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Colonialism: Origin, Development and Consequences

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Abstract: Colonialism is one of the most emotion-ally charged concepts in contemporary language. It is perceived in radically different ways by the colonizers and the colonized. Francisco de Gomara (1552), Adam Smith (1776) and Karl Marx (1848) described the discovery of the Americas and the sea route to India as the two most important events recorded in the history of humankind.¹ Four hundred years later, K. M. Panikkar in his famous book *Asia and Western Dominance* characterized the ‘Vasco da Gama era’ as the beginning of the political domination of Asia by Europe.² In 1992, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the “discovery” of America by Columbus, there was large scale condemnation of it as an invasion, colonization, legalised occupation, genocide, economic exploitation, eco- logical destruction, institutional racism and moral decadence.³ On the same tone ran the voices of protest this year, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India. The Government of India announced that no official commemoration of the event would take place, and social activists planned protest actions against the event which they saw as the beginning of the colonization of the country.⁴ There are others, however, who warn against historical amnesia and want us to look at history more realistically. According to the famous ecclesiastical historian A. M. Mundadan, to picture the arrival of Vasco da Gama only as a black memory will be historically unjustifiable.

Keywords: Colonialism, Francisco de Gomara, Adam Smith, Vasco da Gama, A. M. Mundadan

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Colonialism

Origin, Development and Consequences

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Colonialism is one of the most emotionally charged concepts in contemporary language. It is perceived in radically different ways by the colonizers and the colonized. Francisco de Gomara (1552), Adam Smith (1776) and Karl Marx (1848) described the discovery of the Americas and the sea route to India as the two most important events recorded in the history of humankind.¹ Four hundred years later, K. M. Panikkar in his famous book *Asia and Western Dominance* characterized the 'Vasco da Gama era' as the beginning of the political domination of Asia by Europe.² In 1992, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of America by Columbus, there was large scale condemnation of it as an invasion, colonization, legalised occupation, genocide, economic exploitation, ecological destruction, institutional racism and moral decadence.³ On the same tone ran the voices of protest this year, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India. The Government of India announced that no official commemoration of the event would take place, and social activists planned protest actions against the event which they saw as the beginning of the colonization of the country.⁴ There are others, however, who warn against historical amnesia

and want us to look at history more realistically. According to the famous ecclesiastical historian A. M. Mundadan, to picture the arrival of Vasco da Gama only as a black memory will be historically unjustifiable.⁵

Thus there are different ways of perceiving colonialism and it is difficult to define it. Nor is it fully an event of the past with sufficient historical distance⁶ for an objective evaluation. Still, in the following pages an attempt is made to trace the origin and development of colonialism from the setting out of the Portuguese to explore the seas in the 15th century to the present day. I shall then describe the intimate relationship between colonialism and Christian mission and its far-reaching consequences.

1. The Concept

Colonialism has been defined in different ways. Some of the important definitions are: "Colonialism is the establishment and maintenance for an extended time of rule over alien people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power." It is the "Rule over peoples of different race inhabiting lands separated by salt water from the imperial centre". It is "Direct political control by Europeans or states settled

by Europeans over peoples of other races, notably over Asians and Africans".⁷ Two important aspects of colonialism stand out in these definitions: 1) assertion of racial and cultural superiority by an alien minority over a local majority; 2) encounter of a machine oriented civilization with Christian origins, a powerful economy and a rapid rhythm of life with a non-Christian civilization that lacks machines, marked by a backward economy and a slow rhythm of life, and the imposition of the former civilization upon the latter.

There are problems with these definitions. For example, expressions like powerful and weak economy, rapid and slow rhythm of life, etc., are biased and partial views about non-European peoples and cultures. Secondly, these definitions do not include non-western forms of colonialism like that of China and Japan. Therefore, attempts have been made to give a still broader definition of colonialism. It is seen as a phenomenon where "one political entity exercises direct political control over part of the world not contiguous to it, and any movement or set of ideas designated to bring about or justify such a relationship", or as a "domination of overseas areas without the acquisition of *de facto* sovereignty over them", or as the "expansion of a nation's political system over contiguous areas".⁸ There are people who see in colonialism only evil of the worst sort, characterized by military control, enslavement and bestial exploitation and extermination of peoples and cultures. This is generally the view-point of the colonized themselves, and is often branded as the "left-wing" or "communist"

viewpoint on colonialism.⁹ A value-free definition of colonialism is difficult but from all that has been said so far, we may conclude that colonialism has to do with control over alien peoples who are considered inferior, and wide-ranging exploitation of these peoples.¹⁰

As far as periodization is concerned, modern colonialism begins with the navigational explorations of the Iberian powers, Portugal and Spain, and ends with the decolonization of Africa in the 1960s. Closely related to colonialism is the concept of "imperialism" which in a way provided the conditions for establishing colonialism. Decolonization refers to the process of attainment of political independence by the colonies. The concept of neo-colonialism refers to the indirect control exercised by the erstwhile colonizers on their colonies, particularly in the economic field.

