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Beyond the Colonial Past
Journeying to the Future

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Editorial

The 500th anniversary of the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India gives us an opportunity to assess the impact of colonialism on the life of our people.

Colonialism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon.[1] It is first of all a political reality: the conquest of and rule over alien peoples and their territories. Its original purpose may have been the protection of the lucrative trade of the colonial powers. Gradually it developed into a large-scale economic exploitation of the colonized lands. It also began to exert considerable influence on the socio-cultural life of the colonized peoples. A paternalistic effort to "improve" the life of the people also became part of the programme of the colonial masters. There was, of course, a difference of opinion as to the kind of "improvement" the colonized people needed.

It is not easy to determine the impact colonialism had on the Church in India. Directly or indirectly colonial rule affected the life and activities of the Church. There was often a close link between the colonial rulers and the Christian missionaries. This was quite manifest in the case of the Portuguese. It was more subtle, and somewhat invisible, in the case of the British.

In an analogical way one can speak of ecclesiastical colonialism. To the extent that a foreign Church – be it Persian or Roman – did not respect the legitimate autonomy of the churches in India, but rather imposed its rule over them, to that extent it can be considered colonial. And if, in addition, modes of worship, patterns of ministry, forms of spirituality and models of theology, developed elsewhere, were forced on the Christians in India that, too, smacks of colonialism. According to the ancient tradition of the Church, the local churches have the right to formulate the faith, organize worship and structure the ministry according to the socio-cultural situation of their people.[2]

It is possible that the colonized people have in some way benefited by their interaction with the colonizers. And it is true that a few from among the colonizers raised their voices in protest against the excesses of the colonial rule. All this, however, does not and cannot conceal the fact that colonialism has caused enormous harm to the colonized people. Not only did it oppress and exploit the people, it also deprived them of their freedom, dignity and the right to shape their life and destiny according to their wish. Besides, it robbed them of their creativity and fostered in them a slavish and dependent mentality. In a way, colonialism led to the loss of their soul.

It is against this background that we discuss the question of colonialism and decolonization in the Church. Hence our theme: *Beyond the Colonial Past: Journeying to the Future*. Our focus here is on decolonisation.

Two of the articles in this issue examine the phenomenon of colonialism from historical, theological and philosophical perspectives. Three others investigate the impact of colonialism on the churches of Goa, Kerala and Chotanagpur. The remaining papers deal with the decolonization of the life and activity of the Church – mission, liturgy, spirituality, religious life, theology and formation. We believe that a radical process of decolonization, that is, the removal of the vestiges of colonialism, is necessary for the emergence of a church that is truly Indian and genuinely Christian.

Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ

1. See Partha Chatterjee, "Five Hundred Years of Fear and Love", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33 (1998) 22, pp. 1330-1336.
2. See Kurien Kunnumpuram, "The Autonomy of the Indian Church", in Kurien Kunnumpuram and others, *The Church in India in Search of a New Identity*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1997, pp. 155-176, and the bibliography given there.

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Colonialism

Origin, Development and Consequences

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Coloniaism 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 distance[6] 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 Colonialism[12]

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 cultural 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 Mattheo 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 "reconquest" – 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 dòmination 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 colonial 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 Christianity, 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 Africans 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 country. 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.

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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-Grünewald-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.

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Beyond the Colonial Past

A New Story-ing

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On 12 May, 1998, the Discovery Channel transmitted an interesting and useful television programme in their "Mission Impossible" series. It dealt with human beings' cherished desire to "conquer" space and to "colonize" stars and galaxies. Meticulous planning is needed to send human beings into outer space and it was suggested that we could even bypass Einstein's limit of the speed of light by properly making use of gravitational waves. It was even hinted that generations of human beings could settle down in outer space with or without access to the parent planet earth. What struck me most in the whole discussion of this challenging topic was the frequent occurrence of the words "colony"and "colonization" to denote such a venture.

In this article an attempt is made to indicate that this tendency of colonization is in-built in the story of our lives. Colonization as a political phenomenon, which is almost 500 years old,[1] is based on a story.[2] The process of colonization is enacting this story. We shall see in this article some of the assumptions and implications of this story. Further, we will argue that de-colonization requires a totally different story to be enacted. We will assume that the same story of colonization, however modified, would not enable us to live in a decolonization paradigm. What is needed is a radically different story, enabling us to live in a totally different paradigm. For this discussion we borrow insights from Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* and his understanding of *Takers' story*.[3]

The method that we follow is philosophical. Drawing upon the recent hermeneutical studies on myth, metaphor and story, we deal with the topic of colonization from a theoretical perspective and suggest the model of a new story as the alternative paradigm of a life beyond the colonial past.

1. Human Living as Enacting a Story

Before understanding human life in general and colonization in particular as enacting a given story it would be helpful to understand what we mean by the terms *story*, *enacting* and *culture* here.

We could begin by understanding a *story* as "a scenario interrelating the human beings, the world and the gods".[4] A story, like a myth or epic, relates human beings with God and the world in existential and enigmatic ways. Such a story gives a broader vision to

the burning issues of humanity and articulates a solution for the conflicting situation of human existence.

Further, "to *enact* a story is to live so as to strive to make [the story] come true."[5] Thus enacting a story enables us to make the story come true in our own lives. Conversely, we build on the story given to us by enacting it in our own lives. Collectively, we live the story and elaborate the story, modify it and to some extent make it our own. This story is handed on to future generations for their own appreciation, appropriation and further enactment.

Such a story is aetiological. It is a story that explains. It explains to ourselves and to our own culture how things came to be this way.[6] Bridging the gap between reason and heart, such a story tries to reconcile the contradictory aspects of our lives. It gives us both a justification for our existence and a motivation for it.[7]

In short it tries to explain everything. A story that explains (and justifies) the meaning of the world, the intentions of God and the destiny of human beings is bound to have mythological characteristics and profound implications for our daily lives.

We may understand *culture* as a group of people enacting one story in this background of enacting a story. Thus, human beings in one particular society enact their own story and it is in the enacting that they understand themselves, the world and the divine.[8] Such a group of human beings enacting the same story constitutes a culture. For no single human being can invent a story and enact it for himself or herself. The story is given to him or her by the culture. The culture enriches itself by the enactment of the story by its members.

In the context of the above terms we can understand human living as enacting a story. This is more profound than regarding human life as a story. Life is seen not merely as a story or as a plot, but life is seen as living out a plot (story) given to us by the wider community (culture).[9] It is such a story that gives us meaning and orientation. It is the story that makes us what we are. The story explains and validates the prejudices, pre-understandings, the values, the vision and the goal of a culture. Such a story given to human beings by a culture has two mutually enriching aspects:

a. humans are captivated by that story
b. humans are captives of that story

The story that we are asked to enact is one that fascinates us, that goads us to further commitment and action. The story truly captivates us, we are enchanted by it, we find our lives fulfilled by it. We are ready to give up our most cherished selves for its sake. In this sense, the story takes precedence over the individual. In the case of Nazi Germany, for many Germans the story of Aryan supremacy was one that motivated them, fascinated them and inspired them. That story gave them "a reason to live and a reason to die". The hardships that came their way could be faced because of the tremendous influence of the story. They were blinded by the story, they admired it, made it their own and lived it!

On the other hand, we are also captured by the story, and held captives by the story. The story given to us by our culture is not our own. We are not free to reject it. We are truly held in a cultural prison by the story that we are told to enact. This cultural prison, as opposed to the criminal prison, offers us no easy escape, no release. In the criminal prison, the wardens have the keys to take us out of the prison. But in the cultural prison, given to us by our culture, both the prisoners and the wardens share the same fate and they both know that there is no escape route.[10] For instance, the Germans enacting the Nazi story of the supremacy of the Aryan race were not totally free to think otherwise. Even if they did think otherwise and were not convinced of this ideology, the propaganda machine, the story being enacted by the wider culture, prohibited them from actually living out a different story. Even unconsciously they were dragged into living out this story of the majority community. This story was being lived out in every sphere of the nation's life. So the only way to get rid of the story from their lives was by leaving the country or through physical death .[11]

Such an understanding of living as enacting a story could be compared to speaking which could be considered as enacting a language. Going beyond the naïve view that we use words as means of speaking, we can very well affirm that language is a game being played by us using the rules given to us. It is in the use, that is, in the act of speaking that we are given the language. We are "forced" to follow the rules of the language. At the same time, we are at liberty to invent new words and creatively use the language to exploit the ambiguities of linguistic rules.

As pointed out by L. Wittgenstein,[12] the words of the language acquire meaning in the context of the language game. Similarly, the actions of our daily life acquire meaning in the context of the story that is being enacted. We are not totally bound by language in speaking or by the story in living. We can creatively use both the language and story to go beyond the their own limits. But our freedom is not unlimited. It is a "bound freedom", to use a phrase of Paul Ricoeur.[13]

In the process of development of both language (through speaking) and story (through living) we, the actors in the story, are invited to play the game "properly", that is according to the rules. Some ingenuity is encouraged or tolerated. Even the protesters or the rebels in the story are contributing their share to that game of "enacting" or "counter-enacting" the story. "Counter-enacting" can form part of the same story. We can even "play to the gallery." But to play a totally different story is difficult, if not impossible. A child who has not come in contact with another culture cannot talk a different language on its own. So, too, it is difficult to create a different story from within the story one is enacting.

Hence, human living could be visualized as enacting a story, a story given to us by the culture, a story reinforced by the life of other individuals of the culture. Colonization as a political phenomenon is the carrying out of a story, enacting a story which captivated

the colonizers and which held them captives. In the next section we see some of the guiding elements of the story of the colonizers. We would be assuming here that colonization would never have occurred without the *Takers'* story which they were enacting.

2. The Story Enacted by Colonization

Against this background of human living as enacting a story, we shall now describe some of the features of the story being enacted by the colonizers.[14] It must be remembered that the colonizers were, like most of us, well intentioned people, not necessarily villains out to conquer and kill. Our aim is only to look at some elements of the story that moved, guided and inspired their actions. Thus, we shall be able to see how they were really motivated to enact the story of colonization, how they could live for and even die for this story. This will enable us to understand even the more heinous aspects of colonization from their world view, from the story they were enacting.

a. Its Premise: World for Colonizers

"Every story, is based on a premise, is the working out of a premise."[15] The most appealing premise of the colonizers is that "the world was made for us". From this premise it follows that "if the world was made for us, then it belongs to us and we can do what we damn well please with it".[16]

So the premise of the colonizers is that the world was made for them and they were made to rule it, to conquer it or to colonize it. Not just the world, but other civilizations and people are objects of colonial subjugation. "You hear this fifty times a day. You can turn on the radio or the television and hear it every hour. Man is conquering the deserts, man is conquering the oceans, man is conquering the atom, man is conquering the elements, man is conquering outer space."[17]

For conquering the world and other civilizations, human beings have to pay a heavy price. But the role provided by the story makes human beings willing to pay a price bravely and gladly, however high it may be. What they do not realize is that "the price ... is not the price of becoming human. It's not even the price of having the things you [need]. It's the price of enacting a story that casts mankind as the enemy of the world".[18] It is the price paid by the colonizers and by the colonized because of the story being acted out by the colonizers.

b. Its Method: Cut-Throat Competition

There were three methods[19] the colonizers followed which are never practised in the rest of the community of life and these were fundamental to their culture and civilization. It may be noted that the examples given here are to be understood within the frame-work of the original agricultural farming community. We would be contrasting the life style of Takers (or better, the Taker farmers) with that of the animals to get a better insight into their method of operation.

Firstly, colonizers deny their competitors access to food and thus to life.[20]

In the wild you may deny your competitors access to what you are eating, but you may not deny them access to food in general. For example, a lion in the forest does not claim that all gazelles are his and others should not eat them. The lion naturally defends its kill but does not regard the herd as its own. The jackal also can eat of a gazelle when its turn comes. Unlike the lion, the colonizers seem to take full possession of the herd, ready to defend it and deny it to their competitors.

Secondly, colonizers systematically destroy the competitors' food to make room for their own. In the natural community, the rule is 'take what you need and leave the rest alone'. No wild animal, for instance, destroys the whole habitat of its enemy or the enemy's food.

Finally, they physically exterminate their competitors, which is something unheard of in the larger community of (biological) life. In the wild, for instance, animals will defend their territories and protect their kills, but they never hunt competitors down just to kill them. What they hunt, they eat, unlike what ranchers and farmers do with game.[21]

c. *Its Law: Unlimited Growth*

The law followed by enacting the colonizing story is that of unlimited, unbridled development:[22] Not just settlement and growth, but unlimited settlement and growth. This leads to unlimited production and uncontrolled expansion. When they do not achieve satisfaction and fulfilment in their lives by the production and use of one car, the solution, it is suggested, lies in the production and use of better or more cars. So, too, if one is not satisfied by possessing one house or one estate, it is hoped that possession of unlimited houses or estates will bring joy and satisfaction.

d. *Its Way: One Right Way*

The colonizers' story has another dimension. They are convinced that theirs is the right way, the only right way. So they force everyone else in the world (or in the colonies) to do as they do, to live the way they live. Everyone has to be forced to live like the colonizers, because they alone have the one right way of existing.

It is going to be very hard for the colonizers to give up their way of life, because they are sure that what they are doing is right, and that they have to go on doing it even if it means destroying the world, the other civilizations and humanity with it.

e. *Its Task: The World Police Force*

In enacting the story they had a noble purpose, a holy task: to civilize the world. For without them the world was unfinished, was just nature "red in tooth and claw".[23] It was in chaos, in a state of primeval anarchy. Their task was to come in and straighten it out; to give order to this world and its people; to give to the world a sense of harmony and morality which it otherwise lacked; to bestow on the other people a sense of decency and civilization that they never could dream of; to impart to them a sense of values, which they never possessed. So conquering and colonizing the world was a holy task to

make it financially, morally and spiritually viable. In performing this task, they became a world police force.

f. Its Consequence: Colonization

Nothing much needs to be told about the consequences of enacting the story of the colonizers[24] since we are witnesses to its effects. It includes both the few positive as well as the many devastating negative aspects associated with colonization: openness to other cultures, utter destruction of other cultures, unimaginable economic calamity, inhuman bondage, physical slavery, economic misery and mass extermination of people![25]

3. A Different Story Enacted by Decolonization

If colonization was enacting a story, decolonization can only be enacting a different story. From within the colonizing story itself, it is not possible to be "liberated" and to be decolonized, just as, from within one language family, we cannot speak a totally different language. Decolonization is speaking a different language, playing a different (language) game. So it is to be noted that even the radicals or the rebels within a story cannot create a new story, they can only alter the story here and there. Such efforts will end up only in slightly changing the plot, or some grammatical rules of the game. They will only make "the oppressed the oppressors," and not alter the game totally.

Moreover, the decolonization story is not just one story as opposed to that of the colonizers. They are different stories, which would be opposed to the prominent traits of the colonizers' story. It is not our attempt to give a full account of the decolonizers' story. We only wish to indicate some of the salient features of this different story, which could act as a paradigmatic alternative to the colonizers' story.[26] We do not claim that we are able to formulate an alternative story that could replace the colonizers'. Ours is merely an effort to explore some of the possible avenues that the new story could point to. Hence, the following suggestions are tentative.

a. Its Premise: Humans in the World

The story of decolonization, unlike that of the colonizers, is a story whose premise is that human beings become human by living in the hands of God. Human beings do not need to bring order to the world created by God. Further, the world does not belong to human beings, but human beings belong to the world.[27] "Man was born to the world. [He is] being shaped,"[28] and not the other way around.

Since the world and human beings are God's creation, growth and development goes on forever in one's own as well as in others' culture. This is to be positively appreciated. God made humans for the world, in the same way he made salmon, sparrows and rabbits for the world; this seems to have worked pretty well so far, so we can take it easy and leave the running of the world to God. So the world is in fact God's garden, the Garden of Eden.

b. Its Method: Limited Competition

The world in this story also will not be the place of perfect peace and harmony, like the Kingdom of God or *Rāma Rājya*. We cannot imagine this

world to be a place of peaceful co-existence. There is scope and need for the law of limited competition[29] There would be general laws guiding the growth of life, laws derived from life and not from parliaments.[30] Here human beings will not play the role of annihilators[31] There could be sometimes "erratic retaliation" to make the other aware of one's own existence.[32] Such an "erratic retaliatory strategy" has been found to be viable and community sustaining from the very beginning of life.[33]

c. Its Law: Sustainable Growth

Unlike the law of unlimited growth, the law followed here is that of sustainability and viability. It is a law that has been in existence for the last three million years and has proved to be viable.[34] This law of sustainability is in-built in the (evolutionary) mechanism of the growth of biological life and the role of human beings is to discover this law and to live in accordance with it. Thus the ecological concerns of today will be significant here, not from an anthropological perspective but from a cosmic one.

d. Its Way: Many Ways

Here the exclusive claim is not made that there is only one right way, the way of the colonizers. Since other ways are acknowledged, space is given to other cultures in which they can live and flourish in their own ways.[35] Respect for diversity is encouraged. Diversity is seen as a survival factor for the community and is therefore prized. The problems emerging from plurality and diversity are tackled, and not denied and allowed to explode. Each society is allowed to live in the way it prefers without canonising one particular way as the way for the whole human community. The success of this way of life is affirmed by the existence of human beings for three million years without feeling the need to colonize others.[36]

The colonized never were obsessed by the delusion that what they were doing was right, that everyone in the entire world had to practise agriculture, that every last square yard of the planet had to be devoted to it. They said to the hunters: "You want to be hunter gatherers? That is fine with us. That's great. We want to be agriculturists. You be hunter-gatherers and we'll be agriculturists. We do not pretend to know which way is right. We just know which way we prefer."[37]

e. Its Task: To Shepherd

Since human beings are in the world, their task is to live according to the laws of God, not according to the laws invented by them. In the decolonizers' paradigm it is clear that the laws of God are the laws of life.

So what is required is a healthy respect for the world and for the other living creatures and societies. The particular task of a community or society is to be a trail-blazer or pathfinder in the full development of other cultures and the universe.[38] One can certainly invite the other cultures to learn from the discoveries made by one's own community, but cannot force them to do so. Space must be given to the other communities to live the way they prefer, without, of course, being detrimental to the common good of the

"community of life". Thus, human beings are called to shepherd and guide the other communities of humans as well as those of the animals.

f. Its Consequence: A New Humanity

The consequence of such a new story cannot be totally imagined. It can, however, be maintained that such a story leads to more humanization and freedom and opportunity for all communities to shape their life and destiny the way they see fit. Mutual enrichment and dialogue, but not intolerance and annihilation of groups, be they political, economic, cultural or religious, would be the guiding principle and practical consequence of such a story. The tensions that inevitably arise would be solved in ways which are fair to the human societies concerned.

Conclusion

So, for a society attempting to go beyond the colonial past, the challenge is not just to revise the old story, nor to modify it, nor even to improve on it. The challenge is to create a new story. A new story based on a different premise, with different methods, tasks and goals. Such a story can lead us to a society with a different dream, with a different vision and with a different culture. Only such a story can give us the impetus to build a truly decolonized society. Otherwise, the danger is that colonization will continue to exist in different forms, (like economic, cultural or religious colonization instead of the political one) or in different modes (where the actors or agents of colonization will change). Going beyond colonization calls for a new dream and a new story, which can be enacted only by a new culture. It is a mistake to think that the new story of decolonization would be a story of turning the clock back or of denying scientific progress. It does not lead us merely to a utopian world of primitiveness.

The new culture could be as technologically advanced as today's or even more advanced.[39] It would not be improper for such a society to delve into the galaxies to probe the inexplicable mysteries of the cosmos. But the motive must not be to "conquer" and "colonize" but to "encounter" and to "relate". It would be a technological advancement with a "human face" (or better with a "cosmic heart") that can respect the other for the other's sake, that can let the other be itself.

Therefore, the challenge for us moving beyond the colonial past is to dream a story which is more human and more cosmic unlike that of the colonizers, and to enact it. The call is to have a re-vision of the whole cosmic adventure so that we can live in tune with the cosmic rhythm. The process of decolonization calls for a new mode of living, a new narration of a story and a new enactment of this story.

Notes

1. We recall that a few years ago the 500th anniversary of the "discovery of America" was celebrated and in this year we remember the landing of Vasco da Gama in India 500 years ago. This article is based on a course given by me at JDV in 1997 to the

theology students entitled "An Alternative Vision of Humanity". I am grateful to the students for their creative participation and suggestions.

2. This has quite a lot to do with the recent studies on story, myth, and metaphor. Though we are appreciative of "story-theology" we do not make any explicit reference to it in this article. This article does not belong to the category of story-theology. Here story is seen as more primordial.
3. Bantam Book, New York, 1995. More about the author and his ideas could be found in the very informative web site http://www.ishmael.org. Detailed description of the fans club, of the universities where courses based on Ishmael are given and of the possible ways of supporting this venture are given in the same site. It might be noted that Ishmael operates basically on the two categories of *Leavers* and *Takers* and their different stories. Leavers are those who are left out of the race, the conquered, the uncivilized, the primitive and Takers are the conquerors, the civilized. This article does not equate the Takers with the colonizers nor the Leavers with the colonized people. But we assume that the colonizers' story is linked to the Takers and a declonizing story could draw its inspiration from Leavers story.
4. *Ishmael*, 41. See also Kuruvilla Pandikattu, *Metaphorising of Reality*, JDV, Pune, 1996, for another discussion of story, myth and symbol.
5. *Ishmael*, 41.
6. Cf. *Ishmael*, 43.
7. Thus through the story the people have been given an explanation of how things around them came to be this way, and this stills their alarm. This provides them with a sense of justification for the calamities they inflict on others and on themselves. This explanation covers everything, including the deterioration of the ozone layer, the pollution of the oceans, the destruction of the rain forest, child molestation, subjugation of millions, slave trade, inhuman flesh and drug trafficking!
8. *Ishmael*, 34-36, 40-44 & 62.
9. It may be noted here that by story we understand here not the story of the individual lives; but we mean the story given to the whole community by the culture. It is this larger story with its plot that gives each individual a role, an identity and meaning. It is this story that enables the individual to live in the community. Such a story is intimately linked to the culture.
10. Such an understanding could be compared to that of *Weltanschuung* or horizon of understanding or living. *Weltanschuung*, like horizon, is something beyond the grasp of the person concerned, but he or she is profoundly influenced by it. Cf. E. Coreth, *Grundriss der Metaphysik*, Tyrolia, Innsbruck, 1994, 54.
11. Cf. *Ishmael*, 252-253. Obviously the choice of leaving the country is practically ruled out in the case of the wider story that is being enacted by the larger world community of colonizers.
12. L. Witgenstein, *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*. DF Pears & BF McGuinnes (ed. & tr.), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, *passim*.
13. Or the *gebundene Freiheit*. See Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. E.V. Kohak (tr.), Nortwestern Univ Press, Evanston, 1966, 41f.
14. It may be noted that the author D. Quinn uses the two terms *Takers* and *Leavers* to denote the two types of stories prevalent in our world. We take the liberty to identify the features of Takers (conquerors, civlized, survivors) to be those of the colonizers and those of Leavers (defeated, vanquished, "uncivilized", primitive people) with those of the colonized. We do not assume that the colonized are always the Leavers.

But we assume that the colonizers did enact the story of the Takers and the decolonizers could be inspired not by the Takers' story but by the Leavers'.

15. *Ishmael*, 60.
16. Daniel Quinn, *The Story of B: An Adventure in Mind and Spirit*, Bantam books, New York, 1997, 279-280. See also Ishmael, 61.
17. *Ishmael*, 73. Note the similarity with the conquering of the outer space mentioned in the introduction.
18. *Ishmael*, 75.
19. Cf. *Ishmael*, 126-127. These rules are adapted from the life style of the Takers' as given by Quinn.
20. In *My Ishmael* (Bantam books, 1997) Daniel Quinn observes that our modern society (or for that matter, the society of the colonizers) is the only society which keep food under lock. This control of food enables the society to maintain itself. In other societies where food is not kept locked up but freely availabe (like for animals and birds) people cannot be forced to live this one way of the colonizers. See *My Ishmael*, 50-57.
21. There is a fourth law mentioned by Quinn as characteristic of the Taker civilisation, that is, storing food for the future. He remarks that the lion does not kill a second gazelle to save for tomorrow, but the Takers do.
22. Cf. *Ishmael*, 134.
23. *Ishmael*, 71.
24. We assume that the story of the "Leavers" as told in Ishmael will foot the bill here. We assume that the Leavers' paradigm could be equated to that of the decolonizers. Further, it may be noted that when India exploded the nuclear bombs it was playing according to the rules of the game set up by the industrialised, nuclear powers. By this explosion India became part of the nuclear club following the rules of their game. Defeat and success in a game (or war) belong to the set norms of the game and defeat does not enable you to exit from the game. Due to lack of space we do not elaborate that this story of the Takers (or colonizers) is a self defeating story leading to the utter destruction not only of their own culture but also of the whole living planet. More could be found in *Ishmael*, chapter 6, where the colonizers' civilization is compared to a flying contraption made out of only pedals and falling from a high cliff. While it falls the occupant thinks that he or she is flying without imaging the impending doom.
25. Further it may be noted that the story of the colonizers had its origin about 10,000 years ago when one group of people took up agriculture in the Fertile Crescent. This story cannot have a future since it has inevitably led to the utter destruction not only of its own culture but also of the entire living world. Therefore the only way to get out of the story of the colonizers is to live a radically different story.

    We cannot modify the story of the colonizers and make it a decolonizers' story. That would be like adding new vocabulary to make a new language. Such a counter-story would be absorbed by the story of the colonizers in due time.

    The new story of decolonization is like speaking a totally different language with radically different linguistic and grammatical rules. This is a new way of looking at the world, a new way of living in the world, a different way of being. The encouraging aspect of this is that such a story (or more properly, stories) is about three million years old, the stories which are as old as human being, the stories which make human life on earth sustainable, viable and humanizing.
26. It may be noted that some of the features of Indian Independence could be seen as forming part of such a different story. The way Gandhiji got independence for India

does not fully fit in with the Colonizers' story as perfected by the British. Facing bullets with bare hands or using non-violence to fight the mighty English does speak of another story by which Gandhiji lived.

27. This could be compared to the role of Dasein in the two phases of Martin Heidegger.
28. Daniel Quinn, *Providence: The Story of a Fifty-Year Vision Quest*, Bantam Books, New York, 1996, 149. It may be noted that the "gods" of Ishmael is being replaced here by God from a Christian perspective.
29. *The Story of B*, 252-253.
30. *My Ishmael,* 85.
31. *My Ishmael*, 87ff. Here the general law could be "give as good as you get" and "Don't be too predictable". An elaborate discussion is found in *My Ishmael*, 87-111.
32. *My Ishmael*, 110. By 'erratic retaliation' is meant retaliation to an event but in unexpected ways and at unforeseen times. The retaliation can not be fully predicted by the enemy. This keeps the surprise in retaliation making the attacker not fully sure of the mode of response. So it is implied that the method of competition, as long as it does not become a cut-throat one, is tolerated or even needed in every community of life.
33. *My Ishmael*, 106.
34. This is the claim made by D. Quinn. According to him the Leaver story is being enacted from the very beginning of human appearance. We assume this to be true and assert that such a Leavers' story could lead to a decolonizing story.
35. *ishmael*, 246.
36. This is an assumption we make. We think we are right to assume that colonization with its ugly face is of very recent origin.
37. *Ishamel*, 167. Here we are again assuming that the colonized were not acting out the Takers' story, but the Leavers' story. Even if it is not historically right our assumption it is that only a Leavers' story could serve as a paradigm for a decolonzing story. The Takers' story leading to colonization can never serve as the paradigm for the Leavers' story.
38. *Ishmael*, 242f.
39. There is not much space to elaborate this point here. It must be affirmed that the marvellous technological advance of our society has to do with its story, but it is possible to have a still more technologically advanced and morally humane society which is enacting a different story.

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Christian Life in Goa During Colonial Times

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This paper is an attempt to describe briefly some of the ways Christians of Goa and a few other parts of India lived their faith since the time of the first conversions by foreign missionaries.

"The true Church is universal", wrote a Church historian. "It is not restricted to any definite country or nation, it is not tied down to any particular culture or civilization, it is not identified with any distinct race or people and is ready to adapt itself to all sane customs, climates and conditions of life. Everywhere it can find itself at home. And in the Church all men, all nations, all cultures, all values, can find and achieve their perfect fulfilment".[1]

India, as described by a Swiss Jesuit, Felix Plattner, is "a land subject to and conditioned by the unalterable cycle of the monsoons, which provide or deny the life-giving rain to the parched, thirsty tropical land. This leads to a mix of gloomy fatalism and glowing faith which people bring to the worship of their gods. Theirs is the world of demons, of animals deified, and the mythological powers which dominate men's destinies. People are held in a fatalistic cycle of a never-ending round of birth, life and fading away"[2]

Into such an India did the planting of Christianity begin. It started with the Syrian Christians, immigrants into Kerala from Asia Minor in the first century. Over the years they increased in numbers by their intermarriages with local groups. Towards the end of the 4th century, a group at Cranganore was reinforced by a new influx of immigrants who had travelled from Syria and Edessa under the leadership of Thomas Cana. Yet another group came from Persia under Marwan Sabriso in the 9th century. These Christians, though they belonged to the East-Syrian rite, were by and large at home in Kerala as they had adopted many social, cultural and religious customs and practices of the place.

Conflicts over doctrine and discipline arose with their contacts with the Portuguese from the 16th century onwards. The Religious Orders operating in India at the time (Fransicans, Jesuits and others) failed to understand and tolerate the natural peculiarities of the Indian-Christian communities they had to deal with over the decades, and the schism of 1653 was an inevitable consequence. Francois Houtart[3] describes well how the Portuguese presence and activities in South India led to a split in the Syrian group and to the birth of a Latin community. They introduced a strong ecclesiastical structure and the

Synod of Diamper marked the destruction of the cultural identity of the Syrian Christians while upholding the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic doctrine. Goa, with its strong Portuguese presence and religious authority, became the starting point of the apostolic action of the Church in the whole of the East.

The Portuguese right of patronage gave widespread powers to the clergy to announce the gospel. It backed them as they asked or forced unbelievers to give up their rites and customs. It was done

> "so that in this manner all might be united and joined together in charity of law, and love, since we are created by one (common) Creator and redeemed by one Redeemer. But if the people are so stubborn as to reject the true faith they should be put to fire and steel".

Pope Leo X's words to King Manoel of Portugal in 1515 had a provocative flavour about them. He addressed the monarch:

> "Receive this warlike sword in your always victorious and warlike hands. With this you will wage wars under the most happy auspices; you will subject the enemies of the Faith, as you have done up to now ... may you use your force, strength, and power against the fury of the infidels; may you consecrate not only Your most religious spirit, but also the kingdom itself, and the forces of the kingdom, to the giver of them, to God the best and the greatest, so that having received through this gift the help of heaven in battles, you may bring back abundant spoils and most famous triumphs"[4]

The words were sincerely followed by those working under the Padroado system in the East. One among the many activities that the Religious Orders were engaged in in Goa was education. Thus Goans (excluding women for most of the colonial times) had the unique opportunity of being educated by men from various nationalities, for Portuguese, Spaniards and Italians (among others) taught in Goan schools. Education was linked to the need to spread the Christian faith, though in the process the methods and courses which covered various fields helped in broadening and expanding the mental horizons of those instructed. But to a large extent traditional education did suffer or was given little importance in Goa.

We get an idea of the priestly formation given to boys at the then newly started Jesuit-run Seminary of the Holy Faith in Goa. A letter dated October 7, 1545, from Goa mentions that there were 60 boys there from the ages of 21 and below. Some of them had been forced to attend while others had come of their own free will. They were being instructed so that in turn they would impart instruction to others in their respective homelands. Their teachers were graduates in theology and humanities from Europe, rather overtrained for their work. The same letter concludes that had the students (mainly the Portuguese *mestico* and orphans) not been trained there, they would have gone their wayward ways.[5]

Coming up close on the heels of this centre, was the Seminary of Rachol. An article in a souvenir of the Semi-

nary speaks of its long and glorious history which had given much honour to the archdiocese of Goa by its services to the cause of the faith in India and during time when there were no other ecclesiastical institutions in India. Barreto Miranda[6] comments that like the Seminary of the Holy Faith (set up in 1541), this Seminary had sustained the faith of the people and spread its influence to all parts of India, and no literary establishment could compete with it in matters of instruction and education.

The Seminary which started on November 1, 1601, under the Jesuits, remained in their care till their disbanding in 1759 and went into Oratorian hands from 1762 till 1774. It then remained closed till 1781, functioned under the Lazarists till 1793 and was back with the Oratorians till 1835.

The Seminary while celebrating its tricentenary referred to its role as a representative of a multisecular, rich and brilliant tradition. "There does not exist in the East any ecclesiastical institution like the Seminary", it tells us. "Nothing in her 300 years has lessened the exuberance and vigourous action of evangelization and civilization that it irradiates. She forms men who, trained in science and culture, go to the world to teach the gospel"[7]

A note by Dom Antonio Sebastiao Valente, the then Archbishop of Goa, mentions that the Seminary was meant to instil the spirit of the Council of Trent and make seminarians ministers of the altar. In an exhortation, the Archbishop told his men: "you are the priests of tomorrow ... it behoves you to be not only good scholars, but holy seminarians, for this is demanded by the sublime ministry for which you are preparing yourselves.... The priesthood in not a profession or a career. Hence a seminarian who does not have in himself the courage and strength to become a saint must have at least the courage and the strength to leave the Seminary".[8] Parochial schools came to be set up in Goa and a look at the Constitutions of the archdiocese of Goa for 1953 gives one an idea of the way these schools conducted themselves:

> An important point of education is the establishment of the Catholic schools where the young may be educated in the principles and practice of Christian religion. A special secretariat is needed to study various problems connected with education especially with the raising of the level of education of backward classes, and also of orienting all activities according to the dictates of the Bishop. Parents have a grave duty to see to the Christian education of their children. Priests have an obligation to give a Catholic education to the youth in their instructions and in their catechesis. In Catholic schools the teaching programme, books and organization must be guided by a Christian spirit, and religion must be the foundation and crown of education at all levels. In Catholic schools the principal place must be given to the teaching of Christian religion. Priests should be aware about their duties to backward classes. The Church extends her saving actions to all social classes without distinction and therefore efforts must be made to raise the education of these.[9]

One notices that the various types of Christian schools in Goa did make

an impact on the minds not only of the students but also of their parents and those they were in contact with. Education was meant primarily to further the Christian faith. It was based on a European model, and was taught till the mid-18 century by Europeans. It did give the students a wider vision of things. The missionaries themselves excelled in many departments of life (writing, adventure and diplomacy) and shared this spirit with their students.

Side by side with the drive for education, there had been in the early days of the Portuguese conquest a certain religious rigor, as A. D' Costa informs us. He recounts the story of how Portuguese soldiers would fill wax dolls with wine, cut off their heads and gulp the wine. The people thinking that they had drunk human blood, would take fright and become Christian. Becoming Christian came to mean a clean break with the past way of living, and Indian names and the wearing of nose-rings for women, for instance, were considered incompatible with Christianity. Temples were destroyed even though the quality of Hindu temple architecture was "very sumptuous and of exceedingly fine workmanship" as described in a letter of 1567 by one missionary who had worked at their demolition. The order for the destruction had come from the first Provincial Church Council which stressed that an excellent way of bringing the Christian message to non-Christians was to build churches in their midst and station there priests of good and exemplary lives.

Much as one condemns the wanton destruction of temple and temple art in the excitement of the evangelistic movement in 16th and following centuries in Goa, one is struck by the emergence of a local Christian art. Jose Pereira tells us in his *Golden Goa* that foreign and Indian craftsmen re-created Spanish and Portuguese styles in the churches of Goa. The influences were from Italy and France initially, but it is to the credit of Indian craftsmen that their creations were not mere imitations of the original, but were an elaboration in new forms with local materials and local sense.

Early Christian images in India were very similar to those in the West. Yet gradually, according to K. Desai, an Indianness entered both in the model and the iconography. The images of Our Lady, for instance, took on various forms. She was represented as the mother goddess with her eyes painted black to heighten depth and with the lotus flower placed in her right hand.[10] Or as Pereira tells us, " Indian craftsmen reflected their own peculiar world-views in their creations. Their crucifixes in wood, ivory and metal were decorative and exude not torment as such and have none of the twists and turns of the tortured Christ visible in the West".[11]

Yet one perceptive writer felt that in Goa one earlier noticed traces of Portuguese forms of worship. "There was a strong Europeanization in worship. The city had become a second Lisbon and Church festival days corresponded to those observed in Portugal with her national saints like St. James, St. Sebastian and St. Anthony making a lasting appearance here.... This ten-

dency to feel a permanent debt to Europe and to imitate her ways and customs has remained a dominant trait in all Goan Christians and this fact may explain why so many inhabitants of Goa seem unable to feel that they are true citizens of India.... Luckily over the years the Goan Church has evolved an original manner of worship suitable to the traditions of her people".[12]

Along with education and Church art, flowed the devotional life of the people. Street preaching and singing were a regular feature of life. On their way to and from school in the villages, children could be heard proclaiming the Christian message in chant. They would climb trees and alternately sing their catechism in two groups. The arrival of the printing press brought forth in 1557 the first Portuguese catechism, with a Konkani version four years later.

There were devotions being practised which were similar to the local traditional ones. People used blessed water and relics in time of illness, venerated the cross and holy pictures and used images and beads. Converts on their deathbeds would ask for a cross to be placed in their hands. Many a home would have a cross painted in the front rooms. Local traditional feasts were merged into the Christian ones. It had been the practice for the village astrologer to bless the rice-harvest which the people brought in procession to offer at the temple. A Jesuit letter describes how the recent converts of Divar village in Goa at harvest time requested their parish priest to bless their new yield. They had come carrying a banner with the names of Jesus and St. Paul on it and sheaves of rice to the accompaniment of music and dance. These the priest accepted and placed on the altar-steps.[13]

In an article "Popular Religiosity in Catholic Goa", I have described the forms of popular devotion in Goa in the 16th century. Various reports of the period speak of the variety of religious expressions of the people. Being converts from Hinduism they needed these to feel at home in their new-found faith and events like processions, baptisms and feasts helped in this process. These expressions of their religiosity did not differ very much from the European religiosity of the time or for that matter from the Hindu practices. The Church in Goa allowed them to unfold lest the new converts felt the absence of their former practices and reverted to them. The new converts needed these to bring about an amalgam of mind and heart in themselves.

These Christian religious devotions, the processions in particular, marked an important time in their lives. They had little else to look forward to in normal days and longed for the special days when the processions to mark *Corpus Christi,* the rosary and the Passion of Jesus came around. The impressive larger-than-life statues which were carried around the city on these occasions were artistic and caught their fancy. Preachers used many realistic props to heighten the effect of remorse during their preachings that accompanied these events. Flagellations during Lent, for instance, were common. The Easter processions were generally more joyful. The many

accounts of the miraculous show the desire on the part of many to prove the efficacy of the new faith, and rival Religious Orders outdid each other in proving they had been more successful.

One may wonder how these practices persisted for so long. It is likely that the clergy of the time and the civil authorities suggested by their tacit approval of these practices that only supernatural intervention could solve their problems, thus preventing the people from using their natural freedom to improve their economic and social condition.

It should not appear that the Church existed in the southern part of India alone, for she did have a presence in the north as well. The Jesuits in the 16th century, in answer to an invitation from the Mughal emperor Akbar, were to spend many decades at the royal court at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. The three missions they undertook there failed in the primary sense they were intended, i.e. the conversion of the royals. But they did succeed in forging Christian-Muslim links, winning concessions and establishing a Christian presence there.

Missions came up in Tibet and Nepal, in Patna and Lucknow, too. Education was taken up in a big way along with medical and social activities. In Sardhana, for instance, Fr. Marco della Tomba realising the evils of the caste system organized a *panchayat* in which the people decided to divest themselves of their caste. In the 19th century, it was Fr. Constant Lievans (1856-1893) who was to put his indelible stamp on the history of the Church in Chotanagpur in north eastern India. His approach consisted in the legal defence of his converts.

Missionary accounts do not speak much of the lives and times of the converts they worked for. Recent writings have corrected this and stressed what T. de Souza calls "the historiography of the voiceless". He mentions how the common people did not remain unaffected by the changes in economy, land relations and regulations under the colonizers. In some cases villagers who rebelled against the colonizers had their entire villages confiscated in punishment and given as grants to other individuals.[14]

It is interesting to see how converts to Christianity in India viewed foreign missionaries. They complained that European teachers came to the East to convert, yet their personal lives needed correction first. Some Indian Christians like Upadhyay Brahmabandhav (who died in 1907) aimed at the liberation of Christian teaching from the trammels of European theology and at a syntheis of Christian faith and Indian thought, and of Christian dogma and Indian *Vedanta*.[15]

Some rightly believed that Christianity was not the religious expression of a culture and that the unity of the Church represented the unity of humankind. In the history of the Church's encounter with other cultures, the Church not only received elements from other cultures but it also contributed towards the Christianization or sometimes destruction of other cultures.[16]

The Portuguese presence in India marked the start of a western colonial-

ism and of western cultural influence. As a result the alliance between colonialism and Christianity in many ways influenced the nature of the cultural and religious tradition of India and distorted the nature of the Church, its theology and its missions. While studying the psychology of the colonial process and analysing it, A. da Silva[17] speaks about the dynamics of interaction between the two. The trampling upon of local sensibilities and cultural traditions was psychologically most debilitating to the identity of a people. "However benign and noble the colonizers may have claimed themselves to be", he points out, "the very act of colonization is brutal and destructive. Since the colonized had to learn to live according to the rules drawn up by the colonizers, they had of necessity to develop psychological coping mechanisms, the more common one being that of submissiveness. This enabled the local population to avoid conflicts and tensions with the colonizer". Not quite true. We know of mutually shared hard and antagonistic feelings that some foreign missionaries had for the local people in Goa. An interesting 17th century document relates the antagonism and the comments that sometimes came to the fore.[18] The local Catholic clergy (Brahmin by caste) had once in a memorandum to Rome accused the Jesuits of persecuting them for being unfit for their religious tasks. In reply the religious listed their many achievements in education, in providing jobs for the poor, in composing books, in arresting converts in the act of worshipping their former idols and called the local clergy a dark-skinned people unworthy of any respect. Missionaries wrote regular reports to those who managed their affairs in Europe. These are a mine of information for the times during which they were written. They describe the various kingdoms, wars, local traditions, the growth of Christianity, the money received, and the reactions positive or negative, to the work of evangelization. These writings reflect, too, the views of the writers themselves. In them India and her people come across as an exotic land with people steeped in misery and ignorance, great yet not capable of much.

