

Indigenization and Nationalism / *Indigénisation et nationalisme*

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Résumé

Une différence sensible s'est installée entre les chrétiens qui conservèrent des coutumes et des idées pré-chrétiennes et ceux qui se sont trouvés entraînés dans un processus d'aliénation culturelle. Aussi, cet article s'intéresse-t-il à l'indigénisation en tant que processus conscient de redécouverte et de restauration des éléments pré-chrétiens issus de la communauté d'origine du converti et considérés comme méritant d'être repris en raison de leur valeur propre. Cette démarche, encouragée par quelques missionnaires et menée presque uniquement par une poignée de chrétiens indiens éduqués à l'occidentale, a vu le jour et s'est développée parallèlement à et en lien avec la montée du sentiment national. Ainsi, des parallèles évidents apparaissent entre le désir exprimé par les Indiens d'exercer un contrôle sur l'administration britannique et la lutte menée par les chrétiens indiens pour l'accession un leadership indigène au sein de l'Eglise et des missions. Mais tandis que le sentiment national se faisait sentir avec force dans des domaines tels que la formation de la Société Missionnaire Nationale, le mouvement des ashram et le développement de formes indiennes de liturgie, de culte et de théologie, d'autres facteurs ont commencé à se faire sentir de façon de plus en plus pressante dans le processus de domestication du christianisme durant la période comprise entre 1850 et 1947. Notamment, une attitude de bienveillance grandissante à l'égard de la religion et de la culture indiennes (aussi bien de la part des chrétiens européens qu'indiens) et la nécessité de diffuser la Bonne Nouvelle aux non-chrétiens en tenant compte du contexte culturel.

Resumen

Existe una diferencia entre cristianos que conservaron costumbres e ideas pre-cristianas y otros que, por varios motivos, les afectó un proceso de alienación cultural. Por eso, este artículo focaliza en la indigenización como proceso conciente para descubrir de nuevo y restaurar los elementos pre-cristianos de la comunidad de origen del converso que son percibidos como identificadores propios. El movimiento que animaron algunos misionarios y que impulsaron algunos Indios cristianos, con educación de tipo occidental, nació y creció en forma paralela y ligada al desarrollo del sentimiento nacional. Aparecen con evidencia paralelos entre la voluntad expresada por Indios de tener control en la administración británica y la lucha de los Cristianos Índicos por un liderazgo indígena en la Iglesia y sus misiones. Pero, al mismo tiempo que ganó fuerza el sentimiento nacional en este campo religioso, por ejemplo con la creación de la Sociedad Misionaria Nacional, el movimiento ashram o el desarrollo de formas nacionales de liturgia, de culto y de teología, otros factores vinieron apareciendo y presionando en el proceso de domesticación del cristianismo entre 1850 y 1947. Particularmente una atención creciente por la religión y la cultura indias (de parte de cristianos europeos como Índicos) y la necesidad de llegar la Buena Noticia evangelizadora tomando en cuenta el contexto cultural.

Abstract

There was difference between Christians who retained pre-Christian customs and ideas and others who, for whatever reasons, were affected by a process of cultural alienation. The focus of this paper is therefore on indigenization as a conscious process of rediscovery and restoration of all that was considered valuable and worthwhile in the convert community's pre-Christian heritage. The movement, encouraged by a few missionaries and led almost entirely by tiny Western-educated minority of Indian Christians, grew and developed alongside and in some connection with rising national sentiment. There were, for example, obvious parallels between the Indian desire for control of British administration and the Indian Christians' struggle for indigenous leadership in Church and mission. But while national feeling was influential in this and in other developments such as the formation of the National Missionary Society, the ashram movement and the development of Indian forms of liturgy, worship and theology, other factors continued to be important in the process of domestication of Christianity during the period c. 1850-1947. These included the gradual growth of a more sympathetic attitude towards Indian religion and culture (among European as well as Indian Christians) and a continuing need to communicate the Gospel to non-Christians in their own cultural context.

INDIGENIZATION AND NATIONALISM

CHRISTIAN POPULATIONS IN INDIA

Though their number was steadily increasing in India throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christians continued to represent an extremely small (but growing) proportion of the total Indian population (1). The distribution of Indian Christians throughout the sub-continent was also uneven. There were Christians in all the Provinces and States of India, but far fewer in the north than in the south; and in some districts of northern and central India, so few, that the sense of being swamped and fear of being reabsorbed into « Hinduism » was probably much greater than it was, for example, in Tinnevely district or Travancore (2). Indeed it was this sense of being vulnerable and of losing one's identity that was bound to influence the attitude of ordinary Christians towards policies of indigenization.

Apart from variations in the proportion of Christians in local populations there were also differences between them in language, literacy and education, in their economic position and caste and class background, between the great majority (in 1940 about 90%) (3) who lived in the countryside and those who lived in cities, between the Western educated elites and others who had very little contact with Western ideas or styles of living (4). If one adds to these differences the distinction between St Thomas Christians and those of more recent origin, and the yawning gulf between Roman Catholics and Protestants one wonders, like some observers, whether Christians had anything in common. Indeed, referring to the Catholic/Protestant divide, Vengal Chakkarai, (1880-1958) a well-known Indian Christian commentator, declared in the Indian Christian weekly *The Guardian*, that in India, Roman Catholic

(1) Geoffrey A. ODDIE, ed., *Religion in South Asia. Religious Conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times*, Delhi, 1977, Appendix.

(2) For the distribution of Christians see census reports, for example, *Census of India*, 1901, vol. 1, part 1, report, pp. 387-392, including a map.

(3) E.C. BHATTY, « The Indian Christian Community and the Nationalist Movement », *National Christian Council Review*, vol. 62, n° 2, November 1942, p. 446.

(4) According to the census of 1901, 34,632 Christians in a Christian population of 1,018,977, or 3 %, were literate in English. This compared with 0.4 % of people literate in English in the population as a whole.

Christians had «nothing in common» with the other Christians and that the gulf between the two was greater than between them and Hindus (5).

The wide variation in Indian Christian attitudes towards Hindu ideas and customs, attitudes which greatly affected views of indigenization, was underlined by the Rev. Samuel Sathianadhan, Christian leader and professor in Madras University, in his description of «the Native Christian community» in 1900:

«Of course, the Native Christian community, drawn as it is from all classes and castes at present, forms more or less an incoherent, heterogeneous mass, and social habits and customs among them have not crystallized into uniformity. While there is a tendency, on the one hand, among a certain section, especially in Southern India, to favour purely Hindu customs, on the other hand, there is another section that rushes headlong in the direction of everything English and Western; and between these two sections there are other sections which favour partly Eastern and partly Western habits and customs (6)».

MISSIONARY POLICIES AND THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL ALIENATION

The process of domesticating Christianity in India, which might be described as the opposite of a Westernizing process, was extremely complex and involved both conscious and less conscious efforts on the part of Indian people to follow what they understood of Christianity in their own context. Any movement towards Christianity (if it was voluntary) always began with the convert and the convert's world and necessarily involved a certain degree of what the missionaries described as «syncretism» (7). If anything was to be understood it involved some form of translation, a process of understanding one idea or belief in terms of another and a gradual incorporation of new concepts by building on pre-existing ideas and parallels *which were seldom if ever an exact equivalent*. As one Protestant missionary confessed with reference to Hindi in 1875, «nearly all our theological terms are of heathen origin, and are used in Hindu writing in senses far different from those in which we employ them» (8). One illustration of this problem was the use of the term «avatar» for «incarnation» which implied (contrary to orthodox Christianity) that Jesus was not man *and* God, but God acting as man.

While this stage of development involving an admixture of Christian with non-Christian ideas was regarded as inevitable, it was hoped that the problem of language having a «heathen» connotation, as well as the practice of Indian Christians retaining «heathen» customs would eventually disappear. As Luke and Carman wrote in their 1960s study of *Village Christians and Hindu Culture*, «It is not the presence of these

(5) *The Guardian*, 1 September 1932. The editors of *The Guardian*, established in 1923, were leading Indian Christians and European missionaries sympathetic to the nationalist cause. *The Guardian*, 5 January 1923.

(6) «The Native Christian Community in India: Its Position and Prospects», *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, CMI September, 1900, p. 647.

