Historiography of Christianity in India

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To
Leslie, Harry, and Emily Ann

CHAPTER 1

The History of Christianity in India
*Aims and Methods**

The Church History Association of India, at its October 1973 meeting, appointed an editorial board to prepare a multi-volume history of Christianity in India written from a single perspective. The editorial board consisted of six historians—three Protestant, two Roman Catholic and one Mar Thoma, all of whom had already published in the field of Indian church history. Their opening statement at their first meeting in February 1974 was that the perspective from which the history of Christianity in India had been written up to then was 'in serious need of revision'.[1] But how, precisely, had the history of Christianity in India been written and with what end in view? The purpose of this essay is to answer that question. This is not intended to be an exhaustive bibliographic essay since

* This chapter was previously published in *Bangalore Theological Forum*, vol. X, July–December 1978, pp. 110–48; reprinted in *Indian Church History Review*, vol. XIII, December 1979, pp. 87–122. This is a revised version.

1 See, 'A Scheme for a Comprehensive History of Christianity in India', *Indian Church History Review*, vol. VIII (December 1974), pp. 89–90. One phrase from the mimeographed version was accidentally omitted in this printing.

the literature on the subject is far too vast for it.[2] Instead, it will concentrate upon general histories and refer to more specialized works only where such works represent significant new departures or illustrate important general trends. It is also confined to histories written in English.

Early Histories

The first general history of Christianity in India was a short work by Mathurin Veysierre de la Croze published in 1724. De la Croze was a French Protestant in the employ of the King of Prussia as a librarian and antiquary. His very anti-Catholic history focused on the Christians of Malabar—whom de la Croze found to be very similar to Protestants—and the Roman Catholic attempts to bring them under Papal authority. He simply ignored the rest of Catholic history in India and ended his work with a brief account of the first Protestant mission to India which was begun only in 1706.[3]

The first major history of Christianity in India was James Hough's multi-volume work which was published in 1839, 1845, and, posthumously, in 1860. Hough was one of the early 'Evangelical Chaplains' of the East India Company who sought not merely to minister to the needs of resident Europeans but also to evangelize the Indian people and build up the Indian Church. When he arrived in Palamcottah (Palayankottai) in 1816, he found the old SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) mission there in a state of neglect. He visited the neighbouring villages; revived a number of mission schools which had failed for lack of support; started seminaries to train school teachers; established a local branch of the Bible Society; and began both a Tamil translation of the Bible and a Tamil dictionary. Before he left in 1821 he

2 In 1976, Fr E.R. Hambye prepared a bibliography at the request of the editorial board for the use of the authors of the multi-volume history. This bibliography is 183 single-spaced foolscap pages in length. E.R. Hambye, *A Bibliography on Christianity in India* (Bangalore:Church History Association of India, 1976).

3 M.V. de la Croze, *Histoire du Christianisme des Indes* (La Haye: les frères Vaillant et N. Prévost, 1724).

handed over the work of 'reorganization, revival and extension of the Missions in Tinnevelly',[4] which he had carried out mostly at his own expense, to the Church Missionary Society, and specifically to C.T.E. Rhenius who had arrived there in 1820. After staying in England from 1822 to 1824 Hough returned but found that, owing to poor health, he had to leave India for good in 1826. Before leaving he had occasion to visit the Syrian Christians and the CMS Mission of Help in Travancore in 1825 and 1826.

In England, Hough put his Indian experience to good use as a controversialist for the Protestant missionary cause. While in Madras in 1824, he had written a reply to Abbé J.A. Dubois's *Letters on the State of Christianity in India*[5] which had been published the previous year and which was considered damaging to the cause of missions. During the 1830s, after he had settled permanently in England, Hough wrote a number of letters to the editors of various periodicals defending and vindicating Protestant missions against their 'Romanist' attackers. One of these was the Rev. (later Cardinal) Nicholas Wiseman who, in his 1836 *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, had argued at some length that the success of Roman Catholic and the failure of Protestant missions, especially in India, was clear evidence of divine favour and hence proved the truth of the Catholic and the falsity of the Protestant rule of faith.[6] Given all this contro-

4 Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, vol. 1 (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), p. 202.

5 James Hough, *A Reply to the Letters of the Abbé Dubois, on the State of Christianity in India* (London: L.B. Seeley and Son, 1824). Hereafter, *Reply*.

6 Nicholas Wiseman, *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church* (London: Joseph Booker, 1836) pp. 163–260. Jackman's comments on Wiseman as a historian, while not based upon these particular lectures, do apply to them. 'In his lectures, he used history in a didactic sense. He produced evidence to underline a lesson, to illustrate a specific point of view. The philosophical conclusions existed from the beginning; the evidence merely illustrated the truth.' S.W. Jackman, *Nicholas Cardinal Wiseman: A Victorian Prelate and His Writings* (Dublin: Five Lamps Press, 1977), p. 116.

versy with the Catholics, a 'History of Christianity in India seemed [to Hough] to present the only hope of fortifying the public mind against their assaults' and so he began work on his history.[7] Since Hough's opponents had made extensive use of Dubois' *Letters*, Dubois' arguments helped to shape Hough's history.

Abbé Dubois, a priest of the Paris Missionary Society,[8] writing at the ebb tide of Roman Catholic missions in India, used the authority of his long experience in India to show that it was not possible, humanly speaking, to make 'real converts to Christianity among the natives in India'.[9] His arguments were essentially three in number. The first was that native prejudice against Christianity was so strong that conversion was virtually impossible. Brahmin control over the Hindu mind and the rigidity of the caste system were largely responsible for this.[10] Second, Dubois argued that if Roman Catholicism, which, because of its close conformity to native usages and prejudices, was more congenial to the Hindu mind, but which had failed to make progress, 'no other sect can flatter itself with the remotest hopes of establishing its system'.[11] Third, Dubois believed that those Hindus who had become Christians were not *real* converts. They clung to the old superstitions and usages; they did not practise equality or charity; they had not remained faithful in adversity; many had become Christians for material advantage.[12] Moreover, Dubois contended that the major innovation of Protestant evangelists—the translation and distribution of the scriptures—instead of winning people to Christianity, would increase their prejudice against it. There is much in the Bible that Hindus would find offensive (for example, Jesus was the son of a carpenter and his disciples were fishermen), and a lot

7 James Hough, *The History of Christianity in India from the Commencement of the Christian Era*, vol. I (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1839), p. iii. Hereafter, *History*.