Conclusion

I had intended to describe some aspects of the daily life of Christians in India during colonial times. The idea has been to highlight some behaviours and to pinpoint how loud and sincere had been the reaction to the imposition of the new faith in India in some quarters. And though, typical of the historian quoted earlier, many believed that in the Church all men, all nations, all cultures, all values could and do find and achieve their true fulfillment, the picture has been largely different.

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The Impact of the Portuguese on the Church in Kerala

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The encounter between the Christian West, represented by the Portuguese, and India was phenomenal. The Portuguese achieved the realization of their protracted hopes and dreams, not only in discovering India with its rich commercial resources but also in coming into contact with the Christians of India. The 'discovery' was the opening of a vast field for Christian expansion. It also marked the beginning of a new stage of existence for the Christians of India. They came to know more about the shape and form of the Christian world. The present article will concentrate more on the meeting of the ancient Christians of India, the St Thomas Christians, with the Portuguese and make a brief reference to the new Christian communities which sprang up on the Kerala coast as a result of Portuguese missionary enterprise.

1. The St Thomas Christians and the Portuguese

The story of the meeting between two Christian worlds, two ways of Christian life, of the St Thomas Christians of India and of the Portuguese from the West, is a romantic story of a sort. The Portuguese with their European Christian background believed in approaching in their own way the Christian community they discovered in India. They enthusiastically accepted the claim of the Indian Christians to apostolic origins. They even took pride in thinking thus: "If the Spaniards have St James as their Apostle we have St Thomas in our India".

Deeply rooted in the memories of St Thomas, and in the ties with the East-Syrian Church, and fully integrated into the socio-cultural milieu of Kerala, the St Thomas Christians had developed an identity of their own. With the coming of the Portuguese they were prepared for and initiated into a life in three worlds. The third world was that of the Latin or Western Christendom. This New World would in course of time exert so profound an influence on them (whether they wanted it or not), that it would become hard to shed its traces. The first representatives of this world were cordially and even enthusiastically welcomed; but soon they would pose a challenge to and even threaten the particular identity, autonomy and unity which the St Thomas Christians had developed through many centuries. The new world did not only distort the identity, but shattered the unity and destroyed the autonomy of the Indian Church of St Thomas. There would follow a very hard struggle to restore or rediscover these in a new way.

First Contacts: Cordial Relations

On 21 May, 1498, Vasco da Gama cast anchor in the harbour of Kozhikode. For the Europeans of the time, this exploit was the translation into reality of a long-cherished dream, the fruition of the sustained sea-faring efforts of a century. For the Christians of St Thomas in India it was sudden and unexpected, and the beginning of a new epoch of tremendous impact, the entering into a New World of existence. During the first twenty years or so it was more with Portuguese navigators and traders that the Indian Christians had come into contact. Only from the year 1516/7 did the influence of Portuguese missionaries appear to have had an impact on the life of the Christians of St Thomas.

During the whole of the sixteenth century these Christians continued to be ruled over by East Syrian bishops. The first half under Mar Jacob (1503-1552) was rather peaceful, though much of the initial enthusiasm and expectation soon died out. The second half under Mar Joseph (1558-69) and Mar Abraham (1569-97) witnessed a more tumultuous situation, but even this did not yet assume the proportions of the tense years of the seventeenth century which exploded into what is known as the Koonen Kurisu Satyam ('the Bent Cross Oath') of 1653, the rebellion of the St Thomas Christians against their Padroado archbishop, Francis Garcia.

Vasco da Gama, who came to India in 1498 on his first voyage, returned home, with the mistaken idea that he had met Christians at Kozhikode. It would appear that he and his men mistook the caste Hindus for Christians and their temples for Christian churches. Pedro Alvares Cabral followed da Gama in 1500 and met real Christians at Kochi and even took two of them to Portugal with him.

It is interesting that these lay persons had no difficulty to accept the idea of Christians living a life radically different from theirs. They did not hesitate to enter the temples of Hindus and undergo the rituals offered to them in those temples, all the time imagining that they were Christian churches. This would change when the missionary clergy with their theology arrived and began their activity in the field.

When Vasco da Gama arrived at Kochi (AD 1502) on his second voyage, a delegation of the St Thomas Christians went to meet him. They presented him a 'rod of justice' and swore allegiance to the Portuguese king and sought Portuguese protection. The admiral received them very kindly and promised all help and protection. The significance of this event is variously interpreted by historians. One thing is certain, that with this very cordial and intimate relations were established between the Indian Christians and newcomers. In the following year Afonso de Albuquerque's visit to Kollam further strengthened these relations[1].

The euphoria and enthusiasm did not continue for long. Tension gradually began to develop within the first two decades, and this increased greatly when contacts became more frequent between the Indian Christians and the missionaries who came in greater numbers as years passed.

Two Distinct Approaches

Underlining the tensions in the relations between the Indian Christians and the Portuguese during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and later between them and the foreign Carmelite missionaries) was the respective ecclesial and theological consciousness. Very early in the sixteenth century a Portuguese priest, Alvaro Penteado, noted with regret:

> As regards their national customs, their will is corrupted by their priests who say that just as there were twelve Apostles, even they founded twelve customs, each different from the others.[2]

Archbishop Ros who had spent many years among the St Thomas Christians, studied their customs and practices, and ruled over them as the first Padroado prelate, observed that the Christian held that the 'faith' of St Peter was different from that of St Thomas.[3]

Alexis de Meneses, Archbishop of Goa, had a synod celebrated at Diamper (Udayamperur) in 1599. His intention was to bring the Christians under Padroado jurisdiction and make them accept the Latin way of life and worship. One of the synodal decrees denounced this 'error' of the Christians:

> There is one law of St Thomas and another of Peter; the Church founded by the one is distinct from the Church founded by the other...; those who belong to the law of Peter [the Latin Rite Portuguese] endeavoured to destroy the law of St Thomas.[4]

It is the consciousness of the St Thomas Christians of their individual Church that is to be noted when they distinguished the 'law of Peter' from the 'law of Thomas'. It does not seem to have been their intention to oppose one to the other. Their mind worked more or less like this: each Christian community had its own customs and usage which marked their identity – these customs and usage probably were to be traced back to their foundation by the Apostles. Each community had to accept these customs as sacred, and no other community had the right to question them.

To this sound vision of an individual Church was added a typically Indian communal or caste attitude. It is to this attitude of communal exclusiveness Fr Penteado refers when he says:

> The Christians of St Thomas do not care for communication with the Portuguese, not because they are not happy that they are Christians as we are, but because we are among them as the English and the Germans are among us.[5]

Another important point to be mentioned in this connection is the attitude of the Christians towards the Hindu community in Kerala and their relations with it. The 'Synod of Diamper' of 1599 forbade a number of customs and practices which the Portuguese considered 'pagan' (Hindu). These prohibitions and restrictions imposed by the synod were witness to the communal harmony and cordial relations that existed between Christians and the Hindus. This communal harmony and spirit of tolerance should be considered a typical Indian contribution to the Christian vision. The 'Synod of Diamper' mentions among others one

particular 'error' the St Thomas Christians are said to have held: "Each one can be saved in his own law, all laws are right".[6] The synod attributed this "error" to the contacts the St Thomas Christians maintained with their Hindu neighbours. It would be centuries before the Europeans would acquire a life-experience of other religions, before a theology of the religions of the world would emerge which would give due respect to the positive elements in those religions and their providential salvific role for millions of people. But the Indian Christians had been already living for centuries in a positive encounter with the high caste Hindus and had developed a theological vision of the Hindu religion which was more positive and liberal. Today in the light of modern theological approaches to other religions, one must admit that the vision of the Indian Christians was a more enlightened one than that of their European contemporaries.

Thus, at the arrival of the Portuguese in India towards the close of the fifteenth century the Christians of St Thomas were leading a life full of reminiscences of their past, and enjoying a privileged position in society and a measure of social and ecclesiastical autonomy. At the core of this life was an identity consciousness which, if not expressed in clear-cut formulas, was implicit in their traditions, their social, socio-religious and religious customs and practices, and their theological outlook. It is this particular mode of life which somehow or other came into conflict with the particular Christian vision and way of life of the Portuguese. The struggle began very early in the sixteenth century, and all the troubles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are expressions of this conflict. Western Christendom for a long time looked upon the Eastern Christians as 'heretics' and 'schismatics'. In spite of this, as soon as the Portuguese came into contact with the Christians of India, they showed great enthusiasm and willingness to enter into communion with the latter; yet the Portuguese *elite*, particularly the priests, cherished unhelpful ideas about their form of faith and practices. They considered that the form of Christianity existing in the East including that of the Indian Christians was an imperfect form for, according to them, the Western Latin form was the only perfect form. The relations of the Portuguese with the ancient Christians of India were governed by their ideas of Christian solidarity and also by a feeling of superiority as they regarded their culture and Christianity far superior to those of the Indian Christians. The Western form of Christianity, which was the Roman form of Christianity, was for them the perfect one not only in matters of faith and morals but in everything else that distinguished a Christian from a person of another faith. Hence, every Christian was expected to accept that form. The surest way to achieve this was to bring the Christians under the Portuguese jurisdiction and the Latin Rite. The Portuguese apparently had no clear idea of Eastern Christianity. The only thing they cared to know about Eastern Christianity was the imperfection of that Christianity and they probably attributed this imperfection to its divergence from Roman custom.[7] This view of a particular indi-

vidual Church was quite contrary to the view which the Indian Christians had entertained, as explained earlier.

Missionary Vision of Other Religions

The Portuguese as a true Iberian of his time, was a typical medieval European Christian whose faith was strong, sometimes even verging on fanaticism and whose Christianity was militant. If this medieval spirit had undergone some mitigation elsewhere in Europe through the influence of more liberal ideas and especially the Renaissance Movement, the Iberian was practically untouched by any such liberal ideas. On the contrary, his age-long war with the forces of Islam – considered both a religious and a patriotic duty – only increased the fervour of his militant faith. As regards the 'pagan' world, the Portuguese had fully inherited the gloomy attitude of the Middle Ages towards it; it was a world wholly under the sway of the spirit of darkness and was to be conquered and converted.[8]

In India, however, where the Portuguese had to operate in territories under Hindu rulers, practical prudence called for the use of moderation. In Goa, which was the only Portuguese territory by conquest, the application of medieval ideas prevailed to some extent.

The conquering conception of the mission of the Church was uppermost in the minds of the Portuguese in general and the missionaries in particular, when they approached other religions. They saw the work of the mission and "evangelism in terms of military operations, lines of defence, plans for attack, as if ... waging war against other believers".[9] In many of the missionary reports of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this attitude is quite evident. The works of Sebastian Gonsalves, Diogo Gonsalves, Paulo da Trindade, and Francis de Sousa, are good examples. The many letters of Francis Xavier and even some of the polemic treatises of Robert de Nobili are no exception to this. Two mission histories are of special relevance here; one written by a Franciscan in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the other by a Jesuit in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The titles of these books themselves are highly suggestive of their contents and the spirit in which they were written. The Franciscan, Paulo da Trindade, described his account of the Franciscan missions in the East under the name, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* ('The Spiritual Conquest of the East'). The Jesuit writer, Francis de Sousa, was most probably inspired by Trinidad's title (perhaps such an inspiration was not needed: the times could suggest the title) when he called his history of the Jesuit missions in the East, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo* ('The East Won over to Christ by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus').[10]

Thus the approaches of the Portuguese and those of the Christians of St Thomas were very different and from almost opposite angles. The St Thomas Christians conscious of their history and their particular identity and autonomy wanted the communities to remain unimpaired in every respect, each independent of the other, but each extending full cooperation to the other for the good of both. To use a modern term they wanted co-existence and not absorption

of one community into the other. The Portuguese were unable to grasp this idea of co-existence. What they wanted was absorption, and that too of the local Christians into the Portuguese. To what extent they wanted this absorption is difficult to state precisely. They set no limit to it even going so far as to extend it to food, clothes and also names.

It is easy, therefore, to understand the conflicts in opinions and methods right from the beginning of the mission work of the Latin priests among the St Thomas Christians. In the end the stronger party (the Portuguese) would win temporarily (at the Synod of Diamper in 1599), but the solution thus brought about would lead to violence and the whole problem would become critical and lead to an explosion in its own time (the events from 1653). After this, a real and lasting solution would have to be sought partly in a going back to the old ways and partly in a new approach (from the end of nineteenth century onwards). We see seeds of this sown in the twenties, thirties and forties of the sixteenth century for the dramatic harvesting later.

Beginning of the Prolonged Conflict: First Half of the Sixteenth Century

The first note of open discord with the St Thomas Christians was struck by the rather imprudent activities of Fr Penteado, a Portuguese diocesan priest, who came to India on his own initiative and took up work among the St Thomas Christians some time in 1517, and this without leave from the authorities of those Christians. Mar Jacob's letter of 1524, which he wrote to the king of Portugal, echoes the resentment of the Christians against Fr Penteado as well as some other causes of misunderstanding and misgiving on their part. It is at this time that a Dominican priest, John Caro by name, appeared in Malabar and offered to help Mar Jacob. His sympathetic approach did in fact make up for much of the harm done by Fr. Penteado. But the latter's interference for a second time caused a much more serious breach of peace; the good offices of the Franciscans somehow cleared the atmosphere though there emerged a small hard core who refused to have anything to do with the Portuguese.

In the last few years of Mar Jacob's ministry the Portuguese made a more radical and systematic attempt to latinize the Christians of St Thomas by establishing a seminary or college at Kodungalloor. The seminary was founded by a Franciscan friar, Vicente de Lagos, with a view to training the children of the St Thomas Christians towards priesthood. The friar was a good educationist and disciplinarian and the Portuguese writers have not spared words in praising his work. His only drawback was that he failed to understand and appreciate the specific pattern of the religious culture of the boys committed to his care and to have any regard for their maternal Rite. All those who came out of the seminary had been formed on Latin and western lines. They differed little from the Portuguese Latin missionaries. The St Thomas Christian parents, though at first enthusiastic about the good training their sons received at the seminary, later only felt sorry to find them being estranged from the way of life of the community. These

latinized priests were never assimilated into the community, but were kept out and treated just like the Latin priests.[11]

Mar Jacob had by this time retired to the Franciscan monastery at Kochi and he died there around AD 1552.[12] The death of the old bishop had a special significance for the Portuguese in India: it marked the snapping of the last link which connected the Church of India with that of Persia. Mar Jacob was good, and meek, and to some extent had given in to the Portuguese. Still his presence was a symbol of the relation of the Church of India with the East-Syrian Church – a symbol of the whole ecclesiastical life of the St Thomas Christians. By the death of Mar Jacob that symbol was broken – so the Portuguese thought. With his death the last obstacle to their plans of latinizing the community was removed.

Before the death of Mar Jacob the Portuguese had generally recognized him as the bishop of the St Thomas Christians, although there were a few among them, like Friar Vicente de Lagos, who thought otherwise. After his death almost all the Portuguese took it for granted that the Christians were subject to the jurisdiction of Goa.

Second Half of the Sixteenth Century: Conflicts Intensified

But the Christians of St Thomas were determined to continue to maintain their relations with the Church of the East and secretly negotiated to get prelates from there to rule over them. Bishops did come in spite of all the vigilance of the Portuguese authorities and ruled the Church of India for yet another half century.

Mar Joseph and Portuguese Intolerance[13]

After the death of Mar Jacob, Mar Abdisho, who succeeded Sulaqa as patriarch in Mesopotamia, sent to India two bishops, Mar Joseph and Mar Elias together with two Latin Rite Dominicans, Bishop Ambrose Buttigeg and Fr Antony Sahara, to take possession of the Indian Church. But the Portuguese authorities had already considered India as a Padroado territory and would not tolerate any clergyman entering India without the royal permit of Portugal. Therefore, when the mission of Mar Joseph and companions arrived in Goa in 1555 they were stopped there and prevented from proceeding to Malabar: the East-Syrian bishops were detained in a Franciscan friary at Bassein and the Dominicans were permitted to stay in their monastery in Goa. The guardian of the Bassein friary found the East-Syrian bishops to be fully orthodox and had only words of praise and admiration as regards their conduct and behaviour. Yet he would remind them that "the bishop of Goa was the bishop of Malabar and the whole of India", and "those who administered the sacraments to the Christians of Malabar without the permission of the bishop of Goa, would be thieves who would enter the sheepfold not through the gate."[14] That meant that they had no right, from the Portuguese point of view, to govern the Church of the St Thomas Christians, whatever their credentials.

In 1557 all the four were set free and they proceeded to Malabar. It is not unlikely that such a course was decided upon by the Portuguese authorities because that was the only way they

thought they would get rid of Mar Abraham an, 'anonymous bishop' who was working in Malabar. The Jesuit Fr Dionysio wrote in 1578:

> ... while he [Mar Abraham] was governing, there came three bishops through Ormuz, namely bishop Ambrose, an Italian [actually Maltese] and Mar Joseph and Mar Elias, both Syrians. Between Mar Abraham and these three prelates there arose a dispute. The issue raised was whether Mar Abraham was legitimately instituted or not. Later he was deposed [15]

There is no doubt that Mar Abraham was finally persuaded or forced to quit the country.

But Mar Joseph's presence in Kerala was not to the liking of the Portuguese authorities. He was soon accused of heresy and deported to Goa. The charge of heresy seems to have been only a ruse for getting rid of someone who caused embarrassment to the Portuguese authorities. For not only was Mar Joseph finally acquitted when he was subsequently taken to Lisbon, but we have as proof of his innocence a letter written at this time by the prior of the Dominican monastery in Goa, whose hospitality Mar Joseph had accepted before being taken to Lisbon. The prior, in the letter, speaks of him as a person deserving all honour and approbation. Mar Joseph was taken to Lisbon, which he probably reached at the latest by the beginning of 1564. As mentioned above, he was forthwith acquitted and through the influence of Antony Zahara he received an apostolic brief authorizing him to go back to India and take care of his Christians. Some Jesuits who happened to travel with Mar Joseph in the same ship speak highly of his virtues, fatherliness, kindness and charity.

While Mar Joseph was away in Europe the Portuguese made a concerted attempt to bring the Christians of St Thomas under subjection to the Padroado bishop of Cochin, Dom Temudo. Perhaps the Christians might have succumbed to the pressure and persuasion in their despair at failing for sometime to get a prelate from Mesopotamia. But they would not give in easily; they sent a secret message to Patriarch Abdisho, who succeeded John Sulaqa asking for a bishop. It was, in all likelihood, in answer to this request that the patriarch sent Mar Abraham to India. He came to India in 1568 armed with not only letters of recommendation from Pope Pius IV and Patriarch Abdisho but also those of the Superiors General of the Dominicans, Franciscans and even the Jesuits. But they were of no avail in India. The Portuguese authorities were most unwilling to take the recommendation letters at their face value; and so Mar Abraham was detained. But the shrewd prelate managed to escape their vigilance, and travelling overland reached his Christians in Malabar by April 1569.

At this time Mar Joseph was not in Malabar, he had again gone to Europe. As suggested above, he might have reached India after his first journey to Europe some time in 1565. The shock and disappointment the Portuguese authorities of Kochi felt at his return are evident in the letters the ecclesiastics wrote on that occasion. Even the shadow of what they considered unorthodoxy was enough for

them to mount their attacks on the East-Syrian bishop. Soon accusations of heresy against him began to pour into Rome. It did not take them long to send Mar Joseph to Europe for the second time. Melchior Nuno Barreto S.J. wrote to his superior general to see to it that Joseph was not sent back again to Kerala.

This time the bishop was determined to proceed to Rome. On reaching Rome he pleaded his cause so well that he was acquitted by the Roman authorities. Unfortunately he could not return to India, as he died in Rome in the year 1569. Cardinal Tisserant has this entry in his book:

> The Roman judges, however, like the Franciscan guardian of Bassein previously, felt obliged to give way before the piety of Mar Joseph, and to recognize his orthodoxy. Yet the measure of suffering was full, and Mar Joseph received near the tomb of the Apostles the crown which he had merited- through his long and slow martyrdom which was perhaps a more painful one than that of his heroic brother. Eighteen Syriac manuscripts, and one Arabic and one Persian manuscript, which he had always carried with him on his travels, were incorporated in the Apostolic Library of the Vatican by right of spoil.[16]

Mar Abraham: Discord and Reconciliation[17]

With the death of Mar Joseph, Mar Abraham's trials came to an end and now he was left alone in Malabar as the Metropolitan of All India. The bitter experiences he had undergone on previous occasions taught him to keep clear of the Portuguese circles of influence. He chose Angamali as his residence, instead of Kodungallore which had by this time developed into a Portuguese stronghold. Mar Abraham refused to attend the second provincial council of Goa held in 1575, though he was formally invited to it by the archbishop of Goa.

Mar Abraham's relations with the Portuguese missionaries (now mainly Jesuits) frequently alternated between discord and reconciliation. The Jesuits had by this time been in Malabar for over 25 years, but their contacts with the St Thomas Christians had been so far sporadic and occasional. At this time a certain Mar Simeon from Mesopotamia, pretending to be a bishop sent by the Pope, had come to Malabar and had set up his camp at Kaduthuruthy. He had the following of a few churches and priests. Mar Abraham had tried his best to get this rival bishop out of Malabar but to no avail. The Jesuits offered the archbishop all their help to oust Mar Simeon. From Mar Abraham they obtained permission to establish themselves at Vaipicotta (Chennamangalam) and to go and preach and administer sacraments regularly in the churches of the St Thomas Christians. Mar Simeon was finally forced to leave India. The Jesuits, with the full approbation of Mar Abraham and his archdeacon, George of Christ, visited the Christians and succeeded in introducing many "reforms" such as priestly celibacy, confession before communion, burying the dead near the churches, some feasts of the Latin calendar and so on. Most of these "reforms" were merely Latin customs. A diocesan synod held at Angamali in

1583 was the finale of these reformatory attempts.

In that synod a decision was probably made to start a new seminary for the clerics of the St Thomas Christians. The Jesuits thought that such a seminary under their auspices would bring to full fruition the 'reforming' activities already begun by the approval of the synod. The seminary began to function at Vaipicotta probably in 1584 with the full approval of the archbishop and his archdeacon. Soon it became a centre of ecclesiastical learning, to which students flocked from all over Malabar. Even priests were desirous of going to the seminary to profit by the course of Moral Theology and *casus conscientiae* conducted there. Knowing from experience how ineffective the seminary at Kodungallore had turned out to be to minister to the needs of the St Thomas Christians, care was taken at Vaipicotta to teach Syriac along with Latin, although this policy suffered reverses later on. Courses in Malayalam were given to foreign Jesuits, and in Syriac, Latin and Portuguese to local seminarians.

However, it was not very long before trouble began to develop. The Jesuits were not unanimous about the policy they had to adopt with regard to the St Thomas Christians. While one group wanted total and quick reduction of these Christians to the Latin rite and the Portuguese jurisdiction, another group wished to do it tactfully through a slow process without offending the feelings, retaining even the Syriac language for liturgical purposes. There were others who counselled that their rite be kept intact, and their subjection to the Catholic patriarch of the East-Syrians be not disturbed. At the same time they would insist that the Latin Jesuits should have a decisive role in educating them and disciplining them. In that way, they hoped, they would be able to purge them of what they thought were abuses and errors.

Even the mildest of their attitudes was provocative in the eyes of the archbishop, his archdeacon and the people. The events which followed only helped the situation to get worse. In 1585 there took place the third provincial council of Goa. Mar Abraham was invited and he attended it as the Pope had desired. The third session of the council enacted ten decrees concerning the Church of Malabar. The main ones dealt with the training of the students in the seminary at Vaipicotta, the translation of the Sacramentary from Latin into Syriac for use in the churches of Malabar, the entry into Malabar of a few East-Syrian bishops who were obliged to show their letters patent to the archbishop of Goa before proceeding to Malabar, and so on. Francis Ros, a Catalan (Spanish) Jesuit, who had arrived in India in 1584, and who accompanied Mar Abraham to Goa for the Council, was commissioned to implement the decisions taken in the council, particularly to help Mar Abraham in the work of translating and correcting Syriac books.

While it is true that Mar Abraham affixed his signature to the decrees of the council, this was only under duress. A number of the provisions of the decrees were not to his liking. According to a letter of Fr Valignano S.J., dated

Goa, 17 December, 1585, Mar Abraham was threatened and bullied at the council. It is no wonder that after his return to Kerala he showed little enthusiasm to carry out the decrees of the council relating to the Church of the St Thomas Christians. His relations with the missionaries began to grow more and more strained.

Presumably Mar Abraham's rift with the Jesuits began to widen once Ros progressed in his work of correcting the books. In any case soon news began to reach Rome that Mar Abraham had decidedly heretical tendencies. In the meantime, quite anxious to preserve the identity and autonomy of the Church of St Thomas in India, Mar Abraham tried to provide for his succession. Already in the 80's he had sought the help of the Jesuits and the king of Kochi to get his archdeacon, George of Christ, consecrated coadjutor. He did not succeed in doing this because the archdeacon, it is said, out of humility declined the nomination. George of Christ died in 1593 without receiving Episcopal consecration. Now Mar Abraham sought the help of the Jesuits again to plead the case of archdeacon George of the Cross who succeeded George of Christ. But he never received any reply from the Pope, or the king of Portugal or even from the Jesuit general to all of whom he had written with the request that provision be made for his archdeacon to succeed him.

On his death-bed Mar Abraham solicited the concurrence of the Jesuits to appoint the archdeacon his successor in virtue of the faculties he had received from the East-Syrian patriarch. They refused to oblige him, either because the position was not quite clear to them, or because they were already committed to the idea that a Latin bishop should succeed him in order to facilitate the complete subjection of the St Thomas Christians to the Padroado jurisdiction. This attitude of the Jesuits pained the metropolitan; this, in all likelihood, made him defy the attempts of the Jesuit fathers to administer to him the last sacraments according to the Latin Rite. The Jesuit letters about his death refer to this defiant attitude towards them. He breathed his last in early January, 1597.

'Synod of Diamper'

The 'Synod of Diamper' ratified and consolidated the latinizing and westernizing efforts of the Portuguese which had begun quite early in the sixteenth century.[18] Even a superficial glance at the acts and decrees of the synod would suffice to convince one how radical a change in the life-pattern of the Christians it envisaged. "Many people nowadays are shocked by the tendency to reduce everything to the standard of Roman and Portuguese customs. Was not this tendency the leading principle of Archbishop de Meneses and his collaborators?" asks Card. Tisserant. The Cardinal, after delineating the various changes decreed by the synod, says:

> Alexis de Meneses, born and brought up in the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation in Europe, was not the man however to yield even an inch when he thought something to be his duty.[19]

Some of the decrees insist that there was to be only one law, that of

Christ; there were not to be two different laws, one of St Thomas and the other of St Peter, as some apparently thought. The obvious purpose was to inculcate in the Christians of St Thomas the idea that they should sever all ties with the East-Syrian patriarch and accept only bishops appointed by Rome. C.de Clerq remarks:

> All the causes of the subsequent dissension... are provoked by Meneses' excessive reform and also by doing away with the hierarchy of the rite.[20]

Meneses sought to destroy at one blow what he considered the root-cause of all the shortcomings that he found in the Church of Malabar. By means of threats, bribes and force he succeeded in severing the long-standing connection of the Malabar Church with the patriarchate of Persia, even though the patriarch in question (Simon Denha) was fully in communion with Rome. The next step was to entrust that Church to a Latin prelate and to bring it under the patronage of the Portuguese crown. Several of the ceremonies and rites in the celebration of holy mass and the administration of the sacraments were hastily and unnecessarily changed in order to bring them more in line with Latin usage. All this invariably provoked a good deal of discontent. In several of the decrees the ground was cleared for the radical substitution of most of the East-Syrian and Indian customs and disciplinary laws, which were prevalent in India, with the Western disciplinary laws especially those of the Council of Trent. This produced an unhappy admixture of Latin customs and Eastern customs, and the identity of the Indian Church became blurred for a long time.

Perhaps the most radical action taken to sever the Church of India from the East Syrian Church was the prescription of the 14th Decree which condemned by name literary works which were branded as dangerous, and were subjected to the *auto-da-fe* programme that continued even after the synod was over.

The synod concluded on 26th June. All the rectors of the churches were enjoined to keep in their archives at least one copy of the Malayalam translation of the acts of the synod. This translation was to be the official one, signed by Archdeacon George and by the superior of the college of Vaipicotta. In order that all the faithful might be taught the prescriptions of the synod, its acts were to be read by sections whenever there was no sermon at the services on Sundays and feast days. Two authentic copies, signed by the archbishop, were to be kept, the first at Vaipicotta, the second one at Angamali. Most of these instructions were put into practice under the supervision of Archbishop Menses himself during his post-synodal visitation from July to November of the same year.

Jesuit Bishops Under the Padroado[21]

There can be no doubt about the fact that the tone of the seventeenth century was set by the 'Synod of Diamper', which in practice was the denial of the age-old characteristic pattern of the life of the Christians of St Thomas. The initial calm was belied by the ensuing violent reactions. On the surface everything

seemed to have been set in good order but at bottom there lurked dissatisfaction and resentment, which manifested themselves not in one single violent eruption, but in a series of events apparently insignificant by themselves. The synod had arbitrarily severed all the ties of the Indian Church with the East-Syrian patriarch. Bishops under the Padroado jurisdiction were appointed to rule the St Thomas Christians. The first choice was Francis Ros who ruled them from 1600 to 1624. The other two who followed him were also Jesuits: Stephen Britto (1624-41) and Francis Garcia (1641-1659). The residence of the metropolitan was Angamali during the reign of Mar Abraham. Ros made Kodungalloor again his residence. The respective archdeacons who assisted these prelates were: George of the Cross (d.1637) and Thomas Parampil (Thomas de Campo) who rebelled against Garcia in 1653 and later became Thomas I, 'bishop' of those who broke communion with Rome.

Both under Ros and Britto the story of the second half of the sixteenth century seemed to be repeated in the person of the archdeacons – quarrels and reconciliation with the Portuguese prelates alternate. The difference was in the fact that now the Portuguese Jesuits were the superiors and the archdeacons subordinates. This made the situation even more unbearable. The community witnessed helplessly some of the high-handed actions of the archbishops, who probably did everything with the best of intentions. One such occasion was when Ros denied the archdeacon many of his pristine privileges and rights and even dared to replace him with a foreign Jesuit. Things came to a head under Archbishop Garcia. The arrival of an Eastern bishop, Atallah, provided the occasion for the final outbreak.

The Revolt of 1553: Reaction to Latinization[22]

It seems now an established fact that Atallah who came to India in the middle of the seventeenth century originally hailed from the Jacobite Church of Syria; later he was converted to Catholicism. He came to India at the request of the Coptic patriarch while he was staying in Cairo. He seems to have remained faithful to the Catholic allegiance till his death.

But in India the St Thomas Christians (except perhaps for a leader or two among them) regarded him as a patriarch or metropolitan sent from the East-Syrian Church with the approbation of the Pope of Rome. The Portuguese thought that he was a 'Nestorian' or East-Syrian intruder. The rift that his presence and his forced removal from India caused in the community, is to be understood in the light of the attachment the Indian Christians still cherished for the East-Syrian Church. That the St Thomas Christian always remained very attached to the bishops of their own rite and merely tolerated the government of the Latin bishops, is clear from the many petitions they wrote from time to time to the various authorities, in which they pleaded for Syrian bishops. Garcia himself noted this with utter disappointment. Filled with gloom, he wrote in the last month of 1652:

> It is astonishing to see how attached these *Cattanars* [St Thomas Christian

priests] and Christians are to the bishops from Babylon. Some young men who went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St Thomas, in spite of the fact that they are at present studying in the College of Vaipicotta and also treated with so much tenderness by the Jesuit Fathers, no sooner they see this schismatic [Atallah] at the tomb of St Thomas, than they run back post-haste to announce the news to the Archdeacon, narrating also the many 'miracles' performed by the schismatic.[23]

It seems most likely that it was during the years 1648 and 1649 that Archdeacon Thomas Parampil took the final step of writing secretly to the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria, to the Jacobite patriarch of Antioch and the Nestorian patriarch of Babylon, giving exaggerated reports of the state of abandonment in which the St Thomas Christians found themselves because of the alleged absence of a bishop, and asking them to be so kind as to remedy the situation. In the previous year (1647) he had sent his complaints and petitions to Rome through the good offices of certain Carmelite priests. On the same occasion and also two years later he appointed these same priests his procurators in Rome, Lisbon and Goa. In spite of all this, it would seem that he did not have much hope of any prompt action on the part of Rome. Past experience showed him that his adversaries were far too powerful for him in Rome and still more in Portugal. It must have been this feeling that there was no way out of the situation, that drove the archdeacon to write secretly to the Eastern patriarchs who were not in communion with Rome.

When the letter of the archdeacon reached the Coptic patriarch, in all likelihood Atallah was in Cairo where he was waiting for some letters of appointment from Rome. He was once the metropolitan of Damascus of which see he was dispossessed by the intrigues of his rivals. After that he had charge of the Jacobites in Persia, who at his instigation, had given allegiance to Rome. In Cairo he was expecting to receive appointment as administrator to these Syrian Catholics in Persia. He was there at least from 1646. In Cairo it was well-known that he wished to have a Church to govern. So when the letter of the archdeacon reached the Alexandrian patriarch, the patriarch invited Attallah to proceed to Malabar to help the Christians there.

Atallah accepted the invitation and set out for India at once. He landed in Surat in March 1652 and in August of the same year he reached Mylapore. There he was able to meet and talk to three seminarians and a layman from Kerala, who had gone to Mylapore on a pilgrimage in July of the same year. It is through them that he managed to send a letter to the archdeacon. In the letter he declared himself to be "Ignatius, Patriarch of the Whole of India and China", who had received all powers from the Pope.

Before the archdeacon and his Christians could do anything Atallah was shipped to Goa. When they came to know that he had arrived at Kochi on his way to Goa, they went to meet him. Permission to see the prelate was denied them and a rumour soon spread that he was drowned in the sea. Tempers

rose and the Christians assembled in or before a shrine or near an open-air cross (the "Coonen Cross")and took the oath that they would never obey Archbishop Garcia. Some months later a few leading priests met at Alangad and twelve of them placed their hands on Archdeacon Thomas and made him a 'bishop'- all this they did in accordance with the instructions, so they pretended, they had received from Mar Atallah. The dream of the Christians, aroused by the arrival of Atallah, to be once more an autonomous Church under a Syrian prelate was shattered. The oath and the tragic events that followed were expressions of their bitter disappointment.

The 'Coonen Cross Oath' marked the final outbreak of the storm that had been gathering on the horizon for over a century. It was a revolt against the the Latin rule. The trauma was felt even more keenly when the community became fully conscious of the sad fact that their Church was no longer one. The revolt of 1653 split the community vertically into two groups, one in communion with Rome and the other establishing a new allegiance, namely, to the Jacobite Church of Antioch. From now on the struggle of the community would be to regain its original identity, autonomy and unity. All the three aspects were very closely interrelated and the struggle for one was the struggle simultaneously for the other two.

2. New Christian Communities

The Portuguese missionary enterprise in India that started in the early sixteenth century continued rather vigorously into the seventeenth. It reaped a rich harvest. It must be said to its credit that new Latin rite communities sprang up in a number of places along the coastal region of Kerala. Thus two parallel Christian communities began to exist in Kerala from the sixteenth century onwards, one of the ancient St Thomas Christians following an Oriental rite, and the other of the new Christians following the Latin rite. The ultimate responsibility for the creation of these parallel communities and its adverse consequences, if any, rests with the western missionaries. However, the reluctance of the ancient Christians to break open and come out of their aristocratic shell might have also contributed to the situation.

The Portuguese authorities, especially Afonso de Albuquerque, greatly encouraged interracial marriages, marriages between Portuguese men and Indian women. This gave rise to a distinct group of Portuguese Indian Christians, who, in course of time, assumed different names, one being *Munnuttikar* ('Group of Three Hundred'). Direct converts came from different castes and classes of Hindu population: a few were perhaps brahmins; a greater number were nayars (panikkars and ordinary militia men); the vast majority belonged to what were called the lower classes (today's dalits), such as ezhavas, mucuvas, etc.

At least in the Kochi area the converts from 'low castes/classes and upper castes/classes' seem to have blended so well that the differences of caste or class disappeared from among the Christians. They formed one community which came to be known as

Ezhunnuttikar ('Group of Seven Hundred'). The Portuguese started a school in 1512 in Kochi (the first of its kind in the East). Afonso de Albuquerque, its founder, wrote to the Portuguese king in the same year:

> There would be about hundred boys in the school, among whom there are children of the panikkars and other nobles. They are very clever and quickly pick up what is taught to them; all are Christian boys.[24]

The boys attending it came from all classes; boys belonging to the 'high castes' mingled with those coming from the 'low castes'. This was something of a revolution in the caste-ridden society of the day. The message this pioneer institution conveyed could not but impress the people.

But caste feelings and distinctions would soon find their way into the new Christian communities. Possibly it was the conversion later to Christianity of a large number of fishermen south of Kochi which introduced such distinctions among the Latin Rite Christians in Kerala. These converts formed the *Anjuttikar* ('Group of Five Hundred'), a group distinct from the Ezhumuttikar. The formation of the Alappuzha diocese separate from that of Kochi gave consideration to these groupings.

3. Conclusion

The meeting of the Christian West with the people of India was an epoch-making event. The Portuguese achieved the realization of their protracted hopes and dreams, not only in 'discovering' India with its rich commercial resources, but in coming into contact with the Christians of India, and in giving a new spurt to Christian expansion in this land of religions and ancient wisdom.

By the arrival of the powerful Portuguese Christians the community of Indian Christians, the St Thomas Christians, stood to gain greatly. One of the important gains was that they were brought into direct contact with Western Christianity, a contact which would have immensely helped the growth of the community if the parties concerned had viewed this in the correct perspective. Had the Portuguese cared a little more to study the Eastern Christian and Indian mentality and approach, they would have avoided most of the negative results.

Instead of exaggerating the abuses, the 'errors', the 'schisms'/ 'heresies', and the 'pagan' ways, if only they had the courage and good sense to tell the Indian Christians what the Jesuit Melchior Carneiro and his friends told them in the mid-sixteenth century namely, "Both you and we hold to the same faith, the difference of customs matters little;" if they had consistently followed such a policy and left the Indian Christians to their own life; if they had encouraged them to be more evangelistic and apostolic; if they had built their missionary expansion with the Indian Christian way of life as a basis, the history of the Church in India would have been far different.

It should, however, in all fairness be admitted that the modern evangelistic outlook of the Catholic Eastern Christians in India owes much to the Western missionaries, beginning with the Portuguese. The Portuguese who were not affected by caste prejudices

helped the emergence of Christian communities which renounced caste, as we have seen in the case of Christians in Kochi area. This open attitude of the Portuguese exerted some positive influence on the St Thomas Christians to come out of their 'aristocratic' shell and progressively ignore caste and class prejudice. We know that at least from the second half of the sixteenth century, persons belonging to the so-called 'low castes' were converted to Christianity and at least partially assimilated into the St Thomas Christian community. The 'Synod of Diamper' decreed that all efforts should be made to baptize those people who were quite willing to join the main stream Christianity and were properly disposed (cf. Session V, Decree 36). However, in consideration of the special socio-political conditions prevailing in Kerala at that time, the 'Synod' took a rather tolerant policy (cf. Session IX, Decree 2). Hence full integration of the communities was not effected. Even today the caste prejudices and 'aristocratic' pretence of the St Thomas Christians comes in the way of the desired integration. Inter-marriages between St Thomas Christians and the Latin Rite Christians are rare, though a slow change is visible. The 'exclusivism' of the Southist group of the St Thomas Christians has become scandalous. Even among Protestants (especially the CSI) a tension persists between the 'Syrian' (St Thomas Christian) elements and the 'new converts' from the dalits. The long association with Western Christianity has not succeeded in completely eliminating this unhealthy attitude and prejudices of the St Thomas Christians. There is some truth in what Felix Wilfred says:

> Their [St Thomas Christians'] easy accommodation to the caste-system did not permit the emergence of any prophetic, Christian thought or critique and challenge to the unequal society of their times.[25]

The new spurt in Christian expansion in Kerala was definitely due to Portuguese initiative, though we cannot subscribe to all the methods used by them for conversion and the aggressive polemic and westernizing ideology which was an integral part of their evangelical action. They laid a firm foundation for the growth of Latin Christianity in Kerala. The drawbacks were many. The most glaring of these drawbacks was the quasi-identification of Christianity with Westernizing; many of the converts were asked to adopt not only Portuguese ('Christian') proper names but even Portuguese surnames; even the western way of dressing was considered part of conversion! The segregating of converts from their fellow Keralites and the over-protection extended to them were tantamount to uprooting them from their natural and congenial socio-cultural milieu. All this paved the way for a Christianity in "western garb" which probably came in the way of many well-placed Hindus becoming Christians. There are, however, some very positive aspects for which we should be thankful to the Portuguese. One is the encouragement given to inter-racial marriages and the disregard shown for caste distinction. Most striking of all are the charitable and educational activities which witnessed effectively to the core message of Christianity – the message of universal love and fellowship.