(7) See especially, Geoffrey A. ODDIE, «Syncretism and Conversion in India, 1800-1947», in A. HENN and H. VAN SKYHAWK, eds., *Doctrine, Dialogues and Practice. Syncretic Torrents in the Religions of South Asia*, (forthcoming.)

(8) *Indian Evangelical Review*, vol. 2, n° 8, April 1875, pp. 497-498.

unacceptable religious practices and their accompanying beliefs among the Christians which constitute the Church's problem, but their persistence with little or no change for two or three generations » (9).

From the missionary's point of view, the first stage of the Christianizing process therefore involved, unavoidably, the retention of ideas and practices which were incompatible with purer forms of Christianity reminders of those elements in the convert's pre-Christian life which would eventually have to be dealt with and removed root and branch. But just what elements needed to be suppressed depended on one's view of Christianity as well as on how one viewed the non-Christian customs and belief. For example, what Catholics believed was incompatible with « the pure faith » was very different from what Protestants believed was contrary to their version of « the pure faith ». Indeed, the Protestant missionaries constantly criticized their Catholic counterparts for allowing their converts to follow pre-Christian customs, many of them similar to the « idolatrous superstitions, » such as the worship of saints and the Virgin Mary, which Catholic missionaries followed in their home country (10). Furthermore, while it may be possible to identify general differences between Protestant and Catholic policies towards the retention of indigenous customs, it is also important to recognize differences among Protestants and within the Catholic church. In other words, neither Protestants nor Catholics were unified in their views of caste or on the general question of how far (if at all) converts should be permitted to follow pre-Christian practices in the Christian Church.

Nevertheless, while making due allowance for differences within the Protestant and Catholic traditions there can be little doubt that generally speaking and compared with Catholic policy, the Protestant campaigns against caste and other « evils » were especially vigorous. One well-known example of this uncompromising policy was Bishop Wilson's expulsion of hundreds of Christians in Tanjore district for failing to renounce caste and « overt acts » which he believed sprang from « the distinctions of caste », such as « processions in marriages, or marks on the forehead made with paint or mixture, or differences in food or dress » (11). The widespread nature of these assaults on Hindu custom is reflected in Protestant missionary policy in north as well as south India (12) and also, very revealingly, in the circumstances surrounding the baptism of particular converts. For example, at his baptism in July 1871, Arumugam S. Appasamy, a close friend of the Tamil Christian poet, H.A. Krishna Pillai, refused to remove the *kudumi* (tuft of hair on the head) or to adopt a different name or to take to the freedom of meat-eating as was the custom (13).

(9) P.Y. LUKE, J.B. CARMAN, *Village Christians and Hindu Culture*, London, 1968, p. 168.

(10) Linked with this was the frequently voiced Protestant complaint that there was little difference between Catholic Christians and their « heathen » neighbours. See, for example, Sarah Tucker, *South Indian Sketches*, London, 1842, p. 118. Writing in 1909, the Anglican Archdeacon of Madras remarked on much the same phenomenon when, referring to Roman Catholics in south India, he wrote that « Full advantage is taken of all that can be made picturesque in the Church festivals, particularly by public processions, to the casual eye indistinguishable in their appointments from those of the Heathen. It needs more than a passing glance to discriminate between Shiva and St. Anthony as each is borne in his floral bower through the streets ; while pilgrimages are organized to new Christian shrines all over India. *CMI*, vol. 60, November 1909, p. 699.

(11) Josiah BATEMAN, *Life of the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson. D.D.*, vol. 1, London, 1860, p. 442.

(12) See, for example, Duncan B. FORRESTER, *Caste and Christianity*, London, 1980.

(13) M.M. THOMAS and P.T. THOMAS, *Towards Indian Christian Theology*, Tiruvella, 1992, p. 58.

At the same time it cannot be assumed that Catholics were *invariably* or in all cases more sympathetic than Protestants to the converts' pre-Christian or «heathen» practice. Indeed, the answer to the question as to why Catholic congregations appeared to worship and live in ways which were more in tune with their Hindu neighbours than did Protestants may lie at least as much in the lack of European Catholic control (especially after the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portuguese possessions in 1759) as it does in other factors, such as the similarities between «Hindu» and Catholic tradition, or the operation of Catholic policies favouring the retention of indigenous customs. Certainly there is little evidence of any enthusiasm for indigenization in the well known case involving Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907) the Catholic convert who was asked to leave church when he wore the ochre robes of a sannyasi and who met with opposition from Catholic authorities when he proposed setting up a Christian mutt (monastery) in Jabalpur in 1898 (14).

The very fact that foreign missionaries, particularly Protestants, were actively and successfully involved in attempts to eliminate a range of pre-Christian ideas and practices within the churches encouraged a situation in which Christians, if they were to domesticate the Christian faith, had to go through the process of *rediscovering* their own traditions. There is therefore a fundamental difference between the process which involved the retention of Indian custom alongside conversion to Christianity, something which sometimes happened, and the movement aimed at indigenization through the *restoration* or *reintroduction* of nativistic ideas and customs which had been discouraged or forgotten by Indian Christians who, in the words of S. K. George, one of the leaders of the Protestant community, had been taught to despise «everything in their own ancient traditions and in the culture and customs of those around them» (15). Hence, the movement for indigenizing Christianity associated with nationalism and political developments during the period from about 1870 to 1947, was primarily an example of the latter process which was much less one of retaining existing nativistic customs and much more one of deliberate restoration – a conscious attempt on the part of some of the more articulate Indian Christians (almost entirely drawn from the Western-educated elites) to rediscover their cultural roots and reintroduce what they believed was an authentic Indian form of the Christian faith. Though it was, amongst other things, an implicit criticism of foreign missionary policy during the previous century or centuries, the movement was supported by some of the more liberal and far-sighted Europeans who also believed that Indian forms of Christianity had been given little chance to grow and develop in a foreign dominated system.

INDIGENIZATION AND THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM

The basic argument of this paper is that this movement of conscious and deliberate indigenization coincided with what used to be called «the Indian awakening,» the rise

(14) *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71, and Achilles MEERSMAN, «Can We Speak of Indigenization of the Catholic Church in India during the 19th Century?», *Indian Church History Review, ICHR*, vol. 7, n° 2, December 1973.

(15) *The Guardian*, 30 June 1932.

of a broadly-based nationalist feeling. However, while it originated alongside and was greatly encouraged by the nationalist movement, the subsequent relationship between attempts to domesticate Christianity and nationalism was complex. The nationalist movement itself was fragmented, «nationalists» being divided into various competing, unstable and somewhat ephemeral networks and political groupings; while, at the same time, those who were advocating some form of domestication of Christianity were not infrequently influenced by considerations which appear to have had little connection with wider nationalist movements. Nevertheless, while European dominance and India's struggle for political independence remained as an overriding issue in public life, Indian Christians involved in the struggle for a truly indigenous Church could hardly fail to see the parallels between their own struggle and the broader movement, which notwithstanding its divisions, was clearly focussed on the great human issues of rediscovery, rebirth and emancipation.

GENERAL INDIAN CHRISTIAN INDIFFERENCE TO THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The extent to which, during the period from 1870 to 1947, ordinary people, including Indian Christians, were influenced by the spirit of nationalism and a desire for political change is highly problematic. What evidence there is suggests that the great bulk of Christians were largely unmoved by the new patriotic enthusiasm for national unity and regeneration. If therefore the nationalist movement affected or in some way speeded up the process of indigenization this is likely to have happened only to a limited extent in view of the fact that so few Christians were affected by nationalist thinking and sentiment.

Commenting on the attitude of Indian Christians at the turn of the century, the Rev. Samuel Sathianadhan remarked that «Indian Christians, as a whole, do not seem to be very keen on the subject of politics» (16) and, noting a similar degree of indifference in the 1930s (significantly after Gandhi and the Congress had done their best to arouse the masses), A. C. Mukherjee, another well-known Christian leader, stated that:

«I have been brought into contact with a very large number of my fellow-Christians in different parts of the country, from the extreme north to the extreme south, those living in cities as well as those living in villages, and I have to confess that as far as the bulk of the population is concerned, they are still indifferent to matters lying outside their immediate surroundings. Their politics are concerned, speaking generally, with the Church or Mission with which they are identified (17)».