The motives for colonialism were varied. It is one of the ironies of world history that it was European nations that went out as colonizers, and not the Arabs or the Chinese. Compared to them, Christian Europe in the 15th century was peripheral in terms of geography, population, history and economics, and yet it managed to colonize the whole world because of a number of factors: quest for glory and power, an aggressive missionary enthusiasm, and a tenacious will for profit at any cost.¹¹

2. A Brief History of Colonialism¹²

In 1492 Columbus crossed the Atlantic and reached the islands in the Caribbean which he called the "West Indies", thus beginning the Spanish co-

lonial adventure; six years later Vasco da Gama cast anchor at Kappad near Kozhikode in India, inaugurating the Portuguese trading empire in the East. Thus western Europe began its dominance over the rest of the world. Why and how did this happen? Improvements in navigation, intense curiosity about the unknown regions of the world, desire for a share in the lucrative trade in spices and silk monopolised by Venice and Genoa and taxed by the Muslims, and the religious motive to take the gospel to new peoples were all factors that contributed to it.¹³ In short, crusade, curiosity, commerce, conversion, conquest and colonization in that order ¹⁴ provided the motivations for the colonial enterprises of the Iberian powers.

2.1 In Asia

When the Portuguese landed at Kozhikode in May, 1498, they were asked the reasons for their arrival, and they answered that they came in search of 'spices and Christians.' Their first priority was to wrest the spice trade from the Muslims and to establish a durable Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean. The first Governor General Affonso de Albuquerque (1509-1515) began this process with the founding of Goa (1510) and other colonial posts like Malacca, Ormuz, Ceylon, Macao, etc. From 1544 Portuguese ships travelled regularly to Japan too. But the arrival of the Spaniards created suspicion in the minds of the Japanese and that led to the closure of Japan in 1639. One of the main reasons for the success of the Portuguese was the cruelty of their system. Moreover, they took advantage of the

political rivalry that existed among local rulers. They established a number of trading pockets all along the coasts.

In the 17th century the Dutch, the second most important economic power in Europe in the Middle Ages, took the place of Portugal in Asia. They too came in search of spices and wanted to establish a Dutch monopoly over spice trade in Asia. Unlike the Portuguese, business was the only concern of the Dutch. Starting with a factory in Japan in 1609/10, by 1663, Java, Jakarta, Formosa/Taiwan, Surat, Ormuz, Ceylon, the Malabar coast, Malacca, etc., were established or taken from the Portuguese. The Dutch thus monopolized the spice trade and this made the import of spices difficult for England. This led to the founding of the English East India Company in 1600, and factories were founded on the coasts of India, Malaya, Sumatra and Java. However, in the Spice Islands the Dutch proved to be very powerful. At this point, the discovery of cotton made India an important trading centre and England shifted its attention to India. By the middle of the 18th century, there were at least 170 British trading centres in India under three presidencies. The first French enterprise in India in the early 17th century was not a success because of the opposition from the Dutch. The French Trading Company of East India was founded in 1664 and in 1672/74 Pondicherry and Chandannagar were established as trading centres but slowly French trade declined and never picked up momentum. No other European power was able to compete with the Dutch and the English.

2.2 In America

The ancient and fascinating cultures of South and Central America with their radically different world-views were unknown to Europe till the fifteenth century. When the Spaniards discovered these cultures, what took place was not an encounter, but colonization in great style. Even today, the South American continent is plagued by the consequences of this monumental act of Eurocentrism.

The mode of operation by Spain was entirely different from that of Portugal in Asia. Spain wanted desperately slaves and gold. So from 1498 private initiatives were encouraged with license from the state. People began pouring into South America to work for "God and the King". Therefore, mission also played an important role in the Spanish conquest. It was done with force and cruelty and the empire was won swiftly. The seizure of the West Indies was completed within 23 years of Columbus' first voyage; the Aztec (1519) and Inca (1532) empires were brutally overthrown. The native Indian population declined rapidly because of ill-treatment, epidemics and forced labour to which they were not accustomed. Whether genocidal killing took place or not is not entirely clear. By 1630, there were about 331 Spanish towns and cities in America. So the Spaniards who started with a trading empire became the rulers of a large number of peoples, thus creating a multi-ethnic society. Meanwhile in 1695 gold was discovered in Brazil which led to the first gold rush in history and it added to the sufferings of the people.

The plantations of America, another economic innovation, necessitated the slave trade. The Portuguese had started the slave trade already in the middle of the 15th century, and in 1479 they established the first monopoly in slave trade. It was a triangular system: European ships brought goods to Africa and from there slaves to America and then sugar to Europe. Millions of people were brought to the plantations from Africa.

Meanwhile a new colonial Europe took shape in the Northern Hemisphere under France, Britain and Holland. The French began their settlement in Canada, the Dutch on the Hudson and England in the rest of North America. Here there was colonization of the purest kind with annihilation or total marginalization of the natives. In South America, colonization produced a synthesis and not another Europe. Here, on the contrary, was a total transplantation of Europe. Ironically, these colonies also began the first decolonization process. It started in North America and in 1783 the United States became independent of England. Its resonance was felt overall in America and it led to the independence of the Spanish American colonies at the beginning of the 19th century. The Europeans also colonized countries like Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Everywhere it led to the total marginalization of the indigenous peoples.

3. Modern Colonialism and Imperialism

Modern colonialism began with the transition from trade to political

domination of Asia and Africa by Europe. During this period, “a handful” of Europeans controlled the destinies of large countries like India, Indonesia and Indochina, and the whole continent of Africa. It was a total domination with the help of military, political, economic and technological might on the one hand, and cultural might – deep-rooted ethnocentrism which condemned everything non-European as inferior – on the other.