Notes

1. Cf. Mundadan, *Arrival of the Portuguese in India and the Thomas Christians under Mar Jacob, 1498-1552*, Bangalore:Dharmaram Publications, 1967, pp.59-67, 74-78.
2. Antonio da Silva-Rego, ed., *Docucumentacao para a Historia das Missoes do Padroado Portugues do Oriente, India.* Lisbon: *Agencia geral das Colonias*, Vol.III, 1950, p.550.
3. This is found in Francis Ros S.J., *De Erroribus Nestorianorum qui in hac India Orientali Versantur* (A dissertation written by Ros on the doctrinal position of St Thomas Christians at the close of the 16th century), ed. by I.Hausher S.J., *Orientalia Christiana*, XI,I,No.40, Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1928.
4. Act II,Decree 7, *Synodo Diocesano da Igreja e Bispado de* Angamale...,Coimbra: Officina de Diogo Gomez... 1606, p. 10f.
5. Antonio da Silva Rego, *op.cit.*, p. 550
6. Act III, Decree 4, *Synodo Diocesano... op.cit.*, f.9v; cf. also f.9.
7. Cf. A.M.Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St Thomas Christians*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1970, p.157.
8. Cf..*ibid.*, p. 154.
9. Murray Rogers, "Hindu and Christian – A Moment Breaks", *Religion and Society*, 12(1965)37.
10. Paulo da Trindade, OFM, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, ed. by Felix Lopes, OFM, 3 vols, Lisbon: 1962-67; Francisco de Sousa, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo...*, Lisbon: Officina de Valentin de Costa Deslandes, 1710, new ed. by M. Lopes de Almeida, Porto: Pello e Irmao-Editores, 1978.
11. Cf. Mundadan, *The Arrival*, pp.82-116, 125-42.
12. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 142-48
13. This summary is based on the following books: Jonas Thaliath T.O.C.D. (C.M.I.), *The Synod of Diamper*, Rome: Pont.Institute of Or.Studies,1958; D. Ferroli S.J., *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Vol.I, Bangalore: Bangalore Press, 1939; G. Beltrami, *La Chiesa Caldea nel Secolo dell Vnione, (Orientalia Christiana* 29), Rome: Pont.Inst.for Or.Studies, 1933; Joseph Thekkedath S.D.B., *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.II, Bangalore: CHAI, 1982, pp.37-47; cf. also A.M. Mundadan C.M.I., "The Eastern Church 16th-17th Centuries", in H.C. Perumalil C.M.I. and E.R. Hambye S.J, eds, *Christianity in India*, Alleppey: Prakasham Publications, (1972), pp.89-93.
14. Cf. Antonio da Silva-Rego, *op.cit.*, Vol.IX (1953), pp.298-302; Joseph Wicki, *op.cit.*, Vol.VI (1960), pp.178-80, 413, 427f.
15. Silva-Rego, *op.cit.*, Vol. XII (1958), p.398f.
16. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India, p.* 41
17. Cf. the same books in footnote 14 above; Cf. also A.M. Mundadan, *art. cit.*, pp.93, 96; Cyriac Thevarmannil, "Mar Abraham the Archbishop of the St Thomas Christians in Malabar (1508-1597)" (1965); Joseph Thekkedath, *op.cit.*, pp.47-63.
18. The main study on the 'Synod' is by Jonas Thaliath, *The Synod of Diamper, op.cit.* There is an earlier study: G. M.Antao, *De Synodi Diamperitanae Natura atque Decretis* (1952), Cf.also J.Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.II, *op. cit.*, pp.66-75.
19. Tisserant, op. *cit.* , p. 60.
20. Quoted *ibid.*, p.65, footnote 2.

21. Cf. Thekkedath, *op.cit., pp.75-90;* D. Ferroli, *Jesuits in Malabar,* 2 vols., Bangalore: Bangalore Press, *1939* and 1951; George Vithayathil, "Stephen de Britto, Archbishop of the St Thomas Christians in Malabar" (Doctoral Dissertation, *1971);* J. Kollaparambil, *The Archdeacon of All India,* Rome: Pontifical Institute of Or. Studies, *1972;* also books and articles mentioned in the next footnote.
22. Joseph Thekkedathu (Thekkedath) S.D.B., *The Troubled Days of Francis Garcia S.J., 1641-59 is* the most important study on the revolt. Cf. also K.P. Werth, *Das Schisma der Thomas-Christen unter Erzbischof Franciscus* Garzia, Limburg:1937; E.R.Hambye, S.J., "An Eastern Prelate in India, Mar Athallah, 1652-53", ICHR, Vol. 2/1 (1968), pp. 1-5; J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India, op. cit.,* Vol.II, pp. 91-109.
23. Quoted in J.Thekkedathu, *Troubled Days,* p. 65.
24. Silva-Rego, *op. cit.,* Vol.1 (1947), p. 149.
25. Felix Wilfred, *Beyond Settled Foundations,* Madras: Department of Christian Studies, Madras University, 1993, p. 8.

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The Impact of Colonialism on the Church in Chotanagpur

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"Shall we go on conferring our Civilization upon the peoples that sit in darkness, or shall we give those poor things a rest?" Mark Twain

Colonialism is defined in *The Reader's Digest Complete Wordfinder* as "a policy of acquiring or maintaining colonies", a policy which is "regarded as the economic exploitation of weak or backward people by a larger power."[1] David J.B., in the *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, describes colonialism as "the domination by one society or one people of another and the relationship, processes, and effects that domination sets in motion".[2] Balandier, in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, defines colonialism as "domination of an alien minority" and "an assertion of racial and cultural superiority, over a materially inferior native majority".[3] According to *The World Book of Encyclopedia*, "Colonialism is a term that usually refers to the rule of a group of people by a foreign power. The people and their land make up a colony. Most colonies are separated by an ocean from the ruling nation. The foreign power sends people to live in the colony, to govern it and to use it as a source of wealth. The rulers and the ruled of most colonies belong to different racial groups. The rulers have a more complex civilization and advanced technology than do the people of most colonies."[4] Imperialism, which refers to a rule and policy of acquiring dependent territories or extending a country's influence through trade, diplomacy, etc., is often synonymous with colonialism.

All the definitions above have one thing in common: in colonialism there is a relationship of domination and a relationship of subservience. The first results in conquest, sovereignty and exploitation by the rich and the powerful of the poor, the weak and the backward. The second entails subjection, passive resistance and the inferiority complex of the native majority. The first camp has the upper hand in the exploitation of the natural resources, control of know-how, etc.; as a result, they emerge as far superior to their counterparts who have a backward economy, slow rhythm of life and poor self image as they are subjugated by the external alien forces and vested interests who mercilessly suppress any revolt. One of the main purposes of colonies was to make economic gains in terms of land and such valuable products as gold and spices. Another aim was to expand industry and

trade by capturing sources of raw materials, markets for goods that could be exported to other countries, and opportunities for investment. In addition, colonialism was practised by nations to establish a rapport with other nations, to gain military advantages and to spread their 'superior' religion.

The Church of Chotanagpur is basically constituted by Adivasis who fit into the second category, i.e., the inferior and the dominated, the impoverished and the alienated. They are the native inhabitants of the land. But down the centuries there has been an influx of many groups of strangers into the region with their supposedly superior race and power.

The British imperialists came to Chotanagpur in the 18th century. Since then their style of functioning and attitude have affected the tribal way of life too. Missionaries, both Lutheran and Catholic, from the colonial countries had a field day in Chotanagpur from the 19th century onwards and, consequently, they too had a big impact on the socio-cultural and politico-economic life of the tribals. Oppression, exploitation, and imposition of an alien culture, religion, language and values, having a far-reaching impact, are some of the hallmarks of colonialism. The ideology behind the whole process is the false conviction of ethnic superiority over other groups with supposedly inferior and undeveloped culture and values. Chotanagpur, the traditional habitat of the *Proto-Australoid*[5] and *Austro-Asiatic*[6] stocks of the Adivasi groups, namely the Uraon, the Ho, the Munda, the Kharia, the Santal, etc., for the past three centuries, has been under the influence not only of the British colonizers and the *dikus* but also of both Lutheran and Roman Catholic missionaries from countries symbolising imperial powers like Great Britain, Belgium, Australia, America, Germany, Holland, Italy, etc. All pioneering missionaries, without exception represented first-world countries with a capitalist economy. Hence, their upbringing, world-views, belief-systems and convictions were conditioned by their own socio-cultural environment. It may, therefore, be expected that there would be a similar influence on their style of functioning as well.

My concern here is to show the effect of colonialism on the Church of Chotanagpur. It should be noted that there may have been the impact of many processes of change such as industrialization, westernization, modernization, etc., on the tribal Church, but here we are more interested in the influence of colonialism and in those changes which may have occurred directly due to colonization. The second point to be clarified is that though some foreign missionaries represent colonial powers, they cannot be simply identified with the colonizers. However, this study is not about the missionaries' impact on the Tribal Church of Chotanagpur or about the Church's impact on the Tribal Chotanagpur. Here our focus is on the Christian population of the tribal belt in particular, and not on the tribals of the region in general, though the latter have also been affected by colonialism in the same way because a change in religion does not necessarily transform one's culture entirely. Hence,

the question is valid as to whether there is any unique and typical influence of colonialism on the tribal Church or whether it is the same as the impact of westernization, industrialization, modernization, etc.?

The present paper attempts to objectively investigate the dynamics and consequences of colonialism during and after British imperial rule. An effort is also made to reread the signs of those times in order to bring out the voice of the voiceless and politically colonized Adivasis of Chotanagpur. Hence, it is imperative to identify the characteristic features, policies and effects of the much hated term 'colonialism' from a post-colonial perspective in the context of the Church in Chotanagpur. In the first section, the topic is introduced and the objectives clarified. The second section gives a background of tribal Chotanagpur and the confusion that prevailed due to the influx of the colonizers as well as the circumstances which led to the beginning of Christianity in the tribal region. The third part of the paper deals with the socio-cultural, religious, political, developmental and psychological impact of colonization in Chotanagpur in the context of the Church. The final section attempts to set a vision for the third millennium.

1. Background of the Study

1.1 Tribal Bihar: Tribal Bihar is so called because a high percentage of India's tribal population live there. The Southern part of the state of Bihar and Santal Pargans, some portions of Orissa and also Madhya Pradesh comprise Chotanagpur. The Chotanagpur plateau is full of big and small hills, of a height ranging from 1000 to 3000 ft. above the sea level. Till recently these had a very thick forest cover of valuable trees with varieties of animal species. The Chotanagpur region is rich in mineral and natural resources. It comprises 79,476 square kilometres of land yielding 48% of India's coal, 4% of iron-ore, 48% of bauxite, 45% of mica, 100% of kynaite, 90% of apatite, 100% of copper and 33% of fireclay. The region has also other minerals like china-clay, manganese, limestone, chromite, asbestos, uranium, silica, dolomite, etc.[8] Thus Chotanagpur occupies a key position in the national economy.

According to the 1961 Census, 29 Scheduled Tribes were listed in this area. Father Lievens, the pioneering Jesuit missionary, as well as other early missionaries, mainly worked among the Uraons, Mundas, Kharias, Santals and Hos, and today the tribal Church is primarily composed of these tribes. These tribes were the original settlers of the land, and studies show that they migrated to this region at an early period, moving in from the Ganges valley and Sone river through Palamau. The non-tribals, who were basically invaders or traders, infiltrated into Chotanagpur only after the 16th century. The Santals are the largest of the Scheduled Tribes of Bihar constituting 36.7% of the total tribal population. Their concentration is mainly in Dumka district where they constitute about 73% of the total population. Mundas are the second largest tribe constituting 15.67% of the total tribal population and are concentrated mainly in the Khunti region. The Hos constitute 10.8% of the

tribal population of Bihar and some 99.8% of them are concentrated in Singhbhum district. The Uraons constitute about 17.5% of the tribal population of Bihar and are mainly concentrated in Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla and Palamau Districts of Bihar. The Kharias comprise less than half per cent of the total population of Bihar and are chiefly found in Ranchi, Singhbhum and Gumla Districts.

1.2 British Rule and the Dikuization of the Tribal Chotanagpur: According to Mahto, Chotanagpur came in contact with the Europeans for the first time in 1769 when Captain Camac, a military administrator, touched the north-eastern fringe of Khadgadih, the north-western part of Chatra, and then Ramgarh, establishing some sort of political suzerainty over the local *Rajas* (or Chiefs who did not receive the honours of kingship or special property rights) and *Zamindars* (landlords). In 1765, Shah Alam III granted the *Diwani* (revenue paying district) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company. Chotanagpur, as part of the *Diwani* of Bihar, thus came under British rule. To get a permanent fixed sum of money, the British granted the Zamindars permanent settlement of the land from which they could collect revenues. This gave rise to the landlord system. These *Zamindars* came to be known as *Dikus* and their domination, *dikuization*. The *Rajas* and the landlords were asked to establish police stations and appoint police officers. This system proved to be very expensive, and most of these police officers were from outside Chotanagpur and naturally sided with the landlords to extract exorbitant revenues from the local people. The exploitation went on increasing. The communal ownership of the land was reduced to individual ownership. Tribals had to pay rent even for the *Bhuinhari* (land of the original settlers) land.[9]

1.3 The Confusion called Colonialism: A short time after the coming of the British, a number of transformations were imposed on tribal life and the existing socio-economic and religio-political systems. The tribal chiefs deserted their people and converted to Hinduism. The British administrative system paved the way for the landlord system and overturned the traditional land ownership and agricultural systems. The barter system started to give way to a money economy about which the tribals were ignorant. The *Panchayat* or Council of Elders was undermined, and the court system encouraged. In these courts, and in the government offices, the language used was Hindi which made no sense to the tribals who knew only their own mother tongue. This created tremendous confusion and unrest. The tribals revolted and these revolts were known as the Great Kol Insurrections. It was like the bursting of a fire that had long been smouldering. According to Jha, "These revolts were born out of frustration and anger."[10] It was indeed an outburst of tension, anger, frustration and hatred bottled up for long. During this time, the feelings of hatred against the non-tribals, mainly the oppressive landlords and officers, arose. Consequently, the generic term *diku* and *khattar* for outsiders came into existence. The tribals were compelled to look for an alternate

system, political, social, economic or religious, that would give them self-identity and an assurance for their existence and a peaceful life.

1.4 The Genesis of Christianity in Chotanagpur: The circumstances in which Christianity came to Chotanagpur are interesting. According to Mahto, by the year 1780, a military garrison at Ramgarh was established. The Indian and European regiments were kept in Ramgarh, Doranda and Hazaribagh. It was in view of satisfying the spiritual needs of the soldiers that Catholic priests visited them from time to time. Thus, the first tribal contacts with Christianity in Chotanagpur may date from 1835. The Anglican Bishop Metropolitan of Calcutta was reported to be contemplating as early as 1840 to provide for the spiritual sustenance of the tribals. Two years later, a Church was built in Hazaribagh for the soldiers. We find no other references to missionary activities in the region until the German Missionaries came to Ranchi in the year 1845. The missionaries who came and worked in Chotanagpur between 1845 to 1947 were classified according to the following categories by Mahto:(i) the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission from Berlin; (ii) the Chotanagpur Mission working under the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts from London; (iii) the Roman Catholic Mission from Belgium; (iv) the Scottish Free Church Mission from Scotland, and (v) the Dublin University Mission from Ireland.[11] Here we will limit ourselves to the Catholic Mission, though most of the findings of our investigation are applicable to the other Churches as well. The Catholic Church came to Chotanagpur in 1869. But it spread faster with the arrival of Fr. Constant Lievens in 1885. In that year there were only 2,000 converts; but in 1893 the figure jumped to 100,000. In 1930 the figure rose to 148,000 in the old Ranchi District alone; and in 1961, the Catholic population was 236,073 which shot up to 505,285 in the year 1967. At present there are more than nine lakh Christians in Chotanagpur.

1.5 The Cross-cultural Inadequacy of the Colonizers: The colonizers were not able to accept the natives within their own socio-cultural milieu. Their world-view was totally different from that of their counterparts in Chotanagpur, and they were unable to go beyond their own understanding of civilization. The system from within which the colonizers functioned despised the Indian situation. That is why people like William Wilberforce and James Mill described Indian civilization in contemptuous language. Wilberforce termed the condition of the people of India as 'wretched' and 'sunk in deep ignorance'.[12] James Mill disdainfully wrote that "the inhabitants of Hindustan rank much lower in the scale of civilization than the nations of Europe". In his opinion "in truth, the Hindu, like the eunuch, excels in the quality of a slave"; he is "dissembling, treacherous, mendacious to an excess which surpasses even the usual measure of uncultivated society"; is "cowardly and unfeeling"; and "in the physical sense, disgustingly unclean in person and house". Thus Indian culture, from the colonizer's point of view, was "infantile and childish, similar to the Whites' descriptions of

blacks in America or Africa or indigenous people in South America".[13] The attitude to the Adivasis of Chotanagpur was no different.

1.6 Colonialism in Chotanagpur: Kraft opines that a naive monocultural myopic perspective looks at reality from one point of view only. The British came with such a myopic vision. They took only their world-view into account. Hence, their approach was biased and conditioned by the indoctrination they had received all through their life in their country. The very fact that they were monocultural made them *naively ethnocentric.* They judged native cultural values from their own perspective. Their ethnocentric attitude prevented them from appreciating and understanding the point of view of the locals. Their *absolutistic* tendency was more dangerous than anything else.They regarded the point of view of their own culture and society as absolute and invincible. They believed that their perspectives were the only right ones, and that all the other world-views were either defective or relative. In their perspective of *naive realism,* the colonizers equated their perceptions of reality with reality itself. They perceived their way of life, their culture, their religion, etc., as superior to all others. Hence, others had to be civilized and *domesticated.* They had no respect for other peoples' ways and looked down upon other languages, perspectives, customs, etc., as unrefined and crude. This condemnation of other cultures stemmed from their limited cultural perspectives. In their view, there was nothing wrong with this. Their use of *pejorative terms* was another example of their *Eurocentrism.* The natives were described in value-loaded and biased terms such as '*sawnsars*' meaning *pagans, heathens, superstitious,* etc. Local customs and cultural practices were dismissed as *primitive, prescientific* and *prelogical* in relation to their own *advanced, scientific* and *rational* civilization. The monoculturalism of the colonizers was characterized by arrogance, with a view to making the latter adopt European customs as superior to their own. It is rather obvious that many Westerners held *the One-World-Culture Position* "that the world is all moving in one direction and it is just a matter of time before everyone will be westernized, speaking English and thinking in western ways".[14]

2. Impact of Colonialism on the Tribal Church: A True Story

2.1 The Colonizer-Missionary Interaction:

2.1.1 No Nexus between Colonizers and Missionaries: Missionaries have often been branded as agents of colonialism. In the early stages of colonization, political powers depended on the travelogues and reports of the missionaries who offered first hand information about the natives. And though the reports of the missionaries were subjective and very often biased, they were useful for furthering the cause of the empire. Sardar Panikkar in his *Asia and Western Dominance* wrote about the "mental and spiritual conquest as supplementing the political authority already enjoyed by Europe."[15] On the other hand, the Chotanagpur missionaries may not have been in league with the British Government.

One of the reasons for this was due to the fact that the British imperialists, who patronised the Church of England in India, preferred consolidating Protestantism to Catholicism.[16] It is true that missionaries came as exporters of Christianity, yet their involvement in the social justice issues won them the hearts of the locals.

2.1.2 Colonizers versus Missionaries: Unlike Goa where 'gun and the Gospel' were carried on the same ship[17], the situation in Chotanagpur was totally different. The tribals of the region were illiterate, simple, innocent of the crooked ways of the world. According to Fernandes and Chaudhury, the British colonial attitude toward Indian tribes ranged from seeing them as wild or criminal to the realization that they needed special protection. Thus colonial justification took two main forms: one, to present India as uncivilized country, and two, to present India as a country divided among castes, tribes, linguistic, racial and religious groups constantly at war with each other: peace and unity could only be established by an external force.[18] The prime aim of the East India Company was to make money, so they continued the Moghul system of revenue (tribute) collection from the territories. Over and above, the Indian *Jagirdars* (lease holders), landlords, etc., who were supported by the colonial machinery, proved to be worse than their British counterparts. The revenue collectors (*Zamindars*) now came to be regarded as landlords. The aboriginals continued to lose their land. The missionaries fought tooth and nail against all these forms of injustices. The Lutheran mission had shown the way, and the Catholics took it up as long as Lievens was active. Cases were fought in court, and the missionaries tried their best to get back the lost lands of the tribals, and in many cases they succeeded in their efforts. Thus the period of British rule in Chotanagpur was a time of internal disturbance and unrest.[19] Till 1858, the East India Company was the paramount power. In order to protect its interests it had to maintain a military force. In mid-November 1889, the *Zamindars* accused the Catholic missionaries of inciting the people to revolt. Father Lievens was asked by the government to justify himself and his workers before Mr.Grimley, the Commissioner of Chotanagpur.

2.2 Socio-Cultural Impact:

2.2.1 Structural Disintegration: The colonizers' insensitivity to the local customs, laws and practices is very obvious in the following areas:

(a) Notion of Private Property: The British were responsible for the introduction of the notion of private property into the tribal heartland, where the Mundas, Uraons, Hos, Santals and Kharias previously had no idea of individual or private ownership of land. The system the British were familiar with had two protagonists – the landlord who owned the land though he did not cultivate it, and the cultivator who did not own the land but cultivated it. Then the British introduced the *Maharaja* to whom they gave the status of an European king as regards land. *Jagirdars* were the subordinate tenure holders under the *Maharaja*. They were regarded as landlords. When the *Mundas*

(Mahatos) and the Mankis (headmen of the village) resisted the new system, the British assumed that they were the original holders of the land which had been granted to them in the past by the *Raja.* They thus concluded that the common people were mere tenants under the *Mundas* and *Mankis*. Again, according to the new system, legal documents were required to prove the ownership of the land. The tribals did not have any legal documents. The only proof that they had of their land holdings was the stone-tablets in the villages signifying that they were *khuntkattidars* (sons of the family of original founder). Finally, on specific issues the British relied on the version of the landlords. The colonial administration did not understand the language of the illiterate tribals who were ignorant of the law. As a result, the rulers depended on the interpretations and reports of the landlords themselves, which the latter manipulated for their own benefit.

(b) Total Collapse of the Traditional Parha System: The *Parha* (confederation of villages) system was common among the Uraons. The traditional socio-political organization was based on a system of village *Panchayats* which, for all practical purposes, took care of law and order in the village. For issues involving more than one village, the *Panchayats* were confederated into a number of *Parhas*, consisting of five to twenty villages. Each *Parha* was headed by *Parha belas* (*Parha* king) or *Parha* Chief. He was chosen from among the *Mahtos* (village headmen) of the confederating villages. The Mundas also had a similar socio-political system of administration called the *Manki* system. With the imposition of the alien British system of administration, the tribal system of administration collapsed completely. The various changes in the administrative set up did not in any way help the Mundas and the Uraons. The police were from outside who did not know the local language and customs of the people and sided with the *Jagirdars* in all their confrontations.The main grievance of the natives was the dispossession of their land by foreigners, Muslims, Sikhs and others. If the people went to court they did not fare any better. Roy writes: "With foreigners from Bengal and Bihar, unacquainted with the customs, the land tenures, and the language of the people in all subordinate Government posts, and with the alien landlord lording it over in the villages, the Munda had indeed a very trying time of it".[20]

(c) Migration of the Tribals: The introduction of the new system compelled the tribals to migrate to the tea gardens of Assam, the indigo plantations of Champaran or take up forest-clearing in Andaman islands and road-construction in the Northeast, and to labour in the brick-kilns of the neighbouring states. There are more than twenty five thousand tribals in Delhi alone from Chotanagpur. More than fifteen thousand girls work there as domestic staff. Tribals were exploited as cheap labour since their own agricultural lands could not take the pressure of the increasing population any more. The establishment of heavy factories in the tribal region as well as mining operations led to the displacement of the locals. Hence, the original owners of the

land became paupers and strangers in their own territory.

(d) Tribal Reaction to Colonization: The British did not interfere with the internal administration of the area till 1834. But they later acknowledged that had they actively participated in the administration and police system, things would have been a little better. This indicates that there was a conducive atmosphere for colonial agents to thrive, and they were ultimately responsible for the plight of the natives. As a result, only those villages whose headmen were strong managed to stick together while others were totally dispossessed by aliens. Thus there was a transformation of the communal ownership of tribal villages into individual ownership. There was a lot of resistance to the new system which flared up in the form of Agrarian Adivasi uprisings. These uprisings against the landlords in 1789, 1797, 1807, 1812, and 1820 were suppressed with the help of the British. Before the rising of 1832, a fresh cause of discontent developed. The *thikadars* (contractors) obtained from the young *Maharaja* temporary leases of the villages as payment for their goods. They took the land from the Adivasis and levied rents and other services. *Bethbegari* (forced labour) was yet another form of oppression of poor tribals.

Many Christians did not follow the advice of the missionaries and lost their lands. Hence, they grew suspicious that these were hand-in-glove with the colonizers. The *Sardar Movement*[21] in 1867 made use of the discontent among the people and sent petitions to the government. But, since many of the *Sardars* were Christians, the government suspected the mission, and the Christians themselves grew suspicious of the missionaries being in league with the government since the petitions of the *Sardars* had failed.

The attitude of the landlords to the Catholic missionaries was the same as that towards the Lutheran. They opposed their work. They persecuted the converts, threatened to kill the missionary De Smet, and even sent forty armed men to do so, though the threat was not carried out. The attitude of the colonial government in Chotanagpur was that of wait and see. According to De Sa, they "did not interfere with the apostolate of the mission groups, as long as peace was preserved." It was obvious that "they were not directly interested in religion or in the conversion movement, provided the missionaries and the converts did not interfere in the land question. Their main interest was to ensure that peace was preserved". Lievens knew all this and wished to have the government officers on his side. He avoided anything that might have antagonized the officials. Yet, "in his mission policy he adopted certain procedures which were risky and could give rise to suspicion."[22] Though Lievens was very cautious, at times he was forced to defend himself before the government. The government was watching his activities closely, for fear of a recurrence of disturbances among the Christians. That is precisely why, in 1887, Lievens received a letter from the Commissioner of Chotanagpur asking him to justify himself against serious accusations that he had encouraged the earlier sedition by reaffirming the claims of the Mundas and assisting

them in the re-establishment of their *raj* (kingdom). Lievens replied to the Commissioner who was satisfied with the reply. Discontent built up and burst out again in the *Birsa Rising*[23] of August 1895. For the first time the people even attacked the houses and persons of the missionaries, whom they had long regarded as their friends and protectors.

2.2.3 Colonialism and Cultural Deprivation: A significant fallout of the process of colonialism was the *cultural colonization* characterised by the imposition of an alien culture on the natives under the pretext of its superiority and refinement. Colonialism and deculturation are inseparable. Deculturation can truly be called the handmaid of colonialism. With western cultural values being transmitted in heavy doses, the natives had very little option left. All this came under the garb of 'social justice' and 'true religion'. The colonialists imposed their own values as 'superior' and native religious practices were described as "worship of the devil".

2.2.4 From Colonialism to Detribalizm: The motivation of the colonizers was such that, on the one hand, some of them were more tribalized than the Adivasis themselves, and on the other, the impact of colonialism was so great that some educated tribals were more westernized than the westerners themselves. The fusion of the western and tribal cultures resulted in a process of detribalization whereby the natives started losing their identity as Adivasis. Critiquing the monumental work of the missionaries, Minz says that though the contribution of foreign and western missionaries is accepted and gratefully acknowledged by many, their attitude to tribal religion and culture in general had an adverse effect on tribal society. In some sense, the Aryan attitude to the tribals was carried over by the white missionaries.[24] The colonial policy of sucking the wealth of the region continues even to this day in various forms of exploitation. The plight of the Adivasis, due to unthoughtful uranium mining in Sighbhum, for instance, results not only in the dispossession of ancestral land and cultural heritage but also in the victimization of Adivasis to various dreaded diseases due to radiation. Displacement is correlated with detribalization as it affects social tradition, social institutions like *Parha Panchayat*, kinship, clan, family, village-community, social structure, religious structure, etc. Singh offers an analysis of the change in social structure, cultural values and institutions in India and assesses their implication for contemporary problems.[25] The same principles of structural change are applied to Adivasi society as well, because the changes in rural India, which constitute the dominant sector of our society, are bringing about a process of social restructuring.

2.3 Religious Impact

2.3.1 Colonization of the Church: About a hundred and twenty five years of Christianity in Chotanagpur has definitely contributed to education, justice, health and hygiene, medical facilities, socio-economic developmental programmes, etc., but at the same time it has also nurtured a culture that alienated the converts from their own roots

by inculcating in them new habits, new customs and even new symbols and languages. An alien Church liturgy has now become so much part of the tribal Christian community that any attempt to introduce tribal festivals like *Karam, Sarhul*, etc., in the Church are often resented. Gothic buildings, imported paintings and religious art and music alien to the tribals were brought in. Christians were earlier forbidden to go to the *sarna* grove, forbidden to invoke their protector spirits, forbidden to participate in any of the religious ceremonies of their *sarna* brethren. There was a time when traditional tribal instruments were not allowed in the Church.

2.3.2 Colonization of Tribal Theology: Colonial theology was elaborated by European thought and culture. The cultural needs of the colonized were neglected, only their "spiritual" needs were catered to. The concern of the Church seemed to be more in terms of correct behaviour, the will of God, right doctrine, etc., rather than a genuine effort for integral liberation that not only took into account the individual but also the entire tribal society. There was a process of promoting faith without justice in the theological teachings of the local church even though Lievens had given a social-justice orientation to the missionary enterprise. Though there is now a genuine attempt in some quarters of the Church to make theological studies contextual, it remains by and large capitalistic, western and colonial in approach. Colonial theology did not take into account the struggle of the people. But theology has to be formed in a historical, social and cultural situation. The starting of the Kanke Regional Theological Centre (RTC) at Boreya, Ranchi, was a positive step in this direction. However, the resistance it faced initially is indicative of the deep-rooted process of enslavement to the West which compels one to think only in terms of European categories even if the context is tribal. The West, thus, becomes a reference point. There is still a sign of hope. Thanks to the late Bishop Dr. Philip Ekka, S.J., who revolutionized and reinterpreted the concept of inculturation in the context of the Chotanagpur Church, and Fathers Albert Van Exem, John Lakra, and Paulus Kullu, and Bishop Dr. Nirmal Minz, pioneers of tribal theology in Chotanagpur, a whole new direction has been given to tribal theological reflection.

2.4 Political Impact

2.4.1 The Great Divide: One of the policies of the British was to 'divide and rule'. When the missionaries came to Chotanagpur their only aim seemed to have been: 'give me souls' come what may. The Lutheran missionaries were the first to enter the Adivasi belt, soon followed by the Anglicans and the Jesuits. As a matter of fact, whenever new missions arrived, the converts started switching sides. The first Lutheran converts, for instance, disillusioned by their missionaries, joined the Anglicans. Again, with the coming of the Jesuits, the former Lutherans and the Anglicans became Roman Catholics. Thus, there was an unfortunate cut-throat competition among various missionary groups. It was so bad that in some parts of Chotanagpur there is still animosity between Christians of different denomi-

nations. The missionaries still try to woo people from each other's groups. Thus it is often Lutherans versus Roman Catholics.

The missionary enterprise in Chotanagpur is also responsible for triggering off divisions in the Adivasi community. Earlier the people were one though they had their own separate ethnic identities. But after some of them converted to Christianity there was a division between Christian Adivasis and the rest. The Christian feeling of superiority over the non-Christian Adivasis was mainly due to better schooling facilities. The height of all this was in the 1960's when the late Member of Parliament, Mr. Kartik Uraon, proposed a bill in the Parliament that Christian converts should not enjoy the constitutional privileges meant for the Scheduled Tribes on the ground that they were not Adivasis at all. The impact of colonization on the locals was so strong that cultural forms in traditional societies were reconstructed and transformed by colonial technologies of conquest and rule, creating new categories and oppositions between the colonizers and the colonized – European and Asian, modern and traditional, Christians and non-Christians, tribals and non-tribals, even male and female.

2.4.2 The Tribal Church and Political Consciousness: Father Brenton T.Bradly, one of the earliest missionaries, is quoted by Dharmaraj as having written in 1920, "The three greatest factors contributing to India's progress are the Bible, the English language and modern education. England has been at the back of all three, and these have struck at what has always been typical of the old, undemocratic India. England has built democracy in India's thinking"[26]. The above observations are definitely biased. The missionary enterprise in Chotanagpur, too, had a similar bias about Adivasis. In the political field, there were strong reservations and suspicions about the Jharkhand Movement for a separate state. The reasons for this attitude were not totally unjustified. There was fear of the Government, and fundamentalists accused the missions of encouraging secessionist movements. There was a time when a 'missionary hand' was suspected in every so-called 'anti-national' activity. It was due to the influence of the Church that Christian Adivasis were subdued. Their political consciousness and Adivasi sensitivity became dormant. There were many incidents of dehumanization and human rights violations, but there was passive resistance most of the time. What was encouraged by Church leadership were a few demonstrations, *dharnas*, memoranda to the Prime Minister and President, and that was all. History is a mute witness to the tribal agitations and uprisings against exploitation being reduced to pilgrimages, prayer services and mild demonstrations. Another crucial issue that antagonizes the locals is the fact that there is a lot of hue and cry among the clergy whenever there is a murder of a priest or a nun or when the institutional Church is the target of attack, but when the common tribal people are murdered, and their women raped, this barely causes a ripple.

2.5 Psychological Left-overs of Colonialism:

2.5.1 The Tribal Crisis of Identity: The impact of colonialism was so great that its leftovers can still be seen in the tribal Church. As we have said above, the colonizers were a product of their cultural times which determined their outlook and personality. Their task was not easy as they not only faced opposition and physical attacks but also high risks of casualties due to suffering and sickness. But they always came to the natives with a feeling of superiority, political, military, cultural and religious. Hence, the locals were 'heathens', 'pagans', 'not worthy' ,etc. The locals acquired the psychology of the "discovered". Their inferiority feelings were accompanied by fear. There was an experience of 'outside' help in the face of oppression by the landlords. They deeply realized that their 'liberation' from the clutches of the Zamindars was not possible as long as they continued in their old religion. And hence, they themselves went to the missions and requested to be incorporated into the Church. A feeling of subjection to the foreign religion became necessary as their own religion did not seem powerful enough to solve their problems. In Chotanagpur the perception of the colonized got so distorted that they accepted reality the way the colonizers defined it. The people are still under psychological stress, strain, a sense of insecurity, lack of self-esteem.

2.5.2 Intellectual Colonization: Western Education was a hegemonic imposition, and had an adverse impact on the locals. A sense of subservience to the western intellectual came with colonial education. A lack of self-confidence and an inferiority complex were experienced by the tribals in various fields. Some of the greatest missionary educationists thought that the tribal mind had no capacity to grasp science. The tribal sense of inferiority made the transition from foreign to the local leadership difficult, as there was no manifest expression of confidence in local vocations. Intellectual enslavement has taken such a deep root that the faithful always compare the tribal priests with the foreigners and praise the latter for their doles – the charity work, free rations, oil, clothes, etc. Thus 'white' skin became the reference point at the time of transition when tribal missionaries had to take over the mantle of administration of the Church and other institutions affiliated to them.

2.6 Neo-Colonialism and the Response of the Tribal Church: Some of the features of the 'colonial situation' are domination by an alien minority, assertion of racial and cultural superiority, contact between a machine-oriented civilization, a powerful economy and a rapid rhythm of life in contrast to a non-Christian civilization that lacked machines and was marked by a backward economy and a slow rhythm of life. Since the colonialists were highly motivated by economic gains, all their policies, too, were determined by them. All this was done because they considered the people's culture inferior to their own. Thus, the economic and political policies of the colonizers were always in view of their own material benefits come what may. Indeed colonialism still exists in the

form of *economic, political*, or *social oppression* of one disadvantaged group by another advantaged group. However, this view is not contested. *The Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* defines Neo-colonialism as "the use of economic, political or other pressures to control or influence other countries, especially former dependencies". Here the use of the term *neo-colonialism* indicates the *indirect control exercised by developed nations over developing nations*. According to this view, many developing nations are dependent on investment capital from developed nations. In the process the developed nations take undue and unjustified advantage of their counterparts. In either case, the Adivasis of Chotanagpur are the ultimate victims with developmental projects like hydro-electric project, Netarhat field-firing range, mining, etc. It should be noted that there are over fifty large and medium scale, and above two hundred and fifty small scale industries in Jamshedpur, Bokaro, Ranchi, Rourkela, Muri, Dhanbad, Palamau, Sindri, Hazaribagh, and so on. The tribal lands are being grabbed by the aliens; their forests are being depleted by the government-sponsored industries; and their women are being raped every other day. And yet, the Adivasis maintain a culture of silence because of the Gospel message of love, peace, joy, forgiveness and harmony. "*Christianity has made the Adivasis impotent*" say some lay people. In the Northeast about ninety per cent are Christians, and yet there is so much violence! The Jharkhand Movement is more than fifty years now and yet the destination seems to be quite elusive. The modernization in India which began with a colonial heritage continued after independence resulting in the emergence of new structural situations leading to stresses and challenges unforeseen in the former days.

3. Beyond Neo-Colonizalism: A Vision for the Third Millennium

Can there be a genuinely vibrant Adivasi Church in Chotanagpur in the 21st Century ? Is there any hope of integral liberation for the Adivasi Church when criminals of the Karondabera Priests' massacre go scot free, thanks to the biased government machinery ? It should be noted that on September 1, 1994, two diocesan priests and a Seminarian were attacked and killed by the religious fundamentalists. But justice has eluded the victims even to this day. I have a dream for the tribal Church of Chotanagpur which is to be de-colonized and also de-neo-colonized. The present study, understanding the past, has set a futuristic vision of a total liberation for the tribal Church of Chotanagpour that takes into account not only the socio-cultural and religious needs of the people but also the economic. This implies political consciousness as well. The Tribal Church of Chotanagpur cannot be genuinely vibrant unless the larger tribal community also flourishes. In order to make this dream come true, one has to do now what Fr.Lievens did for his time. In order to operationalize this vision I have the following suggestions, which, I must confess, are not entirely new.

3.1 Inter-Cultural Dialogue: Can there be a true inter-cultural dialogue

between the Adivasi Church in Chotanagpur and the adherents of the *Sarna* Religion who are suspicious of the former because the Christian Adivasis do not maintain the laws of the tribe, i.e., clan exogamy, tribe endogamy, no working day on a Thursday, celebrating Karam festival in the Church instead of *akhra* (dancing yard), etc. These are some of the grievances expressed by the non-Christian Adivasis of the Lohardaga district. In the early nineties when Paulus Kullu wrote an article in a Hindi monthly, named *Nishkalanka*, "Inter-caste Marriage: A Sin Against God", there was a large hue and cry. Many organizations including the Women's, protested against the stand of Kullu arguing that it was unfortunately divisive at a time when they were trying to bring unity among different ethnic groups. The problem is still unresolved. Now the resistance to the liberalised understanding of the Church is from the non-Christian Adivasis. Where are the protesters gone ? Are they even aware of the need of a serious dialogue? What could be the meeting point ? These are definitely some subtle issues which affect the very core of the Adivasi institutions and therefore are non-negotiable from their point of view.

3.2 Socio-Political Unity: There is a need to identify the subtle neo-colonial elements which try to erode the tribal cultural values and thus further alienate them. The role of the Voluntary Organizations is also crucial to make sincere efforts for the all-round progress of the tribals in general. There is a need of honest and sincere officers in the Government who can selflessly work for the welfare of the tribals. A socio-political unity for asserting the fundamental rights in the face of various atrocities is impractical and unthinkable as long as there are differences in the perception of social institutions. With all this, the agony of the Adivasis continue. A Church-sponsored ethnic-political movement by bringing different groups together will be a daring step towards the achievement of a separate autonomous state. The concept of Jharkhand flows from the vision of a state that has peace, harmony, happiness and equality, the values so much cherished by the tribal society.

3.3 Fall back to the Roots– Symbiosis with Nature: On the economic front, the Adivasis have developed cultural traditions, an economy, social control mechanisms, religious myths and techniques of production geared to retaining the links with environment. Can something be done to maintain their symbiotic relationship with nature? Given the rampant deforestation, there is need for a new forest policy that finds a balance between the industrial, environmental and forest dwellers' needs, giving importance to the local economy. Hence, there is need to change the present policies. Fernandes suggests that the 'People's Forest Bill' works on the principle of a partnership of equals between the Forest Department and the local communities and combines people's livelihood with conservation of biodiversity.[27] The dispossession of Adivasi land and their social, economic, and cultural, psychological displacement sadly continues. Who, under the present circumstances, can

play a prophetic role like Father Lievens to restore those lands, to bring back lost self-esteem and identity? Unless the injustices inflicted on Adivasis are removed there is no question of liberation in the 21st century. Only a vibrant Tribal Church can lead people's agitation for the restoration of self rule, human rights and human dignity.

3.4 A Holistic Approach: Can the dedicated priests and nuns, both locals and those from outside the region, give them a ray of hope? Can the committed social workers and people of good will get them their lands back, which will give them their true identity ? Are the missionaries ready to take the Adivasis along with them or do they also impose their 'Indian' culture and civilization on them trying to bring them to the 'mainstream' which is but a myth? Going beyond neo-colonialism is difficult but not impossible. The 'kingdom' of God can be a reality here on earth for the Adivasis. A new earth and new heaven can be established here and now only when there is a genuine effort to go to the roots of the Adivasis which can be found in their culture. That means any effort of liberating them, conscientizing them, etc., will not succeed unless their culture is taken into account. A local vibrant Church has to evolve and emerge in the tribal context so that each of them can genuinely and proudly say *"Ours is the Church of the Adivasis, by the Adivasis, and for the Adivasis"*.

