. De Nobili had separated himself from all contact with Europeans, and would not even see Father Fernandez, who was working among the lower classes. He built himself a chapel in the Brahmin quarter, where he lived in the greatest simplicity, receiving all who came to him and arguing about the divine law. Madura was at that time the centre of considerable intellectual activity, and there were many ready to listen to the new teacher, who spoke in terms which they could understand. There were some who went even further. Intellectually, at least, they were willing to accept the new doctrine and to welcome Christ as the fulfilment of all that they had sought in their own religion. By years of labour on the old method not a single man of respectable caste had been converted. De Nobili had not been working a full year before Brahmins began to be baptized. On 8th October 1609, after four years' work, he wrote :

> As soon as I knew this language, I began openly and privately to dispute with many people, and often with the Brahmins, who are the learned of this land ; and it has pleased the Lord that already we have begun to have success ; as our Lord has opened the eyes of many. In this year, fifty more have been converted, and as this place is the capital, in learning as well as politically, it is more difficult that one should be converted here than many elsewhere.

Naturally these conversions could not pass without arousing opposition from the Brahmins of the

place. It was not long before they found the most deadly weapon with which to attack the work of de Nobili. For all his care in changing his appearance and associating himself with the people, it was not difficult for intelligent men to discover that the religion he taught was the same as that of the black-robed Jesuit padres, and to draw the conclusion that de Nobili was a Prangui. It would follow that all who joined him would become Pranguis, and lose all the privileges of their caste. To counteract this suspicion, de Nobili wrote out, and hung up publicly from a tree, his famous proclamation :

> I am not a Prangui. I was not born in the land of the Pranguis, nor am I linked to the caste of the Pranguis. God is my witness, and, if I lie, apart from my being a rebel against God, and destining myself for the fires of hell, I am prepared to endure all imaginable punishments here upon earth. I was born in Rome. My family there has the status which belongs to the most eminent Rajas. . . . The holy spiritual law which I preach does not bind anyone to renounce his caste, or to do anything which contradicts the doctrine of caste. . . . Anyone who imagined that this law was intended only for Parias or Pranguis would be guilty of a great sin ; since God is the Lord of all castes, his law must be observed by all.

This document deserves close study. How far is it truth ? How far was it consciously intended to deceive ? It is clear that much turns on the meaning of the word " Prangui." Did it mean simply " Portuguese," or had it the wider meaning of foreigners in general ? De Nobili would, no doubt, have been able to make out a good but not conclusive case for the narrower sense. He would have

maintained that the whole success of his work depended on separating himself entirely from the Portuguese tradition, so relieving Christianity of the terrible weight of contempt and hatred by which it was unnecessarily burdened in India. Later history has shown that all duplicity and concealment are fatal to the real progress of the Gospel.

De Nobili's attitude to caste serves as a key to his whole programme. His aim was to change as little in the outward status of his converts as possible. Everything in Hindu customs and usage which was not positively idolatrous was to be conserved and taken over into the Church. Caste he regarded as simply political in character, and as having no religious significance at all. There was no question of his converts "coming out" and leaving their homes; they should conform sufficiently to Hindu customs to be able to go on living with their families. It is the custom of the Brahmins and other "twice-born" castes to wear a sacred thread from the left shoulder; Christian Brahmins should continue to wear a thread, but it should be of different material and put on without the ceremonies of heathenism. In order to maintain Hindu distinctions within the Christian community, de Nobili was prepared to accept the complete division of the Church into two. The Brahmins were to be ministered to by a higher grade of missionaries called *Saniyāsis*, who imitated in everything the Indian religious mendicant; the lower classes were to have *Pandāraswāmis*, who would follow the habits of non-Brahmin religious teachers. The *Pandāraswāmis* could not minister to the Brahmins,

who would not receive them; ministers of the Brahmins would do nothing for the lower castes, lest association with them might mean the loss of all that they had gained among the Brahmins. The situation was not unlike that which St Paul had to face in Antioch, when even Peter withdrew and would not eat with the Gentiles. We can imagine what Paul's comments would have been on the methods of de Nobili.

The accommodation-method, as it came to be called, was not without determined critics. It was the complete reversal of all that had been practised in missions for a hundred years. There were not lacking those who even said that de Nobili had renounced Christianity and gone over to Hinduism. It is not necessary here to go over all the tedious controversy. Criticism raged for a century, until the matter was finally settled by the Bull of Pope Benedict XIV in 1744. While the excesses of de Nobili's method were condemned and forbidden, his general principle that Christianity must be presented to India in an Indian form was accepted and authorized by Rome.

In the meantime, the new method had become more firmly established and had proved itself astonishingly successful. When de Nobili died in 1656 the Church was well established in several directions. In 1676 it is recorded that "the total number of Christians in this mission is fifty thousand, but the total of baptisms up till the present exceeds sixty thousand." For a hundred and fifty years the missionaries followed the practice of identification with the people of the country. They lived in native huts, they used only Indian food, abstaining

entirely from meat. The hardships of such a life without any of the amenities of modern comfort in the tropics can hardly be imagined. The statistics of the mission are doubtful, but in almost every year of which we have direct record the number of adult baptisms seems to have been not less than a thousand.

In spite of this, it seems that not more than thirty-three thousand Christians were left at the end of the eighteenth century, after a time of great disorganization. De Nobili's method must stand or fall by its success among the Brahmins, whom he particularly set out to win. It is just here that the evidence is most depressing. In 1645 it is stated quite definitely that only twenty-six Brahmin Christians remained, the fruit of forty years of work. Of these not one single one was to be found in Madura, the headquarters of the mission. We are bound to ask ourselves whether there was not some fatal defect in the method, whether its great success in extension was not neutralized by lack of depth and permanence.

In India no high caste convert stands firm to the end unless he is prepared to renounce himself and follow Christ to the uttermost. Almost the first cross that he must carry is the renunciation of caste; he must be willing to give up his family and his home for Christ's sake. Many compromises have been tried, but in the end all have been found to fail. The success of a Church in South India is exactly proportionate to its success in dealing with this problem. Social usages may be left untouched; the Brahmin cannot renounce the tradition of learning and leadership which has always been his.

But in all that directly concerns the faith, absolute equality is the only rule of the Church. The Brahmin who is ordained to minister must be willing to visit the home of the outcaste, and to sit with those whose presence, in his Hindu days, he would have considered polluting. If the pariah is ordained to the ministry, the Brahmin layman must rejoice to receive the Cup of salvation at his hands.

The Roman Catholic Church in South India has never been able to free itself from the consequences of de Nobili's initial error. Reaction against his method of reaching India by Indian means was inevitable, but has gone much farther than was necessary or right. The middle of the nineteenth century was the great age of Europeanism in India. The English language and English civilization appealed to India with all the force of novelty and all the attractiveness of a great deliverance. Imitation of everything from the West became the fashion, until educated Indian gentlemen prided themselves on being unable to speak the language of their own country. Missionaries had tremendous confidence in the excellence of all that they brought with them from Britain, and wished their converts to become as much like Englishmen as possible. Since contact was closer and more intimate in the Church than in society, it was in the Church that the current set most strongly against all things Indian and in favour of approximation to the West. Christianity in India to-day presents itself as an alien religion.

To attend Sunday service in any of the greater churches in South India is an astonishing experience. The little choir-boys, in cassock and surplice, come

maintained that the whole success of his work depended on separating himself entirely from the Portuguese tradition, so relieving Christianity of the terrible weight of contempt and hatred by which it was unnecessarily burdened in India. Later history has shown that all duplicity and concealment are fatal to the real progress of the Gospel.

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in procession exactly as they would in England. The moment the minister begins reading one knows instinctively, though the language is unknown, that what he is saying is "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places." The *Venite* follows to a well known Anglican chant quite inappropriate to Indian rhythms. We can at once recognize the hymns by their English tunes. In fact, the only part of the service which makes us feel that we are out of England are one or two lyrics, set to adaptations of real Indian tunes; and the comparative apathy of the congregation shows that this is the part of the service in which they take the slightest interest.[1] No doubt the fault originally was in the lack of vision of the earlier missionaries; but all these things have become a tradition, and now "my people love to have it so." Innovation, especially in Church worship, is no more welcome in South India than it is in England.

When the new currents of nationalism began to flow and quicken the life of India, the Church remained for a good many years unaffected. Church opinion was in the main very conservative; only a few ardent spirits looked ahead to the vision of a truly Indian Church playing its part in the social and political life of the country. It was not until the second decade of this century that the Nationalist movement kindled responsive ardour in the minds of the younger Christians. But for a few brief years at the end of the nineteenth century it seemed as though de Nobili had found a worthy

[1] I have described the Anglican service with which I am familiar; but what is written here would be in the main true of other Churches, with the necessary modifications.

successor, one who could lead the Indian Church forward on the way that he had marked out.

On 2nd February 1861 Bhawani Charan Banerjee was born in a village a few miles north of Calcutta, the child of a Brahmin family of good position. Over his formative years played many and various influences. As a Brahmin he naturally learned Sanskrit, the sacred language, and all his life it was his great delight to thread with confidence the maze of Hindu philosophy. His school and college days were passed in the great institutions of the Scottish Churches; here he learned to use the English language with a fluency and eloquence equalled by hardly any of his contemporaries. But the deepest influence of all was that of Keshub Chundar Sen, whose ardent spirit followed eagerly all that he could see of good in any religious system, but who welcomed with special delight the grace of Jesus Christ. Though Keshub seemed always on the point of confessing Christ as Lord, he never joined the Church by baptism. But all who came under his influence were drawn nearer to the reality and power of Christ.

It was while young Banerjee was working with a group of friends in a school in Sindh that all the complex influences of his early life found their unity through faith in Christ. On 28th February 1891 he was baptized in the Anglican Church in Haiderabad. He was never in any real sense of the word an Anglican; restless by nature he passed rapidly from one thing to another, and a few months later was received into the Roman Catholic Church. He took the name by which he was to be known for the rest of his life—Brahmabandhav,

an Indian adaptation of Theophilus, the beloved of God.

From this time onwards for nearly ten years, Brahmabandhav was an ardent Christian apologist and preacher. Christian truth was once again to be brought to India in Indian guise. He had mastered the secrets of Indian philosophy, he was a ready writer and speaker in the English language. To these advantages he now added a deep study of the Bible and of Roman Catholic theology; his nimble intellect found special satisfaction in the subtle reasoning of the scholastic philosophy. In January 1894 appeared the first number of the monthly paper *Sophia*, in which he set out to reveal Christian truth to the educated public of India. Many of the greatest truths about God, so his argument ran, were known to the most ancient thinkers of India, those of the Vedas. Later, instead of progressing into fuller knowledge, Indian thought had taken the barren turning of pantheism, and so what should have been a life-giving stream had lost itself in the arid sands of mere speculation. Now by the divine revelation in Christ Indian thought was to be called back to reality, and its wonderful powers of insight and subtle reasoning employed in the elucidation of the mysteries of Christ.

For a time, fortune smiled on all the enterprises of the young enthusiast. Devoted disciples surrounded him. The authorities of the Church were favourable. Distinguished missionaries helped him with contributions for the magazine. More than once he toured India giving public lectures, in which his knowledge of the great traditions of India

and his passionate Christian conviction, clothed in beautiful and dignified language, secured for him the almost wondering attention of crowded audiences. It seemed as though Brahmabandhav might be the destined prophet to lead India to the feet of Christ.

Towards the end of the century clouds began to appear on the horizon. The career of Brahmabandhav, both in its triumphs and its failures, is parabolic of the difficulties that the Church must meet before India is fully baptized into Christ.

At first he had spoken with no uncertain voice. Truth must be expressed to India in the language of the ancient sacred books; but it must be Christian truth, pure and undefiled, the full revelation of God in Christ. But gradually a different note began to make itself heard. If new wine is poured into old bottles it may easily become impregnated with some flavour of the old. What, it was asked, is this young man trying to do? Is he trying to combine Hindu with Christian thought? Are the Upanishads a vehicle of revelation equal to the Scriptures? Is Christianity to lose its uniqueness and be brought down to the level of the other religions? At first, suspicion; then hostility; and finally, open condemnation. The authorities of the Roman Church banned all Brahmabandhav's publications and forbade the faithful to read them. As long as he lived he never recovered their confidence.

At first, Brahmabandhav had protested only against the excessive Europeanization of missions; to make Indian Christians poor imitation Europeans was to interpose needless obstacles between India and Christ. English knowledge and culture are a

means for the enrichment of India's ancient heritage, not a substitute for it. But here again, under the influence of Nationalism, the note gradually changes. It is foreign rule which has degraded and impoverished India. Western knowledge can contribute little or nothing of value which India does not already possess. Industrialism is the gangrene of society. The British government is the great foe of all progress in society and in true religion. Towards the close of his life Brahmabandhav threw himself with all his heart into the most violent section of anti-British politics. He died in hospital on 27th October 1907, in immediate expectation of arrest and trial for sedition, which would almost certainly have led to his condemnation.

Here we see illustrated the two perils which must be avoided by the Church in India in all its attempts to be truly Indian. First, it must be unmistakably and definitely Christian. Indian thought can give form to the message of Christ, but it must not change its essential content. The ancient terms must be filled with new meaning, baptized into Christ. But the tendency of the Indian mind has always been towards syncretism—the fusion into one of different systems of thought. When the early Church was brought into close contact with the thought and tradition of Greece, every kind of heresy grew and flourished and was only gradually weeded out through the fuller understanding of the truth. History leads us to expect that the same thing may happen in the Church of India; much watchfulness will be needed to ensure that any heresies which may arise are only imperfect expressions of the truth and not corruptions of it.

On the other hand, it would be a real disaster if the Church in India settled down to be severely national and tried to cut itself loose entirely from the traditions of the West. The days are long past in which the missionary appeared as the ruler of the Church, and wished to make it conform in everything to his own ideas. But the Indian Church is as yet very far from having learned and gained all that it can from the Church in the West. What is needed is not a wholly fresh start in worship and Church life, but a glad acceptance of all that the past can offer, with, at the same time, an independent spirit of criticism, adaptation and enlargement. This is most likely to be achieved where the possible opposition between European and Indian is overcome in frank and loving companionship.