One of the rudest forms of colonialism and imperialism in the 19th century was the so-called “opening of China,” a doctrine of free trade unilaterally imposed on the Chinese by European powers. The refusal of China to accept the import of opium from India resulted in the Opium Wars. The unjust treaties imposed on the Chinese in the wake of these wars compelled them to open their ports for trade with the Europeans. The interference of France in China in the form of “Protectorates” compelled the Chinese to let in Christian missionaries as well. Japan, closed to the outside world since 1639, was forcibly opened to the outer world by the Americans in 1853/4. It reacted to the situation differently; it accepted western knowledge and went through a phase of intense modernization which helped it to become a superpower. But the Japanese society held fast to its cultural and religious roots. The acceptance of western knowledge was not powerful enough to threaten its cultural identity.

Africa which initially played only a marginal role in the colonial designs of the Europeans became an important

colony in the 19th and 20th centuries. Completely side-lined because of the prejudices of the Europeans, Africa still remains in the shadow of European historiography. Till the 19th century, European presence in Africa was confined to the colony of Cape of Good Hope. But through the slave trade Africa was known to Europe already from the 15th century. From 1830 Africa too was forced to be part of the free trade imperialism of the West. Britain and France began to expand their influence over Africa rapidly. By 1870 Britain had claimed for itself the status of “paramount power” in Africa which meant not only control over the colonies but also the exclusion of other European powers. This led to rivalries among European powers and the “Scramble for Africa” and its division among them. The Berlin Congress of 1884/5 accomplished this work, but the process continued till 1935/36 when Ethiopia was captured by Italy. It was a brutal conquest, at times reminding one of the Spanish conquest of South America.

The social consequences of colonialism were the severest in Africa. It radically altered the social structure. New groups of elite were created, urbanization increased, new modes of agricultural production began to be applied, fertility increased with better life expectancy, horizontal mobility was created, and other economically profitable activities were introduced, like mining, building of ports, infrastructure, etc. The Christian missionaries played an important role in all this. Mission accompanied imperialism and the missionaries were in many ways helpful to

the colonial powers. The whole activity was based on paternalism and the belief in the superiority of the white man. All Christian confessions were actively engaged in this work. 45% of Africa was won over to Christianity swiftly.

4. Decolonization

With the division and distribution of the German colonies and the Ottoman Empire after World War I, British and French colonization reached its greatest possible expansion. Japan and Italy also became aggressive imperialists. Japan's imperialism had a decisive role to play in the Second World War. Japan's success began with its victory over Russia and China and its protectorate in Korea. It pursued an aggressive expansionist policy because it believed that territorial expansion was absolutely essential for its survival. It also envisioned a greater Asian sphere of influence for itself. This led to its offensive against the Allied Powers in the Second World War which, however, ended in defeat. This was also the period when powerful movements for decolonization were gaining momentum. The role of the Indian National Movement was decisive in this process. Three factors led to the decolonization process: 1) powerful movements for independence everywhere; 2) the lack of options for the colonial powers; and 3) international opinion which was increasingly becoming anti-colonial. So around 1950 almost all the Asian colonies became independent. In 1955 twenty nine Asian and African nations of western, eastern and neutral allegiance gathered in Bandung in Sumatra

and condemned colonialism as against the Charter of the United Nations which guarantees self-government, and called for its end. In the 1960s, almost all the African colonies gained their independence. In the aftermath of decolonization, there emerged the problem of "neo-colonialism." In the beginning it meant the continuing financial dependence of the erstwhile African colonies on the former colonizers. Later on it came to mean the sad consequences of western education which perpetuated the cultural hegemony of the Europeans in the colonies. Gradually all developmental helps were branded as methods of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. Even today neo-colonialism is an important topic in international relations because indirect economic control over and political subordination of the erstwhile colonies continue in subtle forms throughout the world.

Are we now in a position to evaluate colonialism? I had started by saying that there were different ways of judging colonialism. For some, the beginning of modern European expansionism was an event of world-historic significance while for others it was the beginning of subjugation and exploitation of the weak by the powerful. Whatever one may say, the consequences of this phenomenon are clear to every one. It is responsible for the political and economic map of the world today. These consequences are visible and effective. Expressions like "North-South" conflict, distinctions like "First World-Third World", institutions like the "G Eight" (the club of the so-called most industrialised nations), "P

Five” (another exclusive club of five nations seeking to perpetuate a hegemony over nuclear weapons), financial structures like the “World Bank”, “International Monetary Fund”, etc. are unintelligible without a colonial past. Equally visible are the cultural consequences of colonialism: destruction of social structures and indigenous religions, imposition of educational systems which disparage everything that is indigenous, and a Eurocentric view of history.

The colonized peoples, surely, learned something from this experience but their gains were clearly outweighed by their losses. Improved methods of agricultural production, exploration of natural resources etc., led to increased productivity but were accompanied by brutal exploitation of human beings and nature. Modern European concepts like democracy, international law, human rights, religious freedom, etc. found their way into the vocabulary of the colonies but their adoption had also adverse consequences. They led to radical socio-cultural transformations in many societies. Western concepts of education, science, technology, philosophy, medicine, rationalism, individualism, nationalism etc. were useful contributions of the colonial masters. But today they are evaluated in the light of the demand for the acceptance of the real genius of all the peoples of the world.

5. Christian Mission and Colonialism

Colonial expansionism was not a purely European phenomenon. Migrations and wanderings belong to the cul-

tural history of humankind. In some way, all peoples had been colonizers, and had been colonized, at some time or other. But colonialism in the modern sense was primarily a European phenomenon with its specifically western Christian value system, and its own specific economic, political, spiritual and cultural dynamics. Precisely for this reason, the expeditions of the Arabs, Mongols and Chinese did not have such world-historic consequences as that of the Europeans. The process is sometimes called the Europeanization of the earth or the globalization of world history.¹⁵ European colonial expansion, therefore, more than territorial expansion and political domination, was a cultural and spiritual conquest in which Christianity played a central role. The expansion of Christianity went hand in hand with colonial expansion. Mission functioned as an integral and integrating element of western expansionism.¹⁶ In the following pages an attempt is made to evaluate the role Christian mission played in colonial expansion.