Notes

1. Sara Tulloch (ed.), *The Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Wordfinder,* Reader's Digest Association Limited, 1994.
2. David J.Banks, "Colonialism" in *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.1, Levinson and Ember (ed.), New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996, p. 215.
3. Balandier, "Colonialism" in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, Vol.3, Silis David, L. (ed.), The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1951, p. 75.
4. *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol.4. World Book. Inc., A Scott Company, 1986.
5. According to Guha's classification of the racial types of the Indian Adivasi population, the Proto-Australoid stock are characterized by dark skin colour,sunken nose and lower forehead. Tribes of middle India belong to this stock.
6. Fuchs opines that the Munda, the Ho and the Santal belong to Austro-Asiatic group, speaking a Mundarian language, whereas Proto-Australoids speak a Dravidian tongue.
7. Foreigners or outsiders, referring to the lease-holders, Zamindars and other exploiters of the Mundas and Uraons.
8. F. Ivern, *Chotanagpur Survey*, New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, 1969.
9. S. Mahto, *Hundred Years of Christian Missions in Chotanagpur since 1845*, Ranchi, The Chotanagpur Christian Publishing House, 1971, p. 1.
10. J.C. Jha, *The Kol Insurrection of Chotanagpur*, Calcutta, 1964, p.240.
11. S. Mahto, *Hundred Years of Christian Missions in Chotanagpur since 1845*, Ranchi, The Chotanagpur Christian Publishing House, 1971, pp. 1-2.
12. C and L Alvares, Norma, "The Christian and the Wild" in *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures* edited by Teotonio De Souza, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1994. p. 28.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
14. Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness,* New York, Orbis Books, 1996, p. 70.
15. Gregory Naik, "Forward" in *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures,* Teotonio De Souza (ed.), New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1994, p. 5.
16. J.B. Bhattacharjee, "Predicaments of the Catholic Mission in Colonial India" in *Indian Missiological Review,* September-December, Vol.12. No. 3&4, 1990, p. 81.
17. Teotonio De Souza (ed.), *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures,* New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1994.
18. Fernandes and Chaudhury, "Search for a Tribal Identity: The Dominant and the Subaltern" in *The Indigenous Question: Search for an Identity,* New Delhi, Indian Social Institute,1993, pp. 9-12.
19. Fidelis De Sa, *Crisis in Chotanagpur,* Bangalore, A Redemptorist Publication, 1975, p. 41.
20. S.C. Roy, *The Mundas and Their country,* Calcutta, 1912.
21. Consisted in making collections among the people to send memorialss to the governemt about their traditional rights. It was regarded as political agitation by the British Government.
22. Fidelis De Sa, *Crisis in Chotanagpur,* Bangalore, A Redemptorist Publication, 1975.
23. From 1896 to 1900. The movement refers to a messianic movement started by Birsa Munda to free tribals from injustices and the British Rule. It was a socio-religious and political movement in which spiritual reform and political unity were emphasised. It was, in tribal history, a peak moment of registering discontent against not only the British rulers but also the greedy outsiders (non-Tribal Indians) who unscrupulously exploited the tribals of Chotanagpur.
24. Nirmal, Minz, "Identity of Tribals in India" in *The Indigenous Question: Search for an Identity,* Walter Fernandes (ed.), New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, 1993,p. 29.
25. Yogendra Singh, *Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience,* Delhi, Har-Anand Publications, 1993.
26. Jacob S. Dharmaraj, *Colonoialism and Christian Mission: Post Colonial Reflections,* Delhi, ISPCK, 1993, p. 127.
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Colonial Mission

Retrospect and Prospect

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The commemoration of the quincentennial of the Portuguese expansion into the East from May 18, 1498 and the beginning of the more organised Latin mission into India provides an occasion to evaluate the mission during the colonial period with its accompanying motives and results, especially from the perspective of the victims of colonialism. Such an exercise can lead to important insights into the development of mission theology, which in turn can influence our missionary practice today.

As Kenneth Latourette has pointed out, Christianity, or for that matter any other religion or ideology, has not seen such a territorial expansion as the expansion of the Faith in the sixteenth century.[1] It was closely associated with geographic discoveries, commerce, conquests and the migrations of European peoples.

The Iberian civilisation was in full swing. The two countries of the Iberian Peninsula, as Enrique Dussel has emphasised, with the generous help of their people, of their military forces, of their noblemen passionate for new titles, of the multitudes of poverty-stricken individuals thirsting for riches, and of religious and priests, among whom there were many saints as well, initiated the political, economic and spiritual conquest.[2] What interests us in this paper is the spiritual conquest. However, it is very much mixed up with the political and economic conquest. The story of conquest, colonisation and mission was one. The Church was part and parcel of the state.

Colonial Mission and Crusades

The intimacy between the throne and the altar was a tradition of Europe from the time of Charlemagne. Eleventh century Europe experienced an economic boom as well as a rapid increase in its population. This was accompanied by a revival in monasticism manifested in the Cluny movement, which in turn increased the religious feelings of the Christians. This increased religious zeal coupled with a growing appreciation of pilgrimages to the holy places, especially to the lands hallowed by the life and ministry of the Lord, gave rise to the crusades. The crusades started in the Iberian Peninsula in the 8th and 9th centuries and spread to the East from the 11th century and came to a tragic end in 1453 when Constantinople fell to the Turks.

Though the recovery of the Holy sepulchre was the acclaimed cause of the crusades, they were also an instrument

of political and economic expansion. As Enrique Dussel rightly points out the crusades were motivated equally by the desire to conquer the contemporary world market, Palestine and Egypt, the meeting point of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.[3]

The modern colonial mission was a continuation of the Crusades. When the rest of Europe was licking the wounds of the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, the Iberian nations managed to push the Muslims in their home soil down south to the island of Granada. Pope Alexander VI, well pleased with these two nations, gave them the right to conquer the lands that they "discovered" and "to bring to Christian faith the peoples who inhabit these islands and the mainland ... and to send to the said islands and the mainland wise, upright, God-fearing, and virtuous men who will be capable of instructing the indigenous peoples in good morals and in the Catholic faith."[4] As Teotonio De Souza remarks, the Pope was eager to give his blessings ("*Padrovado*" and "*Patronato*") to the Portuguese and the Spanish colonial forays, in return for the hopes he entertained of being acknowledged as the leader and guide of Christendom. The rulers of Portugal and Spain on the other hand wanted the papal blessings to subject the masses of Portuguese and Spanish people to their interests and to subjugate the conquered peoples.[5]

Though the crusades failed, the crusade mentality persisted. The crusade spirituality was still very much a folk-spirituality which could supply zeal and fanaticism to the ignorant masses. The idea of the Holy land was extended to the whole universe, especially the newly "discovered" lands. Conquest replaced crusades. The folk-spirituality of pilgrimage was transformed into pilgrimage to pagan lands for conquest. Thus the crusades paved the way for the colonial mission.

Spiritual Conquest with Political Conquest

Mission was a by-product of political expansion and parallel to it in its expression. Often mission was the justification for the military conquest. Heinzguenter Frohnes writes: "In 1501-1502 Spain had to look for some other way of justifying the occupation of the New World. This justification was found in the missionary mandate, something wholly new in the history of discovery."[6] The Roman Pontiffs of the time, busy with family aggrandisement, with European politics, with the Turkish menace and with the rising tide of Protestantism, were only too happy to approve this.[7]

A ritual proclamation ("*requerimiento*") worked out by Palacios Rubios in 1513 that was read out by the Spanish 'Conquistadores' whenever they acquired new territories justified the conquest saying that God made a whole continent emerge from the ocean for Spain, and over this continent Spain's power directly represented God's power, the Church's power, and the power of the "*senora y superiora del universo mundo*".[8] The Spaniards demanded the Indians to recognise the Church as the ruler of the whole world and to accept the right order of faith and the world, willed by God, from the Spanish monarch who acted on a direct

mandate from God. To refuse that summons meant war, a just war, and the proclamation made it clear that in such a case the Indians alone would be guilty of the bloodshed and the disaster that would inevitably overtake them. Thus "making God's will known to the Indians therefore established Spain's right to the New World", comments Frohnes.[9] Hence, the call to the faith, with the choice of submission or war, was a precondition for the Spanish occupation of territory.

When Vasco da Gama reported his successful voyage to India, Portuguese King Dom Manuel I in 1499 claimed himself to be the Lord of Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and of India. Conquest, Navigation, Commerce and mission were so intertwined that the Cross and crown, throne and altar, Faith and Empire, God and Mammon, were all inseparable.[10]

Similarly, speaking about Goa, Fr. Paulo de Trinidade wrote in his CONQUISTA SPIRITUAL D'ORIENTE in 1638; "The two swords of the civil and the ecclesiastical power were always so close together in the conquest of the East, that we seldom find one being used without the other. For the weapons only conquered through the right that the preaching of the Gospel gave them, and the preaching was only of some use when it was accompanied and protected by the weapons."[11] How mission and conquest went hand in glove in many places, can be seen from the complaint of the Africans: "At first we had the land and the white men the Gospel. Then the missionaries came and taught us to close our eyes and say our prayers while the white men were stealing our land from us. And now we have the Gospel and they have the land."[12] Enrique Dussel concurs: "The religious or missionary aims of the Spanish rulers are easily understood. They were an integral and necessary part of the effort to expand and thus were mixed essentially with the political aims of Spain as a Christian kingdom. Freed from any admixture or ambiguity, the missionary aim would not be a part of the expansion of a Christian kingdom, but it would be only that of the Roman Catholic Church. The history of Christian missions in Hispanic America, however, is the account of a continual crisis between the state which included the aims of the Church as a means of expansion – a position clearly accepted by many members of the Church but certainly not by everyone...."[13]

The biblical justification of Joshua's conquering and raping the indigenous populations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites (Dt 7:1-11), the Amorites, the Perizzites and the Jebusites (Gen 12:6-7; 15:8-21; Jos 9:1-2) has been used to justify the colonial conquest of the indigenous populations by the "superior" peoples of the West. Thus, the renowned Biblical scholar W.F. Albright writes: "From the impartial standpoint of a philosopher of history, it often seems necessary that a people of markedly inferior type should vanish before a people of superior potentialities, since there is a point beyond which racial mixture cannot go without disaster."[14] Michael Prior underlines how "virtually every colonial enterprise

emanating from the West had the right to exploit, and in some cases exterminate the "inferior" indigents, usually designated by the uncomplimentary term, "the natives".[15]

Some missionaries in fact saw the colonial powers in the light of the Eusebian Imperial Theology. Thus, a Jesuit missionary wrote to Portugal from Goa in 1637: "God's purpose in inspiring the Portuguese seaborne-trade with India was to increase the harvest of souls."[16] Similarly, Fr. Antonio Vieira S.J. assured King Affonso VI on April 20, 1657, that Portugal had been created by God for the express purpose of spreading the Roman Catholic faith around the world. "The more Portugal acts in keeping with this purpose, the more sure and certain is its preservation."[17]

However, in the later period of the colonial era, especially after the founding of the British East India Company, the relation between the colonizers and the missionary was not always that smooth. There were cases, as in India, outside the Portuguese sway, where not only were the missionaries and the colonial government not hand in glove, but they were more often than not at considerable odds with each other. "The commercial companies frequently stood in the way of the missionaries, and the missionaries, with few exceptions, decried the life-style of the traders and colonists. Rarely was the association harmonious", observes Tucker Ruth.[18]

Ideological and Theological Presuppositions

A remarkable account of the theological motivation of the spiritual conquest can be seen from a letter the Franciscan General Fr. Francisco de los Angelos wrote to his friars in New Spain (Mexico) in 1523. Referring to Mexico he writes: "Since its vintage is being gathered by the devil and the flesh, Christ does not enjoy the possession of the souls which he purchased with his blood, it seems to me that, if Christ lacks for no insults there, neither was there reason for me to lack any feeling concerning them; for I have as great, and even greater reason, than the prophet David to feel and say with him: The zeal of thy house has eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me (Ps 68:10)."[19]

Thus the major theological motivation of mission was the salvation of souls for whom Christ died. These souls were considered to be engaged in devil worship and thus subjects of satan. By baptism these souls were snatched away from the devil and sent to heaven.

As David Bosch has shown, the colonial period precipitated an unparalleled era of mission. "Christendom discovered with shock that, fifteen centuries after the Christian church was founded, there were still millions of people who knew nothing about salvation and who, since they were not baptized, were all headed for eternal punishment."[20] They were sheer devil worshippers who lacked any sense of a true God. Though later enlightened anthropologist-missionaries like Wilhelm Schmidt would show how even among the primitives there is faith in a Supreme Being,[21] for the earlier missionaries they were heathens, idolaters, sitting in the shadow of death and darkness of sin.

The notion of sin divided the world into two camps: Christian Europe and the colonial world. Led by this false presumption, there was a systematic destruction of national values and religions, inculcating Western values camouflaged as Christian values.[22]

The sense of religious superiority was compounded with the sense of racial and cultural superiority. As Jon Sobrino has written, anthropologically the human inferiority of the peoples of the conquered places was established. Ethically the evil and perverse customs of these peoples were condemned.[23] Hence mission was based on a distorted idea about the peoples of the newly discovered places.

The mission and the missionary operated from a false anthropology that reduced the Africans and other peoples to savages, barbarians and primitives. This pseudo-scholarship in Anthropology was often reinforced by the reports of some missionaries, based on their own world-views and values. European superiority and ethnocentrism was so high that all those who were outside the pale of European culture were considered savages and primitives. The missionaries, soaked as they were in this pseudo-scholarship, went out not only to spread the true faith but also to civilize the savage "natives". Pope Alexander VI, who divided the world between Portugal and Spain in 1493 with a demarcation bull, "Inter Caetera Divinae", asked them to send missionaries to bring the natives to faith as well as to civilize them.[24]

According to this understanding the use of force was justified in mission, and it was often presumed that the persons involved were incapable of deciding what is good for them. The Gospel injunction, "compel them to come in" (Lk 14:16-24), was used to justify forced conversions. The force used assumed different forms such as the suppression or the banishment of the indigenous priesthood; destruction of "heathen" temples, the burning and banning of all indigenous sacred texts; the prohibition of any form of religious procession, rites, and services, save those of the Church and compulsory attendance at catechism classes.[25]

One of the theologians, Gracia de Toledo, wrote in 1571 to justify the conquest and the accompanying evangelization. "And so I say of these Indians, that one of the instruments of their predestination and salvation was mines, treasures and riches. Because we can see that where these exist, we find the Gospel has arrived and, where they do not exist, it is a form of condemnation. In lands where there is no gift of gold and silver, there is no soldiers or captain who will go there, nor any minister of the Gospel. Thus, these mines are good for the barbarians, for God provided them so that faith and Christianity might be taken to them and keep them for their salvation."[26]

Another sad effect of this racial prejudice was the extermination of millions of indigenous people in the name of conquest and mission. It is estimated that during the first 80 years of colonization some 45 million indigenous people were killed in Latin America.[27]

Similarly, slave trade was justified by the same distorted anthropology. The

Pope authorised the opening of a slave market in Lisbon, where up to twelve thousand Africans were sold annually for transportation to the West Indies.[28] It is estimated that over forty million Africans were sold to European colonies.

Colour prejudice was responsible for keeping the indigenous clergy subordinate to the European clergy, or even barring the former altogether from the higher ranks of the clergy. Mateo de Castro, a convert from Goa who was consecrated as bishop of Chrysopolis in 1637 by the Propaganda, was described by the Jesuit Patriarch of Ethiopia Dom Affonso Mendes as "the bare-bottomed Nigger"[29] and was denied entry into India by the Portuguese. The deeply ingrained Eurocentric colonial prejudice characterized virtually every form of discipline and historiography.

The mission from this cultural superiority was experienced as the beginning of their Good Friday by the indigenous people. Thus, Chilam Balam de Chumayel from the Maya of Mesoamerica, in the "Libro de los Linages" wrote:

> In the Eleventh Ahau there begins the counting of the time ... It was only because of the mad time, the mad priests, that sadness came among us, that Christianity came among us; for the great Christians came with the true God; but that was the beginning of our distress, the beginning of the tribute, the beginning of the alms, what made the hidden discord appear,
> the beginning of the fighting with firearms,
> the beginning of the outrages,
> the beginning of being stripped of everything,
> the beginning of slavery for debts,
> the beginning of the debts bound to the shoulders,
> the beginning of the constant quarrelling,
> the beginning of the suffering.
> It was the beginning of the work of the Spaniards and the priests....[30]

It was this sad plight they inherited with the Bible and the Christian Faith that made the Andean and American Indians return the Bible to Pope John Paul II with an open letter, during his visit to Peru in 1990. The letter said:

> John Paul II, we, Andean and American Indians, have decided to take advantage of your visit to return to you your Bible, since in five centuries it has not given us love, peace or justice. Please take back your Bible and give it back to our oppressors, because they need its moral teachings more than we do. Ever since the arrival of Christopher Columbus a culture, a language, religion and values which belong to Europe have been imposed on Latin America by force. The Bible came to us as part of the imposed colonial transformation. It was the ideological weapon of this colonial assault. The Spanish sword which attacked and murdered the bodies of Indians by day and night became the cross which attacked the Indian soul.[31]

The US Bishops in their pastoral letter on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Church in Americas laments the cultural oppression and the destruction of the native American civilisation. They speak of "the violent usurpation of Indian lands and the brutalisation of their habitats".[32] The pastoral letter acknowledges and deplores the terrible injustices done to African and American indigenous peoples.

Unlike the spread of the Church in the "new world", mission in Asia in the wake of the colonial period witnessed the courageous attempts of some of the best creative minds in mission history. What is later known as the "Chinese Rites" and the "Malabar Rites" were endeavours to insert the Faith in the given culture. St. Francis Xavier showed the way already in 1549 when he presented himself to the Japanese daimyo, clothed in silk, escorted by an array of men in similar dress and bearing rich presents.[33] Later Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) had access to the Chinese emperor as a scholar, a learned mathematician from the West, desirous of establishing relations with his peers in the Far East, while making no secret of the fact that he was a Catholic priest. Ricci made use of Chinese expressions like T'IEN CHU (Lord of Heaven), SHANG-TI (God) and T'IEN (heaven) to express the Christian Faith and also integrated several Chinese customs, like the veneration ("*sheng*") of the ancestors and Confucius, into Christian practice.

Rome, though initially in favour of these adaptations, under the enthusiastic support of the Propaganda, due to the rivalries between the political powers and religious Congregations, later forbade these attempts by the bull EX QUO SINGULARI in 1752.[34]

Taking inspiration from Ricci, Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) tried to penetrate Hinduism from within by adopting Indian social customs which "allowed Indians to enter the Mystical Body without renouncing all their titles and traditions, in a word without incurring the shameful name of renegade" [35] However, the Indian attempt too met with the same fate as that of the Chinese Rites by the papal bull of OMNIUM SOLICITUDINEM (1754) of Benedict XIV. The two papal bulls together suppressed any attempt at 'accommodation' in the missions. Henceforth the Roman practices were to be transported everywhere exactly as they were in Rome. This decision was rescinded only in 1939 by Pope Pius XII. However, it must be emphasized that the Propaganda through its Instruction of 1659 asked the missionaries not to export Europe to the mission fields, and to respect other cultures and local customs.

Expansion of the Institutional Church

Apart from saving the souls through conversion, the colonial mission was aimed at expanding the institutional Church as it existed in Europe. Though it was only in the late middle ages and with the counter-reformation that we come across the strong emphasis of the institutional Church, it has its beginning already in the new religio-political system introduced by Constantine. This received further justification by Augustine's monumental work THE CITY OF GOD. In the context of the Donatists and the Pelagians Augustine stressed the visible unity of the Church and held that salvation was only within the Church. This in turn laid the remote foundation for the later mission theology of the Catholic church. St. Thomas Acquinas too played a role in the understanding of the mission as founding the church. He wrote that proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ can

be understood either as the activity of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ or the preaching the Gospel with the full effect, i.e., founding the church among the peoples (S.T., I-II,106,4.4; cf also 1 Sent.16.1.2.2).

A leading theologian of the colonial times, Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) affirmed that the Church is a Perfect Society "as visible and palpable as the assembly of the people of Rome, or the Kingdom of Gaul, or the republic of Venice" (Controversies IV,III,10). As a Perfect Society the Church was absolute, unchangeable, having in itself every perfection. The Church alone possessed Truth and Salvation. Mission was one of its qualities. Mission meant the activities by which the Western ecclesiastical system was extended to the rest of the world.[36] The entire missionary enterprise could be defined in terms of a dogmatic-institutional arrangement, i.e., ensuring that the faith is spread, sacraments are administered and a hierarchy is established.[37]

Looking ahead

As John Paul II exhorts, our reading of the colonial mission must be done "with the humility of truth, looking only at the truth in order to give thanks to God for successes and learning from mistakes in order to be renewed in its approach to the future".[38] Our reflection is not in order to condemn the past but to learn from the past so that we can be faithful witnesses of the Gospel today.

We have seen how mission in the colonial period had its axis on the conversion of the 'heathen' and the implantation of the Church. It operated from a position of power, superiority and paternalism leading to marginalization of peoples and their cultures. Naturally mission today must be free from the burden of this dehumanising anthropology.

If the mission of the past in many cases led to an experience of oppression and exploitation today mission has to lead to an experience of liberation and humanisation. Conversion is no more a one-way traffic. The evangelizer too goes through a process of conversion: a conversion to the context of the people, especially to that of the poor. This type of conversion we see in the lives of many missionaries today such as Mother Theresa, Dom Helder Camara, Rani Maria, Thomas.A.T., et al. In this the evangelizer also goes through a process of evangelization.

Concern for the institutional Church must give way to the involvement in the actual sufferings and aspirations of humankind. This in turn gives expression to the message of the coming of God into this human world. In this form of evangelization, the Church rather than coming from outside becomes a new presence among the oppressed and the poor so that it really becomes a church of the poor, a church on the edges, a church at the periphery. Only then will the Church be recognized as the incarnation of divine love, even as the Risen Lord was recognized on the road to Emmaus in his fraternal sharing. This renders its credibility. Its face is its solidarity with the poor. Gospel is no more an agent of resignation or consolation, but the inspiration to transform unjust and exploitative situations.

As Gustavo Gutierrez has spelt out, the urgent question for us today is "how to say to the poor: God loves you?".[39] The daily experience of poor, insignificant, oppressed persons is the absence of love. Injustice is the expression of the absence of love in their daily life. With a globalized economy, the poor are marginalized as they have neither any merchandise to sell nor the money to buy the necessities of their life. The option for the poor in the real world is not easy. How are we to be part of this world and yet avoid complicity with institutions of exploitation and oppression? How can we avoid complicity with injustice and at the same time live in this world? We can denounce major injustices by our words, actions and attitudes as we try to be Christians.

In the context of a globalized and unipolar economic system the Church must join in movements for the abolition of international debts at various levels and in campaigns against money-laundering. It can oppose the "structural adjustment" programmes which eventually works against the poor of the countries concerned.

Christians can join hands with other forces in giving shape to alternative agricultural projects which would promote bio-diversity and meet the real needs of the local people. The Church can be a powerful agent of net-working pressure groups and movements that can check the profit oriented multi-national companies and projects operating with vested interests.

Keeping in mind the cultural violence done to the indigenous people, especially in Latin America, today's mission must be sensitive to the cause of the tribal peoples everywhere and respect and promote indigenous cultures. When we are threatened with ecological disaster and shrinking bio-diversity, we can learn from their culture which maintains a balance between human needs and the ecosystem. At the onslaught of modern development and industrialization the tribal people are the worst sufferers as they are displaced and dispossessed of their land. The Church can come forward to find response to their degradation. It is not that the tribals are to be kept as museum pieces. They too have a right to change. But the changes must preserve their basic values of equity and renewability.[40]

Today the concept of the poor is not confined to the economically deprived alone. It would include all those who suffer discrimination and dehumanization of any sort as well as those who have to depend on others for their existence. The poor are the disenfranchised – women, children, unorganised daily labourers, the Dalits, the indigenous, the minjung. In the present context, the Church's mission cannot be blind to anthropological poverty as it inflicts even more suffering than economic poverty.

As opposed to a triumphalistic Church with claims of absoluteness, the Church of post-colonial era realizes that the infinite and many-sided riches of the reality of God cannot adequately be expressed or contained by it or any religion as such. Even the Bible does not use "the Absolute" as a name for God, rather it uses relational terms such as Lord, Creator, Redeemer, etc. The emphasis is on the relationship between

God who is active in human history and human beings.

Alexander Ganoczy has shown how the idea of the absolute claim of Christianity is philosophical in origin.[41] It goes back to Hegel according to whom Christianity was the only religion that would rightly be termed as 'absolute', because it had raised the essential element of all religion, the union of God and man, to its highest level by professing Jesus Christ as God-man. The Hegelian use is in the sense that Christianity is the bearer of what is the highest revelation in itself of the absolute Spirit. This dialectical Philosophy of religion of Hegel cannot be taken to justify the use of Absolute for Christianity.

In the Gospels we have very little support for this philosophical approach to Absoluteness. In the ministry of Jesus if we could speak of the Absolute, it is the Kingdom of God that is imminent and brought about in the practice of Jesus. Jesus himself is relative to the reign of his Father. He is the herald of the Kingdom. Jesus' evangelizing and kerygmatic way of speaking always points away from himself and towards God and His Reign.[42] His practical aim was the welfare and salvation of the poor, the captives and sinners (Mk 1:14; Lk 4:18; 8:1, etc.). He was essentially theocentric which in turn was radically anthropocentric in practice, and in no sense do we come across a sublime egocentricity in Jesus. The resurrection was seen as the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ and in him for all people.

The Church, the assembly of the brethren, *ekklesia*, was the sphere of worship and it was the point of arrival as well as the point of departure as far as mission was concerned. "It was the place where the evangelized were brought together and prepared, although it did not provide an infallible guarantee of their salvation", comments Ganoczy.[43]

In the early Church there was no room for boasting or of making Christianity absolute, or claiming that the Church was the only mediator of salvation. Christian absoluteness is the absolute demand to live our own Christian faith to the maximum, and thus we should be a total witness of our faith in Jesus Christ. That faith is not for the sake of making claims or for measuring the faith of others. Nor is it for condemning others.

The colonial conversion and implantation of the Church operated from the presumption of the impossibility of salvation outside the Church (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*), which in turn goes back to St. Cyprian (Ep 73:21). However, Cyprian used the dictum in the context of his argument for the indivisibility of the Church, against the Novatians.[44]

Vatican II has acknowledged the possibility of salvation in other religions (AG 7; GS 16,22; LG 16; NA 2, etc.). All this shows that other religions are not any more to be seen as objects of conquest but as partners in dialogue and in collaboration. This is based on authentic Christian faith in one God who is the Creator of all and the Lord of all history and who reaches out to humanity through his eternal Word in whom all are created and who enlightens all

humans coming into the world (Jn 1:1-4). This dialogue must be extended also to the primal religions.

The Church as the community of the disciples of Jesus Christ on earth is instituted and assembled for a particular mission even as in the Bible any call is for a particular service, mission. This mission is nothing other than serving human beings by manifesting the love of God made present in Jesus Christ (RM 2). In the words of *Ad Gentes*, "Missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than an epiphany, or a manifesting of God's decree, and its fulfilment in the world and in world history, in the course of which God by means of mission manifestly works out the history of salvation" (AG 9). The characteristic self-description of the Church in the Council decrees is: the mystery of God's presence on earth (LG 1, AG 1).

Our past missiological literature abounded with terms such as conquering, teaching, baptizing, saving, planting, etc. We did not speak of pitching the tent among the people, being with them, beholding them and being moved with sentiments of compassion, admiration, sadness, etc., which are all too vibrant in the Gospels. Jesus was truly with the people and went to meet them where they were and through his presence with them evoked in them admiration, faith, repentance, etc.

Today mission is to be seen as a partnership, God's partnership with humanity. This demands attitudes of communality, humility, service. Mission in the past predominantly was working "for" the people, if not against them. It was from a position of superiority. We wanted to bring people into our fold and to exercise control over them in the name of salvation.

The greatest enemy of mission today is control, power. This inordinate attachment to control and power makes the Church too susceptible to fear. The Church today suffers from a fear complex. Today's Church experiences various sorts of fears, as Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga of Sao Felix do Araguaia of Brazil has shown. It is afraid of Marxism, of the secular world, of Ecumenism, of collegiality, of local church, of laity, of women, of theologians, of cultures, of youth, of liberation theology, of religions, of sex, of sects, of renewal, of changes ... when all these can be opportunities for mission.[45]

This uncalled for fear may be a sign of our moving on the wrong track. If we are a community of witnesses to the Gospel of the Kingdom, then the objects of all these fears can become opportunities to collaborate with, to witness to, to exercise compassion and thus to carry out the task of genuine mission. The Church has to fear nothing but fear itself, as the resurrected Lord has assured it.

Today we need a greater awareness not only of the indivisibility of the Church but also of humanity itself. Vatican II celebrates the common origin and the common destiny of all people (NA 1). Lack of this awareness is the cause of much violence and suffering. Lack of this awareness breeds insensitivity, claims of superiority, exclusivism, etc., leading to control,

oppression and marginalization. Our sense of community must extend to the whole of creation, especially in the context of the ecological disaster. The earth is our home and justice demands that we do not make it uninhabitable for us and for posterity by our greed.

Contextualized mission will make the Church truly local, but always conscious that where the Church exists it exists as the universal Church, responsible for witnessing to the Gospel in a particular socio-economic, cultural and religious context. It will be in communion with the other local churches in the spirit of mutual listening, always acknowledging the ministry of unity exercised by the pope.

In summary, mission of the post-colonial period is a true service to the world, by becoming an extroverted presence within it as the light, the salt and the leaven. Its aim is integral salvation which is at once peace, integrity, community, harmony and justice. Its motto will be: there is no salvation, not outside the church, but outside the cosmos. Mission should lead to this cosmotheandric communion.

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Decolonization of Liturgy

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The images of God which have been projected by various religions reflect the existential search of humankind for security, sustenance and fullness of life. In worship these images are activated through rituals, songs and prayers. The legitimacy and relevance of these rituals do not primarily depend on the fact that they reflect a particular dogma or formulation of faith, but from the fact that they reflect an attitude of faith consisting in an existential relationship of human persons with the divinity. In other words, the rituals are not merely the embodiment of dogmas, but they are the expressions of faith-experiences. They are proclamations of the 'Mystery of Faith'. The dogmas may play a corrective role with regard to the rituals because being limited human expressions of faith-experiences, there is a possibility that the rituals may contain some deviations. While dogmatic formulations of faith can be universal, the ritual expressions of faith must always be particular and local.

At times, faith can be identified with dogma. When this happens there is a danger that the former loses its experiential character; as a result the rituals begin to lose their power to foster the growth of relationship between God and human persons. They become something like mathematical symbols that convey the truth, but do not communicate in truth. They do not have their root in the human, in the soil of the worshipper. They have to look for their meaning in some other sources. When this happens we may say that the liturgy is colonized. It is no more the expression of the faith-experience of the community that celebrates, but the symbolization of truth or an abstract statement that was formulated in an alien culture. This was the main ailment of our pre-Vatican II liturgy; but I would add, even after Vatican II, we have not solved this problem completely. Our liturgies in India, of all the three Individual churches, are still suffering from the bad effects of colonization.

1. The Signs of Liturgical Colonization in India

Colonization is not merely a one way process. Both the parties, the colonizer and the colonized have a role to play. This is especially true when we deal with spiritual or ecclesiastical colonialism. In fact, the defenders of this colonial heritage today in India, are, to a great extent, the very Indians themselves. Having a hierarchy that is totally Indian and having at least one particular church that is fully *sui iuris*[1] which legitimately claims to be a church that was founded in the Indian soil by St. Thomas, the Apostle, in liturgical matters they still look to a cultural heritage

that is alien to them. We shall try to spell out some of the expressions of this state of colonialism that exists in the liturgical life of the Church in India.

a) All the three churches of India, with regard to their liturgical identity, attach themselves to cultures that are not their own. This is evident from the very names themselves: Roman Rite, Syro-Malabar Rite and Syro-Malankara Rite. Their symbol systems and spiritual ethos do not reflect those of India. We know that liturgy is 'tradition', that is, faith that is handed down through celebration. But the symbols that are used in all of them are taken from alien cultures. Thus we have a faith which very much lacks the experiential dimension, which in its turn leads to a mediocre life of witnessing. In fact, I think that I would not be wrong in saying that our Christian communities lack that spiritual clout which can be achieved adequately only through a deep experience of faith, celebrated in symbols that are taken from our cultures and capable of evoking emotions that lead to radical action.

b) The introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy was certainly a great step towards the fostering of the experiential aspect of liturgy. It was an act of decolonization of the liturgy which was celebrated in Latin and Syriac in the pre-Vatican II period. But from a juridical point of view, at least, there is still a colonial remnant in this area. The translations of the liturgical texts into vernacular need the approval of the Roman authorities. This was very strongly criticized by the Fathers of the recent Asian Synod in many of their interventions.

c) One of the best expressions of a local church that celebrates its Eucharist is its Eucharistic Prayer. In this liturgical text, the faith-experience of the community, living in a particular cultural context, is expressed by the head of that community. But today it is very difficult to get a Eucharistic Prayer composed by a local church. On the one hand, our particular churches do not seem to be ready and prepared for such original compositions; and on the other hand, there is always a long delay and hesitation on the part of the central authorities to approve such compositions. If the Church in a particular place is truly a local church, it should have the competence to compose such prayers. Evidently, the central authority will have the right and duty to make sure that communion in our common faith in the Eucharist is maintained and safeguarded, while at the same time respecting the autonomy of the various local churches in this very vital area of their faith expression.

d) Even when the Roman documents permit and encourage creativity in liturgy, many of our local churches are reluctant and sometimes even incapable of taking the necessary steps to use their autonomy in this regard. Many of them have been so accustomed to a stereotyped manner of celebrating that they find it difficult to leave the beaten track. They show no creativity and initiative. They prefer to continue to be in this state of inertia into which they had fallen during the period of colonization.

e) For many people the celebration of liturgy is not an experience of their faith, but the fulfilment of an obligation which the Church to which they

belong has imposed upon them. They are still under domination. They have not yet experienced the freedom of the children of God.

f) Both Vatican II and the Church in India after the Council had initiated a very strong movement towards the inculturation of the liturgy. This was intended to give the liturgy a local character with symbolism taken from the culture of the land. But this process lost its momentum after the initial enthusiasm, probably because the Church in India was not ready and willing to accept the responsibility of being a genuine local church.

2. A Renewed Thrust towards a Decolonized Liturgy

When we look at the changes that took place in the decolonization process in the political field, we notice that it did not always result in giving the people the desired freedom. This is evident from the state in which our own country is finding herself after 50 years of Independence. What we propose here does not consist merely in removing the control exercised by the central authority; there is need of a deeper sense of autonomy in the local church itself. This is the gift of the Spirit. If the Indian Church does not respond to the Spirit that dwells within her, the mere removal of an external control can only result in the creation of utter chaos. Here it may be relevant to recall the words of Swami Abhishiktananda on the dynamism of renewal for the Church in India:

> The Spirit leads her from within; he recalls to her memory the words of Christ and makes her realize their truth in an ever new way. Through his shining presence he enables her to deal with all problems put to her on all planes by the new circumstances of times. That does not mean that the Church in India or in the world at large had to retire from the world, either in the social or intellectual sphere; but however deeply the Church may be involved in the world and even in temporal activities, she must always remain totally free because 'Where the Spirit is, there is liberty'.[2]

The primary source of the autonomy of the Church is the Spirit. Her liturgy has its origin in the Spirit who reminds her of the Lord and his Paschal Mystery. When the Church in India celebrates her liturgy, the Spirit within her enables her to express the Mystery of Christ in a manner that responds to the salvific needs of this land. Together with this experience of the Spirit she also needs the legitimate juridical autonomy in order that she can fulfill her mission of proclaiming the Mystery of Christ in a manner that is relevant. We shall try to describe some of the steps that can lead the Church in India to this state of decolonization and authentic freedom.

a) Creation of Need-Based Liturgies

Need is the mother of invention. It is need that makes things acceptable and appreciated. That is why in the field of commerce, one of the most important task of the seller is to create in his buyers a need for the product that he or she intends to sell. Commercial colonialism of today does this through the technique of advertising. The source of a genuine need should be situated in the very fabric of the organism itself; then creativity will naturally flow from within; what is produced to satisfy this need will flow from the very exigency

of the organism; it will not be the result of an artificially created need.

One of the very serious problems of our Christian liturgy is that it is not apparently flowing from the need of the worshipper. It is a response to the legal obligations of an organization to which he belongs. It is the fulfilment of an official act. The need for worship is not coming from the exigency of an organism, but from the bye-laws and prescriptions of an organization. As a result, there can be very little creativity or spontaneity in the acts of worship; the experiential aspect is very much absent in it. The worshipper is satisfied by rituals that get over as quickly as possible. He goes to worship almost with the same sentiment as those who look for ready made fast-food. There is no felt-need for a community gathering, fellowship, togetherness which would be the characteristics of a genuine experience in a celebration.

In order to have liturgy that is native (decolonized), we need to situate our celebrations in the life-situation of the people. Instead of having worshipping sessions created to meet the need of an organization, we need to animate the organism, the community, to arrive at an awareness of its saving need and therefore to look for a Saviour who would meet them in their existential situation. Such liturgies will undoubtedly be creative. They will not be merely borrowed imitations coming from another society. Our process of decolonization should begin with the creation of this basic awareness of the need for worship.

b) Appreciation of Popular Devotions

One of the noteworthy characteristics of the religious behaviour of the people today is the growth in the number of those who frequent the pilgrim centres and places of popular piety. This is found in all religions. In the case of Christians we see that popular devotions attract many more people than the organized liturgies. This is verified especially in the village settings, where the worship takes on the indigenous forms such as *burrakathas*[3] and *kathakalakshepam.*[4] These can go on for long hours without the people getting tired. These celebrations give the people an experience that touches their emotions and enables them to give an adequate response that affects their whole persons. The worship-forms are not imposed upon them. They are totally native. "The adaptations spontaneously conceived by village Christians are not so much the indigenizing of Western Christian forms as the Christianizing – even if sometimes only to a very limited degree – of traditional ceremonies used in village festivals or in family rituals at various stages of the life cycle ... The Church needs to consider how village Christians can come to see and themselves work out in due response the lordship of Christ over the 'times' and 'spaces' of their village experience".[5] A liturgy that has popular religiosity as the basis for its symbolic expressions will surely not be a colonized liturgy. Instead, a liturgy that merely adopts the native symbols in the process of inculturation will remain a colonized liturgy even after it is inculturated. Hence the provision given in the Liturgical Constitution for the cultural adaptation of liturgy, that the renewed Liturgy remains still the Roman liturgy[6] even after it is

inculturated, can perpetuate the colonial character of the liturgy. A genuine indigenous liturgy cannot do away with the elements of popular religiosity as has been the case also of the Roman liturgy in its period of evolution and growth. Many elements of the official Roman Liturgy of today were taken from the popular devotions of the people.

c) *Liurgical Celebrations in Cultural Settings*

Liturgy is the celebration of our faith. In liturgy faith is expressed in emotional categories. In order to create an emotional experience it is not enough to have the reality that is experienced and the symbols that express it; it is also necessary to have a setting, an atmosphere in which it becomes operative. Real inculturation takes place only when the liturgy is celebrated in a cultural setting that creates an atmosphere conducive to experience the Mystery by the whole person. When this happens there is a genuine re-expression of the Mystery and not a mere translation of the concepts into indigenous categories. The 'tradition', that which is transmitted, must not only be translated and communicated but also re-created in a new context. It must be reconstituted in such a way that it has the power to communicate the same Mystery in a new and creative way to the succeeding generations. In other words, the Mystery of Christ which has been transmitted through a set of particular cultural expressions must be re-expressed in new cultural expressions in such a way that for those who belong to the new cultural group the Mystery will be handed down in expressions that are proper to their particular culture. In this way the Christian tradition of India will be the Mystery of Christ experienced by a particular group in India within their cultural setting, and not merely the patristic tradition of the West. When they transmit it to the succeeding generations they will do it in such a way that those who receive it will be initiated into the Mystery expressed and celebrated within an Indian ethos. Thus we will have a genuine Indian Christian tradition. Only when this happens can we say that we have a fully decolonized liturgy. Inculturation of liturgy will not be a dramatization of the tradition but re-creation of the tradition. "There is a creative period when the ritual takes shape together with other cultural institutions... In this way it is one of the constituent structural elements of the group celebrating it. But once constituted it acquires a certain autonomy, an objective reality. Succeeding generations seek to participate in it, assume it, re-live it ,interiorize it."[7]

d) *The Creation of a New Symbolic Language*

With the freedom from colonial rule India became very acutely aware of the need to develop the indigenous languages of the country. Even though English still remains a language that serves as a link between India and the world and among the various linguistic groups of the nation, there is a great revival in the vitality of vernaculars. The development of one's own native language is one of the most important expressions of one's own autonomy and individuality. We need a similar change in our liturgy. The language of liturgy is symbolic. We need to develop an

Indian symbolic language for our liturgy.

We know that liturgy is a celebration, a communication and sharing of our faith. Symbol is the basic language of every human communication. This is in the ultimate analysis due to the fact that we have been created by a God who is love. "The basic need which certainly is obvious only in man is the need of *symbolization*. This symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities like eating, looking or moving about. It is the fundamental process of his mind and goes on all the time."[8] In our liturgical celebrations the full involvement of the human person is required; there God reveals himself personally to his people and the people respond to him personally. The language in which this takes place is symbolic. Now symbolic language, unlike the languages used for communicating concepts, is specific to every people. If the communication has to be effective, it is necessary that it takes places through the medium of the cultural symbols of each people. We shall have a fully autonomous and personalized liturgy only when such a language is developed.

e) *The New of an Authentic Local Church*

Liturgy is the celebration of the local church. According to the Liturgical Constitution "the principal manifestation of the Church consists in the full active participation of all God's holy people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer at one altar at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers".[9] If an authentic liturgy is to be developed it is necessary that there be two important conditions: in the first place, the local churches must have a very deep ecclesial consciousness. As the same the Liturgical Constitution says, they must realize that "in some way they represent the visible Church constituted throughout the world".[10] They should be aware of the fact when the liturgy is celebrated the Mystery of Christ is made present in their midst; hence it is necessary that they do all that is possible to express it in symbols that are taken from their culture. They should get rid of slavish mentality of undue dependence on the central authority for every detail of the celebration. They should take care that they do not use the rituals of celebration as if they were mathematical symbols valid in all places. They need to have a genuine pastoral concern in the celebration of the liturgy which will prompt them to make use of signs that are relevant for the community. Secondly, it is necessary that the central authority leave sufficient room for the initiative of the local church in liturgical matters. Gradually the role of the former should become more and more that of maintaining communion in faith rather than that of standardization of rituals through prescriptions that tend to create uniformity. In fact, one of the directive principles of the liturgical renewal of Vatican II is not to impose uniformity: "Even in the Liturgy the Church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community. Rather does she respect and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations."[11] However, in the actual implementation of the Vatican II

renewal of liturgy there are still controls and cautions which at times prevent the creativity of the local churches. It is necessary to find a method by which creativity can be fully fostered while at the same time taking care that aberrations in faith are avoided. This will go a long away towards the full decolonization of the liturgy.

f) The Need for Universal Communion

There is no such thing as total independence in any area of human existence just as there is no total dependence. Our human life is lived in continuous inter-dependence. In the process of decolonization we cannot avoid this state of inter-dependence. However, here is a difference in the understanding of decolonization in the political and economic fields and in the liturgy of which we are speaking in this article. While the political decolonization effects autonomy in inter-dependence in our case we should maintain autonomy with communion. The Church is a communion of communities, and not a mere commonwealth of nations. In the affirmation of our liturgical autonomy we should always keep in mind this aspect of communion. "Christianity is a historical religion with a historical tradition. This means not only that the terrestrial Jesus is the foundation for the Christ of faith but that with the events he and his disciples bequeathed a trajectory of meaning within which subsequent interpretation by the Christian community was to take place and which would be augmented in succeeding generations and cultures".[12] Therefore, in our process of building up an autonomous Indian liturgy we should take into account all that the rich heritage of the past has bequeathed to us through the traditions of the particular churches of our country. At the same time, we should not understand respect for tradition in terms of a mere return to the past with a view to its restoration, but as rootedness in the past with a capability of being relevant and creative in the present. The universal communion will be very much fostered also by a changed attitude on the part of the Western churches towards the Third World churches. "These so-called 'young churches' would prefer to be called 'sister churches'. They would prefer a footing of equality with the other churches even with those on which they are dependent for human and material resources. Only equality can ensure genuine mutual respect and the mutual enrichment of the particular churches, which is the principal outcome of inculturation."[13]

Conclusion

The core of the messianic mission of Christ is the Paschal Mystery of His death and resurrection. It is this Mystery that we celebrate in the liturgy. Christ has defined the goal of his mission as communion of all humankind. This cannot be achieved unless two evils are eradicated from human society: alienation and domination; the former goes against communion while the latter destroys the uniqueness. In our liturgy we celebrate the redemptive work of Christ by which he restores the uniqueness of every individual as the child of God and builds up a community based on the communion of persons. Every people have their right to express the Mystery of Christ in a

unique way that is proper to them; every people also have the duty to maintain the communion of all in the same Mystery. The Church has been conscious of it as can be seen from the instruction of the first secretary of *Propaganda Fide* to the Vicars Apostolic under it:

> Do not regard it as your task and do not bring any pressure to bear on the peoples to change their manners and customs unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals. What would be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all to them but only the faith which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people always supposing that they are not evil but rather wishes to see them preserved unharmed.[14]

In spite of such instructions we know that the colonial mentality persisted in the missionary approaches in the past. Fortunately once again the Church has become aware of her duty to respect the individuality and uniqueness of the peoples as she fulfills her mission of evangelization aimed at the transformation of peoples and communion among them. Our idea of decolonization should maintain the affirmation of personality together with unity in diversity. Then the Church will be truly Catholic and the liturgy that we celebrate will he a manifestation of this catholicity. It will be capable of expressing the same Mystery of Christ in a variety of ways, and thus unfold its riches in the midst of the nations.