8 Hough wrongly referred to him as a Jesuit. *Reply*, p. 1.

9 Abbé J.A. Dubois, *Letters on the State of Christianity in India* (London: Longman, Hurst, Orme, Brown and Green, 1823), pp. 1–2.

10 Ibid., pp. 97–102.

11 Ibid., p. 24.

12 Ibid., pp. 63–75.

more which they would find incomprehensible.[13] He also faulted Protestant Bible translations as inaccurate and lacking in literary elegance; they were therefore treated with laughter or scorn rather than with respect.[14]

The stated purpose of Hough's history was to

> ... furnish the Christian Public with a body of facts, an answer to the Romanists' vaunting of the successes of their own Missions, and their assertions of the failure of Protestant Missions; and hence to prove the fallacy of their conclusions, that theirs must be the cause of truth, and the Protestants' the cause of error.[15]

To achieve this aim, Hough made a neat distinction in his *History*. The first two volumes, published together in 1839, dealt with the Syrians and the Roman Catholics, up to 1750 in the former case, and up to the end of the eighteenth century in the latter. In these two volumes, the central event was the Synod of Diamper, which was 'the leading event of the Romish Missions in Malabar, and it develops the character of their entire history',[16] and to which Hough devoted almost half of this portion of his *History*. Hough saw the Syrians as an apostolic[17] church, completely independent of Rome. He treated their history in this period as, first, a prelude to subjugation, and then, as a struggle for freedom from subjugation to Rome. His main interest, however, was clearly the Roman Catholics, and he presented their history as one of deception, betrayal of the Gospel, and ultimate failure in Rome's pursuit of domination in India.[18] These volumes end with quotations from

13 Ibid., p. 32.

14 Ibid., pp. 37–41.

15 *History*, vol. III, p. i.

16 Ibid., vol. I, p. xiii.

17 It was apostolic not in the sense of being founded by an apostle, as Hough did not believe that St. Thomas had come to Malabar, but in the sense that it conformed to the teachings of the Bible in its polity and in its basic tenets. Ibid., vol. I, pp. 110–17, 151; vol. II, p. 12.

18 'In the two former volumes I have shown, from their own authorities, that their entire course in India has been one of deception; a system of accommodation to the most absurd notions and the foulest abominations of the Heathen; that they have systematically concealed

and a refutation of Dubois's *Letters*. By way of contrast, the history of Protestant missions in India, which is the exclusive concern of the remaining volumes,[19] is a story of success. Where occasional failures occurred, they were explained by referring to the peculiar circumstances responsible.[20] This portion of the *History* was organized on a mission-by-mission basis with special chapters on each of the first four Anglican bishops in India. Volumes three and four, published together in 1845, provide decade-by-decade accounts from 1706 to 1816; the fifth volume, which Hough's son edited from his papers after his death in 1847 and published only in 1860, carried the account up to 1826.

Hough's use of sources is also noteworthy. His usual practice was first to establish the authoritativeness of the sources he relied upon and then to treat them as authorities, often reproducing their contents. He sought to meet the charge of bias, particularly in regard to Roman Catholic history, by using Roman Catholic sources.[21] He also showed a marked tendency to rely upon one or two, often secondary, sources for major sections in his *History*. Thus, he made

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from the Hindoo the essential peculiarities of revealed Truth; and that their Indian Missions, with reference to the propagation of Christianity, have proved, according to the confession of Jesuit Missionary [Dubois] of thirty years' standing, *a total failure*.' Ibid., vol. III, pp. i–ii.

19 Hough referred to the subsequent histories of the Syrian Church and its connection with the CMS Mission of Help, and of the Roman Catholic Church only when describing the opposition which various Protestant missions had to face.

20 Usually, this was lack of support from home, for example, *History*, vol. IV, p. 215.

21 An exception would appear to be his extensive use of de la Croze and Geddes, both of whom were Protestant, in his account of the Synod of Diamper. However, both of them drew upon Gouvea's *Jornado*. Gouvea belonged to the same order as did Menezes and is considered to have written a panegyric rather than a history of Menezes's trip and the Synod. Later, Protestant historians used Gouvea's efforts to show how zealous and masterly Menezes was in order to indicate how bigoted and ruthless Menezes really was! See Eugene Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, adapted from the French by E.R. Hambye (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1957), p. 56; and Jonas Thaliath, *The Synod of Diamper* (Rome: Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1958), pp. x, xi, 2 and 173 on de Gouvea.

extensive use of William Robertson's *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India* (4th ed., London, 1804) for contacts between India and the West; Michael Geddes, *The History of the Church of Malabar* (London, 1694); and de la Croze's *Histoire du Christianisme des Indes* (La Haye, 1724) for the history of Christianity in Malabar; *Jornada do Arcebispo de Goa Dom Frey Alexio de Menezes* by António de Gouvea (Coimbra, 1606) for Dom Alexis de Menezes, the then-Portuguese Archbishop of Goa; some Jesuit letters translated by John Lockman in 1743, and Paulinus of St. Bartholomew's *India Orientalis Christiana* (Rome, 1794) for the Madura Mission of Roberto de Nobili; R.P. Norbert, *Mémoires Historiques* for the Pondicherry missions; J.L. Niecamp's *Historia Missionis Evangelicae in India Orientali*; and then the annual reports of the SPCK for the Tranquebar Mission; and, for the remaining Protestant missions, he relied almost completely upon their annual reports. He also drew upon his own personal experience when describing the Syrian Christians or the history with which he was involved when in India. Hough's choice and use of sources led more to a work of comprehensiveness than of originality; as a result, the last three volumes consisted of a series of mission chronicles.