The partnership between the cross and the sword, the altar and the throne, existed from the early centuries of Christianity. Soon after the death of Jesus, his disciples began the proclamation of his message in Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor, and in the major trading centres of the Roman Empire, like Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth and Rome.

From the time of Theodosius I, Roman emperor from 379 to 395, Christianity officially became the state religion. Mission also came under the protection of the state. Christianity became

an instrument at the service of the state. According to the political theology of Eusebius of Caesaria (260-340), the relationship between the throne and the altar was a providential factor in the Christianization of the world.¹⁷ Mission became the task of emperors and kings, and monks and clerics worked hand in hand with the rulers. Force also began to be used increasingly in the furthering of mission. According to Augustine's (354-430) Just War Theory, war against heretics kept the Church pure from within, and war against the heathens helped the spread of Christianity outside. Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) saw war as a means for spreading Christianity. In fact, it is said that Gregory laid the foundation for European colonialism.¹⁸ Kings and rulers used the defence of the Church as a means to legitimize their rule, and the propagation of the faith became a legitimizing factor in their expansionist policies.¹⁹ Thus the ruler was the first missionary, and missionary expansion became identified with territorial expansion.

The Church also became the carrier of culture and the instrument of unity. This cultural mission included confrontation with traditional religions and social and political structures. With baptism, the old traditions had to be totally rejected. The unbaptized were often considered to be wild and uncivilized and had to be made humans first, and then Christians. With the baptism of Clovis, king of the Franks, in 496 began the expansionism of the Franks and the policy of "conversion from above." There began conversion through force,

with the active support and protection of the king or emperor. It does not mean that there was no mission arising out of spiritual motives. But there were real "sword missions" like the conversion of the Saxons by Charles the Great (772-85), the conversion of the Hungarians in 955 etc. The Crusades only continued this tradition. This was the same spirit that was now rekindled in the wake of the exploration and colonization enterprises of the Iberian powers, Spain and Portugal.

5.1 Portuguese Mission

Establishing the *orbis christianus* was one of the objectives of the explorations of the Iberian powers. The chronicler of Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), Gomes Eanes de Azurara, mentions five reasons why Henry undertook the exploration of the seas and the expansion of Portuguese power outside Europe. The fifth reason is the great wish to spread the holy faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in order to lead all souls to him.²⁰ Already in 1510 Goa became a Portuguese colony. In 1534 it became a diocese, and in 1557/8 an archdiocese and the centre of Portuguese missionary activity. Goa was Christianized through the use of considerable force (moral force some would say) in different ways.²¹ Since 1560, the Inquisition was actively engaged in the Christianization of Goa. The Christianization of the Paravas of the Pearl Fishery Coast (1536/37) was another important missionary success of the Portuguese. The most successful missionary of the Portuguese era was Francis Xavier who arrived in India in 1542. Another milestone in the history

of Portuguese missionary activity in India was the forcible Latinization of the Thomas Christians of Kerala who were brought under their control in 1599 at the Synod of Diamper. Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) tried to convert the higher castes of south India through accommodation, which later on gave rise to the conflict on Rites (Malabar Rites Controversy), and the final prohibition of all accommodation practices by the Church in 1744. The missionary activity at the court of Akbar (1542-1605) by the Jesuits bore little fruit. The success of Portuguese missionary activity was not great. As happened later in Japan and China, the Portuguese encountered in India powerful religions with sophisticated philosophical and theological traditions, and Christianity could not pose any serious challenge to them.

5.2 Britain and its Missionary Activity in India

As Portuguese power in India declined, the Dutch and the English attempted to exercise control over India and ultimately the English succeeded. Their religious policy, in the beginning, was one of neutrality. In 1706 the first Protestant missionaries came to south India. Conversions at this stage came from the lower castes and classes. The Protestants emphasised direct individual conversion. At the battle of Plassey in 1757 the British realized that India could be easily conquered politically and this was the beginning of the colonization of India by Britain. From 1786 the missionaries also began to arrive in North India in large numbers. The question of active mission was

bound to arise sooner or later. The picture painted in England about India was that it was an uncivilized land of anarchy, idolatry and ignorance. England, the land of enlightenment, should therefore transmit the English culture and civilization to India. English Evangelicalism and Revival movements in the second half of the 18th century contributed to the strengthening of this attitude. Christian leaders like Charles Grant (1746-1823) and William Wilberforce (1759-1833) wanted India to be civilized and Christianized. The two pamphlets of Charles Grant, *A Proposal for Establishing a Protestant Mission in Bengal and Bihar* published in 1787 and *Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect to their Morals, and on the Means of Improving It*, published in 1792 showed this agenda clearly. In 1793 he tried to introduce the "pious clause" into the charter of the Company. This was rejected. However, in 1813 the new charter of the Company ended the strict neutrality with regard to religion, and in 1833 general freedom for missionary activity was granted. It was hoped that missionary activity would ultimately safeguard British interests in India. With this in mind, the missionaries initiated social reforms and introduced English education. But this did not lead to a Christianization of India. The Indians reacted to the challenge posed by Christianity not by accepting Christianity but by recognizing the inner dynamism and richness of their own religious traditions. The mass conversions created a numerical base for Christian-