Notes

1. The Syro-Malabar Church has been constituted a *sui iuris* Church with a Major Archbishop.
2. Abhishiktananda, *Towards the Renewal of the Indian Church,* Cochin 1970, pp. 13-14.
3. *Burrakathas* are stories (*kathas*)narrated in lyrical form by a leader playing an instrument called *burra,* with the help of two assistants who stand on either side of him.
4 Here the leader sings for a little while, accompanied by a drum and one or two other instruments, and then explains in a dramatic form, with the help of a few assistants, the story he has sung.
5. P.Y.Luke and John B. Carman, *Village Christians and Hindu Culture*, London, 1968, p. 88.
6. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* no. 38
7. M. Amaladoss *SJ, Becoming Indian: The Process of Inculturation,* Rome, 1992, p. 86.
8. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key,* New York, 1948, p. 45.
9. *SC* no. 41.
10. *SC* no. 40
11. *SC* no. 37.
12. Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation,* London, 1988, p.64.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 257
14. Quoted by Sephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, p.179.

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Decolonization of Spirituality

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On December 8, 1855, Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and his ten companions pronounced their religious vows.[1] This event marked "the foundation stone of the first indigenous Religious Congregation in India."[2] On being told that as they "did not have a recognized constitution... their vowed life was still imperfect,"[3] Chavara and his companions sent a copy of the time-table they followed to Bishop Bernadinos of Verapoly. Instead of returning it with his comments, he sent them a copy of the constitution of the First Order of Carmelites, requesting Chavara to make the needed changes and return it to him.[4] This is not the end of the story for

> Without due consideration of the unique nature and historical background of the Servants of the Immaculate Conception, they were affiliated to the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites by the general body of the Discalced Carmelites meeting in Rome in 1860. This was done without their knowledge and consent.[5]

Thus we can say the congregation – *The Servants of the Immaculate Conception* – founded by Chavara was in a way forced to accept the rule of a congregation belonging to the Latin Church, and it came to be known as *Third Order of the Carmelites Discalced* (T.O.C.D).[6]

In 1894 another significant event took place in the history of the Church in India. A recent convert from Hinduism, that too from the Brahmin caste, Brahambandhab Upadhyay made public his decision to become a mendicant *sannyāsī*. He freed himself of his possessions, "and was granted permission (not without struggle) to wear, as a Catholic, the traditional robe of the Hindu renunciate (*sannyāsin*)."[7] Subsequently he wanted to found a Hindu-Catholic monastery whose members would train the wandering missionaries this land needed because, as he wrote in *Sophia*, October 1894,

> People have a strong aversion against Christian preachers because they are considered to be destroyers of everything national. Therefore, the itinerant missionaries should be thoroughly Hindu in their mode of living. They should, if necessary, be strict vegetarians and teetotallers, and put on the yellow Sannyasi garb... The central mission should, in short, adopt the policy of the glorious old Fathers of the South [referring to Roberto de Nobili and Josef F. Beschi]. The missionaries should be well versed in Sanskrit, for one ignorant of Sanskrit will hardly be able to vanquish Hindu preachers.[8]

The Bishop of Nagpur made available to Upadhyay a large house in Jabalpur. But this scheme was soon

suppressed by the then papal representative, L.M. Zaleski.[9]

Why were Chavara and Upadhyay treated in so radically different ways by the Church authorities? While it is true that Chavara and his group were made to accept the rule and patronage of a Latin religious congregation, it would not be the full truth to say that the Latin tradition was entirely imposed on a non-Latin congregation. *Athmanuthapam* is one of the "three major poems" written by Chavara in which "he delves deeper into his own experiences."[10] In writing this poem, Chavara was inspired by some foreign books among which "the most important" was *The Mystical City of God*, by the Spanish mystic, Mary of Agreda.[11] Thus the founder had personally internalized the spirituality of the Carmelites of the Western Church, and subsequent generations of his disciples have perpetuated this tradition. The latest version of the *Constitutions and Directory* of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate – as they are known today – states that the members wish to pursue "the mystical union with God so masterfully explained by great mystics like Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross..."[12] Chavara was beatified on February 8, 1986, and today the congregation has more than one thousand and five hundred professed members.[13]

Upadhyay, on the other hand, wanted a religious community that would draw its inspiration not only from the Catholic faith but also from the profound spiritual tradition of this land. He was thinking far ahead of his times, and so after his death, he was "relegated to almost total oblivion,"[14] and remained for a long time "A Prophet Disowned".[15] As far as my knowledge goes, we cannot even locate the house where he and his disciples lived in Jabalpur. We must not forget that "[a]s ecclesiastical proconsul, he [Zaleski] took his orders from Rome," and that Pope Leo XIII "was never able to divest himself of a somewhat imperialistic conception of the Church's role."[16] Chavara allowed the colonial framework to guide him, while Upadhyay proved a threat to it.

In my article I shall first show why Vatican II gives us a mandate to decolonize our Church and the urgency of this task. The process of decolonization has many aspects. Here I shall concern myself only with spirituality. This is very urgent if the message of Jesus is to reach not only the poor and the uneducated of this land, but also the others.[17] There is another reason for the urgency of this task. Religious congregations are expected to provide their members with a more congenial atmosphere for their spiritual growth. Yet, even though we have many indigenous religious congregations, they continue to be "patterned on non-Indian models."[18]

A. The Emergence of Decolonized Churches

The Pre-Vatican II Scene

In the era before Vatican II, there were no truly local churches in India.[19] Even though the good news of Jesus was brought to this land already in the first century, the Mar Thoma Christians became colonies of Syrian Christianity, because "the Syrian Christianity which

[actually] spread to Mesopotamia, and Persia, Central Asia, Malabar and China, did not attain full independence from Syrian culture."[20] This means that Syrian Christianity arrived in India only after it had acquired a definite form in its native land. Further, if colonialism is a "policy by which a nation maintains or extends its control over foreign dependencies,"[21] then the - albeit ecclesiastical - colonial character of the Mar Thoma Church is further corroborated by the fact that for centuries in the past it did not have native prelates.[22]

In like manner the advent of missionaries from the Latin Church further aggravated the alienation of the Indian Christians. The Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, in its instruction to the first two candidates for the episcopate in Indochina, had this to say:

> Do not in any way attempt, and do not on any pretext persuade these people to change their rites, habits and customs, unless they are openly opposed to religion and good morals. For what could be more absurd than to bring France, Spain, Italy or any other European country over to China?[23]

Yet in India things were different. For instance, in Goa, Portuguese became the official language of the Church, and the people who were baptized had to change their names and surnames. The Latin missionaries even tried to Latinize the earlier Mar Thoma Christians and, to some extent, succeeded. The two Oriental Churches in India – in spite of all their enthusiasm to free themselves from Latin influence – still carry marks of Latinization, e.g., the law of obligatory celibacy for the clergy, which, as Vatican II teaches, is part only of the Latin tradition.[24]

Vatican II and the Formation of the Local Church

All this was possible because the ecclesiology prevalent before the Council saw the Church as a highly centralized institution, with bishops requiring the permission of Rome even in very small matters, e.g., allowing nuns to wash purificators.[25] They functioned more as representatives of the Pope than as successors of the Apostles. But one of the central themes of this Council was the emergence of the local church as the goal of evangelization:

> Thus from the seed of the Word of God, particular Churches founded all over the world shall grow. With their own vigour and maturity, with their own hierarchy united to the faithful and the related means for leading a full Christian life sufficiently established, these Churches shall play their own useful part in the activity of the entire Church.[26]

A little later the document spells out in greater detail what the emergence of the local church implies:

> Truly in the manner of the plan of the Incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built upon the foundation of the Apostles, in wonderful exchange assimilate all the riches of the nations given to Christ as his inheritance. These riches are taken from the customs and traditions of the people, from their wisdom and their teachings, their arts and sciences; and everything in fact is absorbed, which can contribute to the proclaiming the glory of God, illustrate the grace of the Saviour and better the performance of Christian life.[27]

Thus the Council invites the local churches to decolonize themselves and be more rooted in the rich heritage of their own land.

Colonialism in India

The teaching of Vatican II notwithstanding, one must humbly admit that the three rites that constitute the Catholic Church in India today are all of foreign origin: Latin, Antiochean and Chaldean.[28] To say that a particular church is Catholic in faith, Oriental in liturgy and Indian in culture seems to betray ignorance of what is meant by liturgy and culture. There is no authentic culture without some cultic expressions and no meaningful cult without a cultural framework. When this intimate relation between cult and culture is ignored, then we have the anomalous situation that in one and the same city we have believers divided into different churches. Thus imported rites divide, while Jesus came to bring us together. This togetherness is precisely what is most symbolized by the Eucharist, and yet people of the three rites have problems coming together for the Eucharist.

A foreign power can control the country through political or military power. It can also do this by a very powerfully manipulative media or through an exploitative economic policy. Thus the process of colonization is not merely a part of our past history, but also very much of our present reality. I am even inclined to believe that cultural and technological neo-colonialism is doing much more harm than the colonial powers of the past did. The latter disregarded our rich cultural and spiritual heritage, the former is attacking our very humanity. Let me explain. In our world today there are some economically powerful nations with imperialistic ambitions. They want to control not only our life-style, but also our way of looking at life, so that they can successfully sell their products though we really do not need them, and keep their factories going and maintain their economy. The process of globalization, if it lacks a human face, will be at the cost of the poorer nations. Hence, the struggle to decolonize our spirituality also involves the awareness of this dimension of contemporary reality and the capacity to counter it as far as we can.

B. Decolonization as Conversion

The process of decolonization demands that we undergo a change of heart.[29] We need to look at our country with all its past and present with a fresh perspective. Second, we need to correct our understanding of spirituality. This new understanding must take into serious account not only the cultural but also the religious pluralism of our land. If this dimension is ignored then our spirituality will not have an appeal to peoples of other faith traditions.

Mātṛbhūmi: India as My God-given Mother

Some Hindus have the impression that Christians (and Muslims) do not really consider India as their true home. Once again we cannot completely blame them for this prejudice. The colonial dependence of the Christian churches in India for centuries has not only brought about a social and cultural alienation among the Christians, but it

has also left deep wounds on our psyche. Christians seem to be more at home with things western. We find this inferiority complex even among people who are supposed to be theologically educated. They consider foreign universities and degrees superior to our own. Allow me to illustrate this by re-cording a personal experience. When I first joined the teaching faculty of a seminary twenty years ago, some of my students asked me where I had done my studies. When they came to know that I was totally a home-made product they looked a little disappointed.

Thus decolonization begins with *metanoia*, a change of mind, a new way of thinking. In our context this means that we feel at home in this land, a land of which we should be proud – this not just because it happens to be our cradle, but also because it has been the cradle of great spiritual, religious and cultural traditions which are vibrantly alive even centuries after their origin, that too without any centralized organization and in spite of long spells of oppressive foreign rule. My mother not only took care of my bodily needs, but she also taught me the first songs I learnt, the first prayers I uttered. In like manner India, our motherland, provides us nourishment not only for our body, but also for our minds, hearts and spirits. We need to cultivate a taste for native literature and art. Above all, we need to believe that in the global salvation history this ancient land, which God has blessed in so many ways, definitely has a very special purpose, and that it is our privilege to explicitate this hidden plan of God, and to enrich our understanding of the Christ-event.

Darśana: Spirituality as a Life-shaping Vision

Let me begin by saying that I am not quite comfortable with the term 'spirituality' and the expression 'spiritual life'. This vocabulary – part of our colonial heritage – belongs to a dualistic world-view that makes a sharp distinction between spirit and matter. It betrays traces of Platonistic and even Manichaeistic dualism.[30] In India the expressions commonly used for denoting a holy person, a whole person are: *sat-puruṣa* (a true person) or *sādhu* (a good person), or *mahā-ātmā* (a great self).[31] The person trying to attain perfection is a *sādhaka* (exercitant) following a *sādhanā* (exercise or discipline) or a *mārga* (way) that will lead to freedom (*mokṣa* or *mukti*).[32] Having said this I am still obliged to continue using the earlier vocabulary as we do not yet have a more suitable alternative.

For many Christians spirituality denotes a list of pious exercises and also some prohibitions. This is a functional approach to spirituality. While we do need some pious exercises and some disciplinary prohibitions, these do not constitute the core of spirituality. It is understandable that when the new converts belonged to very backward, uneducated and poorer communities, the missionaries thought it best to teach them some prayers and enforce some rules. But spirituality is much more that that. It consists in having the mind of Jesus Christ (I Cor 2.16; Phil 2.5),[33] and having it as fully as possible. It is looking at life the way Jesus did. This is exactly what is suggested by the Hindu concept of *darśana*.[34]

The pious Hindu goes to a temple for a *darśana*.[35] Like other Sanskrit words, '*darśana*' too has many meanings. It implies a certain activity on our part, a reaching out to. It implies a desire to see Truth (*sat*) as it is, and a willingness to dispose ourselves for this experience. The visit to the temple is for a *darśana* of God, not merely of the icon, but also of the mystery symbolized by that icon, the fullness of Truth. The devotee going to the temple for a *darśana* of God also hopes that God will graciously look at him, that God will give him a *darśana*. To see God as He is we need a new vision, a divine sight (BhG 11.8), a new *darśana*. This is the experience of grace, for God can be seen only by those whom He chooses and to whom He reveals His body (*tanu*, KU 2.23; MU 3.2.3).[36]

As a result of his contemplation (*darśana*) and God's grace-filled glance at him (*darśana*), the devotee acquires a new vision (BhG 11.8). That is the third meaning of *darśana*, a way of looking at life in its totality, seeing it as God sees it. Like Arjuna, the devotee undergoes a catharsis and begins to see God in all creation and all creation in God (BhG 4.9-14). As a consequence spirituality becomes first and foremost a vision, a way of looking at life with all its aspects, and the acts of piety and self-discipline become meaningful only if they are an expression of this vision. The contemplative experience of God becomes both the source and the guiding principle of our life and all our activity. The devotee who shares in God's vision becomes *sama- darśin*: he sees all creation in himself (*ātman*) and himself in all things (BhG 6.29).

Satya: Spirituality as Authentic Existence

The Hindu tradition gives great importance to *anubhava* the contemplative experience of God. Thus *anubhava* is another word for *darśana* in its first meaning as explained in the previous section. But this word contains a challenge: it invites us to make our existence (*bhava*) in accordance with (*anu*) the mystery we contemplate. Thus spirituality must not only be a vision but must become an effective vision. This is what is suggested by the expression *satya*, which is derived from the word *sat* (being).[37] A thing or a person is *satya* when that thing or person "is truly and completely that which the substantive (to which it belongs) expressed."[38] It is what it is expected to be. Thus the Hindu tradition gives primacy to being.[39]

The New Testament gives us a similar perspective. God is presented primarily not as one who acts on behalf of His people. He is not merely Israel.[40] He is Emmanuel, "God with us (Mt 1.23)." He does not send Moses to Egypt, but He himself goes there, where His people are (Mt 2.14), pitching his tent not outside the camp (Ex 33.7), but right in their midst (Jn 1.14). What is emphasized is not just His saving activity but above all His loving presence with His people. Jesus is the embodiment of this presence. He not only speaks the Word of God and brings the message of salvation, but He is that Word, that message. Thus the New Testament too gives primacy to *satya*, truth-embodying presence.[41]

The vision the consumer West tries to force upon us is the result of a

production-dominated ethos, where productive activity is what really counts. When action becomes more important than presence then we tend to give primacy to information and knowledge, to performance and production, to equipment and well organized institutions, to flashy buildings and glamourous media. Then what becomes important is not my inner reality but the outer appearance, not what I am but what I can do and possess, not the practice of Christ-like love and compassion but the frequenting of sacraments, novenas, pilgrimages, not what I say but how I say it. The medium itself becomes the message. Competence, effective action and quick results become more important than commitment, authentic presence and honest effort. *Darśana* will help us to realize the primacy of *satya* (truth-embodying existence). Then the messenger becomes the message, a sign of contradiction, a silent but powerful prophetic critique of the modern cult of false gods: competitive careerism and individual success. There is ample evidence that this cult is quite prevalent in the Church.

The primacy of *satya*, the realization that what I am is more important than what I have, will make the Christian deeply detached from worldly possessions and values. The call to evangelical poverty – and this is addressed not only to those who follow the vowed life but to all who wish to follow Jesus fully – will then mean not merely a detachment from wealth and material goods but also detachment from worldly concerns like success, prestige, status, popularity, etc.[42] In our tradition the spiritual person is characterized by *vairāgya*. He has experienced *ātman* (BU 3.5.1), and hence sees all these in relation to this mystery (BU 2.4.5). Second, our mission as disciples of Jesus is to be exercised in the contemporary context. Today we are surrounded by a powerful culture of dehumanizing consumerism, and this poses a greater threat to human survival than all nuclear weapons put together.

The primacy of *satya* will bring about another deeper dimension of the *metanoia* that decolonization demands of us. The missionaries from the West were basically Church-centred, and they tried to make the Church in India a little replica of the Church in their own lands. Today we need to shift from a Church-centred to a Kingdom-centred spirituality. At the moment we are very much an institutionalized community, and a lot of our time, energy, money and personnel are engaged in keeping our institutions going. Efficiency, standards and results are of primary importance for many of us. On the other hand, a Kingdom-centred spirituality will make us more concerned about the quality of life and human values. Hence we will be more open to people of other faiths, and be willing to learn from them, and cooperate with the them in order to promote God's Kingdom.

Yoga: Spirituality as an Integrating Process

When I was a young seminarian, our spiritual masters placed a great importance on control of our senses and bodily penance, and chastity was considered the queen of all virtues. There was no input on the role of our subconscious in shaping our motivation and

behaviour, but the emphasis was on developing will power, often by doing great violence to ourselves. This mentality reflected a defective spirituality inherited from the West. But according to Rabindranath Tagore, "The special mental attitude which India has in her religion is made clear by the word *yoga*, whose meaning is to effect union."[43] Union is an experience of wholeness, and it can only be the result of a holistic approach. The word *yoga* is used in many contexts, but it is specially the way of life succinctly presented by Patañjali in his *Yoga-sūtra.*

The *Yoga-sūtra* begins by defining *yoga* as the spiritual discipline that enables us to control the movements of the mind (1.2), and thereby experience inner quiet. Thus it is possible for us to become aware of and actualize our real self (*svarūpa-avasthāna*, 1.3). God has made each one of us unique, but we tend to respond merely to the demands made on us from outside. We are conditioned by our culture, religion, education, family setup, etc. We easily take on a personality that is more in accordance with the expectations of people around us. It is this loss of our authentic self that *yoga* is trying to correct. It invites us to recognize our real self and gradually actualize it. True *yoga* involves a discernment of our uniquely personal vocation. For this Patañjali spelt out the *aṣṭa-aṅga-yoga* – an eight-limbed discipline (YS 2.29).

These eight limbs indicate the five ethical norms (*yama*: *ṣatya* – truthfulness, *ahiṁsā* – non-violence, *asteya* – non-coveting, *brahmacārya* – continence and *aparigraha* – detachment), the five religious attitudes (*niyama*: *sauca* – inner and outer purity, *santoṣa* – self-acceptance, *tapas* – spirit of discipline, *svādhyāya* – the study of Scripture and *īśvara-praṇidhāna* – devotion to God) that are essential for authentic discernment; the psycho-somatic preparation we have to go through: comfortable posture (*āsana*), rhythmic breathing that helps us to relax (*prāṇāyāma*) and the control of the senses (*indriya-pratyāhāra*) that make concentration and self-awareness possible; and the three stages of prayer we need to cultivate: the focussing of the mind on a definite object constitutes *dhāraṇa* (YS 3.1), remaining on that point without any distraction is *dhyāna* (3.2), and getting totally immersed in the object to the extent of forgetting self is *samādhi* (3.3). This is deep prayer. Thus *yoga* is a process integrating the body, mind and spirit in our struggle towards wholesomeness.

The five *yamas* provide an excellent charter for the Christian: *satya* is best proclaimed by embodying it in our life. It has its own power and hence we do not need to manipulate people to accept it. Such tactics are a violation of *ahiṁsā* and a denial of the Good News. The Christian is called to a life of simplicity (*asteya*) and inner freedom (*aparigraha*). This way of life will not only proclaim his radical commitment to God and to His Kingdom (*brahmacarya*), but will also be a prophetic critique of contemporary manipulative media and consumeristic glamour.

The practice of *āsana* is not just a matter of few moments everyday, not merely the question of how we sit during

our prayer. It calls for a different life-style. There is a certain body-chemistry that needs to be maintained if we are to be healthy. If we eat too much or take such items as are harmful to us, if we do more work and not take proper rest, if we do not exercise ourselves enough, if we accelerate our movements – through computers, motorized vehicles, etc – so that we become tense, then we are doing violence to our self. Unless we pay attention to this side of our life, merely doing *āsanas* will not be of much help.

There is an intimate relation between our mind and our body. Deep emotions find expression in our body. The *Yoga-sūtra* presumes this basic human experience as an important guiding norm. It suggests a reversal: if deep emotions bring about bodily disturbances, then by quietening the body we can still our emotions.Our breathing too is affected by the emotional changes we go through. Here again a reversal is suggested: calm down and regularize your breathing and your mind too will become calm.

There is a deep relation also between our mind and the way our body behaves, so too there is an intimate relation between what we call the conscious and the subconscious levels of our life. What our mind registers during our conscious moments is not just a passing image on a cinema screen but is like the data fed into the hard memory of a computer. It remains within us and then shapes our responses – so often even functioning as a devastating virus. Hence it is very important that we do not load our minds with images and data that is not really needed. It is this that the control of the senses is trying to ensure. *Yoga* brings together human endeavour and divine grace, for the desired integration is the gift of devotion to God (YS 2.45).

The more we dwell on sense-objects the more we get attached to them and experience the desire to possess them. This leads to fear and anger lest our desire be frustrated and eventually we lose our judgement (BhG 2.62-63). Thus, while the powerful media with their seductive appeal to our senses enslave and manipulate us, *yoga* is a call to discover greater freedom. Just as the ocean remains undisturbed even though so many rivers merge into it, so too with the practice of *yoga* we will attain inner freedom and remain unaffected by the many seductive appeals addressed to us (YS 2.70).

C. Decolonization as Discernment

A colonial spirituality will give great importance to humility, loyalty to tradition and obedience to superiors. From my experience of being a priest for over thirty years, I know how often appeal is made to these attitudes to keep people under control and prevent them from asking questions, even when authority has been abused. In the past obedience and loyalty was emphasized. Vatican II calls us to active and responsible obedience.[44] This calls for discernment. This is also our obligation as a pilgrim community.

Brahmacarya: Spirituality as a Pilgrim Attitude

Since we exist in time we experience ourselves as fragmented beings.

Life can be experienced only in succession: my childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. Our life is a journey (*yātrā*). Further, we are not Being (*satya*) but have being (*satya-vat*). Death reminds us that we have received being as a gift, and that we are not full masters of our own existence. Hence we are pilgrims unto Being, the fullness of Reality: God. We are called to be *brahma-cārins*. The word *brahmacārī* indicates a person who is walking (*carati*) towards the great reality (*brahman*).[45] God alone is deathless (BU 1.3.9).

Every journey implies some sort of crossing (*tīrtha*). Only when we leave the place where we are and go over to another, a journey becomes possible, and we can attain the fullness of Truth. Truth alone conquers (MU 3.1.6), and only Truth can make us free (Jn 8.32). We can see the Truth only if, like true pilgrims, we are detached from our present position, if we have *vairāgya*. This is why Gandhiji insisted that detachment was an essential condition for *satya-āgraha*, for the faithful pursuit of the Truth.[46] It is this openness to Truth that that makes our life a sacred journey (*tīrthayātrā*).[47]

Tīrthayātrā: Spirituality as Ongoing Discernment

As Christians we have received some kind of spiritual tradition. Our pilgrim character means that life-contexts are constantly changing and that we are called to respond to these actual contexts. Following a tradition – that too received from the colonial West – without constantly subjecting it to a critical scrutiny leads to fundamentalism and superstition. Then spirituality becomes disruptive of human life and values, and instead of humanizing us it makes us slaves of a meaningless past.

The call to be pilgrims demands that we cross boundaries within which we have grown and learn to make a personal synthesis of the many insights we have today not only from behavioural sciences, but also from the study of other religious traditions. Thus we continue to be pilgrims, in search of the fullness of that Truth which will always remain more than what we have comprehended.

Decolonization means freeing ourselves from what does not belong to the core of the Gospel message, but is an historical accretion belonging to Western Christianity. To put it positively, we need to make the Gospel meaningful to our land at this historical moment, with its specific religio-cultural complexity. Without deep and critical theological reflection there is a danger that our spirituality would be founded on sand and not on solid rock. Let me cite an example. When we look at Jesus as the King of all – and this very well suits the colonial powers – we consider it our duty to conquer others – and their land – for him, but if we see him as the brother of all, then we see ourselves as called to render fraternal service to all.

It is important to note that no culture is static, but it constantly grows due to inner dynamics but also through contact with other cultures. Further, in our eagerness to decolonize our spirituality, we need not completely throw overboard everything that is of foreign origin. Real saints belong to all humanity,

and so we can learn much from the great spiritual masters of the West.

While replacing imported spirituality with some indigenous tradition, we must make a clear distinction as to what within it is primary and what is secondary. For instance, Patañjali defines *āsana* as that posture which is comfortable and therefore can be steadily maintained (YS 2.46). If we sit in a really comfortable posture then we will not need to change. Today most of us use chairs, stools or benches. Hence we find it difficult to squat on the floor. But the *Yoga-sūtra* as such does not require this of us. What is essential is that we be comfortable and hence steady..Sometimes, in our zeal for inculturation, we squat on the floor for our personal prayer, but then we soon find our joints hurting and so need to shift. This disturbs our concentration, and hence I suggest that we discontinue this practice.

D. Decolonization as Commitment

I have expressed my reservation about the word 'spirituality' because it is based on a dualistic approach to human life as a composition of spirit and matter. It is also highly individualistic: *I* must become holy. Real spirituality demands the affirmation and development of the whole of God's creation: wholesome persons, wholesome society and wholesome environment.

Loka-saṅgraha: Spirituality as Cosmic Wholeness

In trying to spell out the elements that go to make for human perfection, ancient Hindu writers elaborated the doctrine of the goals of human life (*puruṣā-artha*). "From very ancient times they are said to be four, *dharma* (right conduct), *artha* (economic interests), *kāma* (satisfaction of sexual, emotional and artistic life), *mokṣa* (liberation of the spirit."[48] The individual who has realized these four goals becomes an integrated person.

A mature person is expected to take care of his basic needs. The money he spends on himself, his friends and his guests must be justified by the hard work he puts in. If our spirituality has been so colonial, then one important factor is that our seminaries and houses of religious formation – especially of men – have plenty of money coming in from the consumer West. Often these places are houses of abundance – colonies of the affluent West – surrounded by people living in sub-human conditions, not having even the basic amenities of life. In these houses many – if not the majority – of our seminarians are positively alienated from their cultural and economic context. In fact most of our seminaries – even those built after our nation became politically independent – are patterned on a colonial mentality and as such they are outdated.

A dualistic spirituality tends to suppress our sexuality. But to be adequately human, we need not only to integrate our sexuality, but also to become aware of, accept and deepen our emotional and aesthetic potential. Our body is the sacrament of our person,[49] and hence an integrated person knows when and how to express love and concern through bodily contact.

A person who has grown in his moral sense will be inclined to do what

is right not so much because he knows it to be right and so sees it as an obligation, but because deep down he feels an urge to do it. Such a person will also be sensitive to others who may not have reached his level of moral maturity and hence will avoid doing what in itself may be right, but could be scandalous for others (BhG 3.21).

The three concerns just spelt out become truly human values only when inner freedom (*mokṣa*) accompanies them. Without it *kāma* will become animal passion and subtle manipulation, *artha* will degenerate into dehumanizing consumerism and cosmetic glamour, and *dharma* will be reduced to enslaving legalism and neurotic compulsion. This inner freedom is the fruit of a steady process of self-understanding (*ātma-jñāna*) and self-acceptance, and it is possible if human life is a lifelong journey unto transcendental or eschatological freedom.

Wholesome persons will constitute a wholesome society. We can understand *dharma* as an attitude guiding an individual. But *dharma* also means "the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standards of conduct as a member of the Aryan community, as a member of one of the castes, as a person in a particular stage of life."[50] What is suggested here is that *dharma* is intimately bound with the traditional structure of the Hindu society based on *varṇa* (social group) and āśr*ama* (stage of life). Originally the Aryan community was constituted by four *varṇas*. The *brāhmaṇa* is the custodian of sacred learning, the *kṣatriya* is responsible for the security of his community, the *vaiśya* was expected to engage in agriculture and business, while the *śūdra* was to be available for the service of others. To me these four groups were really symbolic of the four basic needs of any society: learning, security, production, and the spirit of service – this last being the attitude that must necessarily qualify those engaged in ensuring the first three.

According to the traditional understanding there are four *āśramas*, stages of life that follow one another. At a given age, the sons from the first three *varṇas* would be led to a teacher who would then take them under his care and impart to them sacred learning: *brahmacarya*. After finishing his studies, the young man married and founded a family: *gārhasthya*. After he saw the face of his grandson, the householder left his family and retired to a forest to spend his time in more spiritual matters: *vanavāsa*. Finally, when through his spiritual discipline he felt inner freedom, he became a wanderer: *pārivrāyja*. This wandering is a sign of total renunciation (*sannyāsa*).

I suggest that these four stages should not be seen as diachronic – coming one after the other, but as synchronic – to be realized simultaneously. To begin with, there is the fundamental presupposition that man here is merely a wanderer (*pārivrāyja*) and this world is not his final home, and that all here is passing away. This awareness will be nurtured by deep meditation, specially in touch with nature, which by its beauty reminds us of God – the forest being nature unspoilt by human touch (*vanavāsa*). This awareness will give birth

to inner freedom, a spirit of genuine renunciation (*sannyāsa*), enabling us to make life on earth a sacred journey, a pilgrimage (*tīrtha-yātrā*). This pilgrimage is meant to be a life-long search for the ever-abiding Truth (*brahmacarya*), and it is this search that gives meaning (*artha*) and direction to that journey, to life here on earth. This search for the Ultimate calls for an effective commitment to society and environment, for all that exists is a manifestation of the Ultimate and so we can and ought to be at home with it (*gārhasthya*).

The Hindu sages saw a wonderful harmony and rhythm in nature (*ṛta*), and they experienced this harmony as a source of human welfare. Gradually those sages had a deeper experience of nature. They felt a certain kinship with it: it was not just something, but a revelation of the great Person (*puruṣa,* RV 10.90). Hence nature becomes a revelation of the divine mystery, a sacrament of the God's presence. This explains why, when they wanted to have a deeper spiritual experience, they would retire to the forest, where we can experience nature in its pristine purity.

Nature is the primary school of spirituality. Hence when little *Satyakāma* wanted to be initiated into the life of the Spirit, his teacher sent him back to nature. The boy was very attentive and so he returns as one who knows God (*brahma-vid*, ChU 4.9.2). Nature provides us with most of our deepest religious symbols. We need them not merely to articulate our spiritual experience, but also to deepen it. Only when nature is seen as a partner in our journey towards God, will we approach it with respect and care.

Swadesi: Lifestyle as an Expression of our Commitment

Works speak louder than words, and our life-style indicates the seriousness of our desire for change. Hence if our efforts at decolonization are to bear real fruit, then we must begin with what comes first. Discipleship of Jesus expressed in a way of life comes before liturgy, theology and spirituality. Our efforts have been concentrated on the latter items, sometimes totally ignoring life. Let me give you an example. Imagine a community, swearing by decolonization, celebrating the birthday of a theologian who is fully committed to Third World Spirituality: a yogic meditation followed by an elaborate Indian Mass with saffron shawls and Sanskrit chants in the morning and a grand European style dinner in the evening, made possible by generous donations from erstwhile colonial First World! When decolonization is a very convenient matter it becomes a sedative, but when it calls us to share in the cross of Jesus it becomes liberative. This will happen when we begin with life. Hence, unless we are serious about a change in life-style all talk of decolonization – whatever be the area – is an exercise in futility.

Decolonization is not at all advocating a parochial ghetto, but an enlightened response to our present situation. Even though we have spent almost fifty years as an independent nation, we have massive poverty in our land, and the Church too is very much the Church of the poorer sections. Choosing a

simple life-style – and simplicity has been the mark of God-experience in our tradition – not only brings us in solidarity with the poor but also makes us a prophetic sign in a world of vulgar consumer affluence. Decolonization demands contextualization, and this demands that we take the massive poverty of our land as one of the vital element in process of decolonizing our spirituality. To live a life of simplicity when all the media are doing their best to sell a consumer culture requires a lot of courage.

If we are serious about a decolonized spirituality as shaping the Church at large, then we need to begin by completely overhauling the present formation pattern, starting with the recruitment process. Not only are we taking young people who are not yet fully rooted in their culture and who have dubious or unclear motives, but also the whole system only serves to alienate them from their roots. I have been closely associated with seminaries that have tried to bring their formation pattern closer to the life of the people, for example, by demanding regular manual work from the students. In some cases such efforts have encountered stiff resistance. The message is clear: "We did not join the seminary to do manual work!" Spiritual directors from different seminaries have shared with me their painful experience: "The majority of our students are not eager to receive spiritual direction." But our tradition insists that a person seriously wanting to grow in the life of the Spirit must have a competent guide.[51] Given the frightening level of unemployment and the cut-throat competition for jobs available, the priesthood is an attractive and easily available alternative. On the other hand, I am inclined to believe that, as long as the majority of the seminary staff are trained abroad and as long as the seminaries are generously subsidised by foreign funds, all our talk of decolonization will be a wild goose chase.

The religious are expected to play a prophetic role in the Church, but unfortunately, many of them seem to have been domesticated. The call to be a prophetic critique of a this-worldly consumer culture is one vital aspect of the charismatic presence of religious in the life of the Church. In one of his letters, the superior general of a religious congregation has this to say:

> Poverty has become a matter of very deep concern to me. I firmly believe that on every level – personal, communitarian, institutional – the Society is in serious difficulty with regard to the practice of poverty. I would even go farther and say that many abuses in poverty prevalent among us could indicate that many of us are lacking in supernatural spirit and that our resolutions to be poor are not quite wholehearted.[52]

I do not wish to be judgemental, and yet I must say that this humble confession of a saintly general appears to be a fairly good description of many religious congregations today. We need a relevant decolonized spirituality, but we need much more models who can sustain us in our weakness. This is the primary service the People of God expects from religious communities.

Decolonization of spirituality will be a difficult, slow, long drwn-out pocess. In fact, it will be possible only

> if we are ready to encourage and support creative individuals and groups to experience new forms of life, concerned more with the world to which we are sent as witnesses than with our own identity and structures, looking towards the future that we have to participate in creating than towards the past.[53]

It is for this that we need religious who have rediscovered their prophetic role in the Church. If they really Indianize themselves, they will be true contemplatives without having to cloister themselves in some convent.[54] It is this life of deep prayer that will make them like the Indian *sannyāsīs* who "are free persons, with a deep experience to witness to, with no structures to hold them back, with the liberty to go where the Spirit leads them."[55] They will respectfully resist all efforts to domesticate them by a Church which "seems anxious to surround every one with a structured way of life and community."[56]

If the process of decolonization of spirituality is to affect the Church in India at large, then in this process our pastors must support the theologians, believing that they are as much concerned about the welfare of the People of God as they themselves claim to be. On the other hand the theologians must make themselves more credible. It has been noted that the Indian theologians, exceptions apart, are alienated from the Indian people, from other Indian intellectuals, and even from their own ecclesial community.[57] They were uprooted too early from their home context, placed in a house of formation that was structured on imported patterns, given a philosophical and theological orientation and spiritual formation with Western thought as the basic content. Almost all of them did their doctoral studies abroad and many came back with life-styles far removed from their roots. Few have a sustained involvement in pastoral life, except perhaps some ministry among nuns. If Christian faith is deeply an ecclesial experience, then without being an active and committed participant of a believing community, it is almost impossible to theologize in a relevant and convincing manner,[58] and without this the dream of decolonization would continue to be merely a dream.

Conversion, discernment and commitment are the fruits of the Spirit. We need a new Pentecost but for this, like the first disciples, we need to come together for deep prayer. Once we receive the Spirit then we will be transformed and will live a life that will speak powerfully to the people of our land. That is what decolonization of spirituality aims at. Thus the call to decolonize our spirituality is also a call to deep prayer.

Notes

1. See Z.M. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, tr. S. Kannath, Kottayam: Deepika Book House, 1993, p. 49.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 47.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-52.
6. *The Catholic Directory of India 1994*, New Delhi: C.B.C.I Centre, p. 1052.
7. J.J. Lipner, in his introduction: "Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907): A Resume of his Life and Thought" in J.J. Lipner & G. Gispert-Sauch (eds.), The *Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, Bangalore: United Theological College, 1991, p. xxxv.
8. Qt. Ibid., pp. xl-xli.
9. Ibid., p. xli.
10. Moozhoor, *Blessed Chavara: The Star of the East*, p. 87.
11. Ibid., p. 88.
12. *Constitutions and Directory: The Carmelites of Mary Immaculate*, Ernakulam: Prior General's House, 1997, p. 3.
13. *The Catholic Directory of India 1994*, p. 1052.
14. Lipner, "Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907): A Resume of his Life and Thought", p. xiv.
15. C. Fonseca, "A Prophet Disowned", *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* (henceforth VJTR), 54 (1990), pp. 177-194.
16. R. Aubert et al., *The Church in a Secularized Society*, The Christian Centuries, vol. V, p. 14, quoted by FONSECA, Ibid., p. 191.
17. See S. Anand, "Evangelization among the Hindus", *Evangelization and Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Rome: Salesian Centre for Missions, 1994, pp. 121-45, here pp. 128-132. "A New Spirituality for the Mission of the Church in India Today", *Jeevadhara: A Journal of Christian Interpretation* (henceforth JJCI) 24 (1994), pp. 314-24, here pp. 315-316.
18. M. Amaladoss, "Inculturation of Religious Life in India", VJTR, 55 (1991) 507.
19. See S. Anand, "Inculturation in India: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", *Indian Missiological Review* 19 (1997), pp. 19-34, here pp. 20-23.
20. J. Saldanha, *Patterns of Evangelization in Mission History,* Bombay: St. Paul Pub., 1988, p. 30.
21. *Reader's Digest Universal Dictionary*, London: Reader's Digest Ass., 1988, p. 317a.
22. P.J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay: St. Paul Pubs., 1970, pp. 63-72.
23. J. Neuner & J. Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church,* J. Dupuis (ed.), Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1996, pp. 430-431.
24. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 16.
25. See S. Anand, *The Local Church and Inculturation*, Pune: Ishvani Kendra, 1985, pp. 3-4.
26. *Ad Gentes,* no. 6. The English translation is from *The Documents of Vatican II*, Mumbai: St. Paul, 1966, p. 489.
27. Ibid., no. 22, Eng tr. p. 512. See also *Lumen Gentium*, no. 13.
28. See S. Anand, "The Inculturation of the Eucharistic Liturgy", VJTR, 57 (1993), pp. 269-293, here pp. 270-274.
29. See S. Anand, "A Prolegomenon to Theologizing in India Today", VJTR, 43 (1979), pp. 50-58, here pp. 52-54.
30. In saying this I am not suggesting that radical dualism is totally foreign to India. In

fact not only Samkhya Philosophy, but most of the major Hindu traditions understand final liberation (*mokṣa*) as the liberation of the soul (*jīva*) from the clutches of the body (*sarīra*). Some interpreters of Śaṅkara's Advaita even seem to deny the reality of this world.

31. Some would translate this as 'a great soul'. This word *ātman* is derived from the root *an* (to breathe), and comes to mean not only breath, but also the body or some of its parts. But already in the Ṛg-veda we have "the incipient use of ātman (soul) in a reflexive sense." See Suryakanta, A Practical Vedic Dictionary, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 133; V.S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, eds. P.K. Gode & C.G. Karve, Poona: Prasad Prakashan, rev. ed., 1957, p. 323; and A.A. MacDonell, *A Vedic Grammar for Students*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, rep. 1966, p. 112.
32. See S. Anand, "The Hindu Temple: Its Significance Today", JJCI, 23 (1993), 97-119, here PP. 114-119; and "Jīvanmukti or Liberation in This Life", C.M. Vadakkekara (ed.), *Prayer and Contemplation*, Inter-Religious Dialogue Series - 1, Bangalore: Asirvanam, 1980, pp.179-208, here pp. 181-183.
33. Besides the usual abbreviations for the books of the Bible, the following are also used in this study:

    BU Bṛhadāraṇyayaka-upaniṣad (For the Upanishads, I am following the text as in V.P. Limaye & R.D. Vadekar (eds.) 1958, Eighteen Principal Upanisads, Poona: Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala.)