The major preoccupation of Hough's work was missionary methods. He had no disagreement with Dubois on the question of native prejudice against Christianity. Their views on Hindu 'superstition', the role of the Brahmins in maintaining such superstitions, and on caste as the chief obstacles to conversion were basically similar.[22] Although, in his *Reply* to Dubois's Letters, Hough had made the point that the Brahmins were losing their hold over the people's minds as Indians were being exposed to European arts and sciences,[23] and had begun patronizing them, one does not find this point elaborated in his *History*.

Hough took serious issue with Dubois's contention that, if the Roman Catholics could not succeed in converting India, no one else could, by faulting the methods which the Catholics in general and the Jesuits in particular had used for converting people.

22 *History*, vol. III, pp. 1–52.

23 *Reply*, pp. 38–43.

While he found in St. Francis Xavier's missionary character much that was admirable, Hough believed that many of his missionary methods (for example, the content and manner of instruction of converts) were the unavoidable outcome of the false system of belief 'which enthralled his mind'.[24] Menezes, according to Hough, used force, threats, bribery, lies, treachery and arrogance to achieve his aims in Malabar which were 'to assert the Pope's supremacy, and not to extend the dominion of Jesus Christ'.[25] Hough often found de Nobili and the Madura Mission guilty of deceit (for example, in claiming to be Brahmins and in 'forging' a fifth Veda),[26] while their policy of accommodation concealed rather than highlighted 'the peculiarities of the Gospel'.[27] Hough condemned the Roman Catholics and their methods for deviating

24 *History*, vol. I, pp. 207–9.

25 In writing later about the visit of Thomas Middleton, the first Anglican bishop in India, to Malabar, Hough drew the following comparison: 'We cannot pass without bidding the reader mark the differences between the conduct of Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, in 1598 and 1599, and that of Bishop Middleton, towards the ancient church. The former came to it with the wiles of the deceiver and the rod of the oppressor; the latter came with the words of truth in his mouth, and the olive branch of peace in his hand. Archbishop Menezes destroyed all the copies of the Syriac Scriptures that he could find, together with her [the Syrian Church's] formularies, history and every ancient record he could find, for the purpose of obliterating every vestige of her identity with the Church of Antioch and forcing her into communion with Rome. Bishop Middleton, on the contrary, deprecated any alteration in the Syrian Church brought about by foreign interference, or any conformity of it even with the Church of England, to the loss or injury of its own distinctive peculiarity. He admired its wonderful preservation, though he deplored its grievous errors and sad degradation. He wished it to be *the Church of Travancore*; and that it might be more worthy to occupy that position, and become the centre of light to the heathen around, it was the purpose of his heart to furnish it with an ample supply of the Syriac Scriptures, and other means for the reformation of itself. Whether any of these two prelates acted more in accordance with the character of a Christian bishop, let the reader judge.' Ibid., vol. V, p. 74.

26 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 221, 231, 237–8.

27 Ibid., vol. II, p. 251.

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26 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 221, 231, 237–8.

27 Ibid., vol. II, p. 251.

from Scripture; their ultimate condemnation, however, was their failure to which Dubois had borne testimony in his *Letters*. This failure was the result of their having 'obscured the light of Divine Truth' and put 'stumbling blocks . . . in the way of its reception, by the superstitions and ceremonies with which they have thought to recommend it'.[28] Thus, 'the failure of their labours ought to be attributed rather to their own unfaithfulness to the Lord, than to the people's insurmountable prejudices'.[29]

The methods of the Protestants were completely different and so, too, were the results of their work, measured not in the quantity but in the quality of their converts.[30] The Protestants' methods were scriptural. They sought to win converts not by force or guile but by the simple preaching of the Gospel; not by conforming but by contrasting the Gospel to the prejudices of the people; by translating the Scriptures as best they could, not into the flowery 'high' language full of literary conceits as the Jesuits had done, but into the simple language which ordinary people used and understood; [31] by using simple forms of worship rather than substituting one form of idolatry for another. The result had been a good number of *real* converts who had braved persecution, led Christian lives and died Christian deaths,[32] many of whom Hough described in his final three volumes. The conclusion was obvious: Roman Catholicism and all its ways stood condemned,[33] while Evangelical Protestantism was vindicated. In addition, Protestant missions required the full support of the British Christian public. British rule in India had provided both an opportunity and a responsibility for British Christians which was literally

28 Ibid., vol. II, p. 502.

29 Ibid., vol. II, p. 504.

30 See, for example, ibid., vol. III, pp. 51–2, 279–84.

31 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 232–3, 241–4; vol. V, pp. 218–21.

32 Hough, like many early-nineteenth-century Evangelicals, seemed to be fascinated with the death scenes of pious Christians. For example, ibid., vol. V, pp. 174–5 and 188–9.

33 Hough was not beyond pointing to explicit morals of the Indian story for his English readers as, for example, in using Menezes's take-over of the Syrian Church at Diamper to show what reunion with Rome would actually involve. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 133–42.

God-given.[34] While Hough was opposed to using the power of the State either to convert or to provide inducements to convert,[35] he did expect those in authority in India to be practising Christians, to lend their prestige and personal support to the Christian cause, to allow Indians to learn about Christ in schools, and to withdraw official support of idolatry.

Hough wrote his *Reply* to Dubois at a time when the Protestant missionary cause was fighting to win acceptance both in England and in India. However, by the time his *History* came out, Protestant missions were not only an accepted fact of life but were also gaining in strength and influence. As a result, Hough could and did write a history of the foundation-laying period of Protestant missions in India with a sense of confidence in their future success. His *History* became a standard reference work for future historians who drew upon the large amount of detailed information in its over three thousand pages and who often shared its author's views on the relative merits of Catholic and Protestant missions. His view of the history of Christianity in India as an account (with commentary) of missionary agencies and missionary methods, measured in terms of both (Anglican) Evangelical Truth and the results achieved, was in keeping with the needs of a generation of Evangelicals who were striving both to evangelize India as effectively as they could and to meet with the challenge of the Oxford Movement and Roman Catholicism at home.