(16) *CMI*, September 1900, p. 649.

(17) *The Guardian*, 30 August 1934. Reflecting on the achievement of independence in India in a book published in 1951 Bishop A.J. APPASAMY declared that «apart from a man here and there, the vast majority of our Christian people stood aloof from the national struggle. It is quite necessary to face facts and recognize that in the fight for the independence of India, Christians as a whole had little or no share.» Quoted in A. V. THOMAS, *Christians in Secular India*, Rutherford etc., 1974, p. 100.

It was this kind of apathy among Catholics which deeply disturbed the Belgian Jesuits associated with the journal *Light of the East* and which spurred them on in their attempts to arouse a greater sense of national consciousness among Catholic Christians (18).

One reason for this apparent indifference was probably an unworldly theology, encouraged by both Evangelical Protestant and Catholic leaders, which placed an emphasis on individual salvation and the fate of the individual soul in afterlife, rather than on the role and activity of Christians in « the here and now » (19). Also important according to several commentators, was « the lurking suspicion » that involvement in the nationalist movement was subversive and certainly not in the best interests of the Christian community which it was felt was heavily dependent on foreign support (20). As S. K. George pointed out with reference to Christians in Travancore in the 1930s, almost the only thing Christians knew about the British was what they had encountered through Christian missionary activity. They saw everywhere the benefits of missionary enterprise, the founding of churches, the spread of education, the uplift of the depressed classes etc. and believed that if the British left all these projects and achievements would be under threat, if not actively undermined by an unsympathetic Hindu majority (21). It might be argued that Travancore and other Princely States were, at least initially, less affected by nationalist sentiments than areas under direct British rule. However, even in British territory where the nationalist movement was more clearly established, more pervasive and influential over longer periods of time, there were other considerations which tended to deter Indian Christians from becoming too overtly or publicly involved in nationalist agitation. In the 1920s and 30s a large number of missionary schools and colleges which employed Indian Christians were dependent on government grants-in-aid (22) and it was difficult for Indian Christians, as well as missionaries sympathetic to the nationalist cause, to openly defy government policy the object of which was to try to dissuade anyone under its control from becoming involved in « anti-government » activity (23).

Furthermore, ordinary Christians were bound to be affected by the nature of Christian leadership, and, as Fonseca has pointed out, Roman Catholics, like Anglicans, were governed by an episcopal hierarchy which was almost exclusively expatriate. The bishops therefore could hardly be expected to have much sympathy with the national aspirations of the country « implying as it did the overthrow of a European government » (24). The consequence was that directives from above did little to encourage any active participation of the Catholic laity in the nationalist movement even in the later stages of its development in the 1920s and 30s.

Such Christian participation in the nationalist movement as there was, began with a flourish, with a higher than average representation of Indian Christians when

(18) *ICHR*, vol. XVII, n° 2, 1983, pp. 93-94.

(19) S.K. GEORGE in *The Guardian*, 22 September 1932.

(20) *CMI*, September 1900, p. 649.

(21) *The Guardian*, 30 June 1932.

(22) See for example, S. MANICKAM, « Grants-in-Aid and Christian Missions in the Madras Presidency, 1854-1947 », *ICHR*, vol. 13, n° 2, 1979, pp. 123-145.

(23) *The Guardian*, 22 September 1932.

(24) « The Indian Christians and the Fundamental Rights », *ICHR*, vol. XVII, n° 2, 1983, p. 93.

compared with Hindus and Muslims, in the Indian National Congress (25). However, this initial enthusiasm declined partly as a result of the increasing association of nationalism with Hindu rhetoric and the growth of extra-constitutional methods of agitation, including the use of violence, during anti-government agitation over the partition of Bengal. As we shall see, this period was followed by oscillation and uncertainty among the politically conscious Indian Christians in the years that followed. Indian Christian leaders who favoured the nationalist movement, like those who argued for a greater degree of indigenization, remained a tiny minority in the Christian population. Some of them, extremely articulate and inspired by a faith which included a vision of a new society, appeared to emerge in the public limelight as a result of their confidence and unique abilities. Who they actually represented is an open question and a topic for further enquiry. Some rose to positions, for example, in the All-India Council of Indian Christians (AICIC) established in 1914, as representatives of various Indian Christian associations. Others, however, including editors or contributors to Christian newspapers, such as Aloysius Soares, editor of the *Catholic Week*, might be described as self-appointed advocates of nationalism (and often indigenization). But whatever the case they could hardly be regarded as ordinary Christians. Marginalized and accused of heresy in some missionary circles (26), their arguments were often ignored (if heard or understood) by fellow Christians whether Catholic or Protestant throughout much of the period under discussion.

WESTERN EDUCATION AND FOREIGN DOMINATION

One of the key factors in the rise of both the nationalist movement and Indian Christian attempts to challenge foreign domination within the churches was the spread of Western education. According to the census of 1901 the proportion of Christians who knew English was far in excess of all other communities except the Parsis, and this applied to Christian women as well as men (27). Protestant Christians were almost certainly more highly educated through English than Catholics, some of whom, if they were educated through a foreign language, were just as likely to be educated through Portuguese or French (28). This factor, together with the nature of the Catholic hierarchy, including the imposition of an effective episcopal (expatriate) control, helps to explain why Protestant Christians were more conspicuous than Catholics in nationalist agitation and in conscious attempts at indigenization up to 1947 (29). It was the

(25) Geoffrey A. ODDIE, «Indian Christians and the National Congress, 1885-1910», *ICHR*, vol. 2, n° 1, June 1968, pp. 45-54.

(26) Russell CHANDRAN, Bangalore, interview, 25 March 1997.

(27) *Census of India*, vol. 1-a, India, 1901, part 2, tables, and 1911 vol. 1, India, part 1, report.

(28) Unfortunately census returns on the subject of those literate in English did not distinguish between Catholics and Protestants. This statement is therefore based more on an impression derived from a range of sources including comments on Protestant involvement in higher education.

(29) On the attitude of the Catholic hierarchy in India, see C. FONSECA in the *ICHR*, vol. XVII, n° 2, 1983, pp. 86, 91-93.

Catholic laity more than Protestants who had to attempt to circumvent the ecclesiastical authorities' reluctance to become involved in protest and agitation against British rule.

Western-educated Protestant Christians who were among the pioneers of the nationalist movement were also key figures in attempts to improve the status and position of Indian Christians in Church and mission. The very same spirit and growth of awareness which impelled them into «secular» politics, affected their attitude to questions of leadership and developments within the Christian Church. Those who left their mark on secular politics at the national level included Bengalis and converts of Dr Alexander Duff's well-known institution in Calcutta.

K. M. Bannerjea, Kali Charan Bannerjea and others, who like so many early nationalist leaders were Bengalis, were active in early political associations which were beginning to show an interest in supra regional or India-wide questions (30). K. M. Bannerjea, one of Duff's converts, became an Anglican and was the first Indian pastor of an Anglican congregation in Calcutta. He was not only active in societies such as the Family Literary Club and the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, but played a major role in the more specifically political associations. He was a member of the India League and became the first President of the Indian Association established in 1876 (31). It was perhaps the most important and active association with an India-wide outlook prior to the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Another Bengali Brahman, who was also a convert of Duff's institution, was Kali Charan Bannerjea, a practising lawyer and prominent member of the India League. Travelling to western India specially for the purpose, he helped establish valuable contacts with the leaders of the Bombay Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, discussing with them the possibility of closer political cooperation between the Bombay and Bengal associations. One of the best orators of his time, he addressed public gatherings, one of them in Poona on «National Unity» at a time when these ideas were only beginning to be more widely discussed (32). A third early Christian exponent of Indian nationalism, though not so well-known at the national level, was Kali Charan Chatterji who was President of the Hoshiarpur Municipal Committee after local self-government was introduced in the Punjab in 1882 (33). His son, Golaknath Chatterji was a member of the Indian Association of Lahore.

INDIGENIZATION OF LEADERSHIP IN CHURCH AND MISSION

The parallels between European domination in the colonial state and European missionary domination of church and mission can hardly have escaped the notice of Indian Christian leaders such as K. M. Bannerjea and Golaknath Chatterji who were

(30) See especially Kaj BAAGO, «The First Independence Movement Among Indian Christians», *ICHR*, vol. 1, n° 1, 1967, pp. 65-78.