The Cathedral at Dornakal stands as a fingerpost on the new way that the Church may tread. Its Indian Bishop, more than perhaps any other Indian Christian, has understood how to gain the learning and traditions of the West without losing anything of the Indian heritage. The Cathedral is Indian in architecture. The framework of the services is the traditional Anglican prayer book, but treated with breadth and freshness of adaptation. The *Te Deum* is still sung as a link with the Christianity of Ambrose and Augustine, but it appears now in new dress as a Telugu lyric, readily sung to the music with which the people have been familiar from birth. The Bishop is experimenting with a marriage service in which old village customs, purified and Christianized, enrich the old Christian ceremonial. The whole aim of the new worship is that the Indian, especially the convert, should feel

at home in the house of God, that he should bring of his inheritance to the feet of Christ. When Christianity in India loses the last trace of its alien garb, we shall be able to say with the Psalmist :

> " *I was glad when they said unto me : We will go into the house of the Lord.*
> *Our feet shall stand in thy gates : O Jerusalem.*"

CHAPTER V

AND THE VILLAGES THEREOF

Christian Friedrich Schwartz and his Successors

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the missionaries in India were all Roman Catholics. For two hundred years the only official representatives of the Reformed Churches were chaplains of trading settlements, of whom one or two seem to have done something for the spiritual welfare of the Indians. This reproach was taken away by the piety of a single person, King Frederick IV of Denmark. Finding himself ruler of the small Danish dominion of Tranquebar in South India, he desired to make known the Gospel to Indians; having found two suitable men, Germans, he sent them out in 1705 to begin the Danish Royal Mission to India.

Tranquebar is still to the Church in India holy ground. The fort to-day is one of the quietest places under the sun, but in outward aspect it has changed little since Ziegenbalg and Plütschau, the earliest missionaries, saw for the first time, on 9th July, 1705, the austere lines of the governor's castle, the one or two streets of big houses where the Danish merchants lived, and the crowded lanes of the Indian town. There was nothing at first to encourage the newcomers; the Indians were completely indifferent to their message, the Danish

authorities were actively malevolent. On the day of their arrival the travellers were left standing all day in the burning sun, with no one to take them in. Later, Ziegenbalg was imprisoned by order of the Governor. Old residents impressed upon them the futility of their enterprise: "at all times the impossibility of succeeding in our aim was held up to us." In spite of all, the pioneers held their ground. Converts came in small numbers, a little church was built for them, then the church became too small and had to be replaced by the great Jerusalem Church which is still used for divine service. A printing-press began to pour forth tracts and Gospels, now for the first time translated into Tamil, and the Good News began to spread beyond the confines of Tranquebar and into the neighbouring kingdom of Tanjore. In the first thirty-three years of the mission, three thousand seven hundred and sixty-six converts and children were baptized.

Very few of the pioneers of the early days saw their homeland again. There is a noble monotony in the register of the missionaries at Tranquebar:

> J. Chr. Wiedebrock . . . laboured at Tranquebar nearly 30 years, died 7 April 1767, and was buried in the N.J. [New Jerusalem] Churchyard.
>
> J. Balthasar Kohloff . . . laboured at Tranquebar more than 53 years, died there 17 December 1790, and was buried in N.J. Churchyard.
>
> Dan Zeglin . . . laboured nearly forty years at Tranquebar, died there in May 1780, and was buried in N.J. Churchyard.
>
> Jac. Klein . . . laboured at Tranquebar nearly forty-four years, died there 18 May 1790, and was buried in N.J. Churchyard.

The laconic words of the chronicle cover unwearied devotion and patience. But there was a real danger that the horizon of missionary work might be unduly restricted to the faithful preformance of duties in school and Church in the territory already occupied. While those four sober veterans were still in possession of the field, God brought to their aid the man who was to carry forward the mission to an extension and an influence of which an older generation had not dreamed. On 30th July 1750 the ship set down at Cuddalore three young recruits: one of them was Christian Friedrich Schwartz.

There was nothing at first in Schwartz to give promise of his future eminence. On his arrival at Tranquebar he sank almost at once into the routine of everyday mission work—catechising in the schools, preaching in the villages, and in the scattered Christian congregations. He was not by nature a scholar, but by steady plodding he made himself master of Tamil, the most difficult language in India. He also learned Portuguese, in order to be able to minister to the mixed population of half Indian descent. Later he was able to preach and write fluently in English, and, as he was brought into touch with new groups of people, he added to his other languages Persian, Hindustani, and Marathi. But the best gift brought by these hidden years of preparation was his perfect knowledge and understanding of the people.

At last, in 1762, the way opened for Schwartz to undertake a wider work. The Danish missionaries were not allowed to reside outside the territory of Tranquebar, but some of them had made long

journeys in the interior, and the New Testaments and tracts which issued from the mission press were circulated far and wide through the country. Gradually little groups of Christians were formed over a wider area, of which the chief towns are Trichinopoly, with its great temple built on the Rock, and the royal city of Tanjore, a centre of the strictest Brahminical faith. Schwartz travelled from time to time among these Christians; his absences grew from weeks to months; and at last, though some of the brethren at Tranquebar grew restive and would gladly have recalled him, it became clear that God was calling him to make his home in Trichinopoly. This involved a change in his status and in his relation to the home Churches. The first stirrings of missionary revival had begun to animate the Church of England, but had not yet produced any English missionaries. A curious dual arrangement was made, by which England sent the money and Germany the men. The English S.P.C.K. took over financial responsibility for the stations of the Danish mission outside the territory of the King of Denmark. Schwartz had gone out as a royal missionary, but when he entered the English sphere of influence it was arranged that he should be transferred to what was called the English mission; and thus it came about that England has a share in the life and work of one of the greatest of missionaries to India.

We have a delightful picture of Schwartz in his Trichinopoly period from the pen of a British officer, who was not at first favourable to missionary work:

My ideas of him were very imperfect, and I mixed up what I heard in his praise with an idea of gloomy melancholy and extravagant severity. But the first sight of this man made me give up my pre-conceived ideas. Certainly his dress was worn and of a very old-fashioned make, but in his whole appearance there was something exactly the reverse of what one could call dismal or repelling. Picture to yourself a well-grown man, somewhat above middle height, holding himself naturally yet erect, of rather dark yet healthy complexion, with black curly hair and a powerful manly glance expressing unaffected modesty, uprightness and benevolence, and then you have an idea of the impression which the first sight of Schwartz makes on a stranger. A plateful of rice, boiled after the fashion of the country with a few vegetables, formed the daily meal to which he sat down with a cheerful countenance; and a piece of native cloth dyed black formed the material of his dress for a year. Thus raised above all earthly cares, his whole attention is turned towards spreading the Gospel. He was untiring in making it known both to the natives in town and in the outlying villages, and before long a congregation of converted Hindus was assembled round him. Among these were three or four who soon became assistants to him in his work. These he fed daily at his table, and did all that he could for their support out of his own income.

Seven years passed very quickly. Schwartz was constantly occupied, preaching to the English garrison, visiting sick soldiers, evangelizing in season and out of season, building up his helpers in the faith. He was more than forty years of age, and he had not yet begun the great work of his life. Gradually it became clear to him that Tanjore was to be the centre of his labours; but another nine years were to pass before he was able at last to make Tanjore his home.

He was drawn to Tanjore by his first interview with the King, Tulasi Raja, on 3rd June 1769. After being kept waiting all day he was at last ushered into the king's presence, and invited to sit down about twelve feet away from him. Schwartz greeted the king, praying that God might send down all blessings upon him; the Persian interpreter would not translate this phrase, but when another told the king what the foreign padre had said he was not at all affronted, and answered simply, "He is a priest." He then asked several questions, and Schwartz obtained permission to give an outline of the doctrines of the Christian faith, speaking in Tamil in order that all who stood by might understand. He spoke of the folly and vanity of idolatry, and ended with an exposition of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Refreshments were then brought in, and Schwartz, explaining that Christians never eat without first giving thanks to God, asked and obtained permission to offer Christian prayer. The king had heard much of Christian hymns, and asked to hear one. Schwartz had come prepared, and sang to him an old German chorale in the Tamil translation of Fabricius. When they parted the king was visibly impressed; for many years it was the constant aim of Schwartz to bring him to full faith in Christ, but Tulasi Raja had weakened his will by sensuality and drunkenness, and he never shook off the ascendancy of counsellors who set themselves to counteract the influence of the missionary. Tulasi died in 1787, faithful in his friendship for Schwartz, but still outwardly professing the faith of his fathers.

It was not so much the gifts as the character of

Schwartz which gave him a commanding position among all the Indians and Europeans of his time. It was an age of universal corruption. Many of the Europeans in the service of the East India Company, and all of those in the service of the Indian princes, were adventurers, eager for gain and unscrupulous in their dealings with Indians. Not all missionaries were proof against the hope of gain: one good man, through unwise speculation, lost not only all his own property but nearly the whole of that which belonged to the mission as well. Schwartz was seen by other men as a pillar, erect and unshaken, inaccessible to the temptations which beset lesser men. He received many gifts from rulers, Indian and European, and died a rich man, but no man ever breathed a word against his perfect integrity. The power of this man was strikingly shown when a period almost of starvation came upon Tanjore through the devastation of practically ceaseless war. The peasants in the villages had hidden away their stores of grain, and neither the promises of the British authorities nor the threats of the king's men could persuade them to disgorge. Then Schwartz went out into the country round about. He gave his word that fair payment would be made for everything brought in; his word was enough, the hidden resources began to appear, and Tanjore was saved.

Tulasi Raja's successor was his brother, Amer Singh. After some years his misgovernment grew so intolerable that he was removed from control by the British, and powers of government were entrusted to a council of three, consisting of two British officers and Schwartz. When the officers

disagreed, and this was not seldom, Schwartz, who had the casting vote, became practically ruler of the country. For two years he was actually invested with all the powers of British Resident. Among the people he came to be known generally as the "priest-king of Tanjore." Inevitably his occupation with the affairs of justice and government absorbed much of his time, but his eminence in the state never turned him aside from the simplicity of his earlier habits, or from his supreme devotion to the task of a Christian missionary. The chief man of the state wearing his old-fashioned black coat could be seen every morning in the boys' school which he had established, teaching the simplest lessons, or personally meeting candidates for baptism and spending hours in their preparation. As distress increased, and Schwartz's reputation and official position grew higher, the number of enquirers rose. At the time of his death the Church in Tanjore and its neighbourhood numbered more than two thousand, of whom the great majority had been gathered in by Schwartz and his Indian helpers.

Schwartz never returned to Europe. He laboured continuously and almost without rest for forty-eight years. When he died the whole country mourned as for a father. One of his colleagues wrote:

> The grief was universal at the loss of their teacher, comforter, instructor, benefactor, counsellor, pastor. It was not only we, the congregation, the schools and the mission who had lost a father, but the whole country. Wherever he was known, tears were falling. . . . The servant of the departed stood near me and said in a low

voice, 'Now is our beloved gone!' This went to my heart, for this was not the saying of one, but of many, old and young, high and low, friends and strangers, Christians and heathens, all spoke alike.

The best evidence of the universal veneration in which he was held is the monument to his memory set up in the Fort Church at Madras by order of that very East India Company which at the same time was persecuting missionaries in Bengal, and trying to drive them out of India. The inscription concludes:

> He during a period of fifty years went about doing good; manifesting in respect of himself, the most entire abstraction from temporal views, but embracing every opportunity of promoting both the temporal and eternal welfare of others. For him religion appeared not with a gloomy aspect or forbidding mien, but with a graceful form and placid dignity.

The life of Schwartz is a noble illustration of the law that the instrument of God for the conversion of the world is the life of a perfectly consecrated man. It shows too the impermanence of the work of an individual unless it grows into a living fellowship which abides after the individual has been withdrawn. It is disappointing to find that the Church in India after the death of Schwartz lost much of the ground that he had gained. Most of the blame for this must undoubtedly rest with the Churches at home. In 1801 Schwartz's ward, Serfogee Raja, the adopted son of Tulasi, wrote to the S.P.C.K., "O, gentlemen, that you were but able to send missionaries here who should resemble the departed Schwartz!" This was the tragedy.

Faith and fire had sunk low in the Churches. The missionaries who were left were good men, but they lacked the passion and the power of Schwartz.

But there were errors of method in the eighteenth century which had to be corrected in the nineteenth, before the Church could be so firmly rooted in the soil of India as to grow and develop of itself. The work of Schwartz was enormously extended: his congregations stretched over an area two hundred miles in length by more than a hundred in breadth, at a time when the ordinary rate of travel was twenty miles a day. Schools were started in some places, but little was done to train Christian masters, and few Church members could read or write. The missionaries did occasionally ordain Indians to the ministry, but the number of Indian priests remained very small, and congregations were left for years together without the ministry of the sacraments. Schwartz himself was never married; and even in stations where there were missionary wives little definite work seems to have been done for the uplift of Indian women. But the greatest weakness of all was that the whole work was centred in the missionaries; their control did not allow room for the Indian Church to develop a strong and firm life of its own.

The nineteenth century introduced two new factors into the situation—the firm establishment of British rule, and the entry of Anglo-Saxon Christianity into the field. After Schwartz's death the most distant and neglected of his stations suddenly grew and blossomed, and became in half a century the centre of the greatest missionary Church in India. The first church register of Palamcottah, in the

extreme south of India, is dated 1780, and consists of forty names. Schwartz had not been long in his grave when, to the south-east of Palamcottah, an extraordinary movement towards Christianity broke out. Within a few months in the years 1802 and 1803 nearly five thousand people were baptized. In 1835 the Tinnevelly work was reorganized and strongly staffed by the two great societies of the Anglican Church, the C.M.S. and the S.P.G. When the first centenary was observed in 1880, it was found that in an area of about five thousand square miles there were in connection with the Church of England over fifty-nine thousand baptized Christians and over thirty-eight thousand enquirers. The gathering in of this large increase was the work of men who were giants in their day, scholars, statesmen, and saints. As against Schwartz's policy of diffusion and sole missionary responsibility, they were to show the advantage of concentration on the development of an Indian ministry, ordained and lay, and the building up of a self-supporting, self-governing Indian Church.