Later Nineteenth Century Protestant Histories

Three other general histories were written during the nineteenth century which, when taken together with Hough's and some denominational histories, provide a basis for characterizing the century's approach to the history of Christianity in India. The first of these, Sir John William Kaye's *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative*, was written in 1859 in the midst of contro-

34 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 411–12.

35 Hough criticized the Dutch in Ceylon for their policy of giving jobs only to Christians. Ibid., vol. III, p. 92.

versies between Evangelicals and their opponents not only over the role of Christian missions—and especially of the government connection with Protestant missions—in causing the 1857 revolt, but also concerning the social and religious policies which the Government of India should, therefore, pursue in the future.[36] Kaye, Secretary at the India Office in London, was of the view that the public needed the means for making a more correct judgement on the past and future of India.[37] He wrote as a Christian urging moderation upon other Christians and as a defender (and possible architect) of the particular policy of religious neutrality which was being adopted by the Government of India. History was an ideal vehicle for clarifying what he considered as being both the issues and the relevant components in a desirable policy, because of the importance he gave both to changes and to precedents.

The subject matter of Kaye's history was the progress of Christianity in India, 'more especially as it has been affected by the efforts of the Protestant Church and the measures of the British Government'.[38] He devoted one chapter to pre-eighteenth-century history, one to the Tranquebar Mission, and the remainder to British religious life, religious policies, missions in India, and especially to the relationship of the British Government of India to the missionary cause. His subject matter was intentionally biographical, as he saw this as a period of mostly pioneers[39]—whether British politicians, governors, chaplains or missionaries—and concentrated in Bengal, especially in Calcutta, to the virtual exclusion of the rest of the country, because Calcutta was the centre of British power in India.

For his early, non-British chapters, Kaye drew heavily upon Hough, whose views he shared but which he stated with much greater wit.[40] His chapter on Serampore was based on John

36 For an analysis of these controversies, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 72–5, 82–110.

37 Sir John William Kaye, *Christianity in India: An Historical Narrative* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1859), pp. xii–xiii.

38 Ibid., p. 1.

39 Ibid., p. xiv.

40 The following comments on de Nobili and the Madura Mission

Marshman's manuscript which was published in the same year as Kaye's own work.[41] For the rest, he used official and private papers, as well as occasional mission reports. He treated his sources with more critical detachment and with a broader awareness of historical context than did Hough. The result was an analytical history, rather than a chronicle, written in a very readable literary style. Like Hough, Kaye was not reluctant to pass moral judgements upon people or events.

Kaye showed that there was little enthusiasm in India or England for missions until the very end of the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, in the process of empire-building, the Government of India took over from the governments it had superseded responsibility for religious endowments, collecting a pilgrim tax and maintaining Hindu and Muslim religious institutions. Gradually, the Evangelical chaplains in India and the Clapham Sect in England changed the British attitude towards missions and then towards the government connection with Indian religions. According to Kaye, from 1813 to 1833, the British began to assert their own Christian faith, while from 1833 to 1853, they sought to emancipate themselves from their earlier connections with Hindu and Muslim religious institutions.[42] Kaye differed from the advocates of a 'Christian policy' for India in arguing that the diffusion of Christianity had depended upon British success which, in turn, had been due in part to their early prudence in making Indians feel that their religions were safe under British rule. Thus,

> What I am contending for is, if the people of India had not felt that *their* religions were secure against the assaults of the British Government,

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illustrate this: 'They did their best to render conversion as easy as possible, by heathenizing Christianity to the utmost possible extent. Indeed it may be questioned whether the Jesuit missionaries were not themselves the only real converts. It is almost enough to say of the scandalous nature of their proceedings, that they brought a blush to the hard cheek of Menezes.' Ibid., pp. 32–3.

41 Ibid., p. xv. It appeared in 1859 under the title, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward: Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission.*

42 Sir John William Kaye, *Christianity in India*, pp. 482–3.

> the British Government could not have asserted, as it has done, *its* own religion, without obstruction from the conflicting faiths by which it was surrounded.[43]

Consequently, Kaye argued that the government could not stop religious endowments without committing a breach of faith, nor should it promote Christianity by teaching it in government schools, lest people feel threatened. Instead, government neutrality posed the best hope for Christian missions.[44] Kaye closed with a plea for patience, moderation and for the kind of gentleness towards and respect for Indians that befits a Christian, instead of the cruelty and contempt characteristic of a dominant race.[45]

Kaye's was not only a very timely piece of historical writing for the post-1857 situation but also a very competent one. As the preceding summary of his argument indicates, for Kaye, the history of Christianity in India was primarily a matter of Church–State relationship. For later historians, his book became a standard reference work on that subject.[46]

The next general history, *The History of Protestant Missions in India, from their Commencement in 1706 to 1871*, was written in 1875 by the Rev. M.A. Sherring, for many years a missionary in Banaras of the London Missionary Society. The aim of this work, written to 'stimulate the zeal of the Churches at home on behalf of the great enterprise of Missions in India',[47] was 'to show historically what Protestant Missions have accomplished in India since their commencement'.[48] In this respect, Sherring's book was typical of most nineteenth-century histories. However, while others concentrated on the activities and achievements of their

43 Ibid., p. 480.

44 Ibid., pp. 489–91.

45 Ibid., p. 503.

46 For example, Arthur Mayhew used Kaye as one of his main sources for the pre-1858 period section in his *Christianity and the Government of India 1600–1920* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1929).

47 M.A. Sherring, *The History of Protestant Missions in India, from their Commencement in 1706 to 1871* (London: Trubner and Co., 1875), p. viii.

48 Ibid., p. vii.

own particular missions, Sherring attempted to do this for all the missions together.