(31) On his role in politics see especially S.R. MEHROTRA, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, Delhi etc. 1971, pp. 162-164, 361.

(32) *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 161.

(33) John C.B. WEBSTER, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India*, Delhi, etc. 1976, pp. 199-200.

both involved in agitation for easier Indian access to the ranks of the Indian Civil Service (34).

Discrimination against Indian Christians within Church and mission was apparent in a number of instances including the case of those denied promotion and positions of power and who were subsequently active in attempts to improve the status and position of locals in Church and mission. Indeed, discrimination and the lack of opportunities provided for Indian Christians to fill leading positions in Christian establishments, remained an issue in missionary and Christian circles right up to the time of India's independence and after.

On the Protestant side, tensions between Indian Christians and European missionaries in the 1850s and 60s were noted by some observers and discussed at the Punjab Missionary Conference in 1868 and at the Allahabad Missionary Conference in 1872 (35). The same feelings, including resentment on the Indian side, were also apparent in discussions about why so few Indian Christian graduates were entering the Christian ministry. One cause of complaint was the marked discrepancy between missionary and Indian levels of remuneration and other benefits. But another cause of ill feeling was missionary policy which seemed to be based even more clearly on racial discrimination. For example, writing in 1892, the Rev. Sathianadhan, who was well-known and respected in European and Indian circles, complained that:

« It is not uncommon to find young men fresh from home, with little or no ministerial experience, placed in independent charge of mission stations, having under their control a large number of mission agents. It seems to be an article of missionary faith that every European missionary is *per se* fitted to be in independent charge, and that the average native is devoid of administrative capacity (36) ».

According to the Rev. J. Paul of Bangalore it was only after years of approved service that Indian catechists, delegated to a subordinate position, were ordained « more as a reward than as a dedication » (37). Discussing continuing forms of discrimination in the 1930s, an editorial in *The Guardian* declared that « In Indianization or rather in the elimination of race distinctions the Christian Church and especially the Anglican Church in India, is decades behind the Government of India » (38).

On the Catholic side, the great majority of the clergy under the Portuguese Padroado were Indian, though there is evidence that some were deliberately kept in subordinate positions (39). That all was not well and that there were cases where Padroado Indian clergy resented Portuguese domination is suggested by the involvement of several of the clergy in protest movements directed against the Portuguese

(34) Bannerjea was one of the three principal speakers at a rally in 1853 which passed a resolution critical of « virtual exclusion of the educated natives from the Civil Service » and Golaknath Chatterji testified before the Public Service Commission at its hearings in Lahore in 1886 to the effect that it should be made easier for Indians to compete with Europeans for access to higher positions in the administration (MEHROTRA, p. 73 ; WEBSTER, pp. 200-201).

(35) Kaj BAAGO, p. 66.

(36) *Harvest Field, HF*, 3rd.series, vol. 4, September 1892, p. 92.

(37) *Ibid.*, p. 407.

(38) *The Guardian*, 29 October 1931.

(39) MEERSMAN, *op. cit.*

authorities. Furthermore, indianization even at the ordinary parish level of the ecclesiastical establishment under Propaganda Fide in the nineteenth century was less apparent. Though there were some Indian clergy (recruited mainly from the ranks of the Padroado) in south India, there were no Indian clergy in the north. Nor were Indians appointed as bishops to head dioceses anywhere in India in the nineteenth century. The Catholic Church, like Protestant missions, remained firmly under the control of foreigners and in the hands of an external establishment.

As already suggested, the struggle for office or placement in more senior positions in Church and mission [which was also a struggle against policies of inequality and racial discrimination] paralleled similar struggles for greater control in British Indian administration. However, in neither case was the question of power and placement the only consideration which appears to have encouraged Indian leaders in their opposition to European domination (40). Also important and perhaps beyond self-interest was a certain degree of idealism – a vision of what India or the Church might become freed of foreign control. For many Indian Christian critics of foreign missions this was a vision of national and Christian unity and a passionate conviction that Christians had a definite part to play in the process of national regeneration. Kali Charan Bannerjea declared that the spread of the gospel was a fundamental prerequisite for all real national unity and progress; Pulney Andey, the leader of the National Church of India in Madras, was convinced that if there was any chance of the different races inhabiting India becoming a nation of any power this would be through « the vivifying influence of Christianity », and S. K. Sudra, the first Indian principal of St. Stephen's College, averred that Christ embodied in Himself « all the moral forces which go to create a vital and progressive organization – an organism which may find its goal in a united and independent India » (41).

THE INTEGRATION OF INDIAN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES INTO A UNIFIED AND NATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

The movement for the indianization of leadership in Church and mission was one crucial aspect of indigenization – a movement which eventually led to what was known as devolution or the transfer of power from missionary organizations to local Churches and the appointment of Indians to the most senior positions in the newly emerging Christian organizations, the most important of which was the Church of South India which was formed in 1947 – the same year in which India achieved political independence.

Another vital question for Indian Christian leaders was how far Christians as a community, or communities, should merge with the mainstream in the newly developing national life. Were Christians in a position to follow the example of the Muslim

(40) For example, the theory that nationalist agitation was simply the result of the elites' yearning for the personal satisfaction of power and place makes little sense of the Bengali and other revolutionary movements at the beginning of the twentieth century when young men were prepared to sacrifice their life for the cause.

(41) Quoted in George THOMAS, *Christian Indians and Indian Nationalism, 1885-1950*, Cirencester, 1979, pp. 59-63.

League, by separating and opting out? Was this possible? And if this was not feasible, how far or in what ways, should Christians retain their own distinctive identity within the nation state? Should they insist on their own distinctive rights and special protection in a developing democracy, or should they trust the overwhelming Hindu majority and throw in their lot with national leaders who opposed elaborate measures for the maintenance and protection of sectional interests?

As noted above, initial enthusiasm for the nationalist movement in its more moderate phase, reflected in the higher than average attendance rate of Christians at annual meetings of the Indian National Congress, was somewhat affected by the rise of Hindu extremism as exemplified in the sustained and sometimes violent agitation against Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905. The increase in Hindu revivalist activities, the invocation of Hindu deities and an increasing tendency to equate Indian nationalism with Hindu nationalism, together with the employment of extra-constitutional methods such as boycott, and, above all, the growing hatred of all things foreign including Christianity, created something of a dilemma for Indian Christians (42). There were isolated attacks on Christian missionaries and in some cases, missionary work had to be suspended altogether. Writing from Calcutta, one of the centres of unrest and anti-British agitation, K. N. Basu of the CMS High School noted « a peculiar type of Anglophobia » that could be « read in every face » (43) and the Rev. Herbert Anderson, Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society in India, who debated with young men in Calcutta's College Square, was painfully surprised at « the venomous feeling to which expression was freely given against the foreigner and all things foreign » (44). Studies of developments in the Punjab (45) and the Madras Presidency point to a similar increase in hostility towards missionaries, Indian Christians and all things foreign in other parts of India during this same period.

In spite of these developments, however, the new movements, and especially the idea of *swadeshi*, or of supporting whatever was indigenous [such as home-spun cloth or native forms of education] had important positive and long-term effects on the attitude of a number of younger Indian Christians who began to think more in terms of encouraging indigenous Christian movements independent of foreign missionary direction and interference.

The expulsion of the so-called « extremists » from the Indian National Congress in 1916, together with a decline in specifically Hindu rhetoric and agitation, was, from a Christian point of view, reassuring, and paved the way for a more relaxed discussion of the implications of the changes in British policy announced by the Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu, in 1917, when he declared that henceforth the object of British policy in India was « the progressive realization of responsible government. » This announcement, together with the discussions of the first stage in the constitutional process leading to independence, a measure subsequently embodied in the Montagu-

(42) On these issues see especially George THOMAS, *op. cit.*, and Y. Vincent Kumara DOSS, « The Swadeshi Movement and the Attitude of the Protestant Christian Elite in Madras », *ICHR*, vol. 22, n° 1, June 1988, pp. 5-22.

(43) *CMI*, May 1907, p. 291.

(44) *Ibid.*, December 1907, p. 730.