ity but they did not pose any serious challenge to the Indian society.²²

5.3 Mission in Japan and China

In Japan and China, too, Christian mission did not succeed in any significant way. In Japan trade and mission arrived together and had to depart together. The European enterprise there lasted only for a century.²³ Francis Xavier began the evangelization of Japan in 1549. But for the Portuguese and the Spaniards trade and commerce were more important than mission although the Jesuits had made some missionary advances and converted some Daimyos. Around 1580, 150,000 Christians and 200 Churches seemed to have existed in Japan. Francis Xavier had also considered the option of accommodation and inculturation of Christianity in Japan. However, the man in charge of the Japanese mission from 1570, Francisco Cabral, was a true European, and had no desire for any accommodation. He had no respect for Japanese culture and traditions. The Japanese reciprocated with an equal contempt for Europeans and the missionaries. The Visitor of the Jesuits to the East, Alessandro Valignano, who came to Japan in 1579 tried to exorcise this internal crisis by following the footsteps of Francis Xavier but even he was not ready to accept the radical difference between the two world-views. The missionaries were also very slow to realize the importance of an indigenous clergy.

With the attempt at the political unification of Japan under Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the early 1580s, Christianity came under increasing pressure. In

1587 he issued an order for the expulsion of all missionaries. Though the order was not carried out, missionary work had to be done much more circumspectly. But the "San Felipe Affair" of 1596 turned the wind against the Christians once and for all. The remark of the captain of the ship *San Felipe* that the Spaniards sent merchants and missionaries in order to conquer foreign lands with their assistance, and that was how the Spanish king had so many colonies, was taken seriously by Hideyoshi. The sequel was the mass martyrdom of Nagasaki in 1597 where 6 Spanish Franciscans, 17 lay persons and 3 Jesuits suffered crucifixion. His edict declared that the Jesuits were a threat to the unity of the nation. In 1613 his successor Ieyasu Tokugawa issued an edict against the Christians which was followed in 1614 by a decree of banishment. A revolt in 1637/38 due to social causes was blamed on the Christians and they were accused of endangering the integrity of the nation. In the persecutions which ensued 30,000 Christians died. The edict of 1639 closed the land to outsiders. Christianity was practically exterminated and only an underground Church persevered. Only in 1859 did missionaries come to Japan again, after the opening of Japan by the Americans in 1853/4.

In China, too, the impact of Christianity remained minimal. The Nestorian (635-845) and the Latin (13th and 14th centuries) missions to China did not last long. The Jesuits began their mission in China with their arrival in Macao in 1562.²⁴ The famous missionary Matteo Ricci reached Peking in

1601 and was invited by the emperor to his court. When Ricci died in 1610 he had laid the foundation for the Church in China. Undoubtedly the Jesuits had significant influence at the courts of successive emperors with their knowledge about almost everything that interested the Chinese. At the end of the 17th century, there were 300,000 Catholics, about 1.5% of the population. Ricci himself made attempts at an accommodation of Christianity to Chinese culture. He accepted the practice of ancestor worship as a harmless social custom and allowed the Christians to practise it. It later on gave rise to the Chinese Rites Controversy. Here, again, two world-views were in conflict, and few had the broad vision of a Ricci to understand the other. By the end of the 17th century, Christianity in China began to decline. The Chinese were more interested in western knowledge than in Christianity. There were occasional persecutions from 1615 onwards. But it was the conflict on Rites (1634-1742) that spelt the end of Christianity in China. The prohibition of the Chinese Rites by the papal legate in 1707 and later on by the pope in 1715 and 1742 angered the emperor. With this decision to follow a Eurocentric Christianity rather than one adapted to the culture of China, the dream of the Jesuit missionaries of creating a Chinese Christianity failed. Missionaries were exiled to Macao. Only those who were at the court of the emperor as advisors were allowed to stay on in China. In 1827, even they had to leave China. Only in the 19th century did the missionaries come again to China, now accompanied by the cannon boats.

5.4 Mission in Spanish America

In Spanish America, the process of colonization and Christianization went on simultaneously. The missionaries came full of enthusiasm, fired by the utopian vision of the dawn of the age of the Holy Spirit and a new humanity as envisioned by the mystic Cistercian monk, Joachim of Fiore (1132-1202). They did not engage in any dialogue with the religions of the people, but instead destroyed them as though exorcising demons. The colonizers conquered the body, and the missionaries, the soul. They believed that they were performing a sacred duty by freeing the Indians from idolatry and in the process demolished whole cultures like the Mayan civilization and the empire of the Incas. It was both a European and a Christian act.²⁵ The Church was an actor in this drama together with money, the state, the conquistadors, and the victims.²⁶ With its plentiful clergy, powerful bishops and cultural power, the Church set out with the king at the head and performed an essential function for the conquerors. This was also an immediate continuation of the “re-conquest” – freeing Spain from Islam – which ended in 1492. The role the Church played in the Spanish conquest of South America, thus, was more than that of the Portuguese Church in Portuguese colonies. The official policy of the Spanish crown put conversion of the native population as its first priority. “Without the peculiar force of religious certainty, it is hard to see how the conquistadors could have triumphed; steel blades, thirteen musketeers, sixteen horses, and intrigues with dissatisfied tribes are hardly sufficient explana-

tion.”²⁷ Columbus himself was fired by this motivation.²⁸ From 1492 to 1822, at least 15,000 missionaries were sent to Spanish America. It was an army of its own, led by the Religious Orders.²⁹

There were some protests by missionaries like that of Antonio de Montesinos in 1511, Bartholome de las Casas (1474-1566), etc.³⁰ The Dominican jurist Francisco de Vitoria (1492-1546) said that a nation had no right to wage war against another because the latter was inferior in civilization or idolatrous, or to convert its people. Force could be used only against an aggressor state, or one that refused entry to peaceful Christian missionaries. Thus although Spain had a theoretical justification for its invasion, it had far exceeded what was allowed by human and divine law.³¹ But the establishment replied with a violent theology. Juan Gines de Sepulveda justified the violence practised by the Spaniards against the Indians through a logic of domination, presented as natural law, and subordinated the Church and her theology to this logic.