The major theme of Sherring's book was the spread of Protestant Christianity from one corner of India to the rest of it. After an opening chapter on the Tranquebar Mission, Sherring provided a region-by-region survey starting with Calcutta and greater Bengal (including Assam, Orissa and Bihar), proceeding north through the United Provinces to the Punjab, then down the west coast to South Travancore, and finally up the east coast to Andhra Pradesh. Each chapter of the survey begins with a description of some peculiarity, either of the people or of the missions in the region under survey, before moving on to a brief historical account of the various mission societies at work there and ending with a composite statistical table for 1871. The final chapter describes the direct and indirect results of Protestant missionary work and concludes with an assessment of the various missionary methods employed.

Sherring's sources were extremely limited. He relied heavily upon Hough and on the reports of the missionary conferences held at Ootacamund in 1858 and Allahabad in 1872–3. These he accepted without criticism, often quoting them at length. Of special significance is the unashamed triumphalism which pervades his work.

> The aggressive spirit of Christianity has never been more strongly exhibited than in its conflict with various forms of Hindooism in India during the present century ... It has combated superstition in its wildest forms. It has attacked Brahmanism in its famous seats of learning. It has contended with bloody rites, with foolish customs, with caste prejudices. It has followed idolatry to its most sacred spots ... Under the persistent assaults of Christianity, continued with sustained vigour from year to year, Hindooism has become fairly wearied ... At one time strenuous resistance was shown, and controversy raged throughout the land. But that day is past. Idolatry is not an active foe ... Christianity is looked upon as a young giant with whom it is dangerous to contend, and whom it is best to leave alone.[49]

The concluding chapter attributes the recent awakening of India in all its many aspects to the activities of Protestant missions. For

49 Ibid., pp. 133–4.

Sherring, the history of Christianity in India was the triumphant story of missions, missionaries, and missionary methods.

Sherring's work exemplifies the Euro-centric perspective on the history of Christianity in India which was to continue throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. Denominational histories of Western missions and missionary biographies—the two most common forms of historical writing during this period—followed Hough and Sherring in using history to promote Protestant missions. In these histories, India was reduced to a mere setting, and the sad state of her people explained by reference to the evil effects of the Hindu and the Muslim religions. The instruments of her salvation—measured in terms both of converts and socio-cultural change—were the aggressive band of Protestant missionaries labouring faithfully and efficiently in her midst, whose story formed the main body of each history.

Sherring's history also reflects the changed spirit with which historians were writing. The reminiscences, memoirs and historical narratives of the initial foundation-laying period of a mission society's work in India written in the first half of the century concentrated upon struggles in the face of tremendous challenges posed by the Indian environment—the terrain, the climate, local religious and cultural traditions, and the problematic nature of the resident European population. They were being replaced by histories which faced the future with increasing confidence. Christian missions in India were now taken for granted, at least in Western circles; they were getting permanently established in many parts of India and were expanding their operations; they were winning larger numbers of converts and were stimulating an increasingly apparent social and religious ferment among the still-unconverted. Writers of mission histories and biographies were, therefore, optimistic about the inevitable and none-too-distant triumph of Christianity in India. Whatever controversy there was focused upon such questions of mission strategy as the evangelistic potential of Christian educational institutions, or the wisdom of mass conversion of 'untouchables', rather than upon the very existence of Christian missions themselves.[50]

50 An excellent example of this perspective, as well as of continuing

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Richter divided his work into two parts. After devoting an introductory chapter to the land, people, religion, and caste structure of India, he used three chapters to describe the development of missions in India. In this section, like Hough before him, he lumped together the Syrians and the Roman Catholics and traced their history only up to the end of the eighteenth century. Unlike Hough—who was much closer to the eighteenth century—Richter made a clear distinction between the Tranquebar Mission and 'modern missionary work' which was inaugurated by William Carey.[51] Like Kaye, he devoted an unusually large portion of the modern section of his history to Bengal, even naming two of the four sub-divisions of the chapter, 'The Age of William Carey' and 'The Age of Alexander Duff'. The second part of the history was arranged topically. This dealt with the religious challenges which missions faced in India as well as with missionary organization and methods (that is, vernacular preaching, literary work, mission

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51 Julius Richter, *A History of Missions in India* (trans.) Sydney H. Moore (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1908), p. 131.

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schools, women's work for women, medical missions, and missions to lepers). The final chapters describe some of the results of missions in India.

In Richter's history, one notes several methodological advances upon earlier histories. First of all, although Richter was extremely sparing in the use of footnotes, it is evident that he used a wider range of source materials than did his predecessors. Richter could, and did, draw upon a body of literature on India and on missions in India which had been developing over the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as upon the official census conducted every decade since 1881. A second advance was a certain critical distance between the author and his subject. Both the triumphalism of Sherring's work and the value judgements with which Hough's and Kaye's works abound were more controlled, although not absent, in Richter's. Moreover, where controversies existed—as in running schools for non-Christian children—Richter presented both sides as fairly as he could so that the issues involved were clear.[52] The third advance was his recognition that India did play a role in the history of missions. Hough had provided a (less scholarly) chapter on India while Sherring had mentioned the various influences of Protestant missions upon Indian society. Richter went a step further by describing the challenge posed by the religious beliefs and institutions of India. For Richter, 'The great problem of missionary work is: How can Christianity overcome and supplant native forms of religion?'[53] Therefore, he had to address himself to the question: 'What has been up to the present the attitude of Indian religions towards Christianity, and what prospects are there for their ultimate overthrow?'[54] He sought to answer his questions by analysing categories of Indians who held different types of beliefs. Clearly, the role India played was largely that of a 'problem to be overcome'; even Richter's concluding section on 'The Building up of the Christian Church in India' is a story of those shifts in mission policy and administration which were granting the Indian

52 Ibid., pp. 313–20.
53 Ibid., p. 241.
54 Ibid., p. 243.

churches more independence, rather than about what Indian Christians sought to have their churches become.

Thus, Richter was very much the proponent of Protestant missions and his history was very present-oriented. He used his history not so much to inspire support as to define the problems and issues which he felt missions were facing. For Richter, therefore, the history of Christianity in India was a history of (mostly Protestant) missions, missionaries and missionary methods.