(45) WEBSTER, *op. cit.*

Chelmsford reforms, immediately raised the question of what was to be the future of Indian Christians and other minorities in the new nation state.

While during this period there was no overall or united Christian organization which could claim to represent all Christians, the various Protestant associations, many of them formed in urban areas in the nineteenth century, were represented through the All-India Conference of Indian Christians (46). The Council of the AICIC, responding to the British and Indian government proposals, initially demanded that the Indian Christian community should be granted separate electorates, and this request was ratified at a conference meeting at Nagpur in December 1918. The conference also asked for six seats reserved for Christians in the coming elections in Madras and two in each of the other provinces (47). While it is not clear how far there was any Catholic response to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, judging from subsequent comments, their initial reaction was also to think in terms of protection and of ways in which Catholics could preserve their identity as a minority community (separate from Protestants) within the body politic (48). In other words, the basic Christian response was communal and against the idea of sinking the difference between Christians and the larger community through a system of general or joint electorates. Despite the signs that Indian Christians were beginning to reject foreign leadership and to think more in terms of an Indian-style Church, they still had insufficient confidence in Hindus to want to join in a truly national, undifferentiated political system.

However, even at this stage there was some difference of opinion, and K. T. Paul (1876-1931), General Secretary of the YMCA, who appeared before the Joint Select Committee of both the British Houses of Parliament, opposed the system of communal representation as being detrimental to the best interests of the country. As a person closely in touch with the aspirations of Christian youth, including leaders of the Student Christian Movement, he not only voiced the more radical views of students influenced by the idealism of *swadeshi* and the nationalist movement, but also gave expression to ideas and feelings which were to become increasingly influential among Indian Christians in the 1920s and 30s. In 1927 the AICIC itself abandoned its demand for separate representation, and Christian leaders, including Catholics, gradually came to accept the notion that the different Christian communities, instead of voting in separate electorates, or arguing for special communal representation should participate as common citizens in the one common, national political system (49).

The reasons for this gradual change in the attitude of Indian Christians, which was so different from the Muslim tendency towards separatism, have never been adequately explored and cannot be discussed in any great detail in an overview such as this. However, what seems to be the most likely explanation is that Christian leaders and others were influenced by the growth in national feeling and by considerations of self interest in a situation which was very largely beyond their control.

The upsurge of national feeling during and after the first World War, the rise of Gandhi and spread of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements during the

(46) On the origins of the Council see *Young Men of India, YMI*, vol. 29, n° 6, June 1918, p. 336.

(47) George THOMAS, *op. cit.* and J.H. BEAGLEHOLE, « The Indian Christians – A Study of a Minority », *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 1, 1967, pp. 63-65.

(48) BEAGLEHOLE, p. 65 ; *The Guardian*, 6 October, 10 November 1932.

(49) *The Guardian*, 29 September 1932, THOMAS, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-218.

inter-war period all had an impact on the more educated Indian Christians and especially on young people who saw themselves as sharing in a vital common endeavour with Hindus and other Indian subjects in constructing a free society. These changes, especially in the attitude of Christian youth, were noted, for example, by E. C. Dewick, a leading British missionary, who was also keenly interested in political developments. He remarked that « a growing number of the younger Indian Christians have been gathering courage to raise their voices in criticism of the British Government, and have joined with their Hindu friends in the Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movements » (50). Indian Christian conferences were also increasingly inclined to adopt Gandhian or nationalist rhetoric. For example, leading Christians from all over India who met at Ranchi in 1923 declared that Swaraj, Nationalism, or Self-determination helps the Self-realisation of a people » and that these things were « consistent with the Christian religion and helpful to the Christian life » (51). Linked with this growing enthusiasm for independence and reconstruction was the notion of national unity and an increasing awareness of the evils of communalism as exemplified in the Hindu-Muslim riots especially in the 1920s.

But idealism and a growth in national feeling among Indian Christians were not the only factors which help to explain the greater collaboration with Hindus including an increasing acceptance of joint electorates. There were almost certainly hard-headed practical reasons for the change – considerations which had a great deal to do with the realities of a rapidly changing political situation. No matter how much some Christians might have wanted to remain separate from the Hindu majority, separate states on the model of Pakistan were hardly feasible, even in the north-east where tribals eventually became Christian in large numbers. Christians were therefore faced with the prospect of eventual British withdrawal and with the inescapable reality that, once this happened, they would have to live and survive in a Hindu (or Muslim) dominated political system. These were the facts which Christian leaders were gradually forced to recognize and to take into account at each stage in the constitutional process leading to independence.

Even those Christian leaders who were left untouched by the ideals of the nationalist movement could see, perhaps increasingly, the advantages of giving up the struggle for special safeguards and separate electorates for Christians. One argument, more or less persuasive, was that Christians had less in common with each other than they did with Hindus. This point was put quite forcefully by V. Chakkarai (1880-1951) a prominent Indian Christian nationalist writer in *The Guardian* in 1932.

« Apart from some religious ties that do not really bind us, our community whether so-called Protestant or Catholic, is as much divided as the Hindu into various caste divisions. This is conspicuous in this Presidency [Madras] where it can hardly be claimed that the so-called caste Christian can represent the non-caste Christian; so much so is this the case that the depressed class Christians have demanded separate treatment. The Roman Catholic Christian has nothing in common with the other Christians. The gulf between the two is wider than that between them and Hindus. In what sense can it be said that the

(50) Quoted in George THOMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

(51) *Ibid.*, p. 169.

members of each of these communities represent the other any more than a Hindu can represent it (52)? ».

Another factor which influenced Christian thinking was the recognition that, contrary to expectation, the system of separate electorates did not always enable Christians to maximize whatever political power and influence they may have had. For example, in the Madras Presidency in 1920 Christians were returned to seats representing the interests of the depressed classes. However, as a result of Gandhi's fast and the Poona pact of 1932 separate seats for the depressed classes were abolished and, with that, the possibility of an alliance between the depressed class representatives (usually Christians) and the Christian community representatives in the Madras Council. The impact of these changes was reflected in an editorial in the influential *Catholic Leader* in October 1932:

« Under a system of separate electorates, the Christian members could have counted on the support of the Depressed Classes. Now they have definitely decided to merge themselves with Hindus, the Christian members will be isolated and their voice will be a cry in the wilderness. We shall cut ourselves more and more adrift from the ruling community and the position and prestige hitherto enjoyed by us may be severely impaired. Now that conditions have changed so radically would it not be wiser to change our policy and seek to influence the majority community by a system of joint electorates? At present we do not seek the votes of Hindus and they do not seek ours. The cleavage may further be deepened and the result may prove detrimental to our interests, if prompt steps are not taken to find a solution (53) ».

Last, but not least, was a growing conviction that there was a positive and practical alternative to separate electorates. This was the idea of joint electorates with the Christians' religious and cultural rights safeguarded by a bill of rights. The idea, promoted by Aloysius Soares in *Week* made some headway and was endorsed at a conference of Catholic and Protestant leaders from all over India which met at Poona in October 1932 (54). The conference considered and approved Soares' draft of « Fundamental Rights » which began with the declaration that « Every person in the Indian Federation or Commonwealth shall be free to profess and practise his religion, including the right of making conversions, and, subject to public order and morality, exercise acts of public worship ». It was these and other rights which were debated and eventually incorporated into India's new constitution in 1947. Indeed, Soares' initiative in suggesting measures along these lines, a proposal which helped allay Christian fears of Hindu domination, was one of the most important aspects of Catholic policy and thinking which encouraged the Indian Christians' eventual acceptance of integration in India's modern political system.

INDIGENIZING MISSION

The decision of the vast majority of the Indian Christian leaders and others involved in Christian associations to renounce all claims for separate electorates and

(52) *The Guardian*, 1 September 1932.

(53) Quoted in *The Guardian*, 6 October 1932.

(54) FONSECA, *op. cit.*

representation within the political system was based on the assumption that India would become a secular state and that, like other minorities, they would retain their distinctive identity. For Christians, this meant that they would retain the right of practising their religion including the right to support missionary work and to try to convert non-Christians to their own faith.