Though being by nature servile, the barbarians, uncultured and inhuman, refuse to accept the domination of those who are more prudent, powerful and perfect than themselves, a domination which would bring them very great benefits, and it is in addition right, by natural law, that matter should obey form, the body the soul, appetite reason, brute beasts human beings, the wife her husband, children a father, the imperfect the perfect, the worse the better, for the universal good of all things.³²

Some reactions to the protests against the treatment of the Indians were

positive, for example, the bull *Sublimus Deus* of pope Paul III in 1537 which said that the Indians are human beings and cannot be made slaves. Conversions should take place through preaching and good examples. The Jesuit experiment of the *Reductions of Paraguay* (the Paraguay Jesuit State) for the Guaraní Indians started in 1585, was another form of protest, which still remains one of the most original experiments in mission history. In 1732 the Reductions counted 140,000 members, and there were Reductions in other countries as well. These were exceptions. In general, mission and colonialism in Latin America remained a unified entity.

5.5 French Mission

Missionary collaboration with colonialism was evident also in French Canada. The story of the encounter of the Jesuits with the Hurons as agents of fur trade, who later on turned against them, is an exciting story, and most of the missionaries had to pay with their lives in the most brutal fashion. The Hurons revolted against the “cultural revolution” in their midst and did not want to accept French culture and European Christianity. Evangelization was identified with Europeanization and the missionaries were seen as the bulwark of the French. The Church was one of the pillars of the colonial structure, the clergy making up about 2.5% of the total population, much more than in the mothercountry.

5.6 British Mission in America

In the English colonies in America, too, colonization was very much connected with religion – the Pu-

ritan faith of the Pilgrim Fathers. The Calvinist idea of Election defined their attitude towards the occupation of the land of the Indians and their total marginalization. Indeed, this attitude determined their approach to anyone different from them in religion, ideology, race and culture. Missionary expansion was not their primary goal but still an integral part of their programme. Mission, according to the Puritan theology, was primarily intended to give glory to God and was an act of service to the Indians; there was also an element of competition with the Catholics, who were normally considered to be their enemies. The Indians were forced to accept their faith, and there was no tolerance of their cultures or traditions. They were considered children of Satan. So, more than Europeanization and Christianization, there was total marginalization and destruction as was shown in the James-Town massacre of 1622.³³

6. Mission in the Age of Imperialism

Mission in the age of imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries is intimately connected with the "Protectorates." Around the year 1800, the missionary movement in Europe faced a crisis owing to the radical movements which shook Europe, like the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, secularization and the dissolution of the Society of Jesus. But soon it picked up momentum and became a popular movement. With the rise of Protestant powers like Holland and England, Protestant mission also showed signs of renewal. Mission now really became a co-

lonial enterprise. The Evangelical and Revival movements in England particularly helped this renewal. Colonialism was perceived as a providential factor in mission. The characteristics of the Revival Movement were: a biblically founded idea of chosenness, a sense of superiority, cultural optimism, a belief in progress and philanthropy. One of the concrete expressions of this movement was the founding of Missionary Societies. With this there began a clear missionary expansion under colonial protection. European civilization, technology, political and cultural systems and Christianity were to be instruments in the civilization of the non-Christian world. Commerce and Christianity went hand in hand. The missionaries themselves were engaged in economic activities, making profit just like any one else.

The religious and cultural Protectorates of the French in the Ottoman Empire and China manifest the totally hypocritical character of the whole enterprise. Although in their own secularized and laicized countries, religion played a minor role, they pretended to be ardent protectors of religion elsewhere. It was not any commitment to religion that prompted them to do it but pure political interests. Later on there came other European powers, particularly England, and America. Another sphere of French activity was Vietnam. By the beginning of the 19th century Christianity had taken root in Vietnam but there were also some persecutions. The automatic reaction of the missionaries was to ask for protection, which meant a call for cannon boats and direct colonial administration. France

jumped in to fulfil this role. It intervened in Vietnam with the full support of the Church and established its Protectorate in there.

The Protectorate in China began with the Opium Wars and the so-called “opening” of China. For the missionaries the Opium Wars were signs of providence. With the Treaty of Nanking of 1842 China had to abolish the trade monopoly of Chinese businessmen, open another five trading ports, and allow Christians in these places the unhindered practice of their religion. After the second Opium War and the Treaty of Tianjin in 1858, the foreigners were given freedom for trade and the churches were given full freedom in China. This was reaffirmed in the Treaty of Peking in 1860 after the third Opium War; a French missionary even forged a clause into the treaty that allowed him and other missionaries the right to buy land in China which was forbidden except in the trading ports. These treaties created the conditions for the missionary movement in China. France now built upon these treaties and claimed to be the protector of the Catholics in China. This led to tremendous hatred toward foreigners which showed itself in persecutions and the Boxer Rebellion of 1900/1. The Boxer movement was suppressed and this along with the abolition of the monarchy and the calling of the Republic in 1911 were seen by the Chinese Christians as the beginning of the Christianization of China. However, they were to be sadly disappointed. China accepted western knowledge but was clearly against Christianity. When the communists came to power, they said that Christian-

ity, western goods and the cannon boats were instruments of European and American imperialism.