The preceding analysis of nineteenth-century histories of Christianity in India indicates that, despite certain shifts of emphasis or advances in method, these histories shared several characteristics. The first and the most obvious is that they were written by Western authors and published in the West for a Western readership. Hence, at least in this proprietary way, these histories 'belonged' to the West rather than to India. Second, the history of Christianity in India was viewed as the history of missions and missionaries from the West, of their work, their methods, their successes and failures in India. They were not histories of the Indian Church but of Western attempts to create one. Only in the struggles of the Syrian Christians against the Portuguese hierarchy does one get a glimpse of an Indian *Church*, while individual Indian Christians, even when accorded considerable space, were generally assigned subordinate, 'assisting', or 'mission results' roles. This is also characteristic of the many Protestant denominational histories from this period which bear such titles as *Our India Missions*;[55] *The Story of the Delhi Mission*;[56] *Forty Years of the Punjab Mission of the Church of Scotland, 1855–1895*;[57] and *The Story of Fifty Years' Mission Work in Chhota Nagpur*,[58] to mention only a few. These histories were written for those (Westerners) who controlled and supported Protestant missions in India so that they might appreci-

55 By Andrew Gordon in 1886. *A Thirty Year's History of the India Mission of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, Together with Personal Reminiscences* (Philadelphia: Andrew Gordon, 1886).

56 Published by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (Westminister, 1908).

57 By John F.W. Youngson (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1896).

58 By Eyre Chatterton (London and New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1901).

ate *present* work and *current* issues by viewing them in a historical perspective. Since missions and missionaries dominated the churches in India in the nineteenth century and were expected to continue to do so for the foreseeable future, their histories were, quite naturally, equated with the history of Christianity in India.

Given this equation of Protestant missions in India with Christianity in India, it is not by accident that the third feature of these histories is that, in them, neither the Syrian Christians nor the Roman Catholics have a nineteenth-century history.[59] Not only were those churches non-Protestant but they were also so torn by internal divisions in the nineteenth century as to pose no serious threat, or have anything positive to teach to those Protestants preoccupied with missions and mission work. Fourthly, India played virtually no role in these nineteenth-century histories. India was a setting on which the great missionary drama was acted out or a kind of laboratory in which a variety of missionary methods were tested. The peoples of India had no history of their own in these accounts; they were not actors but were simply acted upon. In fact, one is given the impression that 'by waking them up from their long slumber', Christian missions gave them a history where previously they had none. Finally, these histories were based almost exclusively upon mission sources which were generally treated uncritically.

These histories bear a striking resemblance to contemporary British histories of India in general which were also written to instruct, inspire or convince a Western readership. While histories of India concentrated upon the political, military and administrative history of rulers, and particularly upon British rulers, histories of Christianity in India dealt with (particularly recent Protestant) missionary policies, campaigns, and administrative measures. Percival Spear's comment on British historical writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries applies equally, as we have seen, to histories of Christianity in India.

59 This is not true of the second edition of Richter's history, published in 1924 and only in German, which included a chapter on Roman Catholicism in the nineteenth century. (I owe this information to Hugald Grafe.)

> British historians in general were concerned with British activities and regarded the vicissitudes of Indian society as being outside their ken. Indian society being unprogressive and perhaps decadent the important thing was what the British did and how what they did affected the Indians.[60]

There is also the same kind of dependence upon 'official' sources produced by foreign administrators themselves found in the histories of Christianity. In fact, the parallels are so exact as to suggest that a common imperial viewpoint concerning India shaped nineteenth-century histories of both the religious and the mundane realms.

Early Twentieth Century Roman Catholic Histories

While the Protestant historians described above were experiencing their 'Great Century' as they wrote, the same cannot be said of the Roman Catholic historians. Their 'Great Century' in India had run from the mid-sixteenth to about the mid-seventeenth century, while the nineteenth century was a period of recovery from intervening disasters as well as of prolonged jurisdictional disputes between the Portuguese Padroado (Patronage) and the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome. These circumstances and their concept of the Church gave Catholic historians perspectives on the history of Christianity in India which were somewhat different from those of Protestant historians. They did not produce general histories of Christianity in India comparable to those of Hough, Kaye or Richter. M. D'Sa's short two-volume *History of the Catholic Church in India*[61] may be considered the first written in English, covering the history of the entire Catholic Church in India, while Joseph C. Houpert's *Church History of India*

60 T.G.P. Spear, 'British Historical Writing in the Era of the Nationalist Movements', in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 409. See also, the other articles in this volume, especially, 'The Administrators and Historical Writing on India', by E.T. Stokes, pp. 385–403.

61 Bombay: The Lalka Printing and Litho Works, 1910, 1924.

and Ceylon A.D. 52–1942 provides only a brief Catholic vision of Indian Church history as a whole.[62]

The Rev. M. D'Sa, in all probability an Indian secular priest in the diocese of Damaun, wrote within a frame of reference which was not only Roman Catholic but also Portuguese and Padroadoist. Although the two volumes were divided into a large number of often very small chapters, they were, in fact, quite different. The first, devoted to the period from 52 to 1652, was an account of the establishment and spread of Christianity in India, and it largely avoided scholarly and ecclesiastical controversy. The second, which carried the history from 1652 up to 1924, and was, in the author's eyes, the more controversial of the two,[63] consisted largely of Papal and Portuguese documents pertaining to the jurisdiction of the Padroado in India. Thus, what began as a history of the Catholic Church ended up as a historical defence or justification of the Padroadoist stand on the jurisdictional disputes which plagued the Roman Catholic Church in India during the nineteenth century.