    BhG Bhagavad-gītā (cr. ed. as in Mahābhrata, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933-71).

    ChU Chāndogya-upaniṣad.

    KU Kaṭha-upaniṣad.

    MU Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad.

    RV Ṛg-veda-saṁhitā, with the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, Poona: Vaidika Samshodhana Mandal, 1933-51.

    YS *Yoga-sūtra* as in M.R. Desai, The *Yoga-sūtra* of Patanjali, Kholapur: Desai Pubs., 1972.
34. See S. Anand, "*Yeśu-darśana*: Towards a Hindu-Christian Spirituality", VJTR, 58 (1994), pp. 717-37, here pp. 722-724.
35. See Anand, "The Hindu Temple: Its Significance Today", pp. 111-114.
36. It seems to me that the use of the word *tanu* (body) is evocative of the graceful gesture of the young bride who unveils herself for her bridegroom.
37. sate hitam yat. Apte 1957, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 1614.
38. J. Gonda 1968, "The Historical Background of the Name Satya Assigned to the Highest Being", Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 48-49 (1968), pp. 83-93, here p. 86.
39. S. Anand1979, "Satyam eva jayate", in J. Neuner et. alii, *Mission in India*, Pune: Ishvani Kendra, pp. 5-13, here pp. 8-10.
40. J.L. McKenzie, after admitting that the etymology of the word is not known for sure, maintains that morphologically 'Israel' would signify "let El contend." *Dictionary of the Bible*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975, p. 403. Thus, simplifying a bit, we can say that in the Old Testament God reveals Himself as one who acts on behalf of his people.

41. See S. Anand, "Some Missiological Implications of the Concept of Incarnation", VJTR, 42 (1978), pp. 35-41, here pp. 35-37; "Universally Unique and Uniquely Universal", VJTR, 55 (1991), pp. 393-424, here pp. 419-424; and "The Compassionate God: A Hindu Perspective", JJCI, 26 (1996), pp. 184-200, pp. 198-200.
42. See A. Anand, "Evangelical Poverty and Our Mission in India Today", VJTR, 40 (1976), pp. 461-66.
43. R. Tagore, *The Religion of Man, London*: George Allen & Unwin, p. 67.
44. *Perfectae Caritatis*, no. 14.
45. The word *brahman* is derived from the root *bh* (to grow, to expand). See Suryakanta, *A Practical Vedic Dictionary*, p. 493.
46. V.B. Kher (ed.), *In Search of the Supreme*, 3 vols. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pb. House, 1962, vol. I, pp. 12, 123; vol. II, p. 11.
47. See S. Anand, "*Tīrthayātrā*: Life as a Sacred Journey", VJTR, 61 (1997), pp. 669-692, here pp. 679-683.
48. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, 5 vols., Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, rev. ed., 1968-75, vol. II, p. 8.
49. S. Anand, "Human Sexuality: Some Theological Reflections", VJTR, 47 (1983), pp. 77-85, here pp. 78-80.
50. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, vol. I, p. 3.
51. See S. Anand, *The Way of Love: The Bhāgavata Doctrine of Bhakti*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996, pp. 133-137.
52. P. Arrupe, *Challenge to Religious Life Today*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1979, pp. 95-96.
53. Amaladoss, "Inculturation of Religious Life in India", p. 507.
54. See S. Anand, "Contemplation and Secular Involvement", VJTR, 47 (1983), pp. 240-49, here pp. 242-246.
55. Amaladoss, "Inculturation of Religious Life in India", p. 512.
56. Ibid.
57. G.M. Soares -Prabhu, "From Alienation to Inculturation", in T.K. John (ed.), *Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991, pp. 71-78.
58. See S. Anand, "Gandhian Satyagraha: A Theological Model for India", VJTR, 59 (1995), 561-80, here pp. 574-80.

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Decolonization of Religious Life

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1. Introduction

After Vatican II, many religious congregations set about the task of renewing themselves to witness more powerfully to the Christ event in the world.[1] Following the Council's directive to obtain inspiration from the sources, many congregations in India began to re-study their constitutions as well as reflect on the spirit of their founders. According to Vatican II, renewal of religious life must begin with the "following of Christ as it is put before us in the Gospel". The founder's "spirit and aims" along with the "institute's sound traditions" must be "accepted and retained" (PC 2).[2] In addition, religious must "share in the life of the Church" and "have a proper understanding of men, of the conditions of the times and of the needs of the Church" (PC 2).

Along with these studies and reflections, a need was felt to identify and understand the people whom a congregation had chosen to serve. Here, social and cultural analysis helped to indicate more clearly the needs of people that had to be met and consequently the type of service to be rendered. Because of the studies, reflections and analyses, new forms of apostolate were indicated and more precision attended the efforts to identify the mission of congregations in the Church and the world. Vatican II mandated that a congregation's "manner of life, of prayer and of work" should also be in harmony with the needs of the apostolate, in the measure that the nature of each institute requires, with the requirements of culture and with social and economic circumstances. This should be the case everywhere, but especially in mission territories.

The mode of government of the institutes should also be examined according to the same criteria (PC 3).

Vatican Council II was asking religious to live out their consecration or commitment by identifying with the various cultures and circumstances of peoples all over the world. In effect, the Council was asking religious individually and in community to inculturate their religious life: to adapt it to the region in which they carried out their apostolate, to make it reflect the gospel message in the customs and way of life of native populations. Decolonization can be described as inculturation where communities of religious express freely their native spirit in the living out of their consecration or profession. Our task will be to reflect on the implications of such inculturation or decolonization in India. Before doing so, it will help to understand how colo-

nization affected the people who lived through it.

2. Decolonization and the Colonial Mindset

One of the professed aims of the Portuguese colonizers who landed in India in the 15th century had been to extend the visible boundaries of the Church beyond their country. To achieve this they enlisted papal support.[3] The people in India, whom the Portuguese colonized, were stripped of the right to chart their own destinies. In colonizing territories in India, the Portuguese king felt, it is his task to extend the frontiers of Christ's kingdom to include the Indies while the Portuguese merchants sensed in it an opportunity to secure the spice trade for themselves. The king carried out his task through the institution known as Padroado (royal patronage of the Church outside of Portugal),[4] but soon enough, the Holy See realized that the responsibility of evangelizing was being made subservient to the political and economic interests of Portugal. On January 6, 1622, through the bull *Inscrutabili*, Pope Gregory XV founded the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda) to coordinate the universal missionary effort of the Church throughout the world.[5] In the Portuguese possessions, however, the authority of Padroado continued to prevail. The manner in which the Padroado clergy nurtured Christianity and supervised the affairs of the Church in Goa suited the intentions of the colonial rulers. Moreover, even after Portugal's control over Goa ceased in 1961, the de iure rights of Padroado over the Church in Goa continued until 1974.[6]

An authentic reinterpretation of religious life is possible when a mindset shaped in part by a colonial past has been discarded. A colonial mindset refers to a situation where a community busies itself with the concerns imposed by another – in this case the colonial authority – rather than its own. It diminishes a community's ability to make and take decisions for itself. The resulting debility hinders the living of religious life that is vibrant and relevant to the local community.

Decolonization of religious life supposes a new mindset from the one that prevailed in colonial times. It presumes a new self-understanding, a striving after Christian goals that have been rediscerned and a willingness to dispense with pat answers from the past when responding to the challenges of the present. The process of decolonization began when, after the Second World War, colonies obtained political independence and the freedom to plot their own futures. Similarly, Vatican II signalled a new self-understanding of the Church as the People of God who are called to sacramentalize the divine in today's world. This self-understanding would also apply to religious communities in the living out their charism.[7]

Self-understanding refers to the awareness that persons or communities have of themselves, their way of functioning, their real strengths, weaknesses, and their capacity for self-realization. Such an awareness comes about not only by engaging in self-introspection

but also by accepting that relating to others is constitutive of oneself. In a period of decolonization, the local community becomes important for a correct understanding of the local Church. In fact, providing the local Church with its native clergy had been one of the notable aims of the universal Church's evangelizing activity. She was aware that the successful functioning of local Churches would depend, in great part, on native priests who would minister to them.

During the time of Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667), in an Instruction (1659) to the vicars apostolic of Tonkin and Cochinchina, Propaganda stressed the need for a local clergy in mission lands, and Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) said the following in his apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* (1919):

> For the local priest, one with his people by birth, by nature, by his sympathies and his aspirations, is remarkably effective in appealing to their mentality and thus attracting them to the faith. Far better than anyone else he knows the kind of argument they will listen to, and as a result, he often has easy access to places where a foreign priest would not be tolerated (Neuner-Dupuis 1107 & 1112).[8]

Today, with the consciousness that the Christian presence in India resides mostly in a transplanted Church, the notion of decolonization would suggest creative modes of functioning by the churches in India and new-sprung forms of religious life. In an India that has completed 50 years of independence, it is appropriate that the spirit of a free people with their particular culture and worldview, their patterns of thought and ways of worship finds concrete expression in the life of the Church and in religious consecration. Such expression takes place when religious life becomes contextualized in India.

3. Religious Life in Context

Religious in the Church are committed to living out the gospel message as a way of life, to build up God's kingdom and to bring about a humane and just society in the world at large. Religious life is God's gift not merely to the Church but to the world for the building up of a Kingdom community (i.e. a humane society).

Religious life has always been viewed as the blossoming of particular charisms in the Church.[9] Further, the charismatic aspect of religious life is meant to respond to new challenges in the world where Kingdom values must be fostered and witnessed to. In performing its true function, religious life assists the Church and the world in realizing God's plan for them:

> The consecrated life has the prophetic task *of recalling and serving the divine plan for humanity,* as it is announced in Scripture and as it emerges from an attentive reading of the signs of God's providential action in history.[10]

Contextualized religious life calls attention to the signs of God in history as they manifest themselves in the midst of a particular people or country. Such a manifestation follows from the Christian experience of God being incarnational. Just as in the humanity (humanness) of Jesus the reality of God is revealed as meaningful, so too in religious life that is lived contextually the

true nature of the Church shines forth. Contextualized living of religious life means that a congregation's charism will be lived out differently in India and in Europe (where many congregations have their origins). In India, the first fully native congregation of the Latin Rite was that of the Oratorians which was begun by Fr. Pascoal da Costa Jeremias and counted among its ranks Fr. Joseph Vas of Sancoate (1651-1711).[11]

Living in context means relating to those among whom one is placed, acknowledging their way of life as significant and actively entering into dialogue with them at all levels. Religious life lived in context is a continual reminder that Christianity is not primarily a set of doctrinal norms by which persons live, but a way of life in which the spirit of Jesus becomes alive in the values, culture and way of life of a particular people.

In the past too, the official Church understood the need for suitable types of religious life that would express the genius of local (native-born) peoples. Popes like Pius XI (1922-1939) spoke about the need to found indigenous religious congregations for both men and women:

> (However), you should seriously and impartially consider whether it might not be more useful to establish new congregations more in keeping with the local character and temperament, and therefore better suited to the particular needs of your region (ND 1117).[12]

Even Pius XII (1939-1958) in an address (1944) given to the directors of pontifical mission works had the following to say:

> The specific character, the traditions, the customs of each nation must be preserved intact, so long as they are not in contradiction with the divine law. Missionaries are apostles of Jesus Christ. Their task is not to propagate European civilization in mission lands, like a tree which is transposed to foreign soil... Granted that Catholic inhabitants of a country are primarily members of God's noble family and citizens of his Kingdom, they do not on that account cease to be citizens of their earthly homeland also (ND 1122).

One may legitimately conclude that the official Church supports efforts of religious congregations to become contextualized in the areas where they carry on their apostolates.

4. A Contextualized Understanding of Religious Life

Vita Consecrata no. 62 explicitly recognizes new forms of religious life taking shape in the context of modern society:

> These [new] communities are sometimes inspired by one or other traditional form adapted to the needs of modern society. Their commitment to the evangelical life also takes on different forms, while, as a general rule, they are all characterized by an intense aspiration to community life, poverty and prayer.

In the same number, the apostolic exhortation makes it a point to declare that new forms of religious life are a gift of the spirit:

> (Nonetheless), the new forms are also a gift of the Spirit, enabling the

> Church to follow her Lord in a constant outpouring of generosity, attentive to God's invitations revealed through the signs of the times. Thus the Church appears before the world with many forms of holiness and service, as "a kind of instrument or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of mankind. (*LG* 1)

At this point, some areas are indicated where new understandings of religious life can be envisaged:

(a) Consecration

The consecrated life that a religious leads marks him/her as one who lives according to a particular and structured life approved by the Church. Such consecration was usually linked with the notion of separation and being set apart from the rest of one's family and society at large. Further, assuming that God experience was to be found in solitude and silence, monasticism fashioned a way of life that accentuated such separation. An ashram spirituality, as one discovers it in India, recognizes the value of silence and solitude but situates it in the context of the ashram community where men and women can congregate, where different forms of prayer are practised and where the members of the ashram community are united with the local people in a bond of mutual service.

Consecration must be seen less as a receiving of grace and therefore becoming "acceptable" to God and more as a recognizing of, and being intimately in touch with, the sacredness of the secular that encompasses all human beings. Hence, solidarity with others rather than separation from them will be the defining aspect of a consecrated life. Such solidarity suggests that residences of religious should be situated among people and accessible to them. Religious will gradually begin sharing the common life-styles of the people among whom they live and work.

The prophetic dimension of religious life will be particularly visible and even conspicuous when table fellowship is shared with all castes and classes. Through this action, the equality of all persons as well as human dignity are affirmed and enhanced. In the choice of apostolic works, should there not be an emphasis on building up human communities in collaboration with like-minded persons from other faiths and persuasions? In addition, the support that congregations extend to their members should embolden them to choose those apostolates that few prefer but which serve the greatest number of persons.

(b) Dialogue with other Religions

In India, pluralism is a fact of life. One wishes it away only at the cost of mounting frustration. It exists at the social, economic, political and religious level.[13] In the heyday of colonialism, the Christian experience of faith usually expressed itself in a Christendom system of living. Religious life, especially among women, evoked images of cloistered existence sheltered from the perceived dangers and risks of the world at large. In the light of Vatican II, and especially *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on non-Christian Religions), the Christian (and ipso facto the religious) is invited to dialogue with those of other faiths. Not only must

there be a positive attitude to the pluralism of religions that exist in the country as a whole, but there must also be a sustained attempt to profit by the spirit of religiosity that is shared by Indians irrespective of their religious affiliation. The passage below taken from *The Indian Express* editorial (Monday, June 29, 1998, p. 8) highlights the ecumenical spirit of religion that is shared by the Indian people:

> In India, religion has always been defined by usage. It has rarely been organized in the sense that the faiths of Middle Eastern origin have been. Despite the very visible authority of great temples, mosques and churches, it is the little tradition of worship at home and in the local community that has moulded religious practice... lakhs of Hindus who go to Sabarimala see no evil in the ancient practice of starting the pilgrimage by praying at the mosque of Vavar. And in north India, Ajmer Sharif draws at least as many Hindu devotees as Muslims.

In dialogue with other religions, the starting point is one in which there is a mutual recognition of God experience. Only then can mutual enrichment take place and true respect be shown to each partner in the dialogue. During the time of religious formation and after, religious communities that are contextualized can offer their members the opportunity of praying together with those of other faiths and sharing in the riches of their scriptures. When opportunities are offered to learn about other religions not only in theory but also in practice, appreciation for religious experiences other than Christian will grow.

(c) The Practice of Poverty

The need for religious communities in India constantly to confront themselves with the problem of poverty is real. The dehumanizing poverty that is the lot of millions in India can be tackled by a commitment to stand on the side of, and for, the poor. The figure of Christ who is poor and from whom religious draw their inspiration obliges religious communities to remain in modest dwellings, dress simply and seek ways to identify ever more closely with India's deprived. Would this not be a reason to separate our place of residence from our place of work so that our residences remain simple?

5. Protecting the New Understandings of Religious Life

A new understanding of religious life will come about by a sustained effort. Often it will seem much easier to follow the beaten path, to merely continue ministries, apostolates and ways of living that religious practised in former times. But then, religious will be relapsing into a colonial mindset and rejecting the challenge of the present: inculturation, decolonization. The new understanding argues a new mindset, a willingness to identify with the genius of the Indian people and, irrespective of past practices and ways of life, to decide anew how best to project the identity of a religious congregation, its cherished apostolates and its programme of formation. To preserve the new understandings of religious life, a religious community/congregation could keep before it the four following characteristics:[14]

(a) Internal Democracy

Democracy does not begin with a simple game of a majority in numbers. It begins with the fundamental respect that is due to each person in a community. In the Church, it means that the action of the Spirit is to be looked for not merely among those in the hierarchy but in each and every member of the believing community. Such activity does not preclude the need for a superior to articulate what an individual or community should pursue in obedience. However, it presupposes a lack of fear in community members speaking out their mind freely, a willingness to critique and constructively assess opinions even when they derive from hallowed traditions of the past. Finally, the community as well as its individual members must feel confident that they are well informed about both secular and religious realities in India especially when far-reaching decisions are to be taken.

Retaining internal democracy in a community builds up fellow feeling and fraternal bonds that are based less on mere personal likes, dislikes and loyalties. The notion of a 'praying parliament' should find place in a religious congregation. The holding of elections, following a specific procedure in the voting, and of appointing councillors to help superiors carry out their prescribed function, contribute to a democratic functioning within a congregation. It also ensures that a religious congregation carries out its Church-given mission and not the private wishes or selfish ambitions of an individual superior or a pressure group.[15]

A religious congregation is meant to project strikingly and concretely the prophetic mission of the Church as a whole. Its members must represent Vatican II's basic intuition describing the Church as a sacrament and "people of God". Internal democracy is a potent means of preserving Vatican II's basic intuition of the Church, and preventing ill-advised apostolates being foisted on a community or congregation.

(b) Transparency in Dealings

As an institution, a religious congregation includes structures that knit its members into a whole. These structures help the congregation to govern itself ably, choose its apostolates intelligently and legislate for its programme of formation. When the members of a congregation see that these structures matter in the life of their congregation, a sense of trust is built between the superior and the subjects, as well as among the subjects themselves. When difficult or sensitive decisions are taken with regard to persons or policies, transparency in dealings ensures that correct and fair procedures have been followed and that biases have not vitiated authority's intention in acting. Trust in superiors is built more easily when transparency in dealings is the normal and constant practice in a congregation.

(c) Accountability

Only God is accountable to himself alone. Created beings are accountable to each other –in varying degrees— and finally to God. Accountability means being responsible to another when performing a human action. Being accountable implies that one is

aware of the justifying reasons for one's decisions and doings. Most important of all, being responsible is a species of care for the other that implies exercising charity towards the other. Accountability means that irrespective of the position or place one occupies in a congregation's line of command, an individual religious has duties towards others in his/her congregation. Accountability to God may be easy, but accountability must also be shown to the various constituencies that make up one's context concretely: the official Church, the congregation's authorities and, not least of all, the people who are served. Accepting that one is accountable to the people whom they serve, religious will act in the best interests of those people. On occasion, a superior's bidding may need clarification or even further questioning before it is followed.

(d) Evaluation

A constant assessment as to whether a congregation is truly living out its charism ensures that its consecrated life retains meaning. If the aim of Christian living is to identify with the person of Jesus and partake of his mission in the world, a religious must ask him/herself if his/her way of living actually incarnates the values in the gospel. Further, he/she may find that though the goals set by the congregation are estimable, the practical lifestyle of the congregation constitutes a hindrance in their attainment. This would be the occasion to prayerfully reflect on the future course of the congregation.

The aspects of internal democracy, transparency in dealings, accountability and evaluation are relevant to religious life and to others as well. An indigenous community that wishes to live out of a new self-understanding will recognize the importance of these characteristics.

Decolonization of religious life has less to do with tilting at the windmills of a colonial past; it is more concerned with bringing a new understanding to life. It encourages inculturated religious life in today's India. Internal democracy, transparency in dealings with others, accountability on the part of subjects and superiors, and constantly evaluating the progress made will protect the newness that enters religious life. They will ensure the emergence of a spirituality for religious that is truly Christian and authentically Indian.

Notes

1. The term 'congregation' refers also to religious orders.
2. *Perfectae caritatis* (Decree on the up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life) in *The Documents of Vatican II* edited by Austin P. Flannery, O.P., Pillar Books, New York, 1975.
3. Refer the bull *Romanus Pontifex* of Pope Nicholas V granting the territories discovered in Africa to Portugal in 1455 as found in *Church and State through the Centuries*, A Collection of historic documents with commentaries, translated and edited by Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, published by Burns & Oates, London, 1954, pp. 144-153.
4. Padroado can be "defined as a combination of rights, privileges and duties granted by the Papacy to the Crown of Portugal as patron of the Roman Catholic missions and

ecclesiastical establishments in the vast regions of Africa, of Asia, and in Brazil" in C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*, A Pelican Book, 1973, p. 230.

5. Refer *The Oxford Dictionary of the Popes* by J. N. D. Kelly, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 279.
6. Refer T. R. de Souza's "The Portuguese in Asia and their Church patronage," in *Western Colonialism in Asia and Christianity* edited by M. D. David, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay (Mumbai), 1988, p. 11.
7. Refer George Soares-Prabhu, *Inculturation Liberation Dialogue*, Challenges to Christian theology in Asia today, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 1984, pp. 23-25.
8. Refer *The Christian Faith* in the Doctrinal documents of the Catholic Church, edited by Jacques Dupuis, sixth revised and enlarged edition, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1996.
9. 1. "The birth, the development, the existence and the work of religious communities is nothing else than a particular manifestation of the life of the Church. A religious community, independently from the Church, has no life...
   2. "A religious community may have many goals, all of them good and right. But there is a built-in purpose in every community that seeks and obtains approval from the Church. They publicly proclaim that the words of life are with the visible Church. They want to be publicly recognized by the Church, they want to have their way of life authenticated as good enough to follow Christ....
   3. "Yet, the mandate from the Church does not make all the communities the same. Each retains its own particular character and personality. Each is called to serve both the universal and local church (sic!) in different ways," "A theology of the Local Church and Religious Life" by Ladislaus Orsy in David L Fleming (edit.), *Paths of Renewal for Religious,* St. Louis, MO, pp. 273-274.
10. *Vita Consecrata*, (Apostolic exhortation following the 9th session of the Synod of Bishops, October 2- 29, 1994), Rome, 1996, no. 73.
11. *Life and Achievements of Blessed Joseph Vas* (Apostle of Canara and Sri Lanka) by Cosme Jose Costa, Pilar Publications, Goa, 1996, p. 26.
12. Refer encyclical letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926).
13. Refer Michael Amaladoss A.J.: "The Church and Pluralism in the Asia of the 1990s," Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC Papers No. 57e), 1990, pp. 1-2.
14. For these four characteristics I am indebted to Fr. Francis Gorosiata SJ from Nicaragua who spoke of them in a lecture given in De Nobili College, Pune, on January 24, 1998.
15. Refer David L. Fleming, "Religious in Service of the Church" in *Paths of Renewal for Religious, pp.* 321-325.

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Decolonization of Formation

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An essay on *decolonization* has to be written in the very *language of the colonizers!*

It is realistic to think of de-colonization of formation only when Christianity becomes once again a religion and less of an organization, the Church in India becomes an Indian Church, ridding itself of the Western mould by drawing abundantly from the rich and ancient Indian cultures, with its legitimate autonomy as a truly local Church, with financial and other forms of autonomy proper to a local Church, and above all, the Spirit of God is recognized as the animating power and guide. Such a Church can facilitate decolonization of formation, and those thus formed will persevere and serve as ministers renewed Indian Church.

The first question on 'decolonization' springs from a kind of scepticism: is it possible? Detoxification in the therapeutic field is reportedly mostly successful but decolonization, a process similar to detoxification, is less so. History provides many instances of abortive and unsuccessful efforts. Experiments like the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Turkish experiment under Kamal Pasha, the *Swadeshi* movement in India are often cited as examples. At home we have our own stories to tell: of inculturation and 'option for the poor'; much talked about but with little accomplishment. Internalised values and habits that are of advantage for the self are not easily detected, isolated or surrendered.

What is precisely intended by the project 'decolonization'? Is it possible as a cultural phenomenon? Clarity and precision as to what needs to be achieved, what has to be jettisoned, and what new steps have to be initiated, is required for the project to succeed.

Sociologists and anthropologists are of the opinion that there is no pure culture, pure race, pure language, still less pure religion. Each of these items is virtually a composite product achieved by mutual influence and interaction, and has contributed to the emergence of a race, a language, a religion and a culture. Thus Judaism had been deeply influenced by the neighbouring religions and cultures. As high tide and low tide invade and recede, depositing something and taking away something from the sea and sea-linked backwaters, so are cultures and civilisations: interacting among themselves and mutually enriching each other. One cannot erect imaginary walls between cultures to preserve what each culture has achieved from being contaminated by other forces. A

breakthrough achievement by one individual of a race or culture becomes a heritage common to all humanity, irrespective of distant or neighbouring races or cultures. What is of permanent, universal value crosses borders and travels far and wide. Thus Siddharth in India, Aristotle in Greece, Einstein in Germany (later America) did 'travel' beyond their geographic-cultural space. Mohammed and Jesus Christ have no border-restrictions. Literary authors are immortalized across cultures. Similarly in the field of medicine, science and technology, one invention benefits all humanity. Modern 'Patentism', the ill-begotten progeny of capitalism that wants to restrict such a heritage, for one's own pecuniary enhancement, goes counter to this perception.

But then this mutual acceptance and creative interaction among diverse cultures seem to be governed by certain criteria: the freedom and autonomy of the recipient cultures, and the compelling values of the incoming. Although historians are wont to hold that the military conquest of Athens by Rome was repulsed or repudiated by the Greek cultural conquest of Rome, it is equally true that Rome had its own identity and culture, and therefore the interaction was rather one of adult-to-adult relationship and not necessarily weaker-stronger, conquer-vanquished. Only those with internal strength and rootedness can be open to other cultures and values, without being stormed away by the strength of the incoming. Greek culture has had its homes in many other cultures and retains them even today. Indian culture did spread through neighbouring countries East of India. These were not colonial conquests but could be termed values penetration.

Some Indian poets, novelists, short-story writers, literary critics, were largely influenced by French or German writers early in the century. But of late criticism has been levelled in some quarters against imitation, considering that such wholesale modelling can be a form of submission to subtle colonization and prevent authentic native developments. What, then, can we say about the influence of new theologies born abroad and taken in? What about wholesale borrowing from abroad and marketing at home of disciplines like psychology, scripture, theology, and spirituality; the areas are too vast to enter and point out.

Oliver Cromwell and the so-called 'Plantation of Ulster' still remains a living volcano. European conquest of the Americas: more light is being shed on the dark and untold side of the sordid history. The tale of the destruction of the Alexandrian library, Portuguese destruction of ritual literature after the Synod of Diampher, Napoleon's effort at hoisting and enforcing his lineage on the thrones of conquered European monarchies – these belong to another category. India's experience of the uninvited entry into the Indian soil of armed merchants who later became the rulers of the country can be listed in the latter category.

What is the Demand, and Why?

T.B. Macaulay is too entrenched to be sent back! Suppressers of the Chinese Rite and the Malabar Rite still reign supreme! But, Galileo was absolved – after centuries. Matteo Ricci

will be declared right – one day. History tells us to live with hope!

The Mexican wasp invades the small cave of the tiny fly, seizes the fly, inserts its sharp nasal projectile deep into its neck, injects its semi-poisonous liquid, and waits. When the fly is semi-active, the wasp carries it home and is kept it 'alive' as feed for the young ones in the coming winter. Neither alive nor dead, the fly is fully in a state of control.

This may be a graphic way of describing the phenomenon of colonization but it is what a colonizer does to the colonized; enters forcefully or deceitfully into an alien land and culture, seizes first the military then the political-economic power, next injects the semi-poisonous cultural anaesthesia and keeps the colonized peoples and cultures semi-assertive, mesmerized for its own good. It is reported that the Chinese Emperor was dazed by the magic of Western artifacts presented by Matteo Ricci. Under the impact of the semi-poisonous liquid, namely, the new culture of the colonizer, the minds of the colonized people is taken control of, then the freedoms and finally the creative powers and sources. The rights of the colonized are partially benumbed so that they are neither destroyed nor fully active or autonomous, but kept in 'suspended animation', incapable of asserting and affirming themselves.

Then begins the next process. The colonized begin to look up to the new masters, and set themselves the task of refashioning themselves 'unto the image and likeness of the colonizer'. To be like the colonizer is the be-all and the end-all of all aspirations, relationships and strategies. The most potent instrument for this melt-mould process was soon introduced: education. The misguided 'mission' schools, perched on cool heights, took the contract for the task. English, French and Portuguese in the captured Indian territories replaced the language through which the mother normally shaped the soul and behaviour of the child, the future Indian citizen.

In dress, in food habits, in life-style, in social relationship the new 'slave' and servant begins to become like the new master. Then begins the deeper phase of self-deformation: the values, the beliefs, the thinking patterns, even the world-view of the arrogant conqueror is slowly yet steadily absorbed, internalized. The literature, art and architecture, music and sports, nay even the deepest in the conqueror is gradually absorbed. The colonized takes pride in being the copy of the colonizer. Scrutinise the westernized of India, and the educated leaders of Africa. The American Dollar and Western dress have been almost universalized!

The story was not dissimilar in matters religious. To be a Christian was in all respects similar to the process above. There were the additional factors too: the content of the Faith. Belief in Jesus Christ, born in Asia, but wrapped up in clothes woven fresh by the Greeks, and then by the imperial Romans, reached the shores of the Indian ocean. Since the arrival of Christianity greatly coincided with the coming of the colonizers, the treasure was identified with the bringers. For want

of good knowledge of quite a number of vital concerns – like the cultures of India, the scriptures and the religions of India, the histories of the kingdoms of India – the missionaries fell easy victims to the prevailing dangerous assumption: that the European culture was superior to any other. The result was that until recently, in dress, in life-style, language and areas of life, in theology and spirituality, in worship and celebrations, practically) in all matters, elements alien shaped the Indian Christian.

There are other areas of interest and amusement. Gulliver the mighty found himself tied to the ground on all sides by threads that ran all over the body. One often wonders: Is not the Indian Christian fastened by a thousand laws, visible and subtle, by powers outside India? Reports and requests for permissions flow westward, and permissions and indults stagger from the West.

The awakened Indian Christian in dismay asks oneself: how much of theme is essential for one to be a disciple of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-Asian. Is it not time to distil the components of an Indian Christian identity and separate the essentials from the non-essentials, and the Indian from the non-Indian, as the basis of further planning for the dawn of the third Millennium.'

Formation houses were, evidently, replicas of the same in Europe. To enter a seminary or formation house was a virtual transplantation experience, in early times. You are transported into England or France or Portugal or Italy. The holy pictures of Mary were Italian maidens. The piano and the hymnals, the missal and the vestments, the chalice and the candlesticks – the West was duly present in all details in the East. The worship in language and rituals sounded equally alien. Even today, in spite of the marathon struggle for ritual rights, the right of India to have a mode of worship congenial to the Indian ethos remains ignored. The soul of India cannot pour out its inner sentiments in and through worship forms shaped by the ethos of this ancient land. To enter the psychic chambers of the products of training of these western enclaves in the east, theological centres or seminaries was to confront the core of the puzzle. The imageries, the figures of speech, the laws and customs, the syllogisms and mode of argumentation, the categories of interpreting the core of Christian experience – were traceable to their western sources of origin. Charism and their interpretations, the myriads of religious rules and regulations too. Much water has gone down the Ganges ever since, but still there are religious in India whose local assemblies decide for the mode of dress that befits the weather and the culture and convenience but the clearance to wear them, has to come from centres and councils located across ocean!

Again, for the sake of truthfulness, the question can be legitimately asked: is not 'formation' too a kind of subtle colonization? Imagine young men of the same class and with shared sentiments and perception joining one in the army, one in the police, another in the seminary, and a last one in the religious life. Because of the focused drilling of val-

ues and life-styles we notice that each of these four young men has become truly different from each other. This reveals the power of 'indoctrination', or to use a milder terminology, the role and use of training, of moulding and controlling the mind. The products are truly diverse in this case.

Is not, then, formation a kind of colonization?

India was denied the privilege of receiving the God experience in Jesus Christ in its true form and beauty. Since it came in much-resented alien form response was varied. India's response ranged from acceptance, indifference, ignoring, suspicion, antagonism to hostility – the spectrum of response varied. Accusations of alien origin and extra-territorial loyalty and inspiration began to be levelled against the new arrival. Elements of dissimilarity with the native religions, social and cultural elements that further highlighted the differences, and worsened the negative perception, have been pointed out in defence of their antagonism and suspicion and even rejection. It reached even some state legislatures some of which succumbed to the pressure groups that demanded banning of change of religion.

These are issues that call for serious consideration at various levels. The most serious charge is that the persistence of alienation may take the form of further vivisection of the country!

On occasions like the Millennial Jubilee a bold and fearless search into these allegations, and the possible reasons for them, augurs well.

When consciousness returned to the natives, the colonizers were driven out. Then began a process of re-discovery of the lost or suppressed native heritages. The third phase is on now: search for the damages done to the psyche of the colonized. De-colonisation of formation, just like in other areas of the life of the Christian communities the world over, is part of that effort. When Gandhi introduced the novel 'boycott of foreign clothes', some mischievous questions were raised: why not return the goods to those brought them to this land rather than burn them?

In the following pages the difficult task of de-colonization of formation, both with regard to content and method, is taken up for consideration. The reflections end with some concrete suggestions with regard to formation.

The Problem of Procedure

Very important and even non-negotiable issues are at stake. Human, religious, national, and cultural consciousness has been growing steadily over the years. First of all a re-discovery of what is proper to being a human in a particular place or time. The many rights and duties, obligations and privileges of being a human, form the foundation of all other considerations.

Secondly, to be human is to be related to others in a particular time and place. This has also to do with the problem of living and therefore the life-struggle of the people of the place. This life-struggle is largely influenced by a large number of factors, chief among them being the particular climate and weather that determines the life-struggle in many ways. It is in and through this life-struggle that the cul-

ture of the place or of a society is born and disseminated. Culture also influences, inversely, the becoming of individuals that are born and bred in the place. Thirdly, there is the issue of the nation. Culture, economic well-being, etc. determine the identity of the nation. Sovereignty is part and parcel of the culture and of the nation. These are interrelated. Finally, religion constitutes an essential aspect of the human the cultural and the national identity of the individual.

All these sectors of the individual and of the culture are affected by colonization. Consequently decolonization also will invite our attention to these areas.

How to Re-shape Our Authentic Indian Christian Identity

1. Decolonization of formation comes after decolonization of our Church. The first essential requirement for the Church is *to be* the local Church and exercise the rights and responsibilities proper to a local Church in communion with the universal Church. The tender legs, the bones, the muscles, and the young mind of the child becomes stronger, and begins to grow to adulthood only *by exercising them.* Otherwise there is the danger of malformation and even infantile adulthood. The Church in India should assume responsibility for its own adulthood. As far as formation is concerned, the Church in India has to make efforts to evolve a de-colonized formation programme dictated by the *apostolic needs* of the local Church, assisted, of course, by tradition and history.

2. For such a task do we have the required *autonomy culture?* Our culture is to a large extent handicapped because of the *dependence ethos* we have inherited. As a consequence of the millennia-old caste-culture, there is a very high degree of dependence and subordination culture almost ingrained in the psychic behaviour. Submit to those above and yen treat with contempt those below – is central to caste culture. Such a culture blocks the growth of healthy autonomy, a fundamental property of the human person.

This dependence ethos was further compounded by the colonial culture. A nation lay under the feet of the conqueror! And, the religions of the country, native or fresh also submitted! For more than two hundred years the Indian collective psyche, with awe and fear, looked up at the British Crown thousands of miles away!! A similar ethos prevails in the Christian community too. A 'young Church' or 'mission land' is often treated with a lot of attention and care. This should aim at eventual adulthood of the 'young' church. But if that is not fostered, the collective mind of the young Church can be captured by the interests, favours, protectiveness, the well-intentioned vigilance, and other similar traits of the controlling mechanisms.

The horrendous phenomenon of bonded labour, the practice of employing 'servants' and '*ayas*' in homes, palanquin bearers and their kin in other professions, the night-soil culture – are on one end of the spectrum of a subordination and dependent culture. And on the other we had Nawabs and royalties,

and maharajas who opted to live in splendour by surrendering to the conquerors and even receiving their benefits of booties granted by the colonial conquerors. The excessive veneration of holy places, holy books and holy traditions, as well as holy persons, also contribute to an uncritical submission of minds to the unholy 'holy', a disease of the mind rather than sound religiosity or awe before the Supreme. Obedience in India is often an admixture of many an intellectual surrender and laziness.

Psychic and cultural elements like these have largely contributed to a colonial culture in the subject nations.

Further questions are to be raised. Do we have our own way of thinking or are we dependent on Western tutors? What had been India's way of thinking, feeling, and deciding and organizing one's life? Digging one's own well, cutting one's own paths, mapping one's own territory, singing one's own songs, telling one's own stories – had been a feature of Indian seekers and of those on quests.

But then after the Indian 'Renaissance' this trend suffered. Western philosophical edifices had dazzled many of the colonized minds in India – intellectual, political, sociological, anthropological, and even religious. Some eminent among them had to don the missionary mantle to be upstage among Indians and Europeans! The deeply hidden 'apologetic' tone of such thinkers and writers was manifest in some of the first and second-generation Indian religious and philosophical leaders.

The colonial virus invaded also the Christian leadership, ecclesiastical and lay. Supersedence of the local by the regional, of the regional and the national by the one central power grew out of this unchecked psychic and cultural behaviour pattern. Over-centralisation was the tragic result of such a culture in religion. Is sound Catholic faith in India mature enough to handle affairs of common good on its own? The habit of frequent appeals to central powers with issues that could very well be attended to by a mature and responsible local collective or community did contribute to the continuity of the culture under consideration. Without looking into such deeper areas of our identity, the attempt at the decolonization of formation can prove fruitless.

3. Decolonization of formation demands that the trainers as well as those in training get immersed in the various dimensions of *Indian cultures.* Asian cultures are very rich and ancient. One has to be possessed by the urgency of the problems from the apostolic point of view. Indian life and literature, Indian folklore as well as philosophies, Indian religious as well as secular 'pilgrimages' have to be experienced to know India.

Formators who never had such an experience while in formation, and who continue to receive further studies in centres outside India, will not be competent to undertake such a task. How can colonized minds decolonize formation in an ex-colonial culture that is almost being swallowed by neo-colonial invasion via economics and the media?

4. The *Indian people* can help us to de-colonize formation *if we are not* capable of doing this on their own. An example is introduced to initiate consideration of this significant issue. In the course of an exciting dialogue session at Snehasadan, Pune, a decade ago, with a dozen distinguished scholars from Pune, attention of the group was drawn to the lack of rootedness of Christianity in India. The following was the remedy proposed by a participant: you who are given to taking orders from outside India on all matters religious, even the most personal and concerned even with the conscience, if you are desirous of being authentically Indian, give up your present formation plans and fortresses, and come and live with us. The message is ruthlessly communicated!

The implication is this: *experience of the Indian people* will be a most potent means of decolonization of formation. Fill your lungs with fresh air, and the foreign elements in the blood stream can be gradually replaced. The more you enter into the complex lives and life-problems of the people of India, the more you are assimilating and being assimilated into the Indian cultural ethos. You begin to discover the degree of alienation in contrast. Many formation centres, especially of the early phase, are run by trainers obsessed with the idea that only in isolation from engagement with the 'world outside' will one grow deep in one's vocation. Laws and traditions are cited to support this questionable practice. The main lesson that the history of the Church teaches us today is that the decline of Christianity began when the Church began to withdraw from secular realities, and moved away from real problems of 'the world'. A concern behind such sheltered nourishment is the fear of being contaminated by the 'unhealthy' atmosphere outside the training centres. Theologies and spiritualities, developed in isolation, were of little help for the Church in times of major challenges. It is these theologies and spiritualities, and other aspects, especially the theological methods, that reached India. We need a thorough reconsideration of many of the assumptions behind them, from the Indian religio-cultural ethos angle.

By experience is meant: participating in some ways in the hard struggles of the great majority of the people, in the poverty and the humiliation that a great majority of the people of the country are daily subject to, the kind of inequality that exists in the community, the nature and degree of violence of all kinds that threaten so many of our people, the role of power (economic-political-social-religious) that oppresses and dehumanizes the people, the values that are operative in society, the many oppressive and dehumanizing customs and traditions operative in society, the many structures, systems and institutions that sustain society, the many religions and the role played by them either to oppress or to liberate them. If those in formation get affected by the humiliating reality of those who have no house but live in huts, have no food worth the name but only '*roti*' and salt or *chili*, have no decent clothes to wear especially in winter, and have to struggle all their life against disease and death, against evic-

tion and migration, against the police and their collaborators, live with rejection and diminution of worth all their life, they and those helping in their formation, will eventually get plunged in and rooted in the land and its complex problems.

An often raised question is: is working with the poor the only source of knowing the people of India? Why not the early experience of the candidates themselves? Why not knowledge derived from well-documented books and articles about India and the struggle of the people. Such questions reveal deep-seated ignorance of the entire problem, and the only pedagogical answer will be a counter question: is not one deep breathing-in in the morning sufficient for the day, instead of repeated and sustained breathing? These are needed, yes. But only *after* the experience of the hard life of the Indian people.

5. The inner logic and dynamics of such an *insertion* into India will necessitate the next step: languages of India to replace the language of Clive and Macaulay. As red and white corpuscles flood the plasma, the cultural elements of the people flood the bloodstream that is the language. To know well a language is to enter deep into the people. In and through it we have access to the culture of the people.

In spite of the mild transition from Latin or Syriac to English in the formation houses, the reluctance and facile reasons advanced for justifying the current obstinate adhesion to the language of the British Isles, is an index of the feeble goodwill and commitment of those in formation houses.