Despite differences between some Indian Christians and missionaries, they almost all shared a passionate conviction about the importance of evangelism, and one of the effects of the nationalist movement was to stimulate Indian Christian attempts at evangelization in India and adjacent countries. The spread of the *swadeshi* movement which developed in the context of agitation against the partition of Bengal encouraged Indian Christians to think in terms of indigenizing mission – of doing something for their own country's spiritual welfare quite independently of foreign missionary activity and control.

The effect of *swadeshi* on Indian Christian thinking is reflected in the comments of the Rev. D. L. Joshi, a CMS pastor in Bombay, who urged members of his congregation to take the initiative in spreading the gospel among their own countrymen.

« Awake, Indian Christians! Swadeshism is in the air. Is it not without its lessons for us... Our missionary preceptors have been here long enough, and our community is the result of their labours under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. Is it not time to break off from our swadling- clothes and carry the torch of the blessed Gospel among our countrymen as our own indigenous effort? (55) »

The advent of the National Missionary Society, which was established at a meeting at Serampore in 1905, also suggests that Indian Christians were coming increasingly to recognize that they, rather than foreigners, had ultimate responsibility for the evangelization of their country.

One of the most important factors in this development was the visit of John R. Mott, General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation, to India during the winter of 1895-1896 (56). In a series of well-attended meetings he appealed to students not only to develop a deeper personal faith and commitment but to play a greater part in the evangelization of India. However, the main problem from the point of view of an increasingly nationalistic student body, was that if students wanted to respond to this challenge to give themselves for missionary service, they could do this only by working under the control and direction of foreign missionary societies; and as K. T. Paul declared « serving God is not serving a foreign missionary » (57).

Acutely aware of the need for an entirely independent Indian controlled organization, G. S. Eddy, an American who had gone to India with the avowed object of helping develop national leaders for the Christianization of India, and Vedanayagam Azariah, subsequently Bishop of Dornakal, were largely instrumental in calling a preliminary meeting to consider the formation of a national association. It was attended by seventeen delegates from different parts of India, Burma and Ceylon and officially

(55) Quoted in Donald Fossett EBRIGHT, *The National Missionary Society of India, 1905-1942*, Chicago, 1944, p. 49.

(56) For a discussion of this and subsequent developments see EBRIGHT.

(57) *Ibid.*, p. 59.

established the NMS the object of which was « to evangelise unoccupied fields in India and adjacent countries, and to lay on Indian Christians the burden of responsibility for the evangelisation of their own country and neighbouring lands ».

In subsequent years the NMS met with considerable success. It began its active work in 1907 with one missionary and one field in the Punjab, and with an income of Rs. 2,938. By 1930 it had one hundred and sixteen missionaries and forty-eight mission centres spread in eight provinces of India. The Society's budget in 1929 exceeded Rs. 83,000.

The successful establishment and rapid growth of the movement was partly the result of careful planning and also consultation with foreign missionary societies who were given opportunities for comment. But more important was the general context and timing – the atmosphere in which the society was launched and began its work. Elaborating on this point the editor of the *Christian Patriot*, an influential Indian Christian publication, remarked that:

« At a time when a new spirit is coursing in the veins of Asiatic nations, it was impossible that the Indian Christians should have escaped the magnetic influence of the new ideas and new sentiments which are fast taking hold of the Oriental world. This awakening among Indian Christians has found expression in the organization known as the National Missionary Society (58) ».

Another factor which gave added impetus to the new movement and which was not unrelated to the growth of nationalism, was a certain degree of anti-foreign missionary feeling, a point which was noted by the Rev. R A. Hume when speaking at a missionary meeting at Kodaikanal, and which was underlined by Eddy who, in a letter to friends in America soon after the establishment of the NMS, remarked that:

« Heretofore the Christian students as a class, have been largely unreached by the appeal for missionary service, looking upon it as a FOREIGN enterprise which is not really their own. This new society, however, appeals powerfully to them, and takes away forever the objection of men entering a Christian service which they regard as foreign » (59).

The formation and rapid success of the NMS is not only an example of the way in which nationalism encouraged the domestication of the Christian movement; it also highlights the fact that if Christianity was ever to be truly indianized this could be done only in accordance with one of a number of different models of what it was to be Indian. As already noted the nationalist movement was itself divided, there being different ideas about the character of the new nation and how far it should accept or tolerate religious differences. For Christians, who tended to support the more moderate nationalists, the basic precondition was that India would not only become a secular society, even-handed in its approach to all religions, but that it would also allow them to continue to practise evangelism. It was this insistence on the right to make converts which remained as one of the points of conflict between Christians and *some* Hindu nationalists both before and after independence.

Christian evangelism was in fact an issue within the nationalist movement from the very beginning. It is significant, for example, that the early Christian pioneers of the nationalist movement were involved in neither the Bengal British India Society nor the Madras Native Association, both of which were critical of Christian missionary

(58) Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 99.

(59) Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 96.

activity, while the Bombay Association, which included Portuguese Christians, unlike the other organizations, did not refer to grievances against Christianity in its petition to the British Parliament prior to the renewal of the East India Company's charter in 1853 (60).

The same question of Christian conversion came into prominence during the period of the Gandhian movements in the 1930s and, as Susan Harper has shown, was a major irritant in relations between Gandhi and Azariah both of whom (Azariah no less than Gandhi) considered themselves as nationalists dedicated to the nationalist cause (61).

THE REINTRODUCTION OF INDIAN FORMS OF RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION AND WORSHIP

Indigenization not only involved integration in the new national political system, indianization of leadership and the formation of indigenous missionary associations, but also the *reintroduction* of traditional forms of religious association, such as the ashram, as well as Indian-type rituals, forms of liturgy and worship.

The retention or deliberate return to Indian forms of organization, rituals and expression was motivated at least to some extent by a desire to be more effective in communicating the basics of Christianity. One illustration of this approach is the well-known policy of adaptation developed by Roberto de Nobili and other Jesuits in the Madurai mission in the sixteenth century. Christians, including Indian Christian nationalists, were all along concerned with the question of communicating the gospel so that it would be more acceptable, pleasing and easily understood (62). The movement to indigenize the faith was also encouraged by changing attitudes towards non-Christian religions, a development which might be interpreted as separate from but not unrelated to the emergence of Indian nationalism (63). As one Indian Christian complained, Indian Christians had been taught «to despise» their own culture, and until this prejudice against everything in the convert community's pre-Christian background was overcome, there was no possibility that Indian Christians would accept or want to introduce nativistic styles of organization and worship. Lastly there were feelings inspired even more directly by the spread of the nationalist movement.

(60) MEHROTRA, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

(61) On this issue and the dispute between Azariah and Gandhi see especially Susan Billington HARPER, «The Politics of Conversion : The Azariah-Gandhi Controversy over Christian Mission to the Depressed Classes in the 1930's », *The Indo-British Review. A Journal of History*, vol. 15, n° 1, pp. 147-175.

(62) V. MEYER, «Indigenisation – A Critical Review of the Discussion in India, 1942-1965 », *ICHR*, vol. 7, n° 2, 1973, pp. 98-99.

(63) On changing attitudes among British Protestant missionaries towards non-Christian religions in India see especially K.A. BALLHATCHET, «Some Aspects of the Historical Writing on India by Protestant Missionaries during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries », in C. H. PHILIPS, ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961.

Alongside an increasing conviction among missionaries and Indian Christians, such as K. M. Bannerjea, that « God had not left himself without a witness » in Hinduism, Islam and in other non-Christian religions, there was a growing pride in India's history and accomplishments and also, at the same time, an increasing and acute embarrassment at Hindu claims that Christianity was an essentially foreign religion. It was therefore very important to Western-educated Christian elites sympathetic to the nationalist movement that they should attempt in every way to show that Christians were neither lackeys nor clones of the West and that they were developing their own independent Indian style of Christian faith.

One of the most commonly expressed Indian Christian objections to Western forms of Christianity in India was to the denominational divisions which it was felt were a product of Western history and inappropriate in the Indian context. The desire for unity, which was also an aspect of national feeling, was reflected in a variety of Indian Christian experiments in Church organization. These included the Christos Samaj of Bengal, the National Church of Madras and a Bombay association of Christians who meeting in 1870, declared that it was absolutely « necessary to the progress, peace and prosperity of the Church in India », that Indian Christians demonstrate to their non-Christian critics the good feeling and spirit of unity which, in spite of Western denominationalism, was already at work among them (64).