Most of D'Sa's first volume was organized around the lives and activities of the bishops and archbishops of Goa. He devoted three short chapters to the pre-Portuguese period at the outset, and the concluding chapters to the works of the various religious orders then in India. St. Francis Xavier, the Mughal Mission, and 'The Syriac Church' received separate chapters, but one is still left with the impression that all important developments were initiated from Goa. For example, de Nobili was virtually ignored in this volume and, in the second one, was referred to only in the context of the later disputes over the 'Malabar Rites'.[64] The chapter on 'The Popes and the Church in India' was made up mostly of quotations showing that the Popes were pleased with what the Portuguese were doing to spread the faith in India and that they themselves

62. (Trichinopoly: The Catholic Truth Society of India, 1942). This is a revision of an even briefer work terminating in 1930 and published in 1933.

63. M. D'Sa, 'Preface', *History of the Catholic Church in India, Volume II A.D. 1652–1924* (Bombay: The Lalka Printing and Litho Works 1924).

64. Ibid., vol. I, p. 170; vol. II, pp. 31–41.

were bound by the Padroado arrangement. The next chapter on 'The Kings of Portugal and the Church in India' showed that the Popes' confidence in the Portuguese was well justified. D'Sa not only accepted as quite natural the union of Church and State that was implicit in the Padroado arrangement, but also considered it largely responsible for the success of Christianity in India. He opened his history by saying that, 'In justice it must be said that the conquests of Portugal were so many conquests of religion',[65] and elaborated further when discussing the Kings of Portugal and the Church in India by saying, 'It was his [the King's] army of brave Portuguese soldiers that enabled Fr Antonin do Porto, Michael Vaz, St. Francis Xavier and other zealous missionaries to break down idols and destroy pagodas without molestation'.[66] D'Sa devoted his second volume almost exclusively to the jurisdictional controversy between the Padroado and the Propaganda.[67] He concluded it—as he had the first volume—with brief organizational histories of the various religious orders in India. He provided ample footnotes in both volumes, citing both primary and secondary sources, but gave no bibliography.

D'Sa largely avoided the controversial issues raised by the historians discussed thus far, and, as a result, his explanations often appear complacent and simplistic. For example, he attributed de Nobili's methods mainly to an excess of zeal[68] and explained conflicts between the Roman Catholic and the 'Syriac' Churches

65 Ibid., vol. I, p. 1.

66 Ibid., vol. I, p. 204.

67 Under the Padroado agreement of 1514, the Portuguese were responsible for maintaining missions and churches in India; in return they had the right of ecclesiastical patronage which included the nomination of bishops. When the Portuguese were no longer able to fulfill the financial obligations of this agreement, the Vatican, through the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (the Propaganda), sent out their own missionaries whose churches were organized under Vicars Apostolic. Thus there were two competing, and in some places overlapping, jurisdictions in India. Negotiations went on from 1833 to 1886 when a concord was reached which enabled the Propaganda to establish dioceses and appoint bishops outside the Padroado jurisdiction.

68 Ibid., vol. I, p. 170.

solely in terms of either personal disagreements or of the clash between Catholic truth and Nestorian heresy.[69] The destruction of Hindu idols and 'pagodas' as well as other denials of religious liberty did not call forth any explanation at all. Perhaps controversy made D'Sa feel uncomfortable, as his preface to the second volume suggests;[70] perhaps his loyalty to the Padroado made him accept things which others would question; perhaps he did not want to disturb the Catholic faithful for whom his history was written. However, since D'Sa cited Hough's *History*,[71] he could not have been totally unaware that there were strong differences on these and other questions.

Joseph C. Houpert SJ used both his general history and a more detailed history of his own Madura Mission[72] as vindication for Roman Catholic Christianity. His view of the Church as, on the one hand, 'the visible society of believers united in a constitutional monarchy under one head the Pope as Vicar of Christ' and, on the other, as 'the assembly of God's people imperfect still but growing in perfection … [as the Church] takes men as they are and by degrees raises them to higher levels'[73] undergirded the two major themes of his histories: institutional continuity and missionary expansion. With regard to the former, Houpert considered the Church in India to have been Catholic from the very outset, for a time Nestorian in name only, and then divided by the 'Jacobite schism' in the seventeenth century and the coming of Protestant 'counter-missions' in the eighteenth century.[74] With regard to the latter theme, he saw the aim of mission as establishing the Catholic Church on a permanent basis, with the religious orders as the chief agents of mission. He defended the missionary methods they had used, especially those of de Nobili and his successors in the Madura Mission, and concluded his general history with a descrip-

69 Ibid., vol. I, pp. 172–85.

70 Ibid., vol. II, Preface.

71 Ibid., vol. I, p. 180.

72 *A South Indian Mission: The Madura Catholic Mission from 1535 to 1935*, new ed. (Trichinopoly: St. Joseph's Industrial School Press, 1937).

73 Joseph C. Houpert, *Church History of India and Ceylon*, pp. 1, 97.

74 Ibid., pp. 9–10, 40–2, 66.

tion of the present Church as sociologically complex, economically poor and dependent on foreign help, as well as on the defensive in relation to other Indians.

D'Sa's and Houpert's primary preoccupations—missionary expansion and methods; the institutional development of a hierarchical church; questions of jurisdiction between religious orders as well as between Padroado and Propaganda—are also reflected in the many other histories of dioceses and religious orders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[75] While, as in the Protestant case, foreigners were the chief actors and India served basically as a stage in Catholic histories, the histories themselves do not share quite the same imperial ethos. Most of the authors—both as non-Anglo-Saxons and as Catholics—could not participate fully in the triumphalism of the British Raj. Moreover, the 'Golden Age' of Roman Catholicism in India had come and gone, and was identified more with Portugal than with Great Britain.

Early Syrian Orthodox Histories

The history of the Syrian churches in Kerala was the first to attract Indian Christian writers. It also generated the earliest and largest body of modern historical literature on Christianity in an Indian language (Malayalam). However, the first history of the Syrian Church in India to be written in English was in 1694 by an Englishman who had never been to India. Michael Geddes, Chancellor of the Cathedral Church at Sarum, was a prolific writer of tracts and books, most of which were critiques of the Roman Catholic Church.[76] This history is no exception, as its full title indi-

75 Many of these histories, like their Protestant counterparts, were inspirational or promotional in character, whereas Adrien Launay's five-volume *Histoire des Missions de L'Inde: Pondichéry, Maïssour, Coïmbatour* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Charles Douniol, 1898) parallels Richter's history in its focus upon missiological issues.