To persist in the use of a foreign language is to permit oneself to be influenced, controlled by the culture of which that language is only one aspect. It is such subtle control that perpetuate the colonization of the mind.

Appeal is often made to the all-India dimension of the Church or of the religious congregations with inter-state apostolic commitments calling for transfers across linguistic borders etc. Supporters of such arguments could very well visit other parts of the world and learn how the problem is solved elsewhere. Each state in Europe uses its own language. There is no common language across Europe in which formation is imparted. It is granted that India's case is unique. But that does not justify the blocking of legitimate needs of the local church of which language is an essential aspect. The pointed question is: Can there be any maintainable justification for keeping English as the medium of instruction in seminaries?

6. Announcing the Kingdom of God and collaborating with God and His people of the land for its emergence is our concern here. To work for transformation of the distorted human situation in collaboration with people of other faiths and ideologies a very important and necessary requirement is the development of *analytical skills* to have a deeper knowledge of the forces and structures of Indian society. This will imply knowledge of the forces at work, the structure of the society, the role of the economic, the political, the cultural and religious factors in the formation and fossilization of the Indian social structures, institutions and values. Caste

system is a major Indian phenomenon, and no knowledge of Indian reality is possible without sufficient knowledge of the caste system.

They should also know the religions with their scriptures and their interpretations.

All these need to be understood, illumined, and interpreted in the light of the Gospel, guided by the Word. These should become increasingly part of the syllabus in formation houses.

7. Since there is a substantial link between liturgy, theology and the life of the Christian community, living as it does in the midst of the people of other faiths, a fourfold link has to be re-established and formation in India should have the freedom and the right to enter into it. The first is the life-struggle of the Christian community. Both theology and liturgy are related to this life-struggle: theology, as effort at interpreting the Word in dialogue with the life of the community, and liturgy, as the faith-community's actual surrender of life and worship, as well as celebrations. The Eucharist mediates these twofold functions. But then these are taking place in a milieu that is marked by diversities of faiths and human deprivations. Therefore, Christian life and liturgy should interact with these also.

To actualise this fourfold relationship in a dialectical manner we need to re-enter the field of Christian worship once again. In the field of Christian worship, India lost the race and Rome and the Middle East prevailed, unfortunately. We should open our eyes to the facts of recent Indian history, and turn our ears to the lessons of the same history. Four hundred years of Hindu-Muslim interaction did have some interesting results: like the birth of the Urdu language, influence on certain areas of art, architecture and music, and some interaction with Sufism and *Bhakti* spirituality. Nothing beyond that.

Given the nature of the impact of colonization on Hindu-Christian relationship is it not time that, before tragedy strikes, one more serious re-consideration of the Christian existence and above all, *interaction* with other religions and cultures of the land, is attempted? For the past fifty years and more quite a bit of writing on inculturation, on dialogue and collaboration with the Indian religions, on a more authentic expression of Christian faith in and through the Indian cultural ethos, has been taking place. Some experimentations of a private nature also have been taking place in the area of liturgy. But at the official level, in worship, in language, in life-style, in taking the issues of the country seriously, it is worth considering what strides have been made. A liturgy that reflects life in India, is shaped by its culture, has social content and which breathes the native air, is an essential aspect of a decolonised formation.

8. Probably a most urgent task for the decolonization era of the Church in India, would be: to clarify a major ambiguity that still pertains to the real meaning of evangelization. Many in the country are disturbed by the phenomenon of any one changing over to an-

other religion. There are cultural, religious, social and economic reasons behind such apprehensions. There is a particular understanding today of culture and nationalism and its relationship with religion.

In the Christian tradition two major developments have taken place: theology of religions and inter-religious dialogue. There are people in other religious traditions who have serious doubts about the goal of these two developments. The suspicion is that dialogue and new-found acceptance of other religions by Christianity is only a device for securing more recruits to Christianity. There are also people in the Christian tradition who believe, or seem to do so, that dialogue and theology of religions are new strategies for old practices. In this situation when lack of clarity marks the relationship among religions in India, it is up to Christianity to state clearly and unambiguously what its stand is.

Such a clear stand would be constituted of the following elements: deep-commitment to the Judaeo-Christian faith tradition (of which the core is Jesus of Nazareth), evangelisation as working for the promotion of the Kingdom would call for a new way of being humans where all are equal, all have their fundamental rights and freedoms and the all-round welfare of all the peoples is the objective of the Christian service, and people of all faiths and ideologies live and work together for such a society. Perhaps what we need for the Millennium will be a Comprehensive Creed for Asia, for India, which incorporates Christian rootedness in the country, and yet being open to the wider values. The rootedness would highlight the new Christian understanding of religions other than Christian, and how dialogue is probably the best way of functioning in a multi-religious situation. Such a stand can assuage feelings of some and apprehensions of others. It is the stand of authentic Indian Christian belief and practice.

9. The question with which we should start our investigation and plan the steps towards de-colonization of formation is: formation for what? Our objective should be clear.

Conviction as well as consensus is growing in Asia, in India, that given the present situation of the human community, there is the great urgency to a better and different way of being human. A way of being human that is truly worthy of the human nature as designed by God. But today human living is quite a degraded one. The great blot on Asian humanity, namely, structural inequality, legitimised caste, is the worst form. Poverty, illiteracy, traditionalism and superstitions that are unbecoming of the human person, crime and violence, fraud in private and public life, violence on the weak, denigration of woman in society – all these are dreadful signs of a social situation that calls for serious action by the religions of India. It is up to Christianity in India to elicit the collaboration of other religions and ideologies, so that all work together for bringing about a different and better humanity. The proclamation of the Gospel has to address the tragedies of Asia.

This effort to bring about transformation in the degraded and deformed

human society, and help evolve a better way of being human, is the growing consciousness among all those who are affected by India, all those who are committed to the welfare of India.

A second major concern, known to many but not yet recognised and operationalised, is the already-late interaction with the religions of Asia. The gains made in inter-religious dialogue, theology of religions etc. are not yet internalised by the theology programme itself, and do not enter into other branches like missiology, liturgy, ministries. This is a most urgent ask for theology in India.

If formation elsewhere has distinct goals which are dictated by the specificity of the place and the times, formation in India has to be dictated by the specificity of the situation prevailing here. The Indian Church has to know fully and comprehensively the Indian situation, and gear formation to the goal perceived as specific to India. The Indian Church should preside over the formation of the personnel, although interaction with and listening to other cultures is desirable and enriching for the Indian experiment.

10. In most cases the decision normally made by young men and women to opt for religious or priestly life is motivated by certain vague quest. What is uppermost in their minds and hearts at that phase of the journey may not necessarily be 'service of the people'. Something attracts the young candidate: a way of life, certain ideals, or perhaps some models. It is something different from the many professions most of her /his companions opt for. Later on, in course of time, it turns out to be a meaning and fulfilment and finally a desire for a deep relationship with God.

A large number of men and women who have shaped India's culture are the sages – be they in Hinduism or Buddhism or Jainism or Sikkism or Islam. Their chief contribution was in and through what we now call experience of the divine. Hermitages and caves, mountain resorts and places of withdrawal for penance and contemplation –have been their resorts. Their other competencies – have been their resorts. Their other competencies like knowledge or skill in various arts, came secondary. Primarily they were seekers of God, in search of God-realization.

It is in this background that we find a major lacuna in our formation. The candidate is presumed to be, eventually, for a journey with God, for God. The Indian religio-cultural ethos also is marked by this quest for God, experience of God. In contrast, the Indian formation houses, especially philosophy-theology centres, are largely degree-oriented, certificate-proffering centres. The disciplines are overly result-guided. The mind of the candidate is for years on end taken over by the demands of study, examinations, excelling others in marks, acquisition of skills for later ministries.

This degree or certificate oriented pursuit of vocation we have inherited from the West. A major factor for the decline and practical death of Christianity in Europe is to be found here. We forget the lessons from Church history that the Church's reforms and rejuvenation were often accomplished prima-

rily by individuals like Assisi, Benedict, Ignatius, Theresa of Avila, John of the Cross and others. There is no denying the role of outstanding theologians and philosophers. But their service if not related to the former kind of charism cannot accomplish what the saints did. Conversion of hearts, change of habits of individuals and groups, takes place not necessarily by the brilliance of ideas and argumentations, but by the moral and spiritual influence of men and women like those referred to above.

What sages did in India, was accomplished by saints in Europe.

But in course of time the academies prevailed over hermitages. Philosophical systems and schools of theologies grew but not necessarily transformative experiences of the kind the great reformers of the Church had. The quality of the life of individuals and groups are drawn to change of life more by the witnessing power than by weight of learning, although sound learning is required. The Word of God, received by the prophets in the Old Testament times, affected the prophets first and foremost, and through them, the society. The reform of the society take place primarily through mediacy of such powers and influences which we may call spiritual, capable of effecting change. On the other hand, the mere study of the same Word of God, undertaken by those in formation houses, is primarily a tussle of the mind, and not a relish of the heart or the flaming of the will. The hearts are not on fire, the will is not inflamed, in spite of the 'study' of the Word of God, in spite of the 'study' of the Resurrection experience. It is this system that we have inherited.

Hence, a major step towards decolonization of formation is to consider whether the original motivation for joining the religious or priestly life can be nourished and priority given by de-linking it from the degree-oriented study of the Word of God. India excelled in this a did the early phase of Christianity. In other words, re-introduce experience of God, search for God, and its nourishment, and subordinate the 'study' oriented formation programme, brought in by colonial Christinaity, to the experience-based formation.

This presupposes that the Church in India should turn her attention to the country, its history and culture, the way God had been operative over centuries in this land, especially the role of spiritual experience and transformation.

Arhat is a term specific to Buddhism, but embodying much of the essential features of Asian religiosity. It implies that the liberated or self-realized person teaches or shares, of the divine as in Hinduism or of Truth as in Buddhism. An *arhat* has no juridicial power. It has no institutional reliance. It has no financial power. Such 'powerlessness' is the source of its authority and moral-spiritual power.

In the Christian tradition, a religious leader (sister/brother/priest), is charged with authority of a different kind. Whether God-realized or not, the mode of exercising this function or power is quite different from the Asian/ Indian standpoint. He/she is all-powerful in his/her domain, – institutional, financial, social – and dependence disposition is unwittingly generated in the

beneficiaries of her/his service. What are the sources of this authority? How much of it is acquired in the course of the journey of Christianity via Greece, Rome and Europe till it reached the shores of Asia? This, probably, belongs to the core areas of decolonization. Such a mode, irrespective of its historical or cultural source, does not fit the Indian religio-cultural landscape.

The ancient laudable tradition of one church coming to the help of another church in need, as expressions of genuine ecclesial charity, has over the years grown to gigantic proportions with consequent abuses. Today Church finance has weakened the ethical moral fibre and quality of the members using them. Cases of embezzlement are reported. Finance being used as a source of control, has enfeebled the vigour of religion at the regional national and international level. Worse still, it does corrupt the users and recipients of money. A life-style unsupported by resources earned by personal labour, is adopted and thereby suffocation of the ethical moral, and especially the spiritual is the end result. Reliance is on money, organisation, power and influence. This probably is the worst effect of colonisation. Decolonisation will call for a serious examination of the entire system. Religion should be enabled to restore its original nature and purpose.

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Decolonization of Theology

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1. The Project

1.1 To decolonize is, (according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th edition, 1995), to "withdraw from (a colony) leaving it independent". A colony, (according to the same authority), is "a group of settlers in a new country (whether or not already inhabited) fully or partially subject to the mother country." Colony can also mean the territory thus settled. These descriptions –'new country', 'withdraw', 'leaving it', 'the mother country' – come naturally to the colonial outlook. For the people of the 'new country', however, to decolonize would be to make their territory independent by ridding it of settlers who, oftener than not, have been invaders, illegal immigrants or cheats. The Oxford definition, then, of decolonization needs decolonizing. We have little or no knowledge of colonists withdrawing except when thrown out. Historically, colonialism has been a "policy of acquiring or maintaining colonies" with a view to their exploitation, especially economic, precipitating swift corrosion of the freedom, dignity, life and culture of their original inhabitants. Under colonial domination, the exploited and marginalised people's creativity and resourcefulness deteriorate, paving the way to deepening dependence at all levels of life and in all areas of existence, unless the people resist and keep up the struggle.

1.2 Does the project, then, of decolonizing theology in India presuppose the existence in the past of a theological territory which later was invaded, disturbed and destroyed by theologies from outside? A church has existed in India, at least on its West Coast, long before the arrival of Vasco da Gama (1498) and the colonial era. That church surely had a theology expressed in its structure, worship and life, if not articulated in discourse. We know that Portuguese interference did colonize this church and its theology by introducing/imposing new structures, devotions and practices like concentration of all power in the bishop, obligatory celibacy for priests, daily Eucharist, the rosary, the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, foreign names for Christians, and the present shape of religious congregations. It also brought here a church made root and branch in Europe and given to many foreign mores and manners, and speaking an ancient foreign language, Latin. But perhaps a similar colonization of Christian life in India had occurred at some earlier point in the Church's history. For what the Portuguese sought to replace were not exactly indigenous forms of Christian life and thought. So then the spirituality, liturgy and theology of the Indian Church have, over the years, been largely shaped by West Asian and European perceptions,

experiences, interests, questions and needs.

1.3 'Colony' and 'colonial' derive from *colonia* via *colonus* 'farmer' from *colere* 'cultivate'. Our situation is that either the theological soil of our christian existence has been used to grow foreign crops which we do not need or use; or it has been left fallow while theologies raised abroad were imported, and were borne by us as a burden, and not assimilated as nourishment nor welcomed as a force for social change. Decolonizing would therefore imply and demand (i) rejection of theological imports and imitations; (ii) reappropriation of our theological soil and its promises and possibilities; (iii) sowing of this soil with our own problems, sufferings and struggles, our own needs, hopes, experiences and tears; and (iv) careful gathering of our theological harvest with which to foster human life and humanizing visions, and to equip ourselves for action to create the new earth which would reflect Jesus' dream of God's Reign.

1.4 The project of decolonizing theology is not new, nor confined to India. It has been implicitly present and evolving within all theologies with which liberation movements everywhere are pregnant. It has been growing, for instance, within slave revolts, ancient and recent, in Rome, in Rio, in Maryland, in NeoCartegena, in Carolina, in Auschwitz, in Gulag Archipelago; and within peasant rebellions the world over against feudal lords and land mafias; within protests against oppression and within resistance to domination; and within movements of liberation from colonial and neo-colonial exploitation. One may recall the indigenous tribes who resisted Columbus' scheme to scoop up gold and collect slaves; and others who fought Cortes and Magellan; and the freedom fighters from Simon Bolivar to Che Guevara and Fidel Castro (Latin America); A. Cabral, P. Lumumba and M.Machel (Africa); and the anti-apartheid struggles of the Children of Soweto, of Steve Biko, of Nelson Mandela, and the tribes and organisations which made them (South Africa); and, of course, our own liberation movements led by Tilak, Gandhi and Nehru, Phule, Ayyankali, Narayana Guru and Ambedkar.

More explicit efforts were made and significant steps taken in decolonizing thought, theology and life in the theologies of liberation which have been articulated since the late 1960s. In America the first harvest was gathered in James Cone's, *A Black Theology of Liberation*,1970; and in South America in Gustavo Gutierrez', *A Theology of Liberation*,1971.

The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians announced (Dar-es-Salaam, 1976) a radical decolonization of theology through a Copernican revolution in theology's method as well as in its concept, content and goal. Theology is not merely 'Faith seeking understanding' through harmony with reason and science, while leaving traditions of injustice and structures of oppression intact, and colonial domination unchallenged. Theology is not an attempt to explain away suffering. Rather, it is critical reflection on life-transforming faith-practice with a view to more liberative and socially

transformative theo-praxis which would tackle the ground of poverty and suffering.[1] In doing theology the primacy of praxis over theory is affirmed, and the primacy of social analysis and involvement over detached philosophical speculation. In an atmosphere of widespread search for political, economic, social, cultural and religious identity by once dominated peoples, there emerged progressively decolonized and decolonizing theologies in the Americas, in the Caribbean, in Africa, and in Asia-Oceania. Black and liberation theologies continued to develop in the Americas and provoke native-American theology into being: *God is Red.* Matthew Fox's *Original Blessing* belongs perhaps with nativeAmerican creation theology/spirituality. Africa grew theologies of Black Liberation and Black Humanity.

In Asia there emerged Minjung Theology (Korea), Theology of Struggle (Philippines), Theology of Religions, and of Inter- or Intra-religious Dialogue, and of Enslaving/Liberating Poverty, and Dalit and Feminist theologies (South Asia).

Liberating and decolonizing books like the following also belong with our project and its processes though theology is not their immediate concern: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968); Felix Greene, *The Enemy* (1968); Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*; Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1973); and Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1974).*

2. Theology: Colonial and Colonized

2.1 European colonialism began with a voyage of Christobal Colon, aka Columbus. Catherine Keller recalls how this man equated his 'discovery' of the 'new world' with the apocalypse of the 'new creation' mentioned in the book of Revelation. In 1500 Colon wrote: the Lord "made me the messenger thereof (of the New Heaven and Earth) and showed me where to go." Comments Keller: "Such subliminal messianism seems to have sanctified the colonizing efforts of Europe and then the United States, however divergent the theologies the missionaries who accompanied the conquerors and traders were preaching. It justified a biblical scale of genocide and ecocide against the indigenous populations."[2] There followed the horrors of conquest and plunder, of slave trade and slave labour, and an astounding exhibition of Christian greed and Mammon worship and sea piracy and bloody conflicts, escalating no less in numbers than in barbarity.

2.2 The Western Church saw in Europe's colonial expansion a God-given chance for the salvation of souls and its own growth. It ignored the fact that meanwhile the cause of the Kingdom of God was suffering a major set-back, and Jesus' heart was breaking. The substance of colonialism and the root of colonial/colonized theologies may be found in the staggering arrogance and immorality with which in 1494 Alexander VI unblushingly handed over for ever to Portugal and Spain all the lands to the East and to the West respectively of an imaginary line in the Atlantic, together with all their natural and cultural wealth and peoples to be disposed of (converted, enslaved, abolished) as they should judge fit. In that act Constantinian Christianity came of age.

2.3 The error and poison of the teaching implied in that act has, directly or indirectly, infected most colonial missions and their theologies. Missionaries who went hand in hand with colonizers, traders and soldiers "could not but be at least partially tainted by the designs of searchers for gold, spices, land, slaves and colonies.... They tended to think that the commercial and military expansion of Western powers was a providential opportunity for the spread of the Gospel...."[3] The working document (*Instrumentum Laboris*, 23), prepared for the Synod for Asia, 1998, admits that "taking advantage of the European colonial movement, the Church sent missionaries to spread the message of the Gospel." In fact, "in the early phases of Western expansion the churches were allies in the colonizing process, and benefitted from the expansion of the empire." And in return they legitimized imperialism, and accustomed their new adherents "to accept compensatory expectations of an eternal reward for terrestrial misfortunes including colonial exploitation." And they used the Gospel to soften national resistance to plunder by foreigners. They played a part in domesticating the minds and cultures of converts.[4] No wonder, colonial theology failed to call in question, to critique and resist the colonial plot as contradicting the Gospel and basic Christian and human decencies. Colonial theology failed to see that the subjugation and exploitation of peoples effectively annulled the Gospel of freedom and divine filiation.

2.4 The churches formed under colonial auspices were replicas of Western churches. Ready-made churches, potted plants, were transported to our lands instead of letting the Word fall in the soil of our life, religion and culture, and take root there and sprout and grow to be our vision, nurture and shelter. Christians were often segregated from fellow human beings, alienated from their religious and cultural heritage and communitarian way of life. Liturgies were transported and conducted in a foreign language. Transported also were Church structures, religious art, theologies, pietistic and legalistic spiritualities common in Europe, as well as educational systems and training methods. And everything has been regulated and controlled, every detail prescribed, and all standards set for a world church by a single centre, an ancient imperial capital in the West, Rome.[5]

2.5 The result is that in traditional theologies, liturgies and devotions, God has been appearing as a foreigner, a stranger in our land. For centuries God understood only Latin (or Syriac) which the worshipping people could not follow. In *Mediator Dei* (1947), Pius XII justified the use of Latin by presenting it as a sign of unity in a World Church while in truth it represented an effective schism in every local congregation between the people and the clergy. Paul pointed long ago to the ridiculousness of speech which did not communicate:

> What use shall I be if all my talking reveals nothing new, tells you nothing, and neither inspires you nor instructs you?... if your tongue does not produce intelligible speech, how can anyone know what you are saying? You will be talking to the air. There are any number of different languages in the world..., but if I am ignorant of what the sounds mean, I am a savage

to the man who is speaking, and he is a savage to me (I Cor 14: 5-12).

Use of foreign languages was a calculated act of contempt for the people and their culture. It evinced, besides, a total lack of pastoral concern for the congregation's growth in faith and love, and in creative reflection or theological activity. It amounted to a rejection of 'worship in spirit and truth' in favor of ritual mechanics and of power. A deeply regrettable case of ecclesiastical imperialism that imposed itself for centuries at the people's expense. It is a comfort that since 1965 God seems to have picked up a few more languages than Latin and Syriac. But He still needs for his sacraments food and drink and oil unrelated to our fields, work, homes, hospitality, health and life. And communion given into the mouth insults every culture. The working paper (*Instrumentum Laboris*), prepared for the recently held 'Synod for Asia', has taken note of responses that relate the fact that Asians often do not see the Church as totally Asian, not simply because much financial support comes from western countries, but also because of her Western character in theology, architecture, art ...." (no.13).

2.6 Theologies were imported. These had been made in Western academies, "in royal palaces, castles and abbeys by the ruling class and for the ruling class. Naturally the perspectives, interests, ideas and designs of the ruling class and the rich became crystallized in those theologies. (They) legitimized the socio-economic, cultural and political order of the time.... (They) often functioned as tools and ideologies to maintain the *status quo* to the advantage of the rich and the dominant classes. Some of their philosophical and theological principles were totally wrong. Implicit in them was a theory of 'human hierarchy'. Some are born masters and others slaves. Some ... colonialists ... taught that an Indian (American Indian) is by nature a slave, inferior to the European who is by nature his master."[6]

These theologies, made by dominant classes and found convenient by colonial missionaries and carried by them, stressed hierarchy, power, submission, resignation and other-worldly salvation, rather than community, friendship, obedience to truth, pursuit of justice and the Reign of God on earth. Its outlook was individualistic; it focused on the salvation of each soul; it neglected the neighbour's physical needs, and overlooked the problem of the health of society and the wholeness of history. That prevented it from contributing to united action for changing social structures and building the Kingdom on earth. It was blind to the web of life and the inter-relatedness of things. Colonial theology could not, cannot, address our situation: the threats to our life and freedom; our struggles for food and dignity. It cannot speak for us; cannot speak from within our encounter with God, from within our cries and tears, nor from within the sufferings colonialism has inflicted on us. It can only reflect the colonizers' interests, and use the Gospel to justify oppression, and to call for submission and resignation. It cannot nurse us into freedom fighters, cannot suckle a spirituality for combat. It easily

becomes a tool in the hands of ruling classes and colonialists to keep their victims in bondage.[7]

2.7 Colonial theology was unable, in particular, to take note of and speak to our roots in the spiritual culture of this land. It did not know how to relate to the history of India's quest for the Ultimate Mystery: to India's experience of the Divine; to the symbols of that encounter in its sacred texts and worship forms; to the profundity and beauty of these symbols; and to the saints and seers of this land. Operating from within the West's mercantile framework, the churches (from West Asia and Europe) saw themselves as bringing God and Christ in their ships to these godless shores. They failed to honour the biblical truth that it is always God that leads peoples, brings them together and gives them to each other. Colonial mission and theology committed the *a priori* error of taking for granted that God had never been here, that Christ had not preceded them, that they have never been savingly active in its history, that the Spirit has never been in liberating and life-giving dialogue and communion with the hearts and dreams of the men and women of this land. They did not look first for God's presence and action here, to acknowledge it and give thanks. Their eyes failed to discern in the suffering people, including the victims of colonialism, the Crucified of Calvary. And they did not know what to do with people's struggles for freedom from colonial domination and oppression; they did not know that these struggles were big with a theology of justice and dignity, a theology of the Reign of God.

2.8 Thus the colonial Church and its theology failed to be prophetic, failed to develop a prophetic vision and voice. They had no Gospel for the poor, no Gospel of liberation of the oppressed as Jesus had; and no Gospel of challenge to exploiters, plunderers and worshippers of wealth, weapon and war. That is why the Church missed the meaning of the Asian Revolution. Tissa Balasuriya suggests that "high among the causes must be placed our theology which is imported from the West, individualistic in morality, socially uncritical and heavily weighed on the side of preservation of the status quo... a theology of essences, of a certain immobility in which the highest value is the preservation of the Church itself."[8]

2.9 The main traits, then, of this imperial-colonial-colonized theology may be summed up here, following Balasundaram who follows Balasuriya, with some slight modifications and additions of our own.[9] This classical, traditional theology:

2.9.1 - is ethnocentric and culture-bound, and not universalist as it has been claiming to be. It has been a handmaid of Western expansionism, and an ally, however unwilling, of the exploitation of other continents by Europe and America;

2.9.2 - is Church-centred, and tends to equate, wrongly, the Reign of God and common human good with the expansion of the Church. It presents the Church as the indispensable vehicle of salvation, and advocates the questionable scheme: God-Church-World, as if God works in the world only through the Church, instead of the scheme: God-World-Church, for God works in

the world, and therefore also in the Church which he makes a qualified witness of some of his significant deeds.[10]

2.9.3 - is work-oriented and possessive in its attitude to nature to the neglect of respect for God's creation and contemplation of its beauty and wonder;

2.9.4 - is dominated by male clergy who in the Catholic Church are celibate, who easily find in the Scriptures texts that reinforce their power, importance and indispensability. Rights of women have been successfully marginalised, and do not figure in this theology.

2.9.5 - is precapitalist and unfamiliar with the conditions of life, concerns and problems of the working class and of the rural and urban poor. It has little relation to the life and struggle of the masses.

2.9.6 - is anti-communist with a negative evaluation of socialist regimes, and a positive appreciation of capitalism and colonialism. Since 1950 it has turned a blind eye towards half of Asia which is China and to a most significant revolution in human history. It has also been unnecessarily involved in ideological battles with Marxism.

2.9.7 - is non-revolutionary, and supportive of the western technological model as the normal pattern of national development. It does not see the naked greed and insatiable thirst for profit, central to this model, as contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. It is utterly inadequate to transform a system in which 80 per cent of the world's people have access only to 20 per cent of the world's resources.

2.9.8 - is bereft of social analysis, is individualistic in orientation, and unmindful of the social aspects of the Reign of God and of salvation, sin and conversion; and that, despite its almost exclusive derivation from the Bible.

2.9.9 - is overly theoretical and not oriented to action. It fails to take into account the exigencies of real situations and of efforts required to change them. "When action is precluded from reflection, thought tends to be sterile, oriented to the status quo, and conservative .... Traditional theology neglected the dynamic nature of the Kingdom of God and its impact on human history."

2.9.10 - is of low credibility in the vast ex-colonies because of its collusion with colonialism and its inability to critique and disown such an anti-Christ enormity.

2.9.11 - is fond of a Western version of Jesus, a one-sided picture of him that suited Christian institutions which had become a handmaid of the Roman empire and of medieval feudal lords. Jesus saves us from original sin rather than from actual oppression and exploitation by colonialist and capitalist greed. He is a-political and interested above all in each individual's interior purity. He is often presented as sweet and domesticated, an enemy of science and modernity, of democracy and socialism, and of the struggles of workers and victims for liberation and Justice. "At least he has not been seen as on their side."[12] When Christ reentered the continent of his birth, it was "as the white colonizer's tribal god seeking ascendancy in the Asian pantheon."[12] Indeed, with regard to faiths other than Christian, Jesus Christ was a veritable Julius Caesar out to conquer and destroy and level up. In Pieris' phrase, it was a theology of

Christ-against-religions and Christ-against-cultures.

2.9.12 - is somewhat uneasy with Jesus' simplicity and powerlessness. The Church, assimilated to imperial systems, has come to love a little show of pomp and power. A great deal of traditional clerical theology is about hierarchical power and about minutiae of rituals, titles, procedure and precedence, and not about You-are-my-friends, or You-are-the-branches, or You-are-all brothers/sisters type of relationship within the community! Is it not remarkable that so many official prayers are addressed to 'Almighty and everlasting-God'? One could wish that the New Testament figure of God as the gentle Father, as Compassion, as Love came to the fore oftener.

2.9.13 - is not able "to make connection between God and human freedom". It cannot "discern God's liberating work in the world of human bondage. It fails to see that God's Kingdom is the Kingdom of free humanity, and that "historical freedom is the centre of the Christian faith".[13]

It is due to features such as these, due to so many deficiencies, disservices and failures that classical, traditional, colonial, imported theology is to us irrelevant. Theology has to be radically rethought and built afresh on the foundations of our own collective encounter with God and the world, using materials from our religious, cultural, secular, human heritage and the dynamism of our people's history.

3. Theology: liberated and liberating

3.1 "Therefore we may not look to the West for prophetic theology which does justice to God's self-revelation both in Jesus and in the world today." That is Sebastian Kappen speaking in the mid-seventies.[14] In a talk given in USA around the same time, T.K Thomas said: "the credibility of Western Christianity is at a low ebb.[15] Charles W. Format admits that "Christianity has been breaking with the idea that it depends on a Western base, and has been asserting its Eastern identity... Non-Western Christianity has come of age."[16] A negative but a necessary aspect of our starting point is a critique of Western theology which has comfortably cohabited with imperialism, slave trade, genocide, plunder, mammon worship and avarice which is idolatry (Col 3:5; Eph 5:5). Of evil practice error is born. The West's centuries-old organized oppression of people on all the continents is the mother of modern Western systematic atheism.

3.2 Theology has to do with faith; it is critical reflection on faith and life in the light of faith. The first step, then, in decolonizing theology and in building an authentic Indian theology, is to re-examine the colonially obtained/imposed definition of theology and to re-understand it if need be, and re-describe it.

3.2.1 Theology is bound up with faith, and faith with revelation. *Revelation* is not a set of propositions or a string of truths; it is not even a credal formula handed to us by God. Revelation is God's free, loving self-communication to us in and through what God does for us and gives to us. Creation is revelation: so are the seasonal rains, the crops that grow, the food that gives us strength; they are God's self-witness. In and through them

God says, 'I am here, and I care' (Rom 1:19-2O; Act 14:17). We ourselves are God's love-gift to us, and are a disclosure of God's mind and heart. And God's law is inscribed in every heart (Rom, 2:14-la). The human heart's endless yearnings born of its radical God-ward orientation, is also revelation. So are all meaningful events and history's unfolding. They are ways of God's self-giving. The poets, the makers of just laws, the seers and saints of all ages everywhere are a word from God about us and about God's own self, God's love for us and plans for the world. The Word of God is not only disclosure but invitation to respond by collaborating with God in the ongoing work of creating and recreating us and the universe. And we know that Jesus of Nazareth is a very special self-communication of God, of divine Love and Compassion, of solidarity with us human beings, with the poor in particular, in their humiliation and suffering and struggles for justice.

3.2.2 Hearing the revelation is *faith.* Traditionally, in the patristic and Scholastic West, faith has been understood as an intellectual conviction. Hence the concern with dogmas and their elaboration, and the killing of people whose terminology differed from that of the people in power. Faith was reduced to correct words and creeds, to neat orthodoxy. But the truth is that saving faith consists in orthopraxis, in right living, in doing God's will. Jesus said, "It is not anyone who calls me, 'Lord, Lord,' who will enter in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father". Merely to listen to Jesus's words won't help; one has to act on them. To listen and not to act is to build one's house on sand and to have to watch it collapse when the floods and the gales come (Mt 7:21-27). Jesus asks, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you?" (Lk 6:46-49). James' outlook is similar: "How does it help when someone who has never done a good act claims to have faith " (Jas 2:14-17). Did not the good Samaritan, whom Jesus points to as a model, have finer faith than the priest who hurried by to pray in the temple for the man on the road side? (Lk 10:29-37). Or, what saving faith did those have whom, according to Mt 25:31-46, Jesus invites to come , inherit the Kingdom? Perhaps they had never seen Jesus nor heard of him. Perhaps when they fed the hungry and clothed the naked they had no religious thoughts or intentions. Still they are blessed with the reward of faith. Saving faith is the concrete love they showed to needy persons, regardless of colour, creed or caste. In such acts of justice-love there is a real encounter with God, a true hearing and heeding of the Word -made-Flesh in the reality of the hungry and the broken, the cast-away and the unwanted. The simplest deeds of justice and love have dimensions and depths unknown to us, but known to the Spirit and disclosed by Her.

Jesus too points to deeds as the decisive revelation grounding faith :"If I am not doing my Father's will there is no need to believe me; but if I am doing it at least believe in the works I do" (Jn 10:37-38). Similarly it is by our love for one another, and not by our buildings, rites quarrels or canon laws, that

the world will know we are Christ's disciples (Jn 13:35). Hence the sending of us to bear witness with the beauty, the newness and the surprise of our lives, by being light and salt and yeast and the fragrance of Christ (Mt 5:13-16; 13:33; 2Cor 2:14-16). Faith is caring for God in the needy neighbour, in the crucified Son of Man.

Faith is yessing ourselves to God who comes offering Self in the rejected Son of Man. Faith then is "the full act of human existence in freedom".[17] That is a completely decolonized description of the saving relationship we call faith.

3.2.3 Where faith was mainly a matter of words rather than of life, it was in style to hunt for heresies and kill people in the name of 'truth,' while conniving at and using profoundly criminal and heretical systems like slavery, conquest, land-grab, exploitation of the poor and oppression of women. A decolonized Church and its theology, understanding faith as ortho-/ theo-praxis, will avoid such pitfalls and strive to become Good News of liberation and life for the people of the land.

3.3 *Theology* is a way of orienting this praxis towards social transformation in the direction of the Reign of God with its justice, equality, freedom and peace. It is a process of making faith, understood as commitment and obedience to God's purposes for history, interact critically with our situation: negatively with the situations of oppression and structures of injustice, and positively with people's struggles for dignity, freedom and food. Theology is done by bringing faith-experience with its interpretations and symbols face to face with real life with its problems and sufferings; by letting them meet., clash, question and challenge each other, illumine and interpret each other, and encounter God as judgement or as grace in each other's depths. The sparks born of the contact and the flame leaping from it will be the seeds and the buds of a theology making for social transformation. Faith-experience will interact with situations of oppression and death till it becomes a call and a stimulus to fresh liberating and life-enhancing action.

3.3.1 In the classical tradition in which faith was a matter of the intellect, – an intellectual conviction or assent,– theology was an attempt to understand the faith by exploring and establishing its harmony with reason and secular sciences through the mediation of some philosophical system currently popular such as Neo-platonism (the Fathers), Aristotle's system (the Scholastics) or existentialism (moderns). Colonial theology was speculation on dogmas: a matter of logos or the reasoned speech, not liberation praxis. It could not afford to present faith as God's call and challenge to freedom and justice; it could not direct faith-commitment towards questioning of imperial systems and colonial interests with a view to meaningful humanizing and gospelling transformation in Church and society. In that tradition theology is not done but taught and learned; for it is supposed to be perennial and universal, valid for all places and times, regardless of natural variations, cultural diversities and historical evolutions.

3.3.2 Jesus is Revelation; but in a real sense he is also theology. He is

God's Word about God and us; the truth about all God-world encounter; the liberating and life-giving divine call and challenge; and a complete theology enfleshed and situated among us in a new Humanity, whole and beautiful and full of promise. The Saving Truth done, lived, realized in a person and a ministry unto death; but also interpreted and re-expressed in that same life of service and its deep involvement with the masses of the people. Its further interpretative articulations are had in the lives, reflections and meditations of Paul and John and the early Christian communities. The Scriptures, like Jesus, are both revelation and theology. So are the saints and all authentic churches. Shall we say that a finer and profounder and more telling and engaging interpretation of the faith is had in the martyrs and the saints and in all loving, sharing communities than in writers and their books? And that Francis of Assisi is a richer theology than Aquinas' *Summa*? The need and usefulness of spelling out the meaning Francis and his life embodied is not to be denied. The truth emphasized here is that theology has first to be a person/community and a life before it is articulated in speech or other symbols. Every good man and woman, every genuinely human life is a theology.

3.3.3 Divine revelation is received and grasped in faith. Both revelation and faith need to be 'reflected upon, explained, communicated and confronted with other truths'.[18] Of these truths the most basic and vital is the historical human condition of freedom or slavery, of hope or despair, of life or death. Depending on the nature of the situation, the confrontation will be celebratory (thanksgiving) or conflictual (transforming). For, the revealed Word is freedom, hope and life, and demands the abolition of slavery, despair and death. That is why Jesus' own life was both celebratory and conflictual.

3.3.4 Jesus made it a point to decolonize the religion and the theology of the people, which had been occupied by royal, priestly and wealthy settlers from the time of Solomon. Power centres moulded religion for the socio-religious periphery. Worship was centralized to suit monarchical politics. Religion became priest-ridden and expensive, legalistic and burdensome. It had its outcasts and untouchables. It also had its ways of fleecing the poor and 'devouring the houses of widows'. Jesus marginalized the temple and all priestly pretensions. The temple is destined to disappear. Worship shall be in spirit and truth. Mercy, not sacrifice. People, not Sabbath. Relationships have priority over offerings to God. God offers life to sinners, not death. Rules of purity and pollution are not decisive at the level of the heart. Amassed wealth is no sign of divine favour. God's favourites are the poor. Finer faith is found among 'the gentiles' than in Israel. With such teaching and corresponding practice Jesus stood much of traditional religion and theology on its head. His work of decolonizing and revising religion was so far-reaching that, while the liberated people rejoiced, the powers that be decided to rid society of the radical prophet. But before the cross rose on Calvary, many a mind and heart had been transformed, new ways of relating to God and one another put in place,

a new image of God disclosed, and a fresh experience of the Divine communicated.

3.3.5 Theology will no longer be an attempt to explain away suffering, including those caused by colonialism; nor to promote resignation to oppression in view of the notorious 'pie in the sky'. Theology will be a praxis to overcome all the minions of death including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The perspective or horizon of theology in our context will be God as freedom and life, God as call to life and freedom. Theology will therefore press for historical freedom so that the Kingdom may come. Eschatological freedom demands that we work to change things now.[19] Theology will connect hope and freedom in history; connect eschatology and struggle for justice now; connect the Reign of God and social change. It will also clarify the relationship between God and freedom, and freedom and life. God is indeed the basis of the rights and freedom of the oppressed. "God's freedom is for people". "To be Christian is to be free; and to be free for the Kingdom is to be Christian". "To be Christian is to be human because the locus of freedom is the Kingdom of God. In fact, "historical freedom is the center of Christian faith'.[20] According to the Gospel, "the human response to God's freedom is to take responsibility for the ordering of the world... Freedom must mean action in history that will lead to the creation of a more just and humane society."[21] There is a dialectic of authority and freedom both in the Church and in the larger society. "Authority is competence to communicate freedom.. Those who lack competence use power...(Jesus') authority was his freedom available to all who touched him... It is a concern for humanity testifying to a God-experience; the two prongs of a liberation struggle".[22]

3.3.6 The project then is to decolonize theology and build authentic Indian theologies:

3.3.6.1 - by helping theology spring from the underside of history (as EATWOT has been saying for 20 years and more). That is, from where the victims of our systems are: where Savitri, the woodcutter's wife , prays and weeps and defeats death by love; where lie the chopped thumbs of Ekalavya and the Bengali weavers of East India Company days; and where broken people join hands to struggle for their rights.

3.3.6.2 - by letting our faith- articulations and interpretations arise out of the pain and suffering of the people, out of the faith and reflection of the poor, and from the search of the marginalized for relevance.

3.3.6.3 - by making sure that our theology has its feet on this earth, on Indian soil; and that its heart is in the trials and travails of our people, in their tears, hopes and dreams. Theology is to sense and do things as these are revealed in "people's struggles for spirituality and social emancipation, and expressed in the idioms and languages of the cultures such struggles have created".[23]

3.3.6.4 - by being faithful to our theological method of primacy of praxis over theory. The source of our theology will be our spirituality, and this will

consist in radical involvement with the poor. "We know Jesus the Truth by following Jesus the Way ... and that is the way of the cross, the basis of all knowledge. Growth of the world into the Kingdom... is a process punctuated with contradictions, violent transformations, and death-resurrection experiences".[24]

3.3.6.5 - by making sure that all theology is people's theology created by the people themselves out of their sufferings and their faith-experience of being called by God to put an end to oppression and misery. Theology will be carried and brought to birth by the people themselves in prayer and travail, the experts giving but midwifery assistance.

3.3.6.6 - by taking seriously the feminine contribution to faith and life and community, and recognizing their right to build into theology their perspectives, intuitions and experiences so that theology ceases to be colonized by patriarchy as it has been for far too long.

3.3.6.7 - by stepping together with Jesus into the people's religion and culture, and identifying ourselves with the righteous poor of the land. Baptism of the Jordan leads to the baptism of Calvary. It will be theology's task "to show that there can be no authentic religion without a painful participation in the conflicts of poverty, and no Abba experience without a struggle against mammon."

3.3.6.8 - by engaging in a deep-cutting critique of the feudal-capitalist system, without which no effective decolonization is possible. It is essential to unmask the anti-God, its greed for wealth and war, its anti-human ideology and history. It uses people for profit and then discards them. Re-evaluate the system from the perspective of its victims down the centuries: the victims of feudalism, colonialism, capitalism and neo-colonial liberalism. It is essential for an honest decolonization of theology to reevaluate the frenzied anti-communism fervently fomented in the Church for over a century. That has been a signal service for mammon-worshippers. We should come to an honest decision as to the nature of socialism/communism, its association with atheism, its relationship to the Kingdom-dream of Jesus and of the early Church and to the deeper meaning of the Eucharist, of the Our Father, and the historical meaning of our faith in God as Trinity/community. We must decide, for instance, how true is what Michael Manely of Jamaica said in 1975 in his keynote address to the fifth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi: "If capitalism is the engine that lifted man to new levels of economic and technological progress, it was equally the burial ground of his moral integrity."[25] Earlier that year Manley had summed up as follows his social vision for Jamaica: "... Socialism is love ... Socialism is Christianity in action ... Socialism is the Christian way of life in action. It is the philosophy that best gives expression to the Christian ideal of the equality of all God's children. It has as its foundation the Christian belief that all men and women must love their neighbours as themselves."[26]

3.3.6.9 -by realizing the significance of the fact that the majority of God's poor are non-Christians. They

"perceive their ultimate concern and symbolize their struggle for liberation in the idiom of non-Christian religions and cultures". Theology therefore has to speak to and speak through this non-Christian peoplehood. "We need a theology of religions that will expand the existing boundaries of orthodoxy as we enter into the liberative streams of other religions and cultures."[27] This has further consequences for theology and makes fresh demands.