Another objection which was sometimes made by European missionaries as well as Indian Christians when considering the Church in India, was to the retention of particular Western forms of liturgy and worship. In 1916 the Rev. J. Lazarus, a south Indian pastor, summed up this feeling when he complained that « costly edifices to which the poor Indian is quite a stranger, cumbersome surplices and stoles, sleep-inducing liturgies... and all other paraphernalia from a cold and rigid west should go and give way to simple, indigenous methods » (65).

There were spasmodic, though not always successful attempts by some European missionaries as well as Indian Christians to encourage more indigenous forms of worship during the period from about 1870 to 1947. For example, Kali Charan Bannerjea, the well-known Indian Christian nationalist leader, attempted to introduce among Christians the *nagarkirtan* (dancing and singing processions) taken from the *bhakti* traditions in Bengal (66). Shortly afterwards, in the 1870s, Tamil lyrics were introduced in worship in Pulney Andey's National Church in Madras, while in Bombay, N. V. Tilak, who established what he called « God's Durbar, » also experimented with indigenous forms of worship (67). More mainline and systematic attempts were made to indigenize Church architecture and styles of worship in subsequent years, for example, in the Dornakal diocese where the newly consecrated Bishop Azariah built a cathedral reflecting Hindu and Moslem as well as Christian forms of religious architecture. K. T. Paul and J. N. Farquhar edited a series of works for the Indian YMCA on Indian culture and tradition, the Indian Christian Literature Society published a selected anthology of hymns and prayers from Hindu sacred

(64) *CMI*, vol. 7, 1871, p. 262.

(65) Quoted in George THOMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

(66) Kaj BAAGO, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

(67) George THOMAS, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-178, *The Guardian*, 7 July 1932.

scriptures, while Indian Christian authors composed devotional lyrics more in line with traditional forms of expression (68).

That the attempt to indianize European forms of liturgy and worship met with some degree of apathy and opposition becomes immediately apparent to anyone familiar with Protestant forms of worship in the Churches of north and south India today. Referring to the situation in 1923 Chakkarai pointed out that there were « still many both Indians and Westerners » who were not convinced of « the possibility and necessity of what is called Indigenization » (69). The attitudes of ordinary members of the congregation are often reflected in the hymns they sing and, in this respect, the frustrations of P. Thangaswami, an advocate and enthusiast for more truly indigenous forms of Christian worship, are clearly apparent. Writing from Palamcotta in Tinnevely district in July 1932 he stated that:

« Indian Christian poets like Vedanayaga Sastri, Krishna Pillai, Narayan Viman Tilak and several others have poured out their souls in heart moving strains of Indian lyrics. Some of these have come out of their deep experiences of God. But the average Indian Christian spurns these in favour of translated hymns and chants which satisfy neither Indian nor European laws of poetry or grammar, but are a sort of mongrel that only provokes the pity and contempt of scholars, both Indian and foreign » (70).

The ashram movement, which led to the establishment of a number of ashrams prior to independence, was perhaps more successful than these attempts to persuade ordinary Christians to adopt more recognizably Indian forms of liturgy and worship. This was no doubt partly because the establishment of ashrams did not depend on widespread Christian support and because those involved in ashram movements, were more open and accepting of the insights and values of non-Christian religions than ordinary Churchgoers who still tended to fear (or despise) the religious traditions of their non-Christian neighbours. Those who founded and lived in ashrams were free of the constraints imposed on pastors and others who failed in their attempts to introduce indigenous forms of worship in local Churches, especially when this involved introducing liturgies influenced by middle or high caste culture when congregations were composed largely or entirely of people of outcaste origin.

On the Catholic side there was already a monastic tradition and a number of orders such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Augustinians and others which were well established in India long before the rise of the nationalist movement. Catholic monasteries and the later Anglican brotherhoods were not necessarily organized in the same way as Hindu ashrams (71), but the idea of self sacrifice and communal living for a religious purpose was something they had in common. Considerable impetus towards the formation of Christian ashrams, more open and less formal than traditional Catholic monasteries, was given by the example of the Tagore establishment at Shantiniketan

(68) *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208, fn. 74.

(69) *Harvest Field*, vol. 44, May 1923, p. 169.

(70) *The Guardian*, 7 July 1932.

(71) On Anglican brotherhoods see especially William W. EMILSEN, *Violence and Atonement. The Missionary Experiences of Mohandas Gandhi, Samuel Stokes and Verrier Elwin in India before 1935*, Frankfurt, 1994, pp. 38-95.

and Gandhi's Satyagraha Ashram (72). The ashram movement was therefore partly a response to the rise of the nationalist movement and the call to Christians to be involved in the task of national reconstruction. Linked with this endeavour was the same concern with the need to indigenize reflected in other activities in the Christian community.

One definition of an ashram is «a Hindu pattern of community living under a Guru» (73) and the founders of one of the first Christian ashrams, which was established at Tiruppattur in Tamil Nadu in 1921, called it Christukula (Family of Christ) to denote that Christ was the guru. The nature and purpose of Christian ashrams which were founded in increasing numbers during the period from 1921 to independence varied considerably. Many were founded by European priests or missionaries and Indian Christians working in collaboration, with the idea that the ashram would demonstrate the social equality implicit in Christian teaching, including equality between races so conspicuously absent in Indo-European relations elsewhere. There was usually an emphasis on simplicity of living and, in many instances, on experimentation in incorporating or adapting Hindu texts and rituals in Christian worship. Also common was the idea of social service, usually among village people or others living nearby. These activities, which varied considerably, included teaching, the establishment of dispensaries and hospitals, homes for the destitute, agricultural experiments and other practical and socially orientated projects.

CONSTRUCTING INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

At the heart of the movement to domesticate Christianity in India were Indian and European thinkers who were determined to think through and reinterpret «the Christ event» in the context of India and in the light of Indian religious and cultural traditions. Prominent among Indian Christian thinkers and theologians were K. M. Bannerjea, Nehemiah Goreh (1825-1895), Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929), Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907), A. S. Appasamy (1848-1926) and his son A. J. Appasamy (1891-1975), K. T. Paul (1876-1931), V. Chakkarai (1880-1958), P. Chenchiah (1886-1957), R. C. Das (1887-1976), Paul Devanandam (1901-1962), and others (74). They were mainly Protestant (the only Catholic in the list above being Upadhyaya) and had usually received an education in English. They were therefore part of the new Western-educated urban elite. They included lay people such as Chakkarai, A. S. Appasamy and Chenchiah (all graduates in law) who, possessing an independent income, were better placed than some other leading Christians to think and act

(72) See especially S. JESUDASEN, «Ashrams» in G. V. JOB, P. CHENCHIAH, V. CHAKKARAI etc. *Rethinking Christianity in India*, Madras 1938, pp. 215-224; Philipops THOMAS, «Christian Ashrams and Evangelization of India», *ICHR*, vol. 10, n° 3, December 1977, pp. 204-228 and EBRIGHT, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-198.

(73) M.M. THOMAS and P.T. THOMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

(74) The most important work on this subject is Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, (Revised ed.) New Delhi 1975. See also M.M. THOMAS and P.T. THOMAS, *op. cit.*

independently of Church and mission organizations. They were, almost without exception, influenced by the growth of national consciousness and feeling, a number of them, Bannerjea, Upadhyaya and Chakkarai (who joined the Home Rule movement) becoming actively involved in nationalist politics.

Though Christians and members of a developing Western-educated elite they were deeply aware of their roots in pre-Christian religion and culture and some, like A.S. Appasamy, publicly lamented as unwise the policy of isolating converts from their former surroundings (75). Men like Bannerjea and Goreh were outstanding scholars of Sanskrit literature; some were deeply conversant with the Tamil religious heritage, while others, like Upadhyaya and Sadhu Sundar Singh, were scholars of other forms of indigenous tradition. While recognizing the values and insights which were present to a greater or lesser extent in their pre-Christian heritage and background, Indian Christian theologians and thinkers were mainly concerned to relate what they perceived as the positive aspects of their former faith to Christian teachings and ways of life (76). One example of this approach can be found in Bannerjea's pioneering work entitled the *Arian Witness*. In this he explored parallels in the Vedic and Biblical passages and argued that what was especially important were Vedic views of sacrifice which foreshadow and find fulfilment in the Christian faith. Another example of the attempt to relate Christian and non-Christian understandings of God and of God's relationship with humanity, was the work of Bishop A. J. Appasamy who focussed on the parallels and insights in Tamil *bhakti* and Christian formulations.