The most complete and rounded piece of service was rendered by a man whose very name to-day is unknown except to experts in missionary history. A Welshman, John Thomas, was sent by the C.M.S. to Tinnevelly in 1838, and assigned as his station Megnanapuram, the village of true wisdom. When he first saw it, it was a sandy wilderness, producing thorny shrubs and the invaluable palmyra palm. Thomas lived there for almost a third of a century. Before he died the desert had been made to rejoice and to blossom as the rose. The garden of his bungalow was filled with fruit and flowers; his village is now

shaded by graceful and mighty trees and coconut palms. When he went there, Christians were few, neglected and ignorant; when he died, there was a compact, well-organized and well-instructed body of eleven thousand Christians. Long before this number had been reached Thomas saw into the future with the eye of faith, and decided that the Christians must have a great and glorious church in which to worship God. This was long before men had thought of trying to adapt Indian architecture to Christian uses; and as the wilderness in which he lived contained little but single-storied huts, it is not surprising that Thomas thought he could not do better than copy exactly a beautiful English church. In 1849 the great Church of St Paul was completed; fifteen hundred worshippers are not overcrowded in it. Its spire, a hundred and ninety-two feet in height, is seen from far away rising out of the surrounding green—a silent witness for Christ, and a moving testimony to the faith and vision of the pioneer.

It is obvious that one or two men could not deal with the innumerable enquirers, each of whom needed to be individually instructed and tested before being baptized. The great growth was only possible and permanent because the Tinnevelly mission had developed the principle that the missionary must do his work through the training of Indian helpers. Every congregation must have a school, every teacher must be a true Christian, and he must be in regular and constant touch with the missionary. Many of the teachers were at first ignorant and unsatisfactory men; but every Saturday they were brought in to headquarters to

be taught the Bible and the elements of sermon-making, to be advised and exhorted and encouraged. Gradually the incompetent were weeded out, and Thomas saw himself surrounded by men whom he had known and loved in his own school. Many of them responded to his teaching, and grew in grace and knowledge. The older among them became tried and trusted friends. Then Thomas went a step forward. The village congregations needed the ministrations of ordained men which the two missionaries were wholly unable to supply. Why should not some of these village teachers be brought forward to be admitted to the ministry of the Church? The battle was joined for the creation of a village ministry in India.

The general idea a hundred years ago was that Indians should not be admitted to the ministry until they could compete on fairly equal terms with missionaries trained in the West, in Greek and Hebrew and divinity. It is very remarkable that any Indians of that day were able to meet these exacting demands; the number of those ordained in the early days was very small, but the men were of striking ability and some of them did splendid work for the Church. Progress, however, was very slow, and the number was quite inadequate to meet the demands of the rapidly growing Church. Tinnevelly boasted one dignified Indian clergyman, the Rev. John Devasahayam, ordained in 1832, a pillar of the Church till his death in 1864. No other ordination took place till 1849, when one of the two candidates was John Devasahayam's son.

In the meantime, Thomas had intervened with his proposal that a new class of Indian minister

should be created, that candidates should not be required to learn English, but should be taught in their own language all that they needed to know for village work. There were long and serious debates. Most of the men who would come forward would be recent converts. Would they have sufficient stability and depth of Christian experience to bear responsibility? Would not the dignity of the ministry be seriously impaired by admitting to it men of such inferior qualifications? Would it be possible to class together missionaries and Indians, equal as touching their ministry, but utterly unequal in training and knowledge of the world? There was force in all these objections, but by degrees opposition was worn away, and consent was obtained from the higher authorities. The missionaries met and solemnly chose the first six candidates, and the new ordination class met for the first time on 3rd December 1846.[1] The ordination took place in 1851. From the very first the experiment was a complete success. The men were carefully chosen, their heads were not turned by their new dignity, they proved diligent, sober and effective; and the village congregations gained greatly by having in their midst men who could supply the fuller ministrations which laymen are not allowed to give. Fresh classes of students were formed; ordinations were held in 1856 and 1859, and by 1880 the number of Indian clergymen had risen to ninety. Other Churches and missions began to notice what had been done in Tinnevelly, and to develop similar

[1] The grandson of one of these six men is at the time of writing Vicar of Megnanapuram, and in charge of about half of Thomas's old district, with a Christian population of close on ten thousand people.

plans. A great step forward had been taken in freeing the Church in India from the control of the missionary and establishing it on its own feet as the Church of the Indian people.

Of most of the Indian clergy of that time little can be said except that they were found faithful in their day and generation. But God raises up prophets in unexpected ways; and in turning over old records the historian finds traces of men who rose surprisingly above the limitations of their education and origin. Among the men ordained at Megnanapuram in 1856 was a catechist named Paul Daniel, who knew not a word of English and had never been in any regular theological institution. The day after his ordination he preached at the early morning service in the great church, and from that moment took his place as one of the most eloquent of Tamil preachers. "He never took so much as a scrap of paper into the pulpit in the form of notes, and yet he always rigidly adhered to his text. His imagination was fertile, and his resources in illustration inexhaustible; his language clear, copious, appropriate and euphonious in the highest degree. . . . One of the Christians, when referring to his preaching after his death, remarked that his words poured out of his mouth like pearls on a string." Thomas, hearing him preach, recorded his impression: "This man is at perfect ease when descanting upon the mysteries of religion, and has penetrated further within the veil than anyone I ever met before." Paul Daniel was not long spared to use his gifts for the good of the Church; in 1860 cholera broke out, and while visiting a woman who was suffering from this deadly disease he caught the

infection himself, and died three days later. Those who had watched his life were convinced that what they saw was no mere flowering of human abilities, but the direct working of the Spirit of God upon a man guided to His purpose. "He was also a man of prayer. You felt that, as soon as he knelt down and opened his lips in supplication, he was engaged in no strange work, but in that which was familiar to him; he was in his element."

A mission of the Church of England is not complete without its bishop. The Tinnevelly Christians were under the fatherly superintendence of the Bishop of Madras, but he was far away and could not visit them more than once in three or four years. This caused various inconveniences, and from time to time proposals were made to erect Tinnevelly into an independent bishopric. Thomas and his friends viewed the proposals with suspicion; at that date the bishop would inevitably be a European, and they were already looking forward to the day, not far distant as they hoped, when an Indian Bishop of Tinnevelly would gather round him a purely Indian ministry, and the missionaries would be free to go on to other regions as yet untouched by the Gospel. In 1864 Samuel Crowther, the freed slave, was consecrated Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa; if Africa, sunk in ignorance and barbarism, could in a single generation produce its own bishop, why not India, with its age-long tradition of seeking after God and its eminence in literature and philosophy? Unhappily, the development of the Tinnevelly Church has not wholly fulfilled the promise of its earlier days. Seven bishops have

been appointed to work in that field, but every one of them has been a European.

Nevertheless, Thomas's vision has become fact, though not in the way that he anticipated. Among the early converts at Megnanapuram was a simple peasant, whose son, being intelligent, was chosen as a teacher and catechist. Thomas Vedanagayam was not highly educated, but the spirit of God was with him, and because he was faithful in lower things, God called him to higher. In the great ordination of 1869, the year before John Thomas died, he was presented to his Bishop to be ordained deacon. The whole of his ministry was passed in one village, three miles from Megnanapuram, where there is a congregation of nearly a thousand people. At his death, he left behind him two clever sons. The elder, Ambrose, had just become Headmaster of the new high school at Megnanapuram; he had had little education, but by his own efforts he had taught himself Latin and Greek and Sanskrit, and had risen to be a graduate of Madras University. He continued his work for twenty-three years, old-fashioned but alert, and one of the most original of Indian Christians. Faith in God was always put first in his school, and the Bible knowledge of his boys became proverbial throughout the East. The other brother, twenty-three years younger, was just preparing for the matriculation examination at the time of his father's death. He passed two years ahead of the average age. More fortunate than his brother, Samuel Azariah was sent to college, though illness prevented him from taking his degree. Then he took up work for the Y.M.C.A., and very soon, in work for boys and children or amongst students,

this young man came to be known as one of the ablest and most earnest speakers in South India. In 1903 the Church in Tinnevelly launched out upon a new adventure. For a hundred years the Indian Church had been receiving gifts and help from England, and by using them wisely had prospered and grown strong; now it was felt to be time that the Tinnevelly Church should learn to give and send forth to others. The Indian Missionary Society was formed, as the outlet for the generosity and zeal of South Indian Christians, a sphere for their work was chosen, not in their own country, where Tamil is spoken, but farther north in the Telugu land, where the great mass movement was taxing the resources of the Church to the utmost. The first secretary of the new society was Samuel Azariah; no one better could have been found to arouse enthusiasm and to call out the spirit of sacrifice in the Tinnevelly Church. Some years later he gave up his work with the Y.M.C.A. in order to be wholly free for missionary work. He was ordained and sent to take charge of the missionary area of the Indian Missionary Society.

Now the time had come for John Thomas's dream to be realized. The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 had emphasized the need for creating leadership in the younger Churches, and for giving to Christians of all countries free scope to develop their gifts. It was decided at last that the Church in India should have a bishop from among its own people. The man chosen was the grandson of Thomas's old convert, the son of the faithful village priest. On 29th December 1912, all the bishops of the Church of England in India met

together and laid their hands upon Vedanagayam Samuel Azariah, setting him apart for God's service as Bishop of Dornakal and first Indian Bishop of the Church.

The history of that episcopate is still being written. Twenty-one years have changed the diocese of Dornakal beyond recognition; they have brought to its bishop added wisdom and spiritual power, and great honour in the counsels of the Church. No other Indian leader has proved quite the equal of Bishop Azariah, and progress has not been so rapid as could have been desired. But the principle has been fully conceded that in the Indian Church Indians must have the final and deciding voice. There are to-day many Indian leaders of power and ability. In 1932 England was thrilled by the Mission of Fellowship from the Indian Church, in which a Syrian, an Anglican, a Presbyterian and a Baptist, under the leadership of Bishop Banerjea, shared with the Christians of the West the great things that God has done for India.

Perhaps the westerner rates too highly brain and administrative abilities; India responds more to the grace of saintliness. It is as true to-day as it was in the days of Schwartz that the power which will win India for Christ is the radiance of His life seen again in men and women wholly devoted to His will.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORD OF THE LORD

William Carey: The Bible for India

On a day in July 1830 two men met at Serampore, not far from Calcutta. As Alexander Duff advanced up the steps from the river, William Carey stretched out his hands and solemnly blessed him. It was the meeting-point of two worlds. By Carey's forty years of Indian service, father Schwartz and the old mission of Tranquebar are linked to the great surging powers of Anglo-Saxon missionary enterprise of the nineteenth century.

The tale of Carey's early years and struggles has often been well told. When the churches of England were sleeping it was God's pleasure to awaken them, through this His chosen man from the poorest of the people, to the immense need of the heathen world for Christ. "I have seen him," wrote one who knew him as a young man, "at work in his leather apron, his books beside him and his beautiful flowers in the window." This is an epitome of all Carey's life: the cobbler—"not even a shoemaker, Sir; just a cobbler, a mender of other men's old shoes"; the student, who raised himself from nothing to be one of the most learned linguists in the world; the lover of beauty, who on his deathbed thought lovingly of his Indian paradise, and said with regret, "After I am gone, brother Marsh-

man will turn the cows into the garden."[1] But the great and consuming passion of Carey's life was the proclamation of the Gospel to the heathen. His great opportunity came when he rose, on 31st May 1792, to preach to the Baptist Association at Nottingham his epoch-making sermon on Isaiah liv. 2-3, with its echoing phrases, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God." When it seemed that once again the claims of a dying world were to be passed off in words without deeds, it was his agonized cry, "Is nothing going to be done, Sir?" which led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society; inevitably Carey was chosen as the first missionary of the Baptists, the first missionary of the churches of England, to the East. On 13th June 1793, he set sail with his young family in a Danish ship, and five months later landed in Calcutta.

The first beginnings of the work were disastrous. The mission party were friendless, their scanty store of money was soon exhausted. Carey was just preparing himself a retreat in the Sundarbans, the unhealthy marshes south of Calcutta, when he was saved by an offer from a pious planter of a salary and the post of manager on an indigo plantation. It is not surprising that the Committee at home wrote out a letter "of serious and affectionate caution" against allowing "the spirit of the missionary to be swallowed up in the pursuits of the merchant." It seemed indeed a paltry ending

[1] Dr Marshman's sense of humour was not his strong point; he replied solemnly, "Far be it from me. Though I have not your botanical tastes, I shall consider the preservation of the garden in which you have taken so much delight as a sacred duty."

to a great enterprise; the man who had come out to preach the Gospel disappeared into the fastnesses of upper Bengal to the tedious task of superintending factory labour. We, looking back, can see that Carey's five hidden years were providentially ordered; he was gaining that intimate acquaintance with Bengali and with the life of the people without which his later work could never have been accomplished.