3.3.6.10 - by listening to God's Word spoken outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition and recognizing God's saving work there and giving thanks. We should pay greater attention than we have paid hitherto to the lesson of Jonah, Job, Second Isaiah and the Melchizedek story concerning the universality of God's revelation and grace and of the offer of salvation. And so we must learn to bury for ever the old adage, 'No salvation outside the Church', which is a reflection on God's character if not on God's existence. Theology's task is to equip us not so much to plant the Church in more places as to participate in the mission of God. The texts and symbols of this God-world encounter and this larger history of salvation must be acknowledged and embraced.

3.3.6.11 - by welcoming theological pluralism and rejecting imposition of dead uniformity. India has a certain unity of outlook and historical experience. But this unity has been woven out of diverse ethnic groups, cultures, languages, religions, myths and sacred texts and symbols. Since revelation and faith, too, are filtered through human experiences and symbol systems, they "become varied according to personal and comrmunitarian experience. Theological pluralism, therefore, based on the diversity of human experience, and cultural, political and psychological contexts", is inevitable.[28] Pluralism is a grace. No one person, race, culture, language or religion can grasp and express exhaustively the riches of God's self-communication. The nuances that one misses, some others experience and articulate to the benefit of all.

In the 1974 Synod of Bishops, the African delegates stressed the need of theological pluralism. In the concluding address to the Synod, Paul VI stressed the need of theological unity. He said, "It would be dangerous to speak of diversified theologies according to continents and cultures ... Peter and Paul did not transform (the faith) to adapt it to Jewish, Greek or Roman world."[29] In reply to this Aylward Shorter makes three observations: (i) African Bishops themselves repudiated a theology of adaptation and called for a theology of incarnation. (ii) A distinction must be made between pluralism and diversity. Pluralism is diversity in unity. Unity presupposes pluralism. (iii) Ten years earlier, in 1964, in Jerusalem Paul VI spoke beautifully of this diversity in unity. He said, "Each nation received the Apostles' preaching according to its own mentality and culture. Each local church grew according to its own personality, customs ... without harming the unity of faith ..."[30]

3.3.6.12 - by recognizing afresh the identity of the Risen Christ with the Jesus of history, and by restoring to the

world community the figure of the quiet critic, the creative thinker, faithful friend and the imaginative innovator and revolutionary that was Jesus of Nazareth. Re-emphasize his overarching interest in people, and his readiness to act and risk his life for their health, honour and happiness. Rekindle faith in his challenging and transforming warm presence wherever people are: in the farm and the factory, the home and the street, the slum and the prison. He is not only, nor primarily, in Church and Sacrament but where people care for one another, struggle for justice, build solidarity and friendship, and toil to earn their daily rice. Jesus is there with them, participating in their liturgy of life, in their Bethlehems, Gethsemanes and Calvaries. Refashion the theology of his real presence in and among the people with all its socio-economic implications and imperatives. Restore the people to him and him to the people, whom to feed is to feed him.

3.3.6.13 Theology, in its beginnings, processes and conclusions, must be open to challenge. It should be willing to be judged, evaluated, corrected not by secret agents and invisible hands, but by the public, by the victims with whom and for whom theology is done, by the thinkers and critics in the Christian community, as well as in the wider community with whom the Church too works to change structures and fight injustices. What is required is a public socio-historical evaluation in the context of the changes to be effected, and not a criticism in the abstract.

3.4 Theology will grow and develop and renew itself along with our Indian and Christian faith experience. A three-fold source of this experience has been indicated: (i) the social, cultural and religious traditions of this land in which we are historically rooted; (ii) The Judaeo-Christian tradition which we accept, and in which we meet Jesus of Nazareth; and (iii) The life-experience of today in a culture of science and technology, irrationality and wars, poverty amid plenty.[31] Our theology will be a continuous creative interaction with and among these three sources. It will be an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation leading to new critical insights and to new praxis. A never-ending search for the meaning of life, and an ever deepening commitment to the creation of a new society of equality and gentleness and shared responsibility.

Theology is thus always on its way. It never arrives. There is no definitive and normative theology. Theology is ever in making. It is always to be remade and refined as struggles develop, as experience deepens, change pursues change, and history keeps unfolding. It is ever on the move in the direction of the Truth symbolized by faith and mysteriously known in love. Theology is a pilgrim of truth.

In brief, our theology does not aim at being a perfect system but at being nourishment for life and a plan of action. It will not be tied up with philosophical speculations but with people and their quest for meaning and their will to freedom. It originates in Jesus' passion in his people, and makes for ever fuller liberation-resurrections.

Notes

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5. *Ibid.*, 5-6; K. Pathil, *Indian Churches at the Crossroads*, Bangalore, 1994, pp. 129-132.
6. K. Pathil, op. cit., p. 41; T. Witvliet, *A Place in the Sun*, New York, 1985, pp. 10-11.
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11. Balasuriya, *Jesus Christ*, p. 14.
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20. *Ibid.*, pp. 124.
22. Pieris, *An Asian Theology*, p. 85.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
24. *Ibid*, pp. 82-83.
25. M. Manley, "From the Shackles of Domination and Oppression", in Erskine, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
27. Pieris, 1988, p. 87.
28. Pathil, *Indian Churches*, p. 46.
29. Osser. Rom, 9.
30. *Petit Echo, Bulletin of White Fathers*, 1964:2; A. Shorter, *African Christian Theology*, New York, 1977, pp. 150-152.
31. Cf. Pathil, *Indian Churches, pp.* 136 ff.

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The Indian Church of the Future

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1. Preliminary Remarks

1. In this paper I shall attempt to answer the question: if the Church in India were to inculturate itself radically, what kind of a church would emerge? My intention is to describe the main features of the Indian Church to come. Limitations of space do not permit me to paint a complete picture of the future Church. What I have to say about the Indian Church of the future can be summed up in two statements: 1. It will be a church of God; 2. It will be a church of the people.

Experience of God is central to Indian religions.[1] The followers of these religions do not appreciate any religion which presents itself as a well-organized and rigidly structured institution.[2] Hence, the Church when it becomes truly Indian will be a church of God which lays stress on God experience as basic to Christian existence. It will also be a church of the people, a church which respects the equality and dignity of all its members. This is highly significant in a country where the caste system has tended to marginalize large sections of the population and look upon them as non-people. The Church needs to be responsive to the quest of the Dalits, women, the tribal people and other sections of society for human dignity.

2. The situation of the Church in India is anomalous. The proclamation of the gospel normally gives rise to truly inculturated churches. As Vatican II declares:

> The seed which is the Word of God sprouts from the good ground watered by divine dew. From this ground the seed draws nourishing elements which it transforms and assimilates into itself. Finally it bears much fruit. Thus, in imitation of the plan of the Incarnation, the young churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these churches borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Saviour's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life (*AG* 22).

Though the Christian message was brought to India most probably in the Apostolic times, no truly Indian Church emerged. In fact, what we have here at present are three churches - the Syro Malabar Church, the Syro-Malankara Church and the Latin Church. I have serious doubts about the legitimacy of the churches which, after they had grown into adulthood in far-off lands,

were transplanted into our country. Are they not remnants of our colonial past? The only way open for them is to undergo a process of decolonization which demands that they be ready to die in their present form so that a genuinely Indian Church can be born. According to Vatican II, all things human stand in need of this paschal experience:

> For it is only by putting to death what is old that we are able to come to a newness of life. This fact applies first of all to persons, but it holds also for the various goods of this world, which bear the mark both of man's sin and of God's blessing (*AG* 8).

3. The Council is quite clear that because of its universal mission the Church should be ready to incarnate itself in the cultures of the peoples among whom it exists. This demands that it does not behave like an "export firm" which exports to different parts of the world a church which was deeply rooted in the culture of a particular people.[3] This is how I would interpret the following statement of Vatican II:

> But at the same time, the Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life or any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too (*GS* 58).

2. The Church of God

1. For us believing Christians, the Church is not a purely human enterprise. It is more than just an association of humans. God is at work in the origin and development of the Church. That is why Paul speaks of "the Church of God, that is at Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2). He is quite aware that the Church is the fruit of God's saving design in Christ Jesus. This is implied in his view that the Church is a mystery (see Eph 5:32). For Paul, "The mystery is the divine plan and decision to save men (and women) through the death of Jesus."[4] And the Church is the effect of God's saving action in Jesus Christ.

God's saving work accomplished in Jesus Christ is effectively communicated to humans through the Holy Spirit. He is the author of the Church. That is why Pentecost is regarded as the birthday of the Church. One can say that the Church is "the sacrament of the Holy Spirit."[5] It is meant to be a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led community. As Vatican II has stated:

> The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (cf. 1Cor 3:16; 6:19). In them He prays and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons (cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15-16 and 26). The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth (cf. Jn 16:13) and gives her a unity of fellowship and service. He furnishes and adorns her with the fruits of His grace (cf. Eph 4:11-12; 1Cor 12:4; Gal 5:22). By the power of the gospel He makes the Church grow, perpetually renews her, and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse (*LG* 4).

This has serious implications for our Christian life. The transforming power of the Spirit at work in us is to be manifested through the quality of our

life. The fruits of the Spirit have to be visible in us (see *Gal* 5:22).

2. The expression, the Church of God, also signifies a church that is rooted in the experience of God. Just as Israel originated from the experience of the liberating God in the Exodus event, so too the Christian Church sprang up from the experience of the saving God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One becomes a member of the Church by sharing this experience.

The early Christians were quite aware of this. It was the Damascus experience - the experience of God in the risen Christ - that transformed Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle.[6] This is what enabled Paul to assert that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Cor 5:18). And his only desire in life was to deepen this experience. As he has stated:

> All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, in growing conformity with his death, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead (Phil 4:10f).

John, too, was quite clear that Christian life and Christian proclamation were rooted in an experience of God in Jesus Christ. So he says:

> We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us (1Jn 1:2-3).

The Indian Church of the future needs to recapture this spirit and strive to become a church rooted in an experience of God in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, because of a one-sided development of European theology, the importance of God experience for Christian existence has been lost sight of.[7] This rationalistic theology - which gradually spread to all parts of the Church - reduced revelation to a communication of divine truths which can be articulated in propositions. As a result, faith was understood as the acceptance of these propositional truths. It appeared as though one could be a believer without any experience of God or relationship to him. To be fair, we must point out that the mystical tradition in the West did not follow the predominant theology and stressed the importance of personal experience of God. So, too, St. Thomas pointed out that our faith is not directed at the expressions of faith but at the reality they refer to. So we do not confess: I believe that God is all powerful, but, I believe in the all powerful God.[8]

Vatican II has a rich understanding of revelation and faith. It has laid stress on the experiential dimension of revelation. It speaks of how "Israel came to know by experience the ways of God" (*DV* 14). And the Apostles encountered God by listening to Christ's words, by observing his actions, by living with him as well as by the experience of the Holy Spirit (see *DV* 7). For the Council, revelation is God's saving intervention in human history and it takes place through words and deeds (see *DV* 2). Only by listening to the words and observing the deeds of God

can we receive this revelation. To put it differently, divine revelation is available to us only in experience and as experience.

3. As Gabriel Moran has pointed out, "Experience should not be equated to what is empirically evident and scientifically measurable."[9] Nor should it be reduced to the subjectivism of a human being living in individual isolation. Human persons are essentially community beings. And the community exerts a deep influence on the way we experience life and reality. Humans are also historical beings. This, too, shapes our experience. Hence, human experience includes the dimensions of society and history. If one understands experience in a comprehensive way, then one can agree with Moran when he asserts:

> People who demand that there be a higher norm of truth than human experience are asking for an idol. Man has no recourse in his life except to turn to what is finite. He can submit, as he is always tempted to submit, to a text or a ruler or an institution built by his own hands. There is no lack of things available and waiting for divinization. His only other alternative is to follow his own human experience and to pursue it wherever it takes him. If there be a God, must not his voice be heard within the experience of a man who listens with all other men for the voice of the divine?[10]

As Vatican II has said, "all believers of whatever religion have always heard His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures" (*GS* 36).

4. We need to reflect a little more on human experience. Experience is not something which we do, it happens to us. Herein lies the possibility of encountering the Absolute who makes unconditional claims on us. As Langdon Gilkey points out:

> The ultimate or unconditioned element in experience is not so much the seen but the basis of seeing; not what is known as an object so much as the basis of knowing; not an object of value, but the ground of valuing; not the thing before us, but the source of things; not the particular meanings that generate our life in the world, but the ultimate context within which these meanings necessarily subsist.[11]

Hence, the divine is the horizon of our experience and understanding.

True, there is a danger that people who insist on personal experience may fall into pure subjectivism. The only way to avoid this is to be in open dialogue with the members of the Christian, human community. The community can correct and complete my defective and partial understanding of what I experience. Inter-subjectivity is the only safeguard against individual misinterpretation of experience. As Paulo Freire has said, people in communion discover truth.

5. We have now to examine the specific nature of the Judaeo-Christian experience of God. In the religious traditions of humankind, there are at least four ways in which people have encountered the divine.[12] First of all there is the experience of God in nature, as the power behind natural phenomena. Such an experience usually leads to belief in nature gods. This is true of the Hindus from the Vedic times. This type of God

experience is to be found also in Judaism and Christianity. Secondly, there is the experience of God in the depths of one's being. God-ward movement often takes an inward direction. This leads to the cultivation of interiority. The Upanishads bear witness to this kind of an experience of God. It is also found among the Christian mystics. Thirdly, there is the experience of God mediated through the rites and doctrines of religions. This is probably the most valued form of God experience in popular Catholicism, in which the frequent reception of sacraments is highly esteemed. Such an approach to the experience of God is found also among the followers of other religions. Finally, there is the experience of God in inter-human relationship and socio-political involvement. This form of God experience is, I believe, typical of the Biblical tradition. The foundational God experience of Israel was the Exodus – the experience of God in the liberation of slaves. Israel also experienced God as the one who was active on its behalf in the decisive moments of its history. And the early Christians experienced God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus who was done to death as a political criminal. For us Christians, the human person is the privileged locus of God experience – first of all in Jesus of Nazareth, and then in every man, woman and child. Besides, as Charles Davis has pointed out:

> The Christian religion has always been thoroughly political, with social and political action the major vehicle of the distinctively Christian religious experience. Briefly, Christians find God in their neighbor rather than in their inner consciousness or in the cosmos.[13]

In fact, Israel's prophets bear witness to this kind of God experience. Thus for Jeremiah, to know God, to experience God, is to practise justice as well as to promote justice (see Jer 22:15-16). Similar ideas are found also in the other prophets. And this way of experiencing God has affected the shape of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. According to Charles Davis:

> Yahweh from the beginning was a political God. Most of the images and symbols we use of God are social and political in their basic meaning. The mighty acts of God are a series of political events. The prophetic message is a demand for social justice. Jesus died, not because of his inner life of prayer, but because of his impact upon the social order. The Gospel message is centred upon the political symbol of the Kingdom. The earliest Christian creed was 'Jesus is the Lord' – a declaration that takes its meaning from the political order. The early Christians were a movement of the marginalized and under-privileged. They eventually came to power in the Roman Empire because their movement offered, culturally and politically, what was needed by society.[14]

If the Indian Church of the future is rooted in such an experience of God, it will necessarily be a prophetic church. Like the prophets of old and Jesus of Nazareth, the Church will speak on behalf of God and interpret his will for his people today.[15] Basing itself on its real experience of God, it will endeavour to decipher the designs of God in the events of today. It will also engage in "a continuous and endless

critique of all earthly institutions, beliefs, customs and practices."[16] It will do this not in the name of any earthly absolutes – which would be idolatry – but under an appeal to the incomprehensible mystery of God. In the last analysis, "the task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[17] At a time when global capitalism has made money the central tenet of faith of the present-day universal religion and when it brings with it poverty and misery for millions of people in India (and elsewhere in the world), we are faced with a crucial choice: God or Mammon?[18] It is here that the Church has to take a stand for God and raise her voice in protest against this iniquitous system. It has to hold fast to Jesus' vision of a new society[19] and work for the establishment of a new human community which is rooted in God, which is characterized by freedom, equality, love, justice and peace, and which lives in harmony and communion with nature.

6. The Indian Church of the future will be a church of real spirituality. There is a frightening dearth of true spirituality in the Church today. What Karl Rahner has said of the Church in Germany is by and large true of the Church in India. "The Church's public life even today (for all the good will which is not to be questioned) is dominated to a terrifying extent by ritualism, legalism, administration, and a boring and resigned spiritual mediocrity continuing along familiar lines."[20] Besides, there is a lot of piety, but not enough spirituality in the Church today. This is not to condemn the popular devotions which play a significant role in the life of many Christians. It must, however, be pointed out that these devotions are truly beneficial only if they mediate an experience of God and help people to live the gospel way of life. The quality of one's life, not fidelity to exercises of piety, is the sign of real spirituality.

The Indian Church of the future needs to learn and practise "the incomprehensibly noble art of a true initiation into the mystery of experience of God."[21] This has to become a top priority for the Church. All Christians, but especially the leaders of the Church, have to be men and women who have had a deep experience of God and who can mediate such an experience to others. There is reason to believe that at present the Church is not very successful in mediating an experience of God to people.[22] One wonders if this is a high priority at all on the Church's agenda today.

Because of its peculiar nature the Christian experience of God leads to a spirituality not of monastic withdrawal from the world, but of evangelical involvement in it. In this the Church has to follow the example of Jesus who because of his experience of God adopted a spirituality of identification and confrontation. As George Soares-Prabhu says:

> In his sharply polarized society, clearly divided into economic and social classes with conflicting interests, Jesus takes sides. He identifies with the poor and the outcast, and he confronts the establishment, which impoverishes and rejects them.[23]

Incarnation and the cross are the symbols of Jesus' spirituality.

7. The realization that the experience of God is basic to Christian existence will lead to a new understanding of many ecclesial realities. Thus, in the Indian Church of the future, Scripture will be not looked upon primarily as a book of doctrine, but as a record of the Judaeo-Christian experience of God. It is the story of this experience. As George Soares-Prabhu writes:

> It is because the specific God-experience of biblical religion is the experience of a God active in history that the literary expression of this God experience takes the form of a story. It is important, then, that we grasp firmly this overarching unity of the Bible as a story. The Bible contains many laws but it is not (unlike the *Manusmriti*) a book of laws. The Bible contains much doctrine, but it is not (unlike the *Upanishads*) a book of doctrine. The Bible contains many hymns but it is not (unlike the *Rgveda*) a book of hymns. Laws, doctrines and hymns are all parts of the one story the Bible tells.[24]

As a story, the Bible is meant to mediate this God experience. That is probably why Vatican II says that Tradition and Scripture are "like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God" (*DV* 7).

So, too, the primary function of the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, is to mediate an experience of God. I do not deny that it may fulfil other functions as well. But if it does not put people in touch with God, then it is of no great value. Something similar is to be said of the doctrines of the Church. The doctrinal formulations are articulations of the experience God. Originating in experience, they are meant to lead us back to experience. Unrelated to experience they are empty and meaningless. Speaking of the dogmatic formulations of the early Church, J. A. T.Robinson remarked:

> Originally the doctrine was created to describe, define and safeguard an experience. But in the process experience seems to have drained right out of it, the dogma has become airborne, and we are asked if we believe in the dogma as though this were what being a Christian means. We are left with a shell on our hands from which the life which shaped it has long since departed.[25]

Besides, dogmatic language goes the way of all language and changes with the passage of time. This calls for creative reinterpretations of doctrines in the socio-cultural context of the emerging India. As Avery Dulles has pointed out:

> Christianity has been a vital religion for so many centuries because Christians of successive generations have had the courage to rethink their faith in the light of the most pressing problems of their day. This was done by the biblical authors, by the Greek and Latin Fathers, and by the great Scholastics.[26]

The Indian Church of the future will encourage the faithful, especially the theologians, creatively to reinterpret the doctrines of the Church so that they become living and life-giving.

3. The Church of the People

1. The Church of God is not primarily an institution but a people - a

people who have positively responded to their experience of God in Jesus Christ. That is why from ancient times the Church has understood itself as the congregation of the faithful. The Kingdom of God, which is central to the life and ministry of Jesus, "evidently presupposes a people, a people of God, in whom it can become established and from whom it can shine forth."[27] St. Paul, who is the first New Testament writer to develop an ecclesiology, looks upon the Church as the new Israel, the people of God of the messianic times.[28] And in our own day, Vatican II has retrieved this understanding of the Church as the people of God.

2. The Church is a community of radical equality. Basing himself on his experience of God as abba, Jesus taught that all men and women are brothers and sisters, and this rules out all discrimination on any ground whatever. And his life exemplified this teaching. As George Soares-Prabhu asserts:

> Jesus himself violates the caste distinctions of his people by 'communing' with tax collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1-2) and by numbering an outcast customs official (Levi the tax collector of Mk 2:13) and an outlaw rebel against Roman rule (Simon the Zealot of Lk 6:15) among his closest followers. He makes women his disciples (Lk 8:1-2; 10:38-42), commends the faith of gentiles (Mt 8:10; Mk 5:34), and proposes a Samaritan as the model for the interhuman concern which for him is the essence of the Law (Lk 10:29-37).[29]

And the early Church followed the example of Jesus. It was a community in which all racial, social and gender differences were eliminated. As St. Paul declares:

> For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26-28).

Such an egalitarian ecclesiology is of great significance to the Indian Church of the future. Caste is an all pervasive reality in India today. It exerts an influence on almost all aspects of life. Practically all political parties exploit it as a means to mobilize the people. What is very sad is that it has also affected the Church. It is to the credit of the Church that it has received into her ranks large numbers of the Dalits. But, unfortunately, it has not treated them as equal members of the community. Various kinds of discrimination against the Dalits are still prevalent in the Church. The Church will have to take effective steps to remove them and ensure that the equality of the Dalits is accepted by all. They have to be treated with respect and love.

Obviously, the Dalits are not the only people who suffer discrimination in Church and society. The tribal people and women, too, are often treated as second class citizens of the country and inferior members of the Church. The Church of the future will have to make sure that the equality and dignity of these people are affirmed in practice, and not merely in theory.

3. The Indian Church of the future will be a community of radical frce-

dom. Freedom is one of the parameters of the Kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed.[30] And Jesus thought it to be his life's mission to liberate people (see Lk 4:16-21). The early Christians regarded freedom as one of Christ's gifts to them (see Jn 8:31-36; Gal 5:1, 13-15). Freedom is also the sign of the presence of Christ's Spirit: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2Cor 3:17). The Church as a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led community has to be a place of freedom - not only freedom from sin and selfishness, but also from all forms of oppression and manipulation. This is necessary if it wishes to fulfil its mission effectively. The Church is the bearer of the gospel, which is a message of freedom and a source of liberation. As the sacrament of liberated humanity, the Church is called to champion the cause of freedom in our country. Even though India has just celebrated the 50th anniversary of her Independence, the vast majority of our people suffer from unfreedoms of various kinds. How can the Church credibly fight for their liberation if it is not itself a community of real freedom?

One important aspect of freedom is the freedom to express one's views fearlessly and frankly. For a variety of reasons, many Catholics including theologians do not experience this freedom. And yet, Vatican II powerfully affirmed the freedom of the believers to express their views without fear. Speaking of the theological education of lay people and their collaboration in the formation of priests, the Council declared:

> In order that such persons may fulfil their proper function, let it be recognized that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence (*GS* 62).

I hope that the Indian Church of the future will take this statement of the Council seriously. The leaders of the Church will have to realize that hasty condemnation of what they consider to be an erroneous teaching often creates an atmosphere where freedom of expression is threatened. In this day and age when there is an explosion of knowledge and when the legitimacy of pluralism in theology is acknowledged, it is not at all easy to say whether a particular opinion is erroneous or not. Besides, the experience of the past, when the magisterium had condemned some theological views as false, but later on had to retract its verdict, should make the Church cautious in the future. Moreover, there is no need of any condemnation, if a teaching considered erroneous can be refuted. And if it cannot be refuted, then the condemnation is manifestly unjust. In his opening speech to the first session of Vatican II, John XXIII declared:

> Nowadays, however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations.[31]

Today the most effective way of arriving at truth while respecting the freedom and dignity of the faithful is through honest dialogue. And the pastors of the Church have a duty to foster

it. While speaking about the mission of the Church to unify all humankind, Vatican II affirms the importance of dialogue within the Church. It declares:

> Such a mission requires in the first place that we foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity. Thus all those who compose the one People of God, both pastors and the general faithful, can engage in dialogue with ever abounding fruitfulness. For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything which divides them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case (*GS* 92).

4. The Church of the people will be a participative community. All the faithful will have a say in the making of decisions in the Church. This is quite in keeping with the tradition of the Church. In the Apostolic times, when the nascent Church faced a serious problem it called an assembly of the faithful. The twelve apostles served as a kind of "ruling council" which presided over the assembly and facilitated the process of decision-making (see Acts 6 and 15)[32]. When there was some confusion caused by the charismatics in the Church of Corinth, Paul asks not the leaders of the Church (in fact we do not know if there were any leaders at the time in Corinth) but the community to regulate the use of the gifts of the Spirit (See 1Cor 14:26-32). These practices of participative decision-making continued after the New Testament times. In the third century, St. Cyprian declared: "I have made it a rule, ever since the beginning of my episcopate, to make no decision merely on the strength of my own personal opinion without consulting you (the presbyters and the deacons), and without the approbation of the people."[33] In the course of the thirteenth century, Innocent III and Boniface VIII, two of the most authoritarian Popes in the Church's history, appealed to the principle: "Whatever affects everybody ought to be corporately approved by everybody."[34]

Gradually the Church ceased to be a participative community. The decision-making power was concentrated in the hands of the clergy, especially the higher clergy. Lay people had no say whatever in the affairs of the Church. In our own day, Vatican II has recommended the establishment of a pastoral council in each diocese and a parish council in each parish (*CD* 27). This is only a first step towards becoming a participative community. In 1996, the meeting of the general body of the CBCI stated:

> We reiterate our sincere desire to improve and to perfect the movement towards a truly participatory Church where all sections of the People of God revitalizing their baptismal grace fulfil their vocation and mission. The CBCI will then be a Body that gives witness to unity in mission, achieved with a diversity of roles. In this context we resolve to emphasize the importance of involving all sections of the Church, especially the laity, and reposing greater confidence in them."[35]

The Indian Church of the future will have to set up structures and organs of participation, for without them the desire for a participative Church will remain just a pious wish. In democratic

India today sections of people once neglected are clamouring for participation in the making of decisions that affect them. And lay people in the Church are asking for a more active role in the thinking, planning and decision-making process in the Church. If we believe that the Spirit of the Lord is present and active in every member of the Church, it is important that we attentively listen to every one. Through him\her the Spirit may be speaking to the Church.

5. In the Church of the people there will be a radically new understanding and exercise of leadership. It will recapture the spirit of gospel leadership and incarnate it in the situation of our country. Selfless service, and not power or domination, is the ideal Jesus sets before the leaders of the Church. As Mark sums it up:

> You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many (Mk 10:42-46).

Thus, Jesus the servant, who lays down his life for the welfare, the salvation, of the people is the model for all Christian leaders. This is witnessed to in all the books of the New Testament. As Edward Schillebeeckx observes:

> According to Paul and the whole of the New Testament, at least within the Christian communities of believers, relationships involving subjection are no longer to prevail. We find this principle throughout the New Testament, and it was also to determine strongly the New Testament view of ministry. This early Christian egalitarian ecclesiology in no way excludes leadership and authority; but in that case, authority must be filled with the Spirit, from which no Christian, man or woman, is excluded, in principle, on the basis of the baptism of the Spirit.[36]

As is well known, the leaders of the Church down the centuries have not always exercised their authority according to the gospel ideal. It is, however, an encouraging sign that Vatican II has reaffirmed that the ministers of the Church are servants of their brothers and sisters and that their service consists in coordinating and directing the efforts of all towards a common goal, while respecting the Christian freedom and dignity of each one (See *LG* 18).

Such an understanding of leadership is very relevant to the Indian Church of the future. Ours is a country in which the priestly caste has for centuries oppressed and dominated over the Dalits. It is also a country where the rich and the powerful have been exploiting the poor and making them totally powerless. As a prophetic community, the Indian Church needs to raise her voice in protest against the abuse of power and authority in the secular society. One way to make its protest credible is precisely to ensure that in the Church there is no place for power and domination over people. This calls for a return to the gospel ideal of leadership. The Church should make serious efforts to empower the laity. In this connection

one needs to raise the question of the place and role of women in the Church. Is it not strange that they have absolutely no leadership role in the Church?

6. The Indian Church of the future will be a church of the poor. According to the Bible, the poor are the objects of God's preferential love.[37] God is on their side. Though the poor are an oppressed group of the economically and socially deprived, they are not depicted as a pitiable group of unfortunates who have no historical significance. As George Soares-Prabhu points out: "The poor in the Bible are a dynamic group who are not passive victims of history but those through whom God shapes his history."[38] They are the mediators of salvation for all. The Church of the future will have to follow the example of God and take sides with the poor. The primary thrust of all its activities will be the liberation of the poor. It should make an "irrevocable covenant" with the poor as God has done.[39]

It is not enough for the Church of the future to be a *church of the poor*, it must also be a *poor church*. Even though the vast majority of the Catholics of India are poor, the Church in our country gives the impression of being a rich church. This needs to be changed. Vatican II believes that the Church in its saving mission should follow the example of Jesus who became poor for our sake (see *LG* 8). It will have to give up reliance on material wealth for the furtherance of its mission. This is highly significant in India where 'opted poverty' is a sign of true religiosity. As Aloysius Pieris has observed: "The open repudiation (not necessarily the overthrow) of any order of society based on the cult of Mammon is an essential ingredient of Asian religiosity as symbolized in the Monastic ideal of *voluntary poverty*."[40]

4. Conclusion

In this paper I have suggested that the Indian Church of the future – a church that is radically inculturated in our country and among our people – will be first of all a church of God. It will be a church that is rooted in the experience of God in Jesus Christ and constantly draws nourishment from it. It will be a church of faith – a church that entrusts its life and destiny into the hands of God. It will be a church of hope which places its trust not in what it can foresee, plan, control and manipulate, but in the incomprehensible mystery of God. It will also be a church of charity, which in its life and activity strives to manifest and exercise God's unconditional love for humankind (See *GS* 45).

I have also suggested that the Indian Church of the future will be a church of the people – a community which is characterized by equality, freedom, justice and participative decision-making. The liberation, empowerment and wholeness of the people, especially the poor, will be her primary concern.

Notes

1. See I. Puthiadam, "Experience of God in Hinduism", in *Jeevadhara* 21 (1974), pp. 247-259.
2. See T. Urumpackal, *Organized Religion According To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan*, Rome: Gregorian University, 1972, pp. 45-155.

3. See K. Rahner, *Concern For The Church*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1981, p. 78.
4. J. L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible,* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968, p. 598.
5. See L. Boff, *Church: Charism And Power*, London: SCM Press, 1985, p. 144.
6. See F. Pereira, *Gripped By God in Christ: The Mind and Heart of St. Paul*, Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 1991, pp. 29-39.
7. See M. Schoof, "The Theological Roots of Christian Dogmatism", in *Downside Review*, 316 (1976), pp. 178-196.
8. *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 1, art. 2.
9. G. Moran, *Design for Religion*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970, p. 45.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46; see also S. Kappen, "The Future Of Christian Education And Christian Education Of The Future", in *Jeevadhara* 13 (1973), p. 64, where he says: "Authority as the principle of truth therefore must be subordinated to the principle of obedience to reality, i. e., to the global experience of man."
11. L. Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind,* Indianapolis: Bobbs Merril, 1969, p. 296.
12. See C. Davis, "From Inwardness to Social Action: A Shift in the Locus of Religious Experience", in *New Blackfriars*, 67 (1986) 789, pp. 114 - 125.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.
15. See G. Soares-Prabhu, "The Dharma of the Biblical Prophet", in *CRI National Assembly Report*, Delhi, 1988, pp. 85-109.
16. C. Davis, "From Inwardness . . .", p. 124.
17. See W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981, p. 13.
18. U. Duchrow, "God or Mammon", in *Mission Studies*, 13 (1996) 1 & 2, pp. 32-67.
19. See G. Soares-Prabhu, The Kingdom of God: Jesus' Vision of a New Society", in D. S. Amalorpavadass (ed.), *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1981, pp. 579-626.
20. K. Rahner, *The Shape Of The Church To Come,* London: SPCK, 1974, p. 82.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
22. See P. Parathazham, "The Challenge of Neo-Pentecostalism", in *Vidyajyoti* 61 (1997) 5, pp. 312-313.
23. G. Soares-Prabhu, "The Spirituality of Jesus as a Spirituality of Solidarity and Struggle", in J. Vattamattom, et al. (eds.), *Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society*, Hyderabad: Montfort Bhavan, 1990, p. 145.
24. G. Soares-Prabhu, "Expanding the Horizon of Christian Mission - A Biblical Perspective" in A. Kanjamala (ed.), *Paths of Mission in India Today*, Mumbai: St. Paul Publications, 1997, p. 35.
25. J. A. T. Robinson, *But That I Can't Believe*, London: Collins, 1969, p. 463.
26. A. Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma,* New York: Doubleday, 1973, p. 210.
27. G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 27.
28. See L. Cerfaux, *The Church In The Theology of St. Paul*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1959, pp. 49-79.
29. G. Soares-Prabhu, "Radical Beginnings: The Jesus Community as the Archetype of the Church", in *Jeevadhara*, 15 (1985) 88, p. 321.
30. See G. Sores-Prabhu, "The Kingdom of God . . . ", pp. 601-602.

31. John XXIII, "Opening Speech to the Council" in W. M. Abbot (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York: America Press, 1966, p. 716.
32. See R. E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, London: SCM Press, 1971, pp. 58-59.
33. As quoted by Y. Congar, *Lay People In The Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965, p. 43.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
35. "CBCI Evaluation Report: Response of the General Body," Trivandrum, 1996, Nrs. 4-5.
36. E. Schillebeeckx, *The Church With A Human Face*, London: SCM Press, 1985, p. 39.
37. G. Soares-Prabhu, "Class in the Bible: The Biblical Poor A Social Class?", in S. Arokiasamy and G. Gispert-Sauch (eds.), *Liberation in Asia*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987, pp. 81-85.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
39. Aloysius Pieris, "A Theology of Liberation in Asian Churches?", in S. Arokiasamy and G. Gispert-Sauch (eds.), *Liberation in Asia*, Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987, p. 31.
40. *Ibid.*

Book Reviews

Ecological Concerns: An Indian Christian Response, Edited by Joseph Mattam, S.J., and Jacob Kavunkal, S.V.D., Bangalore, N.B.C.L.C., 1998, pp.148, Rs 80.

This is a volume of the edited Papers, Minutes of the workshops and the Statement of the 20th Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association, Aluva, 26-30 April, 1997.

The main Papers address, quite unequivocally, the concerns of our age related to ecology and the habitat of the animate and inanimate beings. Their perspectives range from ecology, science and sustainable development to eco-feminism, ecosophy, ethics, social justice and theology with biblical interpretations and the vision of Jesus.

The main issues in ecological concerns are laid out briefly by Kunnumpuram. The United Nations' concept of sustainable development is explained succinctly by Prasad. Eco-feminism under various aspects is considered by Gajiwala and its Indian (Christian) critique by Nalunnakkal. He presents a view that women are main victims of ecological crisis. Vadakumcherry explores well the native wisdom and intuition of the Maria Gond tribe in Maharashtra related to the cosmos enshrined in their myths. Kocherry presents a simple reflection on ethics and social justice in the matter of ecology and development. In an applied sense the scope of the solutions to or the averting of the crisis is dealt with in ecosophy by Painadath, nature mysticism (eco-spirituality) by Manickam, and in the vision of Jesus that provides space for all by D'Lima. The often repeated theme that the western model of the exploitation of Nature is rooted in a particular understanding of the biblical text (Genesis 1:26-28) is given a fresh interpretation by Ceresko.

Given the variety of titles of the Papers one would expect that they enrich the reflection in a truly Indian context and address the alternatives that the Christians of India wish to suggest to change the alarming situation. Somehow, the final Statement gets overly focussed on 'seminary' compounds and ends up with a suggestion to create a Forum for Eco-theology. The papers dazzle occasionally with some new sparks, but glow rarely.

The editorial presentation is good. However, the Papers in themselves are of varying standards. Some present common reflections. Many repeat, explain again, the issues and terminology used in current discussions of the topic. Some offer sparse bibliography or footnotes. Some do enter into depth discussions. Most Papers have ample sub-headings, but the profundity of argument is hardly enhanced. The repetitious aspects could have been inserted into the initial Paper on Issues and Perspectives and deleted from the subsequent Papers where they occur.

Some tricky spellings and expressions have added a note of ingenuity, e.g. *Icavasya Upanishad*; (p.102); "Women in National Eco-system Mangament:.." and "The Earth is One, But the World is Not" (p.68); An Interpretive Strategy for Genesis 1:26-28 (p.24); the values of justice (88).

The material can serve as a good general introduction to ecological concerns. It seems to be a good incentive for Indian Christians to widen their

awareness of the issues. When academia addresses itself to include courses on ecology, this neat volume, reasonably priced, could be listed in the Bibliography of resources.

Rosario Rocha, SJ

The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest in the Light of the North Indian Missionary Reality, by J. Ponnore, Raipur, Pastoral Centre, 1998, xxi + 417, Rs. 100/-.

This book is the author's doctoral thesis, presented to and approved by the Gregorian University, Rome. The first chapter gives a good synthesis of the present theology of inculturation. Since the author wishes to understand priestly spirituality "in a new way" (4), he rightly realises – and this is to be emphasized – the "need of critical theology so as to clarify, guide, broaden and deepen spirituality" (16). As the Church can only exist in a given historical situation can there be really "two basic *loci* [the Church and the prevailing historical present] where Christian spirituality can be experienced"(18)? The "ongoing nature of inculturation" (34) must take a serious note of "all socio-politico-economic conditions of human beings in their situations" (30). This is a very timely reminder, because some try to a have a time-bound process, while others celebrate very Indian liturgies but follow a life-style reflecting the consumer West.

The second chapter provides us with a graphic picture of the North Indian missionary context. The description is supported by charts providing us the statistics of the different facets of the North Indian situation. But the concern for brevity sometimes leads to over-simplification (e.g. 112-114). An attempt to understand spirituality anew should have included an in-depth reflection as to why "a large number of Church personnel still consider success and meaningfulness in mission endeavour almost solely in terms of the number of baptisms" (132).

The third chapter makes a historical survey of the development of the theology of the diocesan priest, starting from the New Testament data. I have a feeling that at times the author has based himself on studies which lead to contradictory conclusions. For instance, he quotes A. Vanhoye, who contrasting the Old Testament understanding of sacrifice and priesthood with that of Jesus, says "With Christ all this changes. His perfect personal offering removes all barriers... Taken away, finally, is the separation between priest and people..." (156-157). This is followed by quotes from J. Galot who defends the traditional essential distinction between the priesthood of the laity and the ministerial priesthood (165-166). If I understand Galot correctly, the difference is that the ministerial priest has certain authority and pastoral function. But today's pastoral reality in different parts of the world necessitates nuns taking over parishes, and lay people animating basic Christian communities, and these I presume have some authority and definitely a pastoral function. Further, in a doctoral thesis, one would expect at least a reference to contemporary New Testament scholars and systematic theologians who question the traditional position. I do not know whether Vanhoye has discussed this question himself, but in his book – cited by our author: *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989), this is

what he says: "Here is the reason why we are all now invited to draw near to God (10,22). All believers possess this right which previously was the prerogative of the high priest alone (9,7). They even enjoy a greater privilege still, for it is into the true sanctuary that they are now authorized to enter, and not into a human construction (8,5; 9,24). And their right is not limited as was that of the high priest to once each year (9,7), it is always valid."(71) Consequently the question would arise whether clericalisation begins only in the third century (179) or even earlier. Tracing the development of the Christian priesthood and the impact of monasticism on it, the author concludes: "Three main consequences of this monastic influence on the priesthood are the priestly habit, breviary and celibacy" 187). But though the thesis in an attempt to understand priestly spirituality "in a new way"(4), it does not carry a critical reflection on this phenomenon.

The last two chapters discuss the spirituality of the diocesan priest and its contextualisation in the North Indian missionary reality. The chapters are quite comprehensive and succeed in the task the author gives himself. In this context the author rightly notes that "there is a real human problem involved in the case of obedience of the diocesan priest to his bishop. If a bishop happens to be less considerate..." (248). Lack of consideration would not be a major problem had the priest and the bishop not been bound to each other for better and for worse till death do them part. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that today we have priests who are in their early forties being appointed bishops! Hence a serious reflection on the spirituality of the diocesan priest is intimately bound up with a discussion on the term of office of bishops. While discussing the obedience of the priest, a greater emphasis ought to have been given to discernment in which both the priest and the bishop are honest and open partners, more so since the "bishops are to regard their priests as brothers and friends" (259) and because Vatican II calls for active and responsible obedience. To emphasize the need of prayer, the author quotes Pope John Paul II (297), but he could have brought in another much more powerful text: "My contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation." (*Redemptoris Missio*, no. 91. English translation, Bombay: St. Paul Pbs., 1991, p. 150)

The book has a fairly comprehensive bibliography, though some important texts dealing with priestly ministry in India have been left out: *All India Seminar: Church in India Today* (1969), *Programme for Priestly Formation For India* (1970), *Charter for Priestly Formation for India* (1988). While *Priestly Formation in North India: Problems, Challenges, Hopes* (1982) finds a place in the bibliography, and while it already anticipates much of what the author has to say, it is not referred to anywhere in the thesis. At times we have quotations in languages other than English. These could be in the footnotes, and their gist in the text. A little more attention ought to have been given to the use of diacritical marks. A suitable index would add to the value of the book.

Subhash Anand

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The Third Issue of this Journal will appear in January 1999. The theme of the issue is: *Towards a New Society*. It will be dealt with from an interdisciplinary perspective.

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