7. Mission in Africa

However, the greatest collaboration between mission and colonialism took place in Africa. Till the 1880s, when the “Scramble for Africa” really began, it was considered only a reservoir of slaves. It was precisely the question of slavery that now directed the attention of the imperial powers to Africa. There began the association of commerce and Christianity in one of its most radical forms. The “Scramble for Africa” was not only with reference to land and resources but also souls. At the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 it was said that there should be religious freedom and freedom of conscience for all in Africa, including the natives. But it was pure rhetoric because it could not be reconciled with the feeling of western-Christian cultural superiority evidently shown by the participants at the Conference. Christian mission began its “civilizational work” soon after the Conference. State and Church worked hand in hand. The colonizers saw the missionaries as useful agents in realizing their goals.

This is clearly expressed in the saying of the Zulu chief Cetshwayo in 1870: ‘First a missionary, then a consul, and then come (sic) the army.’ Mission in Africa was cultural imperialism at its worst. It destroyed the traditional order and effected a Christian revolution. Christianity was an ideological and ritual accompaniment of imperialism. The missionaries took away land with the help of the colonizers; any move-

ment towards self-identity was considered rebellion and was suppressed; every advance of the white man had to be greeted with joy; he was the natural leader of the Africans appointed by divine providence. The missionaries as agents of spiritual conquest (Josef Schmidlin, 1876-1944) had the most important duty of educating the natives. One of their important tasks was to teach them to work which was important for the colonizers. The Africans were, according to them, accustomed to natural laziness and, therefore, the western Christian work ethic had to be imposed upon them. They had to accept the absolute superiority of western Christian culture, as also the inseparable relationship between western culture and Christianity. European culture was the model for all cultures and therefore it should substitute all others.

The missionaries were also convinced of the inferiority of the indigenous people. They justified this racist mentality biblically, by going back to the book of Genesis where Ham was cursed by Noah, and the Africans were considered to be the descendants of Ham. All alien cultures "sat in the shadow of death" (Luke 1,79), ignorance, superstition and immorality. African rituals and traditions like polygamy, circumcision etc. were seen as sexual immorality of the worst sort, without giving any thought to their economic and social background. As a whole, the missionaries practised an intolerant and aggressive cultural and spiritual imperialism. Indigenous traditions, customs and religious practices were mercilessly destroyed. The Afri-

cans were like children who needed strict upbringing. However, what remained was the rationalistic and materialistic culture of the West, and not its real values, like liberal democracy or an egalitarian society.³⁴ This in no sense denies the revolutionary and emancipatory contributions of the West, what is today called, the "dialectic of colonialism."³⁵ On the one hand, Christianity initiated a radical break with the past and created an exit point for a social and cultural transformation. On the other, it contributed to a political, social and cultural disintegration which would create latent tensions in the society with a lot of conflict potential. Mission had not only a system-immanent but also a system-transcending effect.

With the independence of the African colonies in the 1960s, an epoch in world history came to an end. It was the end of the partnership between state and Church which began in the 4th century with Constantine. It was also the definitive end of European expansionism as it is traditionally understood. It has been clearly shown that European expansionism and Christian mission functioned hand in hand. Mission was an integral and integrating element of European expansionism and imperialism. But not everywhere was it equally successful. Where there were powerful religious, cultural and political structures, Christian mission could not succeed, as in India, Japan, and China. But where the religious, cultural and political structures were weak, it effected radical and revolutionary transformations with grave consequences.

Conclusion

What judgement can the historian give on the phenomenon of colonialism? History from the “point of view of the other,” that is, from the point of view of the colonized, is yet to be written. This neglect of history is perilous for any society. We must have the courage to read the facts from the other side of history. Only historical honesty can free us from prejudice and ignorance. Hiding what really happened condemns us to historical amnesia and sterility. However, the purpose of studying history is to deal with the present and the future, and not condemnation of the past. Fixation on the past is unhelpful and it is not possible to turn back the historical clock. But the historical past is a fact. Against historical facts, neither the mind’s abstract speculations nor the spirit’s highest ideals can do much. It is a matter of realism. Unfortunately this realism is not coming forth from theology, the Church, and from the world of politics.

Neo-colonial structures and behavioural patterns are not illusions but contemporary realities. Most erstwhile colonies feel that colonialism did not end with the attainment of independence. Particularly in the economic field, dependence on the erstwhile colonial masters still continues. This is perpetuated through military interventions, political assassinations, developmental help, technological monopoly, and cultural and ideological imperialism. It is helped by a section of the society in the erstwhile colonies themselves which often conducts a kind of colonial government within the coun-

try. This section is an alienated group which mostly protects its own interests rather than work for the progress of the whole nation.