In 1800 the situation entirely changed, and Carey was enabled to give all his time to the work that had never ceased to be first in his thoughts. Helpers were sent out from England to join him. Almost by chance they lighted upon the one place in Bengal where their work could go on unimpeded: the little Danish settlement of Serampore, sixteen miles from Calcutta, at that time a thriving port and a beautiful commodious town. Now began one of the great partnerships of Church history. Carey we have already seen; he was the best linguist of the party, and by patient plodding and the exact allocation of all his time managed to accomplish almost the work of three men. Ward had been a printer and mainly devoted himself to the work of a printing shop, which gradually grew into a paper-mill and type-foundry as well. But he was a student and evangelist too, a master of colloquial Bengali, who by his apt and ready flow of speech could attract and hold the Hindus of the villages. He had a pleasant gift of humour, was reckoned the best preacher of the mission, and because of his loving heart and winning ways was the most successful in bringing men to Christ. Marshman had been a charity schoolmaster; he

had had no real education, but being possessed of a prodigious memory he had acquired a great fund of general knowledge, to which he was always adding. He was the most widely learned man of Serampore. Unfortunately, the curious cast of his mind which made him approach every object or idea obliquely instead of directly gave an unpleasant impression of crookedness and double-dealing. In spite of many efforts from outside to break their fellowship, the three remained in closest friendship, and their unity in work for Christ was dissolved only by death.

What appeared almost as accident gave them not merely a quiet haven for work, but affluence to carry it on. The great pro-consul Wellesley had decided that the young men sent out by the East India Company to become the rulers of India must be educated for their responsibilities, and established the great college of Fort William where they could be instructed in the learning both of East and West. Carey was called to be teacher of Bengali, to which later Sanskrit and Marathi were to be added. He was appointed at a handsome salary which was later increased. Marshman added to the store by founding excellent schools for the children of Europeans, in which he was helped by that admirable wife of whom it was written, "she possessed a strong mind and a sound judgment, and nothing was ever known to ruffle her temper."

The first aim of "Serampore" was to make the Gospel available in the languages of India. Carey had brought with him from his seclusion the first Bengali New Testament, written out with his own hand on thousands of sheets. This was the first book printed there. This version was afterwards

found to be very defective; Carey set himself to re-translate, and to the end of his life continued the work of revision as edition after edition came from the press. With success, vision became enlarged; Carey, not knowing the number of the languages of India, conceived the ambition of translating the New Testament at least into all of them. The most difficult task of all was the translation of the Bible into Sanskrit, known to very few before Carey learnt it and wrote the grammar. A Sanskrit Bible would be attractive to the learned of the land, who despised the vernaculars, and Sanskrit might become the foundation of other versions, to be made by Indian scholars in the languages which the Serampore missionaries had not time to study. Hindi, Marathi, Oriya, followed. Then the stream became so great that even to enumerate the languages is meaningless except to those who know India well. Not content with India, the three cast their eyes upon the whole East. China was still inaccessible to Europeans, but with the thought that it might be penetrated through the north-east frontier of India, Marshman spent fifteen years in learning Chinese, and produced the first Chinese New Testament.

The men of Serampore recognized that much of their work was rough and inadequate; they were pioneers, and were glad that other workers should follow and surpass them. In the course of Carey's forty years, some part of the Scriptures was made available in languages covering every part of India, except the extreme south-west where Malayalam is spoken. Six complete Bibles were produced, twenty-three New Testaments and smaller portions in five other languages. All of these were either

translated by Carey, or revised by him and printed under his close supervision.

It seems incredible that any man should become master of so many languages. Carey, when asked how it was done, said that "none knew what they could do until they tried," and added by way of explanation that, having thoroughly mastered Bengali, Hindu, Sanskrit, Marathi, Persian, Punjabi, and Telugu, all else was easy; which, of course, is obvious—but most ordinary men find the study of any one of these languages a life work. Carey's achievement was made possible only by unremitting industry and minute attention to the expenditure of time. Here is a specimen day from his diary:

Thursday, June 12, 1806:

5.45-10.0. Heb. chapter. Prayer. Family worship. Persian with Munshi. Hindustani. Bkfast. "Ramayana" with Skt. pundit.
10.0-1.30. College.
1.30-6.0. Dinner. Beng. "Isaiah" proofs. Skt. "Matthew" with Mrityunjay.
6.0-7.0. Tea. Telugu with pundit. Visitor from England.
7.0-9.0. Prepared and preached Eng. sermon to about 40. Got £60 from a judge present for our Calcutta chapel.
9.0-11.0. Beng. "Ezekiel" revision. Letter to Ryland. Gk. Test. Chapter.

It was an amazing record; and this kind of labour, continued for forty years, was enough to remove mountains of ignorance and prejudice in England and in India.

But the printing of the Gospel was only a preparation for the speaking of it and the building up of the living Church. Almost daily some of the party

went out from Serampore for preaching, and as their families grew up and other workers came, the stations of the mission were widely extended. At different times members of the fellowship worked as far afield as Allahabad, Agra, Amboyna, Ceylon, Chittagong and Java. The labourers had to wait years for their first convert, and in that hard soil of Bengal, which has nearly broken the heart of many generations of missionaries, converts never came in great numbers. But slowly and steadily the beginnings of an Indian Church were gathered in. From the first the missionaries were firm in their decision that Christians must become full members of the family of Christ, and that the old power of caste must be completely broken. At the first Indian Christian burial the astonished city saw that the coffin was carried by a Brahmin convert, a Moslem convert and two Europeans.

In 1816, Dr Marshman worked out a complete scheme for the establishment of village vernacular schools. He was convinced that the foundation of education must be the language of the people. "For ideas to be acquired in a foreign language, opportunity, leisure, inclination and ability must combine in the case of each individual. Moreover, instruction to answer its proper design should be such as to render the inhabitants of any country happy in their own sphere, and not to take them out of it. But those who acquired a knowledge of English would scarcely remain tilling the ground or labouring at a manual occupation." The instruction, besides reading and writing, was to include elementary mathematics and science, the outline of history and geography, and moral precepts lead-

ing up to the study of Scripture. The scheme was very welcome to the people, and within a year or two schools had been established in nineteen villages within a radius of a few miles from Serampore.

As early as 1803 we find Ward writing:

> It will be vain to expect that the Gospel will ever spread widely in this country until God so blesses the means as that native men shall be raised up who will carry the despised doctrine, brought into the country by the Mlechas (barbarians), into the very teeth of the Brahmins, and prove from the Scriptures that this is indeed the Christ that should come into the world. We hope to see the dawn of this. I have constantly made it a point of recommending the making of native preachers as soon as possible; and I hope we may soon see two or three, who are at least more able and eloquent than some good men who are employed in England.

It was this need of trained teachers and preachers which led the missionaries to the most famous of all their enterprises—the foundation of the College of Serampore. In 1818 a prospectus went forth, announcing the foundation of an institution which was to give to the youth of Asia full instruction in Eastern literature and European science. It was to be open to all who cared to come, without distinction of class or creed, but its chief purpose was the service of the Church by the production of trained Christian workers. Instruction was to begin with a thorough course in Sanskrit, most of the teaching was to be in the vernacular, and English was to be taken later as a learned language. There is no doubt that the Serampore men were over-generous in their estimate of the powers of

the students who came to them, and that they were too ambitious in their plans. But in the main their principles were sound, and modern educational ideals in India have rather returned nearer to them than moved further away.

At a more favourable time the Serampore missionaries might have determined the whole future of Indian education. But circumstances were against them. Disastrous divisions amongst the Baptists and bitter criticisms in England drew away from them much of the needed support. The new composite civilization which was growing up in Calcutta demanded education for urban life rather than on village lines. The tide of life ebbed away from Serampore, and, though the college has in modern times recovered a new and great importance as the centre of theological education for the whole of India, it remained for nearly a century rather a framework and an ideal than a living power.

The decisive factor was the personality of Alexander Duff, who turned the scale in favour of English education in the terms of city life. The new life of missionary enthusiasm had been long in reaching the Church of Scotland. In 1796 the General Assembly of the Kirk passed the motion that "to spread abroad the knowledge of the Gospel among barbarous and heathen nations seems to be highly preposterous, in so far as it anticipates, nay, it even reverses the order of nature." Even forty years later, when the first missionary of the Church was rousing all Scotland with the tale of his first period of missionary service, a minister in whose church a missionary sermon was to be preached greeted him in these uncompromising

terms: "Are you the fanatic Duff who has been going about the country beguiling and deceiving people by what they choose to call missions to the heathen? I don't want to see you or any of your description. I want no Indian snake brought in among my people to poison their minds on such subjects; so as I don't want you, the sooner you make off the better."

But in 1836 this minister was the exception. God had been working in the intervening years. Charles Simeon of Cambridge had visited Scotland and left the impress of his victorious faith. The great Dr Chalmers had arisen as a prophet of a new day. As Professor at St Andrews and Edinburgh he used all his incomparable eloquence (Gladstone spoke of him as the grandest preacher he had ever heard), to stir and inflame the students. They began to awake, the Churches were kindled, and in this general beginning of new life men began to realize that the Church exists for the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world. The Church had never had missions overseas; the hour produced the opportunity and the man.

Alexander Duff was the best student of his year at St Andrews, and the greatest power for good among his unruly companions. He was a man of great physical strength and vitality, of wonderful charm and outstanding eloquence. Early in life he became possessed by an intense evangelical faith, and took as his only aim the manifestation of the glory of God. Religion had in him the force of one of his own Highland rivers in spate.

> Fearlessly and unsparingly have I reprobated the indolence and cowardice of those who kept lingering,

> lounging and loitering at home in lazy expectation of some sunny peaceful settlement instead of nobly marching forward into the wide field of the world, to earn new trophies for their Redeemer, by planting His standard in hitherto unconquered realms. Look at men's acts and not at their words, for I am wearied and disgusted with very loathing at great swelling words that boil and bubble into foam and froth on the bosom of an impetuous torrent of oratory, and then burst into airy nothingness.

When this tornado landed in India, miraculously rescued from shipwreck, on 27th May, 1830, he was just twenty-four years old. Before he left Scotland he had been careful to safeguard himself against the possibly hampering orders of home committees, and had come out with one definite instruction only, that he should not settle in Calcutta. It is characteristic of the man that within a few days of his arrival he had made up his mind to disregard his orders, and for the next third of a century Calcutta was the scene of his labours and triumphs.

The problem which he had to solve was the relation of the English language and English education to the future of the Church in India. As we shall see, his work had effects far beyond the limits of the Church. The problem was not new, but it had become tangled, and the time was ripe for a clear decision. For many years it had not been certain that the English would remain in India, and the growth of their power had been subject to violent fluctuations and set-backs. During the earlier trading period there had been surprisingly little intercourse between Englishmen and Indians, and no strongly felt need for a common language. Very few Englishmen learnt any Indian

language, and English-speaking Indians were almost unknown. The barbarous Portuguese spoken by the population of mixed European and Indian descent served as a *lingua franca*. When the East India Company succeeded to the government of Bengal, it took over Persian as the language of justice and of official life; this, though it had been introduced by the Moguls centuries before, was and always remained a foreign language in India. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century the situation was changing. English power had been consolidated; the trading station was changing into an empire, and the number of Englishmen in the country was rapidly increasing.

Indians began to clamour for opportunities of learning English; they needed it for their commerce, and their English knowledge lightened the burden of inferiority which they felt in the presence of the foreigner. When Duff reached Calcutta there were three policies affecting the study of English.

The first policy was that of English rationalists. English schools had been conducted by men of little culture and less educational method. The pioneer of better things was David Hare, a watchmaker. This remarkable man, though he had received little education himself, conceived the great object of founding a college in Calcutta to make the highest English education available for the intelligent youth of India. With the help of a few Europeans and some leading Indians he founded in 1817 the Hindoo College. This college passed through various crises in its first six years, and was not remarkably successful. Then government took a

hand in its affairs, and wisely appointed as Visitor, Horace Hayman Wilson, the greatest Sanskrit scholar of the day. From that time on success was assured; pupils were numerous and eager to learn. But a peculiar character was given to the college by its exclusion of all forms of religion. The end of the eighteenth century was a time of religious decline: the critical philosophy of Hume seemed to have undermined the foundation of faith; those who were not philosophical read the works of the anti-clerical Tom Paine. This was the type of book which was used as a text-book in the Hindoo College. India is a religious country, though Hinduism at that date was at a very low ebb; and the sudden confronting of the old traditional lore of India with the latest modern theories from the West was bound to have surprising results. The young men turned a critical eye on everything that they had inherited; the only things they could see in Hinduism were its indefensible superstitions; many of them wished to destroy it root and branch, and to free men altogether from the fetters of religion. They had not yet discovered that it is not enough to exorcise evil spirits, but that the Spirit of God must be called in to take their place.

A very different policy was that of the Hindu reformers. The greatest of these was Ram Mohun Roy, the most striking figure of the Indian Renascence. Born in 1774 of an orthodox family, he was distinguished by earnest interest in spiritual things, and studied eagerly both ancient Hinduism and the teachings of Islam. Before his twentieth year he was convinced of the folly and wickedness

of idolatry. Then he learned English, and became acquainted with the New Testament. He never became outwardly a Christian, but from this time onwards Christ was his master. He even wrote a book called *The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Happiness.* Probably the ideal of Ram Mohun Roy was the return of India, beyond the follies and idolatry of later Hinduism, to what he regarded as the pure teaching of the Vedas, the original classics of Hindu faith and the most ancient books of the Aryan race. He would have allowed the incorporation of truths from other religions, and, for the sweeping away of superstition and the bringing in of a higher ethical standard, he would have welcomed the teaching of the Gospels and a very large part of Christian practice. In 1814 he founded the Brahmo Samaj, a kind of church of reforming Hindus, which has existed until the present time though its numbers have never been large. Since English was the channel of a wider culture, and knowledge of western science would be most potent in breaking the power of superstition, Ram Mohun Roy was a convinced champion of English education in India.

The third group was that of the reactionaries, who opposed English culture in all its forms. Orthodox Hindus were scandalized by the irregularities of the young men from the Hindoo College, and they realized that the teaching of Ram Mohun Roy would entirely change the Hinduism that they knew. A hundred years later the Sarda Bill to raise the age of marriage for children, and Mr Gandhi's efforts on behalf of the untouchables, aroused the violent opposition of the Sanatanists,

the upholders of the traditions of Hinduism. In the same way, the conservatives massed their ranks against all innovation in the early nineteenth century. They founded the Dharmasabha, or as we might call it, the Society for the Defence of the Faith. Its object was to maintain the letter of Brahminical tradition and practice; it is to be remembered that the unreformed Hinduism of that day demanded the burning of a widow with her husband's body, the sacrifice of infants to the holy river Ganges, and other unbelievable horrors.