As already mentioned, almost all of these writers were of high caste status. Their theology was therefore limited very largely to attempts to relate Christianity to higher caste religion and culture or to what is sometimes called « the great tradition ». Most Christians in India were of low or outcaste origin and hence could not be expected to easily accept the views of people they sometimes thought of as belonging to an oppressor class. Nor is there any reason why they should have found higher caste reinterpretations of Christianity any more meaningful than the European version of the Gospel. What was required therefore and what was so often lacking were systematic low and outcaste reinterpretations of the faith, including what is now sometimes called « dalit theology ».

One final and important characteristic of Indian Christian theology up to the period of independence was the growing recognition that for Christians the main issue was not so much the domestication of the pre-packaged European faith, but a new, dynamic and living version of a gospel which would reflect Indian insights and experience and be somewhat different from foreign missionary models. In the view of Chakkarai, and others as well, what was important was not the repetition of understandings derived from European experience, but an openness to what God appeared to have been doing and saying in Indian traditions. Indian Christian theology was, therefore, for them, largely a two way process of listening to what they believed was the voice of God in India's history and culture, and of reinterpreting and making known the Christian Gospel – a message which, far from being European, would be appropriate and relevant in the Indian situation.

(75) M.M. THOMAS and P.T. THOMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

(76) According to Boyd, even Goreh, who was a severe critic of Hindu philosophical systems, believed that there are certain ideas in « orthodox Hinduism » which point beyond themselves to their « fulfilment in Christ. » (BOYD, *op. cit.*, p. 55).

CONCLUSION

What then was the relationship between indigenization and nationalism? We have noted the important distinction between conversion to Christianity which was essentially a process whereby converts retained much of their culture and previous life-style, and the situation whereby Christians renounced, of their own accord or because of pressure from their mentors, many or most elements in their «Hindu» or Muslim background. One process involved a considerable degree of continuity, the other, «a burning of bridges», and an active dislike of any reminders of a pre-Christian past.

The focus of this paper has been on Christians who, one way or another, became «foreigners in their own land,» but who for a variety of reasons embarked on a journey of rediscovery, finding, in the process, ways of reinterpreting and integrating the Christian faith with all they perceived was valuable and worthwhile in their pre-Christian background. The relationship between this conscious healing process of indigenization, which was mainly the work of a Western-educated elite and the rise and spread of nationalist sentiment, was both close and complex.

Most ordinary Christians appear to have been unaffected by the new spirit of nationalism. Those who were already deracinated or cut off from their cultural roots saw little need for indigenization, especially if it involved the introduction of ideas and practices influenced by higher caste culture. Lastly they also tended to fear reabsorption into «Hinduism» or Islam as the case might be, ex-Hindus, according to Chakkarai, fearing that Christ would be lost, «captured by pantheistic, monistic and other terrors».

Over against these tendencies were forces within Christianity in India which tended to encourage a conscious indigenizing process. One of these was the need to communicate through effective language and in ways that non-Christians would appreciate and understand. Another development was theological – the growth of a greater degree of liberalism – a more open and critical spirit in relation to Christianity itself and a growing conviction (somewhat contrary to the earlier evangelical view) that God was operating in some way in the world outside the Protestant or Catholic community. But the third and most important factor was the Indian awakening and the impact of nationalist sentiment on the tiny minority of Western-educated elites. It was these elites within the Christian community, mostly Protestants but with some prominent Catholics, who together with a small number of European missionaries and priests, were the main driving force behind attempts to indigenize the Christian Church. Some of them, including those who had suffered from racism and other forms of discrimination within the Christian establishment were in a position to appreciate the parallels between European domination of church and mission and the European dominance of the British-Indian administration. Some like K. M. and Kali Charan Bannerjea, were active leaders in the early nationalist and indigenizing movements. The move to indigenize the leadership of church and mission, to encourage Christians to find their place in a newly emerging nation and political system and to indigenize styles of religious association, liturgies, worship and Christian mission were all aspects of the same journey of rediscovery and reaffirmation of the idea that Indian Christians

belonged to India and were no longer subject to Europeans, or living as foreigners in their own land.

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Abstract

There was a difference between Christians who retained pre-Christian customs and ideas and others who, for whatever reasons, were affected by a process of cultural alienation. The focus of this paper is therefore on indigenization as a conscious process of rediscovery and restoration of all that was considered valuable and worthwhile in the convert community's pre-Christian heritage. The movement, encouraged by a few missionaries and led almost entirely by a tiny Western-educated minority of Indian Christians, grew and developed alongside and in some connection with rising national sentiment. There were, for example, obvious parallels between the Indian desire for control of British administration and the Indian Christians' struggle for indigenous leadership in Church and mission. But while national feeling was influential in this and in other developments such as the formation of the National Missionary Society, the ashram movement and the development of Indian forms of liturgy, worship and theology, other factors continued to be important in the process of domestication of Christianity during the period c. 1850-1947. These included the gradual growth of a more sympathetic attitude towards Indian religion and culture (among European as well as Indian Christians) and a continuing need to communicate the Gospel to non-Christians in their own cultural context.

Résumé

Une différence sensible s'est installée entre les chrétiens qui conservèrent des coutumes et des idées pré-chrétiennes et ceux qui se sont trouvés entraînés dans un processus d'aliénation culturelle. Aussi, cet article s'intéresse-t-il à l'indigénisation en tant que processus conscient de redécouverte et de restauration des éléments pré-chrétiens issus de la communauté d'origine du converti et considérés comme méritant d'être repris en raison de leur valeur propre. Cette démarche, encouragée par quelques missionnaires et menée presque uniquement par une poignée de chrétiens indiens éduqués à l'occidentale, a vu le jour et s'est développée parallèlement à et en lien avec la montée du sentiment national. Ainsi, des parallèles évidents apparaissent entre le désir exprimé par les Indiens d'exercer un contrôle sur l'administration britannique et la lutte menée par les chrétiens indiens pour l'accession d'un leadership indigène au sein de l'Église et des missions. Mais tandis que le sentiment national se faisait sentir avec force dans des domaines tels que la formation de la Société Missionnaire Nationale, le mouvement des ashram et le développement de formes indiennes de liturgie, de culte et de théologie, d'autres facteurs ont commencé à se faire sentir de façon de plus en plus pressante dans le processus de domestication du christianisme durant la période comprise entre 1850 et 1947. Notamment, une attitude de bienveillance grandissante à l'égard de la religion et de la culture indiennes (aussi bien de la part des chrétiens européens qu'indiens) et la nécessité de diffuser la Bonne Nouvelle aux non-chrétiens en tenant compte du contexte culturel.

Resumen

Existe una diferencia entre cristianos que conservaron costumbres e ideas pre-cristianas y otros que, por varios motivos, les afectó un proceso de alienación cultural. Por eso, este artículo focaliza en la indigenización como proceso conciente para descubrir de nuevo y restaurar los elementos pre-cristianos de la comunidad de origen del converso que son percibidos como identificadores propios. El movimiento que animaron algunos misionarios y que impulsaron algunos Indios cristianos, con educación de tipo occidental, nació y creció en forma paralela y ligada al desarrollo del sentimiento nacional. Aparecen con evidencia paralelos entre la voluntad expresada por Indios de tener control en la administración británica y la lucha de los Cristianos índicos por un liderazgo indígena en la Iglesia y sus misiones. Pero, al mismo tiempo que ganó fuerza el sentimiento nacional en este campo religioso, por ejemplo con la creación de la Sociedad Misionaria Nacional, el movimiento ashram o el desarrollo de formas nacionales de liturgia, de culto y de teología, otros factores vinieron apareciendo y presionando en el proceso de domesticación del cristianismo entre 1850 y 1947. Particularmente una atención creciente por la religión y la cultura indias (de parte de cristianos europeos como índicos) y la necesidad de llegar la Buena Noticia evangelizadora tomando en cuenta el contexto cultural.