The colonial era has left behind an international structure which divides the world into industrialised nations and the rest which are dependent on them. It is maintained by strict protectionism and division of labour. This dependence is perpetuated at all cost because the prosperity and way of life of the rich nations depend on it. The development achieved by most erstwhile colonial powers and their high standard of living and the stagnation and deterioration in the erstwhile colonies are undeniable. Developmental helps from the rich nations are often deadly poisons which achieve the opposite of what is intended. It is only natural that from economics, this dependence is extended to the political and socio-cultural spheres. The imposition of an alien educational system, alien languages and an almost narcissistic attachment to a Eurocentric Christianity are examples of this process. Coming specifically to the Church and her mission, one must ask the question whether it is clear to the European Church that European expansionism has definitely ended, and that it has no legitimately dominating role in global Christianity. But the desire for uniformity and power so dominates the distant centre of Christianity, that one cannot but be reminded of the colonial past, when a handful of parliamentarians in Britain controlled the fortunes of millions of Indians, thousands of miles away. The answer to it is another “freedom struggle” which is a far more subtle and intellectually challenging task.

Notes

1. W. Reinhard, *Kleine Geschichte des Kolonialismus*, Stuttgart, Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1996, p. 338. This book by one of the leading historians of European expansionism gives a compact but instructive history of the phenomenon of colonialism. For a detailed study of the same, see by the same author, *Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, 4 vols., Stuttgart, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1983-1990.
2. K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1959, p. 14.
3. Extremely enlightening is the volume of *Concilium*, (1990/6), "1492-1992: The Voice of the Victims", ed. by L. Boff and V. Elizondo; see also C. Krauthammer, "Hail Columbus, Dead White Male", *Time*, May 27 1991, p. 76; "The Trouble with Columbus", *Time*, October 7 1991, pp. 52-56.
4. V. Honawar, "Gunning for the First Comprador", *The Telegraph*, May 19 1996, p. 13.
5. A. M. Mundadan, "Gama Who Came in Search of Spices and Christians" (Malayalam), *Sathyadeepam*, July 9 1997, pp. 1,6.
6. Since the concept of the "longue durée" has been introduced by the "nouvelle histoire" as one of the driving forces of history, one cannot neglect this aspect any more.
7. "Colonialism", *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 3, Crowell Collier and Macmillan Inc., 1968, p. 1.
8. "Colonialism", *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, Catholic University of America, Washington, 1967, p. 1024.
9. "Colonialism", *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 3, p. 1.
10. Reinhard, *Kleine Geschichte...*, p. 1
11. Reinhard, *Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, vol. 1, p. 27.
12. Sources for this brief overview are: Reinhard, *Kleine Geschichte des Kolonialismus* whose basic structure is followed in this exposition; Reinhard, *Geschichte der Europäischen Expansion*; D. Fieldhouse, *Colonialism 1870-1945, An Introduction*, London, 1981; J. Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus, Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*, München, 1995; J. S. Olson, ed., *Historical Dictionary of European Imperialism*, New York/Westport, 1991; H. Gründer, *Welteroberung und Christentum*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1992; J. Vogt, "Kolonie, Kolonisation, Dekolonisation, Umriß einer Fragestellung", *Saeculum*, 30 (1979), pp. 240-250.
13. J. McManners, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, Oxford, New York, Oxford university Press, 1990, pp. 301-304.
14. S. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: From the Beginnings to AD 1707*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 87-88.
15. H. Gründer, *Welteroberung und Christentum*, Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1992. p. 12.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
17. J. Vogt, "Die kaiserliche Politik und die christliche Mission im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert", in: H. Frohnes, ed., *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, vol. 1, München, Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1974, 166-188; G. Ruhbach, "Die politische Theologie Eusebs von Caesarea", in: *Die Kirche angesichts der konstantinischen Wende*, Darmstadt, 1976, pp. 236-258.
18. H.-D. Hahl, "Die ersten Jahrhunderte des missionsgeschichtlichen Mittelalters.

- Bausteine für eine Phänomenologie bis ca. 1050", in: K. Schäferdieck, ed., *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, vol. II, München, Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1978, pp. 11-76.
19. Gründer, p. 23.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 41
 21. J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 2, Bangalore, Church History of Association of India, 1982.
 22. A. Kanjamala (ed), *Integral Mission Dynamics*, Delhi, Intercultural Publications, 1995.
 23. C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1951.
 24. J. Gernet, *Christus kam bis nach China. Eine erste Begegnung und ihr Scheitern*, Zürich-München, 1984.
 25. E. Düssel, "The Real Motives for the Conquest", *Concilium*, (1990/6), pp. 30-46.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
 27. McManners, p. 304.
 28. "Franziskanische Spiritualität, Kreuzfahrermentalität und Goldhunger bildeten bei Kolumbus eine Einheit. So gesehen war er "Kreuzfahrer" und "Konquistador" ° zugleich.", Gründer, p. 86.
 29. For a very informative study on the role of Religious Orders in the evangelization of Latin America, see, M. Sievernich et al., eds., *Conquista und Evangelization. Fünfhundert Jahre Orden in Lateinamerika*, Mainz, Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1992.
 30. M. Salinas, "The Voices of Those who Spoke Up for the Victims", *Concilium*, (1990/6), pp. 101-109.
 31. McManners, 308.
 32. P. Richard, "The Violence of God and the Future of Christianity", *Concilium*, (1990/6), p.62.
 33. "In der Tat haben die Engländer, anders als ihre kolonialen Rivalen, die Spanier und Franzosen, den Indianern in ihrer Kolonialpolitik in Amerika nie einen Platz oder eine Zukunft in ihrem Kolonialreich zugewiesen", Gründer, p. 196.
 34. *Ibid.*, pp. 568-577.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. 577-582, W. Reinhard, "Christliche Mission und Dialektik des Kolonialismus", *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 109 (1989), pp. 353-370.