Into the midst of this confused situation came Alexander Duff. In a few days he had seen to the heart of the problem. The young men, he saw, were determined to have English knowledge; if they gained it only from the infidel and the scoffer they would be well qualified to destroy the ancient traditions of their land, but they would have nothing to offer for the rebuilding of its life. English knowledge of this kind would be a potent and destructive force. But it need not be so. The learning of the West is grounded in the revelation of God in Christ. History and physics are part of the Christian scheme, and in the hand of a Christian teacher have their evidential value. All truth is truth about God, and can be made to proclaim His glory. A wise system of education in the hands of convinced and earnest teachers could not, he thought, but open the door to Christian faith in God; it would not merely sweep away Hindu superstition and ignorance, but would let in the sunshine of a living faith. English education the young men would have; they must receive it in a Christian College in Calcutta at the

very heart of India's renascent life. Thus it came about that on that day in 1830 Duff made his pilgrimage to Serampore, to lay his scheme before the greatest of Indian missionaries. Carey not merely blessed the young adventurer, he gave his cordial approval to all that was being planned.

Duff's decision has often been criticized and challenged. It has never met with fiercer opposition than in the days between the making of the plans and their first execution. Almost all the missionaries were opposed to him; they believed in the preaching of the Gospel, and to them his method appeared unbiblical. They had before them in the young men of the Hindoo College ocular evidence of the demoralizing power of education on the Indian mind. On the day before the college opened, one who loved Duff dearly parted from him almost in tears with the words, "You will deluge Calcutta with rogues and villains." But, the decision once taken, the verdict rested with events; results alone could prove whether Duff was right or wrong. Among the firmest friends of the new venture was Ram Mohun Roy; he went about among his friends telling them of the new school that was to be opened, and was himself responsible for the coming of the first few boys. Gradually interest grew, and by the day fixed for the opening Duff had a satisfactory list of applicants from the most respectable class in Calcutta.

The powder was now prepared for this new assault on Hinduism, the train was laid, and the match was to be lighted at 10 a.m. on 13th July 1830.

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

Alexander Duff: The Indian Christian College

On 13th July 1830, Alexander Duff and Ram Mohun Roy met for the first time, in the rented house which had been secured for the new school, the group of boys whose prejudices had been sufficiently dispelled to allow of their coming to learn. As the first act of the new regime Duff stood up before the boys and read out slowly in Bengali the Lord's Prayer. This beginning was symbolic of the course that he intended to pursue. First, the education given to the boys, though communicated in English, was to be as closely linked as possible to their own background and to their own language; its aim was that they should become channels, giving back to the people in the vernacular what they had themselves learned in English. Secondly, the instruction was to be frankly and unashamedly Christian; the education was to be first rate of its kind, but every subject was to be taught in its relation to Christian truth and as part of the preparation of minds for the reception of the Gospel. The Bible was taught from the first day. The patient friendliness of Ram Mohun Roy dispelled the doubts of the boys, and they were at first willing and then eager to hear the words of the Christian Law.

Duff knew well when he began his work that he would have to start from the very beginning and spend long years in laying foundations. The Church had sent out its best qualified man to lay before India the highest knowledge of the West. To those at home it seemed almost as though he were betraying his trust and disappearing into what appeared to them the gloomy underworld of elementary education. Outsiders smiled when they heard of the brilliant graduate of St Andrews slipping large English letters into a groove on a blackboard, and gravely informing a class of Bengali boys that OX spelt ox. Duff could also afford to smile. The first steps must be very elementary—the writing of graded text books to help the boys through the initial difficulties of English, the building up of a Bengali department side by side with the English; higher things would come in their own season. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

But Duff, while absorbed in his school, did not neglect other opportunities of making his message known. He held public lectures and debates, in which his magnificent powers of rhetoric were let loose upon a people readily susceptible to emotional appeals. Results came far more rapidly than could have been anticipated; and, rather surprisingly, not among Duff's own boys, but in the most unpromising quarter of all, the students whom the rationalism of Hume and the Hindoo College had driven into materialism. These young men had lost all faith in the religion of their fathers, and the chill gospel of rationalism could not satisfy them; unknown to themselves they were seeking

something or Someone worthy of their affection and loyalty.

The first to make public confession of faith was Mohesh Chander Ghose. He had come to hear Duff lecture, not because he wished for instruction, but "from a secret desire to expose what I reckoned your irrational and superstitious follies." In less than a year he was baptized in the Old Mission Church, Calcutta, and gave this striking testimony to his experience:

> A twelvemonth ago I was an atheist, a materialist, a physical necessitarian; and what am I now? A baptized Christian! A twelvemonth ago, I was the most miserable of the miserable; and what am I now? In my own mind, the happiest of the happy. What a change! How has it been brought about? . . . Against my inclinations, against my feelings, I was obliged to admit the truth of Christianity. . . . My progress was not that of earnest enquiry, but of earnest opposition. And to the last my heart was opposed. In spite of myself, I became a Christian.

A little later he was followed by a Kulin Brahmin, who was to become the Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjea, LL.D., one of the leading clergymen of the Church of England in India. The third was Gopinath Nandi, who sought Duff one morning in his study and burst into tears with the cry, "Can I be saved?" He was later to win a martyr's crown in the dark days of 1857. These three were from outside, but the same leaven was working in the school. The first to yield was Anando Chand Mozumdar. He had been deeply stirred by lectures on the Sermon on the Mount. His steadfast persistence gradually overcame the opposition of his

family, until his father wrote to Duff, "Convert him in your own way, and make him your follower." He was baptized on 21st April, 1833.

Such a thing had never happened before. The great majority of converts had always come from among the poor and the despised; many of them were pensioners of the mission. Now four young men of the highest caste had braved everything to follow Christ. Every one of them remained faithful, and all were earnest in trying to win others to the faith. Suddenly a new vision dawned upon the Church: it seemed that Hinduism, which had seemed so strong, was beginning to crumble, and that Duff had found the infallible way to secure its downfall and to win India for Christ by the conversion of its natural leaders.

Criticisms were still to be heard, but Duff's first furlough in Scotland was a triumphal progress. Recruits for the work began to come in. What Duff was doing in Calcutta, others began to do elsewhere. In Bombay, Dr John Wilson founded the College now known by his name. John Anderson was sent out to Madras; he founded the General Assembly's Institution, which later grew into the Madras Christian College, the great centre of Christian education for the whole of South India. Here his experience was exactly that of Duff in Calcutta; his earnestness drew men to hang upon his lips. After listening to what we are told was an affectionate and moving address on the text, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver," two of them made the great decision and asked to be baptized. Soon other Churches entered

this field, and in the century between 1830 and 1930 the number of colleges had grown from one to thirty-six.

But the later story of higher education in India is very different from its beginnings. The record of almost all the colleges is the same: first, a period of great enthusiasm and popularity, leading up to a small number of outstanding conversions; then fierce opposition, the temporary emptying of the college, the opening of rival Hindu or Moslem institutions; followed by slow recovery of confidence in the mission college, and growth in the number of its students; finally, a long period of steady work, without any special features, and the almost complete drying up of the stream of converts. There are colleges in India which have not had a single baptism in thirty years. It became clear that valuable as the work of the colleges was, it would not result either in the disintegration of Hinduism or in the raising up of a great band of Indian leaders for the Indian Church. Why has the situation so completely changed?

The first cause undoubtedly is the unhappy association of English education with government employment. For years a controversy raged in government circles. As early as 1813 a clause had been introduced into the Act renewing the Charter of the East India Company, providing for an annual expenditure of ten thousand pounds on the diffusion of education among the peoples of India. How was the money to be spent? Immense interest had been aroused in Europe by the discovery of the ancient Sanskrit literature and culture of India; and the predominating view was that government

should spend its money only on the revival of the classical languages of India—Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. The "Anglicists" maintained, on the other hand, that Sanskrit and Persian were no longer creative in the life of India, and had no more than an antiquarian value; that Indian culture needed to be not supplanted but enriched by the literature and science of the West, which, taught in English to a selected few, would by them be mediated in the vernaculars to the whole country, and would be in time the means of quickening all the life of India. Prominent among the Anglicists was Duff, the success of whose educational work was an argument of the most practical kind in favour of the view which he supported. The matter was really settled when the government made English the language of the law courts and of public life. Henceforward no one need apply for a government appointment, that heaven of the Indian upper classes, unless he knew English. English education was now not a means to culture, but a strictly commercial proposition, with golden rewards for the proficient.

The decision was inevitable, but educationally it was disastrous. Duff's early success had been due to the real intellectual passion of his students. Western knowledge had come to them with the joy of a great deliverance; they were often crude and violent, but they had a genuine love of truth, and were therefore ready to be led on towards Him who is Himself the Truth. Now all was changed. The purpose of knowledge was not enjoyment, but a career; examinations began to narrow the field of knowledge and to cramp the enquiring

mind. With new openings for employment, the passion for English knowledge grew apace in India, and is still growing. Schools sprang up in a night, of every kind from very good to very bad indeed. In remote villages children begin to study English before they can read or write their own language correctly. It is no uncommon thing for villagers to complain of the teacher in a tiny school of mud and thatch—"He is not good at English." Independent thought and enquiry are at a discount, the examination rules the world; the best teacher is the one who clings most closely to the examination syllabus and teaches most exactly in terms of the questions that may be asked. An Indian college a month before an important examination becomes a place of settled gloom; students sleep not much more than three hours a night, and are to be seen pacing endlessly to and fro reading over to themselves aloud the piles of examination notes which they are feverishly trying to commit to memory. Under these conditions it is impossible really to learn; the mind is not free to absorb, to expand, to create. The words of Christ are not a subject for the government examination, and are therefore regarded as hardly a subject for serious study.

The expectation that Hinduism would fall to pieces under the shock of western criticism and science has proved a complete miscalculation. Duff sincerely believed that every form of truth is a *praeparatio evangelica*, a way for the coming of Christ; he expected that minds trained in the impartial recognition of truth would instinctively reject error, and that Hinduism would cease to

have any hold upon them. He had greatly underestimated the power of resistance in that multiform religion. Hinduism is always changing and yet remains always much the same. It has withstood the assaults of Buddhism and Islam; now it is preparing itself to swallow up Christianity. It has most successfully made terms with all that the West has brought, and has absorbed into itself with apparent success the whole of western science. The Quantum Theory and the philosophy of MacTaggart are expounded by Hindu professors, who would emphatically deny that there was any incongruity between their intellectual convictions and their religious faith, or that because of what they teach they had in any way ceased to be Hindus. Hinduism is ready even to absorb Jesus Christ into itself; it can take His teaching as an ethical ideal and His life as an example, it can revere Him as one of the greatest teachers of the world; there are many Hindus who sincerely regard themselves as His followers, and yet reject His claim to be the Saviour of mankind. The steady growth of Nationalism has led to the resuscitation of Hinduism as part of the Indian heritage; nothing which has come from the West must be allowed to be in any way superior to anything produced by the East. Though Christ, the oriental teacher, is to be revered, the Church is a western importation, a part of the exploitation of India by the West, and therefore not a fit home for the patriotic Indian; though Christianity is ethically sublime, it is philosophically inadequate and inferior to Hinduism, which alone holds the key to the deepest mysteries of the Universe. Hinduism is to-day far

more alive than it was a century ago, and the minds of Hindu students are far less accessible to Christian truth than they were in the days when Duff was electrifying his first classes at Calcutta.

The Christian colleges were at first most prosperous; there were few rivals, the demand for higher education was very strong, and it was fatally easy in those days to begin college work. A high school one year had a specially intelligent and promising sixth form; those in charge did not wish to lose these boys, and therefore at the end of the year moved them all up and started "the first College Class." Subjects of study were few, standards were low, very little was required in the way of accommodation and equipment. Nemesis followed in due course. Competition became increasingly fierce. Government itself entered the field and started colleges lavishly supported at the public expense. The Christian colleges lost their primacy in the highest fields of education, and had to struggle for bare existence. Inevitably, the minds of the Christian authorities were harassed by the perpetual problem of making a budget balance with inadequate resources. It was necessary to keep up the reputation of the colleges by success in examinations, and gradually those who had the highest educational ideals began to be forced down to the merely utilitarian level. The evangelistic purpose of the colleges was not lost sight of, but it ceased to be central; the main energy of the leaders was spent in keeping the colleges going, and only spare time and surplus strength were left for the work of making Christ known.

Even where Christian ideals were most strongly held, the staff was inadequate for the work which needed to be done. The home Churches failed to supply recruits as they were needed; the Indian Church was in the main uneducated and could not supply men for college work. Even to-day, in half the Christian colleges in India the non-Christian members of the staff are more numerous than the Christian; in one college there are only six Christians to fourteen non-Christians, in another seven to fifteen. Fifty years ago, conditions were still worse; one or two tired and over-worked missionaries would find themselves burdened with the whole administration of a college, with much of the teaching and the whole task of representing to the students the truth of Christ. Even under these impossible conditions, wonderful work was done; but it is not surprising that conversions were very few, and that the majority of students left college with only the most hazy notions of the meaning of Christianity, and some of them with a positive distaste for it.

Matters were made worse by the wave of "defeatism" which passed over the Church. It is one thing to deplore impossible conditions and to seek to change them, and quite another gradually to accept and finally to justify them. The facts were unmistakable; a great deal of Christian money and strength was being expended on the colleges, and converts were not coming in. But was conversion the only aim of a Christian college? Had it not a much grander work to do in leavening the whole lump of non-Christian India with Christian thought? Thus grew up a fresh conception of the

work of education in terms of "peaceful penetration," which might be expressed somewhat as follows: "It is true that we are not making converts, but it is unworthy of the Spirit of Christ to reckon progress by the mere counting of heads. In the present stage of work in India, it is not possible to expect conversion as a regular thing. We are trying to do something of which the results cannot become apparent for a long time: our aim is to leaven the whole mind of India with Christian ideas, until Christianity has lost its strangeness and the country is ready for the conversion of its leading classes. We gather into our schools and colleges large numbers of high caste Hindus and Mohammedans who cannot be evangelized in any other way, and bring to bear on them, sometimes for as long as eight years together, Christian influence. It is true that, owing to shortness of staff, this influence is often lamentably less than we should like. Still, these young men are hearing the Bible taught day by day, and seeing something of the beauty of Christian character. Initial prejudices are being worn away; wherever our men go, they will be ministers of understanding and reconciliation, and even if they are not converted themselves, they will be preparing the way for their children to become Christians." There was very much truth in this line of argument, but it is manifestly incomplete as a statement of the aims of a Christian college. In those colleges where men were praying and striving definitely to win their men for Christ, conversions did take place, though never in large numbers. Two of the leading Christian ministers in the Madras Presidency

to-day are Brahmin converts who were won for Christ in their college days.

The Hindu world welcomed the new point of view in Christian education, and stressed one phrase in it: "the aim of Christian education is not conversion." It is possible to make out a very damaging case against Christian propaganda through schools and colleges. "Do you think it is honest to take boys and girls in their unformed years and to bring every kind of moral and spiritual pressure to bear upon them to undergo, while they are still immature, a conversion which will separate them from their families, and will undermine their self-respect by making them dependent on foreign missionaries?" When the argument is put in this form, there can be only one answer. It may be true that in the past missionaries have erred by bringing too much religious pressure to bear on boys and girls, by hurrying forward a decision before the young mind was ready for it. "No proselytizing" has become almost a slogan of thoughtful Hindus. Mr Gandhi, whose deep interest in all things Christian is well known, expressed the general opinion of his fellow-countrymen when he declared himself forcibly as against conversion of any kind. This was the gist of his remarks: "In an independent India, missionaries will not be forbidden to come to the country. They will be warmly welcomed for their social and philanthropic work. But there should be no attempt at proselytization. The religion in which each man is born is good enough for him, and is appointed for him by God." Many missionaries, eager to meet half-way the demands of their Indian

friends, echoed back, "Yes, we are here to serve India, but do not think that we are here to proselytize."

In the meantime the general situation of the Church in India had rapidly changed, and, while the work of the Christian colleges seemed on one side to be closing in, on another it was immensely widening out. Duff's intention that vernacular and English education should be carried on side by side had never been fulfilled. All the colleges were in cities. The work in them was carried on entirely in English, and most missionaries were too deeply absorbed in their work to learn any Indian language. They were entirely cut off from the life of ordinary Indians, and tended to regard village and evangelistic work as important, but in some ways inferior to their own. The village missionary, on the other hand, cast eyes of jealousy and suspicion on the distant college. It appeared to him as a very expensive and unnecessary part of the mission equipment, swallowing up a great deal of missionary strength and money, with nothing at all to show for it. In recent years, quite unexpectedly, evangelistic and educational work have been brought together again.

The Church in India has always been a great educational power. Its converts have mainly been from the poor and illiterate classes, but it has set itself patiently to teach them. Every mission has its network of village elementary schools; at strategic points is to be found the village boarding-school, from which come those pillars of the Indian Church, the village teachers. A few of these boarding-schools grow into high schools, and from

the high schools selected boys go on to college. In most missions the educational ladder is complete, and the intelligent son of the outcaste may be sent on from stage to stage and sit next to the son of the Brahmin in the final examination for the B.A. degree. The colleges were founded to educate the aristocracy and the hereditary priesthood. In recent years Christian students, mostly from the poorer classes, have been pressing into them in vastly increasing numbers. There is one college which in all its history has never had simultaneously more than three Christian students; but already in eight colleges the Christians are in a majority. Altogether there are in Christian colleges more than two thousand Christian students, about fifteen per cent of the whole. There are also small groups of Christians in government and non-Christian colleges.[1] The colleges had been thinking in terms of the non-Christian world; it seemed that a re-orientation was necessary, and that in future they would have to regard as their main task the education of Christians, and the training of Indian Christian leaders. The missionary societies concerned agreed to review and reconsider the whole situation, and to that end appointed a commission.

Now the appointment of a commission is very often a sop to conscience devised by those who know that something ought to be done and are anxious not to do it. Missionaries have not in general a high opinion of commissions sent from the West; they have an idea that the man who is

[1] None of the figures given here include the Roman Catholics, whose work is entirely separate. They maintain about thirty colleges, but the proportion of Roman Catholic students is small.

doing the work is much more likely than other people to know how it should be done. But the Lindsay Commission of 1930 was quite an exceptional affair. The Master of Balliol College, Oxford, was chairman, two Indian leaders were nominated, and the representatives of Great Britain were two most experienced missionaries who had only recently retired from active service in India. The opening words of their terms of reference are important: they were "to review the field of service open to the Christian colleges under present conditions in India, and to suggest ways in which the available resources of the Church can be most effectively used for this purpose." They spent four months in India, most carefully surveying the situation, and produced a masterly report which is one of the most important missionary documents ever published. Four conclusions seem to follow from their work:

I. The primary task of the Christian colleges is the education of the Christian Church. The Church, though still small, is comparatively well educated, and already far more influential than its numbers would suggest. God's purpose cannot be fulfilled except through a Church in which every member can reach the educational level for which he is fitted; this is not therefore a time for self-satisfaction, but for pressing forward to a goal as yet unreached. College education must be brought within reach of all Christian boys and girls who are able to profit by it. But it is not sufficient that they should attain the B.A. degree; they must undergo mental and spiritual discipline, which will enable them to be real leaders in church and state.

The task of the colleges is to call out in Christian students the qualities of Christian leadership.

II. The educational standards of the colleges are not so high as they ought to be. It is dishonouring to the name of Christ to offer to India third-rate education, and defend it on the ground that it is Christian. Commonsense warns us that with increasing competition, second-rate Christian colleges will not be able to maintain their place. But on higher grounds, that which is offered to India in the name of Christ should be the best in every way. His honour is involved. This lays on the Churches a heavier burden of self-sacrifice than they have yet shouldered. The cost of the colleges is increasing, and the need for men of the highest ability is greater than ever before. The colleges must be prepared to reconstruct their work to meet the demands of the new day. In some cases this will mean the closing of weak colleges, or the amalgamation of two or three colleges in strong corporations. It may mean the temporary shortening of the line, a temporary weakening of the work for the sake of strength in days to come.

III. The colleges are insufficiently Christian. Two or three periods of Bible instruction a week do not make a college Christian. Christianity is not so much taught as absorbed in an atmosphere; it is impossible to create such an atmosphere when Christian staff and students are in a tiny minority. At present, the disproportion is very serious. We may suggest as a reasonable figure that half the students and three-quarters of the staff should be Christian, but even this minimum cannot be reached for many years. The number of Christian graduates

available for college work is rapidly increasing, but their work is useless unless they are consecrated men. Bitter experience has proved that nominal Christians on a college staff are a greater hindrance than Hindus or Mohammedans.

IV. The colleges must be brought into close relation with the life of the Church. At present, colleges exist in isolation. Members of the staff are Church-goers, but they are not for the most part deeply interested in the growing Church. The Christian students look to government or to the law for their careers, and do not, except in rare cases, think of the village church as a possible sphere of work. The Church is groaning under problems too difficult for it to solve—problems of rural economics, of religious education, of health and preventive medicine. The Church must learn to look to the colleges for help, the colleges must learn to give generously of their knowledge to the service of the Church. By this means the colleges will be saved from artificiality, and the Church from stagnation: the college becomes the organ of the Church, the Church the field of practical activity for the college.

This chapter has a special interest because it is only the beginning of a story. For a century the colleges have followed the lines laid down by Duff. The Lindsay Commission marks the beginning of a new lap in the history of Christian education in India. India to-day is a difficult world. The old life is breaking up under the stress of western civilization, nationalism is a devouring passion, secularism is detaching many from their hold upon God. The student suffers often under serious dis-

abilities—lack of discipline in early years, inadequate mental training at school, emotional overstrain. But he is a delightful creature, responsive to affection, open to the appeal of idealism, ready to dedicate himself to high adventures. He is the instrument given us by God for the upbuilding of the Indian Church. To train him for this enterprise is a task worthy of the best brains and finest spirits of the universities of the West. There is no room in India to-day for the man who comes as a ruler, intending to impose his will and his ideas. For the man who comes humbly as a friend, to show the Spirit of the gentle and patient Christ the door stands open wide.

CHAPTER VIII

WOMEN THAT MINISTERED

Pandita Ramabai and others

AMONG the stories which the Indian boy learns from his grandmother are certain to be many tales of the famous women of Indian history and legend. He will hear how Sita, the pattern of womanhood for Indian wives, gladly accompanied her husband, Rama, to a life of privation and hardship in the jungle after he had been wrongly deprived of his throne, and how she was carried off by the demon Ravana to Lanka (Ceylon) and rescued by the prowess of Rama and his brothers. He will learn too the tale of Damayanti, the faithful wife of King Nala; and as he grows older he may read of the learned lady, Maitreyi, the wife of one of the sages of old, who dwelt with her husband in the forest, and by him was taught the mysteries of philosophy.

All these tales bear witness to a deep reverence in the heart of India for womankind. Readers in the west have been made familiar with tales of child-widows and oppressed wives, of women secluded in little courtyards from the life of the world. The facts are undeniable, but Indians complain rightly that it is not fair to take the dark side only of a country's life and to forget all that is pure and ennobling. The life of India's women is

hard and laborious; the husband is the god, by devotion to whom they are to win their part in heaven. But this hard discipline has constantly worked itself out in sweetness and strength, and the women, in the fastnesses of their homes, exercise immense influence over the whole life of India. Christian Indians like Sadhu Sundar Singh speak with almost exaggerated reverence of the goodness of their non-Christian mothers. The boy in an Indian family is often spoiled by over-indulgence; his sister is trained from infancy to obey, and obedience is in the long run the way to power. But for centuries the power of the women has been exercised in secret; in modern times Pandita Ramabai was the first to show that an Indian woman can play the part of leadership on the stage of public life.

No story of fiction could be stranger than that of the early years of Ramabai. Her father was a Chitpawan Brahmin of the West of India; this community has produced many leaders and is distinguished by practical ability in a land where great ideas are not by any means always carried out in action. Anant Sastri Dongre was a scholar and an earnest seeker after God. In early years he had enjoyed the favour of princes and had amassed considerable wealth. In middle life he married a second time and, always independent, decided to teach his girl-wife Sanskrit, the sacred language of India which may not be taught to a low caste man or to a woman. In spite of the respect in which he was held opposition was fierce, and he felt it best to withdraw to a forest *ashram* far from the haunts of men. Here, as his fame spread, pupils

gathered round him, and the little wife found herself the head of a great establishment. About the year 1858 Ramabai was born, and in her turn learned the sacred tongue. But the quiet life of the forest was not to continue for ever; hard days came upon the family, and the father decided to set out on pilgrimage. Now began a wonderful period of education for Ramabai; in their wanderings they came to all the holy places of India, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and all the varied life of the country was spread out before her. The family earned their living as Puranikas, tellers of the sacred tales of Hinduism. In a land where few can read, the teller of tales is still an important figure; he gathers round him a knot of people, and then rolls out for hours at a stretch the sonorous Sanskrit; they do not understand much but they love to listen, and the reciter explains a little in the vernacular. Since Ramabai's family were Brahmins they were well received everywhere, and always had enough to live upon; it is a meritorious act to give to those who do the work of religion. Gradually, as she grew older, Ramabai also began to take a share in the recitation; though people must have been greatly surprised no one seems to have raised serious objections.

But darker days were coming upon them. In 1877 one of the worst famines ever recorded descended upon India. The wandering family suffered terribly. In the course of two years Ramabai saw her father and mother and sister die literally of starvation and the diseases caused by it. She and her surviving brother, Srinivasan, only just escaped alive. The two continued the old wander-

ing existence; but in 1878 they came to Calcutta, where a new chapter of life began for Ramabai.

Attention was soon attracted by this unusual young woman, very small of stature but with immense dignity, who could speak the purest Sanskrit and hold her own in discussions with learned men. More than once she lectured to crowded audiences of men, and was given by the scholars the title of Sarasvati, the Indian goddess of learning; from this time on she was known as Pandita, "the learned," the only Indian woman in history to win this distinction. Up till this time Ramabai was still an orthodox Hindu. But in her many wanderings she had seen much of the hollowness that underlay religious profession, and of the unsatisfied thirst of her people for God. Now she became acutely conscious of the wrongs of Indian women, of child marriage and the complete subjection of women to men. Others who shared these views acclaimed her as their leader, and encouraged her to work for the freedom of her sisters. But Ramabai was not yet sufficiently hardened on the anvil of affliction, she was not sufficiently set free from Hindu prejudice to be an instrument in the hand of God. Two more blows were to fall upon her. In 1880 her only brother died. Six months later, Ramabai married an educated Bengali gentleman. But married happiness was short-lived; after nineteen months her husband died, and Ramabai, with a baby girl, was left alone in the world. She decided to return from the land of strangers to the home of her fathers; in 1882 she came to Poona, the intellectual capital of western India.

Her fame had gone before her, and many were urging her to set to work at once for the redemption of Indian women. But Ramabai was not yet ready. A knowledge of English would greatly increase her usefulness; and she felt that she must have a religion that would satisfy her. In the Bengal days Hinduism was ceasing to hold her, and she had been brought in contact with Christianity as a living faith. This is her own testimony: "As I lost all faith in my former religion and my heart was hungering after something better, I eagerly learnt everything which I could about the Christian religion, and declared my intention to become a Christian, if I were perfectly satisfied with this new religion." It was as a seeker after Christ that Ramabai set forth to visit England. She was welcomed and cared for by the Sisters of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage.

Ramabai spent three years in England. During that time she became convinced of the truth of Christianity, and was baptized. Many influences were at work upon her. Strongest in India was that of Father Nehemiah Goreh, himself a Brahmin convert, and one of the most scholarly and wise of the princes of the Indian Church. In England what impressed her most was the work of the Sisters for the redemption of women who had sinned. This was the kind of work which Ramabai longed to do, and she saw that for it a power of love was needed which Hinduism could never supply. After baptism came a year of study at Cheltenham, and then three years in America. The little Indian lady, with her fluent English speech, took America by storm. She went every-

where lecturing; the story which she had to tell of the plight of India's women was new at that time and compassion was aroused. The American Ramabai Association was formed and undertook to supply for ten years the money for a home for high caste widows. Ramabai had now all that she needed: a knowledge of God, a deepened love for His children, English learning, and the guarantee of supplies for her work. After an absence of six years she turned her steps again towards India. "I felt as if I were going to a strange country and to a strange people. I fell on my knees, committed myself to the care of our loving heavenly Father and sailed." She landed at Calcutta in February 1889.

There was at that time in West India a remarkable group of reformers within the Hindu religion. Greatest among them were Mahadev Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. These men were behind Ramabai in her work, and it was partly by their aid that the first Widows' Home was founded. The school started with one girl widow; little more than a year later it had eighteen, and had to be moved from Bombay to Poona, where roomier buildings were available. The school was maintained on the basis of complete religious freedom, but it soon became clear that wherever Ramabai was, girls would become Christians. Her witness for Christ was the attractiveness of her personality, and through their devotion to her the girls found that they learned to love and adore her Master. Ramabai used in the morning to have prayers with her little daughter, Manoramabai; girls would come in of their own accord, listen while she read

the Scriptures, pray with her when she prayed. "At first, when they heard me with Manorama, they peeped in at the door; then, one by one, they ventured a little farther. Occasionally one would sit, but all would leave when I knelt; now all remain." It was but a short step from this to faith in Christ; and when two of the little widows declared their intention to be baptized, the storm broke in bitter persecution. Many of the Pandita's friends in America felt that they could no longer support her work, and the Hindu gentlemen who had so far helped her withdrew from all connection with the school. Ramabai, deprived in this way of the help of men, was cast back more fully on the help of God.

Outward circumstances combined with her inner development to lead Ramabai into a great advance of faith. All this time she had been a sincere Christian, but about 1893 she entered much more deeply into living experience of Christ. Responsibility for the souls of others had deepened her sense of inadequacy; when she came to realize the adequacy of Christ for every need it was to her like life from the dead. "I can only give a faint idea of what I felt when my mental eyes were opened and when I who was sitting in darkness saw Great Light, and when I felt sure that to me, who but a few moments ago sat in the region and shadow of death, Light had sprung up." About the same time, she read of the way in which George Müller in England and Hudson Taylor in China had been led to trust wholly in God, without appeals to men, for the supply of every need. She, too, was led to follow this way, undertaking every

call to work solely as it appeared to be God's will, without anxious calculations of finance. As her work grew her faith was justified, and God's power was seen in the provision of daily bread. Now Ramabai was ready to pass out into her greatest work. In 1896 Central India was visited by famine; hundreds of children were left orphans, and a brisk traffic was growing up in the bodies and souls of young girls. Ramabai went forth into the stricken area and was horrified at what she saw; the number of girls under her charge leaped up suddenly by more than three hundred. It chanced that she had bought land at Kedgaon, thirty miles from Poona, for a fruit farm; now the whole establishment was transported there, and the place called "Mukti," Salvation, a most appropriate name. Again, in 1900, famine was everywhere in western India; the doors of refuge were always opened wide, and at one time more than nineteen hundred women and girls were under Ramabai's care.

This was work very different from that of the old Widows' Home. There the girls were of good caste and family, usually ignorant, but refined and gifted. Now it was a case of bringing order into the lives of rough girls, who had much of evil to unlearn, and almost everything of cleanliness and godliness to learn. The old work went on; from the school for high caste girls, now under the charge of Manoramabai, came many of the best workers for the larger school. "The gardens and fields, the oil-press and dairy, the laundry and bakery, the making of plain Indian garments, caps, lace, buttons, ropes, brooms and baskets, the spinning of wool and cotton, the weaving of blankets, rugs, saris and

other cloths, embroidery and various sorts of fancy work, thread-winding, grain-parching, tinning, culinary utensils, and dyeing, furnish employment for hundreds of girls. Within the last few months a printing press has been added to the establishment." It need hardly be said that all this immense work would have been impossible without the gallant band of workers, Indian and Western, who had gathered round the Pandita; but the centre of all the work was Ramabai herself. She was untiring in work, the inspiration and encouragement of the weary; hers was the vision which saw beforehand new ways of advance. But Ramabai ruled not by her outstanding gifts, but by her hidden life in God. Deafness, an affliction which had come upon her early, probably through the hardships of the wandering years, grew upon her as she advanced in age; as she was withdrawn from the ordinary converse of life, she entered more fully into the presence of God. Much of her time was spent making a new translation of her beloved Scriptures into Marathi; much in listening for the whisper of God's voice. The same principle was maintained as at the beginning, that in matters of religion all should be free. But the influence of Christian life and service was very strong in Mukti, and the fruit of the work was seen when group after group of the girls went down into the river and were baptized in the name of Christ. A great wave of emotional revival swept through the place; outsiders were doubtful and anxious, but by such almost violent means wild and untamed girls were brought into the fellowship of the Kingdom, and many of the results were deep and permanent.

In 1920 a heavy blow fell upon the work through the death of Manoramabai, who would have been her mother's natural successor. Two years later, on 5th April 1922, the Pandita herself "slipped away quietly in her sleep as the day broke." She left a great and growing work, every part of which had been set in order by her before her call came. She left to the Indian Church the priceless legacy of a life poured out to the utmost in the love of Christ. She showed to the whole world what can be done for the redemption of India's women by one Indian woman empowered by the Spirit of God.

The great glory of Mukti is that it is an Indian enterprise, conceived in an Indian brain and carried out by Indian faith. But the Pandita was a special instrument raised up from most unlikely soil. India's women were desperately ignorant, bound by custom and condemned by both Hinduism and Islam to the narrow round of domestic duty. One single enterprise could set the example for the whole country, but it could not alone achieve a final liberation. The Pandita's work would have been largely ineffective if it had not been backed up in every part of the country by the work of women missionaries from the West, aflame like Ramabai to share the liberty which has been won for womanhood by Christ.

Much has been done in the fifty years since Ramabai began her work, but there is still much that is discouraging in the situation. Among Hindus and Moslems barely two per cent of the women can read; of the depressed classes, which to-day are swarming into the Church, probably not

more than one woman in a thousand is literate. There is still a strong prejudice against women's education and the objections raised are many; it is not custom, there is always so much work for the girls to do in an Indian home, almost as soon as they have begun to learn they are liable to be called away to be married.[1] The Christian Church has everywhere been the pioneer. The early missionaries were determined that Christian girls should be educated; argument, advice, command, cajolery, sometimes even bribery, were called into play, and the effects are seen in the wonderful advance of the Christian women of India. In all better-class Christian families it is axiomatic that girls as well as boys are sent to school. One large Church in the South reports that of the women and girls between fifteen and twenty years of age, thirty-six per cent are literate. The higher we go in the educational ladder the more remarkable is the proportion of Christian girls. Christians are less than two per cent of the population; but of the women taking college courses in India just one-third are Christians.

The women's movement has up till now been strongest in the Christian Church, but there is no community and no part of the country which has been unaffected by it. Already an Indian woman has been president of the most influential political organization in India, the National Congress; two of her poems appear in the *Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*. Another Indian woman has been Vice-President of the Legislative Council in Madras,

[1] The Sarda Act, which forbids the marriage of girls under 14, will gradually have a very beneficial effect.

and has taken a prominent part in putting forward proposals for the well-being of women who specially need the help of the law. In the civil disobedience movements, women have shown over and over again extraordinary powers of leadership and willingness to endure hardship and imprisonment for what they believe to be the cause of their country. Every year Indian women meet in their own conferences and congresses, debate the most serious topics, and sometimes pass the most radical motions. At all such conferences and congresses the cry is "Educate, educate!" The Church, because of its high educational level, has a unique opportunity of influencing the whole future of the life of India.

This opportunity can only be grasped if the Church is filled with the spirit of service and self-sacrifice. As we have seen, the education of men in India has been largely ruined by being regarded solely as a means to employment and a career. There is a steady increase in the tendency for the educated to drift from the villages to the towns, and so for culture to be concentrated rather than diffused. This tendency can be corrected only if some of the best qualified deliberately resolve to spend their lives not where prospects are most promising, but where the need is greatest. Pandita Ramabai exiled herself from her own land for six years and mastered the learning of the West. Her aim was perfectly unselfish; she desired nothing for herself, but only that she might be better qualified as a servant of Christ and of His children. India's greatest needs at the present time are all in the villages, and the needs of the women are far more pressing than those of the men. It is urgent

that many of those who have gained most of knowledge and wider experience should turn back to the narrower life of the villages, in order to share what they have gained with others less fortunate than themselves.

Happily, many experiments to-day are showing what can be done when need and supply are brought together in loving service. One instance will show the type of work which is being undertaken in many places. Two Christian women were working together in a college in South India. One was English, an M.A. of London University; her colleagues used her as a ready reference encyclopædia. The other was Indian, an M.A. of Madras University, one of the very few women to gain that distinction. In her younger days there were no women's colleges in India, and she had to take the very bold step of joining a Christian college for men in order to study for the B.A. degree. Years later, when she was an experienced teacher, she set herself to work again, and was successful in the examination for the higher degree. These two women were not discontented with their work. They saw its importance. Their pupils were going all over South India, many of them as teachers in places where no direct missionary influence was exercised at all; others were married to men of good position in government and private life. But always there was sounding in their ears the great cry of the villages, where women were living in the bondage of ignorance and disease and fear, with no hand lifted to set them free. Had the time not come when a link could be established between the college and village life? Could these two experienced women be set

free to go and live in a village, serving themselves, and setting to all the girls passing through the college an example of service? The plan was carefully talked over and at first discouraged; gradually opposition grew less, other arrangements were made for their college work, and the two were set free to fulfil the desire of their hearts.

They consulted a village missionary as to the location of their new adventure. He directed their attention to one of the most backward areas in the province. In India, to a considerable extent, civilization follows the roads; but roads are few, and it is by no means uncommon to find, within a few miles of some large city, an area in which all communication is by field paths, where the whole population lives in small isolated villages, without schools, almost without shops, and with no provision at all for medical aid. The place selected for the new women's ashram was a village in the middle of such an area. A quarter of a mile away was a little outcaste settlement, in which there was a group of Christian houses, but a large hole in the roof of the chapel was eloquent of the poverty, literal and spiritual, of the Church. The sole occupation of the people was agriculture, even the women spending long days in the fields and coming home weary in the evenings, to begin as it were a second day with the work of the house and the cooking of food for the still more weary men. One of the communities most numerous in the neighbourhood is well known for its marauding habits; thefts, house-breaking and highway robbery are extremely common; and with no police station nearer than ten miles it is not surprising that many of their crimes

are undetected, and that the other castes groan under the oppressions of the hardy and courageous robber folk.

All this poverty and ignorance and need lies seventeen miles from the great college where the two pioneer women had worked before. In the village was just one house in which it would be possible for them to live; by good luck it belonged to a Christian government servant away in other parts of the province for his work, and he was quite willing for it to be used as the headquarters of the new Christian settlement. The great change took place; the college lecturers became the servants of the poorest among the people.

From the first day the difficulty was not to find work to do, but to find means to cope with all the work that presented itself. The morning hours were filled with the work of a school for the girls from the higher caste village to the east; evenings with two night schools, one for the boys and one for the girls, for the outcaste village to the west. In the afternoons, when possible, visits would be made to the surrounding villages to teach the women in their homes and to make known to them the Good News. Another opening was a boys' school close by, in which, though it was not a mission school, most of the masters were Christians and full opportunity was given for Bible teaching. Very soon, too, patients began to arrive, and soon averaged fifty a day. In a land where proper medical treatment is so rare, common sense and a very little knowledge go a long way. One successful dispensary was run for a time on three drugs, aspirin, "mag. sulph." and iodex; if some of the

cures were the result of faith rather than of skill, they were none the worse for that. The ashram workers could do more than that, especially in the cases, very common indeed in India, which call for minor surgery; but neither of them was medically trained, and it was a great joy when a fully qualified Indian woman doctor volunteered to join them. A proper dispensary has been erected, and, as in Galilee of old, the work of healing and that of preaching the Gospel go hand in hand. Generally in India we wait long and patiently for results; the ashram was blessed from the start. Within a few months enquirers began to come in, mostly from the boys' school for the higher castes and the boys' night school for the outcastes; and to all other labours had to be added catechumen's classes, to be taken, of course, by the only two qualified workers in the place. Within a year the first baptism took place, and fifteen souls were added to Christ's Church.

Now "to what purpose is this waste?" Is it really wise, when highly trained workers are so few, to allow two of the best of them to go and bury themselves in obscurity and teach the alphabet to rough village girls, when they might be teaching the binomial theorem and *Paradise Lost*? In itself, clearly a shocking waste. But the ashram does not stand by itself; it is the spear-head cleaving its way to the heart of the life of the village people. Behind it must be the weight and thrust of the Christian women of the Church. What college missions in East and South London have been to Oxford and Cambridge, that the ashram tries to be to the girls of the Christian schools and college

of the Tinnevelly Church. It is to be a place of vision and enlightenment, where those of different classes can meet as friends and learn from one another, where those who are fortunate can learn the joy of practical service among the disinherited. If the workers were not themselves women of the highest qualifications, they would not be able to attract and hold girls of the class which they used to teach in college. As it is, no holiday passes but a large group of girls and teachers from the Christian schools make a pilgrimage to the ashram. They share its very simple life and join in its prayers; they are given tasks in the schools and the dispensary. They bring their own gifts of high spirits and laughter, games and singing and acting. They gain more than they give, and go back with a chastened and quickened patriotism, feeling the desperate need of their country and their responsibility to meet that need. It seems not too much to believe that some of them in time to come will be impelled by the same compassion that brought down the Son of Man to the villages of Galilee, that drove out Ramabai to seek her little widows and the victims of the famines, and that they in their turn will find their vocation and their happiness in the service of Christ, where His feet stand among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.

CHAPTER IX

LIFT UP YOUR EYES

The Indian Church that shall be

ABOUT twenty years ago the Indian Bishop of Dornakal wrote a book called *India and Missions*. It is very unlikely that anyone to-day would write a book under that name. The title of this chapter is a measure of the change in emphasis that has taken place. The day of "missions" is over; the day of the Indian Church has come. Christianity is no longer as it were a settler in India, confined in small foreign locations. It has been admitted as a citizen of the country with full rights.

The first cause of this change is simply growth. In the ten years, 1921-1931, the population of India increased by ten per cent; the Christian Church increased by thirty-two per cent. The Church has doubled in numbers in the twentieth century. Christian work is being carried on in every province, and in almost all the larger Indian states. Christians are a scattered folk; very often their work, in government or police, as doctors or teachers or traders, carries them far away from their homes, and little churches are growing up in many towns which have never been occupied by a missionary. As the Christian Church is almost the best educated community in India, Christians are coming to hold many positions of trust and responsibility, and to

exercise an influence on the whole life of the nation far more than proportionate to their numbers.

The political changes of the last few years have compelled Christians to take stock of their position in relation to national life. Democracy in India is a new thing. Even the moderate instalment of it which has been given has proved a very strong solvent of old traditional forms of life. The most difficult of all problems under a democracy is the safeguarding of the rights of permanent minorities. Power is always placed in the hands of the majority; what can the minority do? The Hindus are in a majority in almost every part of India. The Moslems, though smaller in numbers, feel themselves to be a warrior race, born to rule, and are very restive under proposals which seem to tie them for all time to the tyranny of the vote. Christians, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, each form a separate group and constitute a distinct problem. At present, elections in India are conducted on what are called communal lines. Under this arrangement a certain number of seats in each Assembly or Council are allocated to Christians, and Indian Christians vote separately for Indian Christian candidates. There is no doubt that this arrangement has immensely strengthened the sense of unity in the Church: pressure from outside has made the whole Church throughout India conscious of itself as a separate political entity. The great Y.M.C.A. leader, Mr K. T. Paul, and after his death, Dr Datta, sat on the Round Table Conference in London as the representatives of the Indian Christians.

But there are many disadvantages in this communal arrangement. Each community is tempted

to strive after the maximum of representation for itself, to covet the largest share of the spoils of office. Many of the wisest Indian politicians see in communalism the greatest danger to the future life of India. True patriotism and a strong public spirit cannot grow unless party and faction are forgotten in wider loyalties. It has fallen to the small body of Indian Christian leaders to give a lead to the whole of India. Christianity is a religion of service and not of self-seeking. Communalism is alien to its whole spirit. Its ideal is citizenship understood as service and generous giving by each for the good of all. Already this attitude of the Christian has called forth the outspoken commendation of non-Christian leaders. If only the Church will be true to its ideal, if it is willing to bear what may be immediate loss for the sake of ultimate advantage, it will gain immensely in reputation and in power to bear witness to the truth in Christ.

While these political changes were taking place other changes were making Indians feel as never before that their Church was something which belonged to them. The last twenty years have been the great period of what is called devolution, the transference of control from western to Indian hands. There is a wicked saying that "the man who pays the piper calls the tune." This could be applied as meaning that the western Churches, which still give more than half of the money needed by the Indian Church, are entitled to a decisive voice in its affairs. The year of the great World Missionary Conference, 1910, found the Indian Church still in all essentials a western organization.

Individual Indian Christians had reached considerable eminence; but in all important matters it was "the mission," the purely European committee at home and its representatives in India, which decided everything. The beginnings of local self-government had been made long before, but generally the local church bodies had worked only within the European framework. Now changing circumstances have compelled almost every missionary society and Church to reorganize its work so that initiative and control are increasingly in the hands of Indians, and the policy of the Church becomes the expression of their thought and their desires, while the western missionaries are glad to be no longer masters but servants of the Church. In some areas the mission as a separate body has simply ceased to exist, and the Church has taken its place. Missionaries continue to be sent from western countries, but they hold their position in the field as members and servants of the Indian Church.

It is difficult to indicate all that is involved in these changes. A concrete example from a living Church may help to make the picture clear. In the old days the method of selecting men for the ministry was that the heads of departments, all missionaries, nominated their candidates; the nominations were accepted by a docile Church committee, and the men were sent for training to a theological college under the autocratic control of a missionary appointed from England. Now, the initiative is taken by the Indian Church. The names are sent up through the Church committees, in each of which there is an overwhelming Indian majority. The

candidates are then interviewed by a special selection board, composed of three Indian laymen, three Indian clergymen, and three missionaries. The successful candidates are sent to a theological college which is under the general control of a committee on which Indians are in a majority of four to one.

The Church in India has turned its back on the past. What are its needs, if it is worthily to face the future? They may be briefly summed up in the ancient words of the Creed. The Church in India must be One, Holy, Catholic.

The Body of Christ in the West has been disastrously divided and torn in pieces, and the divisions have been most faithfully reproduced in the East. As western Churches have seen the missionary vision they have come to India, often without plan or order, and settled themselves where chance or conviction guided them. In one remote valley in South India, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and Brethren are competing for the souls of the people. In one small outcaste village there are three churches. It is often said that western divisions mean little to the Indian Christian. This is unhappily not wholly true. The older Christians have inevitably a tendency to fasten on points of Church order and practice which are not essential, and to cling to them with passionate devotion.

The history of the last twenty years is largely that of growth in understanding and co-operation, and towards the oneness of the Indian Church.

The first great step forward was the recognition of the principle of comity—that is, that Churches should not compete against one another, or trespass on each other's work. In the South the result has

been the allocation of definite areas to each Church, so that, as far as possible, the non-Christian is confronted with one type of Christianity only, and not with many. Thus, South Arcot district is in the hands of the Danish Lutheran Mission, North Arcot is the field of the American Branch of the Dutch Reformed (Presbyterian) Church.[1] Another milestone was the formation of the National Christian Council, a central clearing-house for all the co-operating Churches, of which half the membership at least is always Indian. The National Christian Council takes action in matters which affect all Indian Christians, such as problems which arise from the administration of the Indian Christian Marriage Act. Through its committees it is in close touch with higher education, mass movements, and every other department of church life. It is a ready means by which Indian Christian feeling and purpose can express themselves.

Much more important than these voluntary associations is the movement for the complete unity of the Churches. In 1908 the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and America, the Churches founded by the London Missionary Society (mainly Congregational), the American Madura Mission (Congregational) and the American Jaffna Mission (Congregational) came together in the South India United Church. This union was remarkably extended in 1919 by the admission of the Churches founded by the Basel (Swiss Reformed) Mission in

[1] Unfortunately some Christian bodies, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Brethren, are conscientiously unable to accept this principle and work independently alongside of other missions, or establish new missions in places where others are already working

Malabar. This was a great achievement, but it was still incomplete. The next stage began with a meeting of Indian Christians at Tranquebar in 1919, in which the Holy Spirit of unity was powerfully at work. From this came the appointment of a joint committee of the Anglican Church of South India and the South India United Church, and this was joined in 1925 by the Methodist Churches. From its work is gradually emerging the hope and possibility of a great united Church, such as has never been seen before.

Three things must be clearly realized by readers in the West :

1. *The area and the numbers involved in the proposed union.* The Churches concerned are spread over the whole of the Madras Presidency, Mysore, and the Nizam's Dominions, an area five times as large as England. The population is nearly seventy millions, the Christians of the negotiating Churches about three quarters of a million.[1]

2. *The progress that has already been made.* All the negotiating Churches are agreed as to the aim of the union : it is " so to organize the Church in India that it shall give the Indian expression of the spirit, the thought, and the life of the Church universal." The Scriptures are accepted as " the rule and ultimate standard of the faith," the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as " a sufficient statement of the faith of the Church for a basis of fellowship." The two Gospel Sacraments, Baptism and

[1] The adherents of the Baptist and other Reformed Churches, which are not at present co-operating in the scheme of union, number perhaps another quarter of a million.

the Supper of the Lord, are to be continued. The government of the Church is to be a combination of Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational elements, outward continuity being maintained by what is called the historic episcopate, that is, the succession of bishops in the Church which can be traced back to at least the second century after Christ.

3. *The determination that the union shall be real*, that is, that it shall combine, as far as possible, the essential characteristics and witness of all the uniting Churches. From all Churches some sacrifices will be demanded; but no Church should be asked to give up anything without which it cannot make its own full contribution to the life of the whole.

Many stages have yet to be passed through before the United Church can come into being. The home Churches are rightly asking to be fully enlightened on many points before giving their final blessing to the scheme. Much educational work has still to be done in India before the Churches will be ready to give their full support to what is proposed. But so much ground has been gained that it is perhaps not too sanguine to hope that 1937 may see full agreement reached, and 1938 the inauguration of the Union. Similar negotiations are going on in North India, but have not yet reached so advanced a stage. In several other regions of the mission field advance towards union is being made on South Indian lines.

Outward union would be an immense gain, and would set free many forces for the work of winning India for Christ. But external union would be

ineffective without the inner union with Christ, which is the true life of the Church. The Church is the living manifestation of Christ, His Body, but those who love the Indian Church most dearly would confess that the witness is not clear and unmistakable, as it should be. The numerical weakness of the Church is unimportant compared with the inner weakness of a low standard of Christian living.

There is, first, the ever-present problem of caste. In some parts, at least, of South India the Christian feels more closely akin to the Hindu of his own caste than to the Christian of another caste. In the Roman Catholic Church it is still almost impossible for the Christian of outcaste origin to be ordained to the priesthood. The great sign of progress is that the loudest protests come now not from missionaries but from thoughtful Indian leaders, who see that it is the very nature of the Church to be a fellowship, and that Christians are in danger of falling behind reforming Hindus in their zeal for the brotherhood of man.

Great bodies of Christians are still very ignorant. Accessions from the outcastes are taking place at the rate of at least fifty thousand a year. Almost all those who come are illiterate. Superstition still holds sway in their lives. Under the outward appearance of Christianity there is much that is purely heathen; at times of birth and death, in the crises of sickness and epidemics, it is no uncommon thing for the old evils of sorcery, witchcraft, demon-worship, sacrifice, to reappear and temporarily to drive Christianity from the field.

It is not by swift and sudden campaigns of

evangelism that these and other evils can be driven from the Church. They will yield only to the slow patient toil of day-to-day witness in the congregations. All Churches and missions are agreed that no task is more urgent to-day than the training of the village clergy. Guru-bhakti, reverence for the religious teacher, is stronger in India than it is in Britain, and every ordained man has the opportunity of immense influence. His faith will communicate itself to all the teachers and catechists who work under him, and from them to the scattered congregations of a wider area. Conversely, if he is careless and worldly, there will be a marked fall in the spiritual temperature of all the churches which look to him for leadership. Candidates for the ministry are coming forward in increasing numbers. The intellectual quality of the men and their spiritual depth are full of promise. It is the task of the Church to send them out as well-equipped as possible for their difficult and exacting work.

Here we find the first answer to the question: *Does the Church in India still need and want the help of missionaries from the West?* All thoughtful Indian Christians are agreed that the resources of the Indian Church are not yet adequate for the training of the leaders that she needs. Colleges, training schools, theological colleges must have the help of European teachers. Here, as in everything else, the best work is done where European and Indian work in close fellowship, and the initiative should be taken increasingly by the Indian members. But for many years yet the scholarship and science, the discipline and spiritual experience of western

universities will be needed. Those who are willing to bring them as an offering of love to India will be welcome from the first day as brothers in Christ.

The Church must be one, it must be holy, but above all it must be catholic, that is universal. The heart of its message is that Christ is God's revelation to all men, the charter is that the Gospel must be preached to every creature. "The evangelization of India in this generation" is not an impossible dream—taking its fulfilment to mean not that India will become Christian in a generation, but that, if the Church girds itself to its task, the Gospel could be clearly and intelligibly proclaimed to every one of India's three hundred and fifty millions.[1]

At this time the policy in many regions is concentration with a view to greater efficiency. This is justifiable and necessary, but only if it is retirement now in order that later there may be a grand advance. In *Out of Bondage* (1930) we calculated that there were ninety-five million people in India out of reach of the Gospel. This was probably a very moderate estimate. There are six million Christians in India. It is very unlikely that for every Christian more than twenty others are in touch with Christian influences. That would mean a hundred and twenty million influenced and two hundred and thirty million uninfluenced, roughly two-thirds of the population. Where the Church has been established, evangelization is the work of the Church. In the vast areas as yet unoccupied

[1] Exception must be made of a few Indian states where no Christian preaching is yet allowed—a challenge to the prayers of the Christian world.

the western missionary is still the indispensable pioneer. Work in virgin soil usually has to be carried on for a generation without harvest. The westerner with his longer Christian experience, occasional furloughs, the love and prayers of friends at home, and a tradition of dogged perseverance, has a staying power which is a gift of immense value to his Indian fellow-workers. For the time being, extension into new and unoccupied fields is almost at a standstill. There is hardly anything of importance to chronicle in the four years since *Out of Bondage* was written. But a day will come when the Church will be ready to reach out again, to lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes. Then the cry will be loud and insistent for an army of missionaries to man the front line of advance. The cry will come from the Indian Church, conscious that its strength is far less than sufficient for the burden which God has laid upon it. In that day all will be welcome who know their God, and who are ready to take as their motto the words of St Paul: "*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus and Him crucified, and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake.*"

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