76 These include works on the Council of Trent, the Protestant Martyrs in Spain, a Church History of Ethiopia and one titled *A View of the Methods by Which the Roman Church Keeps Her People from Coming to the Knowledge of the Great and Manifold Errors and Corruptions Which are in her Faith, Worship and Spirit* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1706).

cates: *The History of the Church of Malabar from the Time of its being first discovered by the Portuguezes in the Year 1501. Giving an Account of the Persecutions and Violent Methods of the Roman Prelates, to Reduce them to the Subjection of the Church of Rome. Together with the Synod of Diamper, Celebrated in the Year of our Lord 1599. With some Remarks upon the Faith and Doctrine of the Christians of St. Thomas in the Indies, agreeing with the Church of England, in opposition to That of Rome.*[77] The main body of the work consists of the decrees of the Synod of Diamper taken from Gouvea's *Jornada* because, as Geddes pointed out, in condemning them, the decrees revealed much about the doctrines and practices of the Malabar Church that otherwise would not have come to light[78] and showed that 'there has always been a considerable visible Church upon Earth, that never believed the Doctrines of the Pope's Supremacy, Purgatory, Transubstantiation, Adoration of Images, Auricular Confession &c.'[79] The decrees were preceded by a history of the Malabar Church's relation with the Portuguese from 1501, most of which was devoted to Menezes's trip to Malabar climaxed by the Synod of Diamper and to a list of fifteen 'doctrines in which the Church of Malabar agrees with the Church of England and disagrees with Rome'.[80]

The Syrian Christians of Malabar,[81] the first history in English by a Syrian Christian writer located thus far, was published in England in 1869. Its author, Edavalikel Philipos, was a cathanar of the Jacobite Syrian Church and a staunch supporter of Mar Joseph Dionysius against Mar Matthew Athanasius in the dispute over who was the legitimate Metropolitan of the Jacobite Syrian Church in Travancore and Cochin. Philipos's was a short work written in a question-and-answer form. It began by setting forth the doctrines of his Church and its relationship to the early councils of

77 London: Sam. Smith and Benj. Walford, 1694.

78 Ibid., p. 109.

79 Ibid., Dedication Page.

80 Ibid., p. G3.

81 Edavalikel Philipos, *The Syrian Christians of Malabar: Otherwise Called the Christians of S. Thomas* (ed.) G.B. Howard (Oxford and London: James Parker & Co., 1869).

the Church. The Indian portion of the history, that covers only a third of the thirty-two pages, describes the coming of St. Thomas in AD 52 and Thomas of Cana in AD 345, the Synod of Diamper and its aftermath, ending with the then-current controversy, in which he condemned Matthew Athanasius as a deceiver, and the Travancore government for its policy of non-interference in ecclesiastical matters.[82]

Only in 1892 did a full-length history, *The Syrian Church in India*, appear. Its author, George Milne Rae, a former professor at Madras Christian College, had it published in England as his aim was simply to inform Western readers about this church by writing its history. His focus was first upon its origin and then upon its relationships with churches in the West. With regard to the former, he argued, largely on the basis of the *Acts of Thomas*, that St. Thomas did not come personally to south India. However, since Thomas was the founder and patron saint of the Church of Edessa, when members of that Church migrated to south India, Thomas became by extension the founder of the church there, too. This, Rae called 'the migration of tradition'.[83] The rest of the history he divided into three periods: the Nestorian, the Roman, and the Jacobite. During the Nestorian period, the Syrian Christians established themselves in India as a caste of good standing.[84] The Roman period was characterized by subjugation. The Jacobite period involved a switch of allegiance from Nestorian Edessa and Babylon to Jacobite Antioch and thus from the tradition of St. Thomas to a heretical tradition of St. Peter. However, Rae devoted most of this period to the 'Mission of Help' of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (1813–37) aimed at reforming the Jacobite Church from within; to the divisions in the Church that followed; and to the dubious role that the Patriarchs of Antioch played in those disputes. His history ends with the 1889 court case that the traditionalists won over those reformers who were influenced by the CMS missionaries, and to a critique of the ways in which the two Hindu judges used historical

82 Ibid., p. 25.

83 George Milne Rae, *The Syrian Church in India* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1892), p. 128.

84 Ibid., p. 183.

data to reach their majority decision. Rae's own conclusion was that the Syrian Church in India would be much better off if they cut ties with the Patriarchs, to whom they sent money and from whom they received nothing in return, and if they took 'their Church affairs' into their own hands lest their members be absorbed by the stronger Catholic and Protestant churches nearby.[85]

C.M. Agur's lengthy *Church History of Travancore*, which appeared a decade later, had a less conspicuous agenda to push than its predecessors had. Agur, a Tamil Protestant native of Travancore working in government service, sought to create an interest among his fellow countrymen in the history of their churches 'in view to their further development'[86] and published his history in India in 1903. In his view, the central fact about the Travancore churches was their marvellous growth. This, he attributed primarily to the zeal of many missionaries, both Indian and foreign.[87] He treated the history of the Syrian Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church separately, devoting more space to the last than to the former two combined, despite the shorter history of Protestantism in Travancore. His section on the Syrian Church was not about growth. Instead, he followed Rae not only in his analysis of the St. Thomas tradition and in labelling the three periods of Syrian Church history as Nestorian, Roman and Jacobite, but also in paying a lot of attention to the Church's external ecclesiastical relationships. Where he differed from Rae was in supplying more information about the nineteenth-century Syrian congregations; about what the competing metropolitans actually did for their congregations; and about the current condition of the Jacobite Syrian and the Reformed Syrian churches following their separation. Like Rae, he saw the connection with Antioch as a weakness because it created divisions in Travancore but offered no compensating benefits. Unlike Rae, he saw some signs of reconciliation and reform in both parts of the now-divided

85 Ibid., pp. 355–6.

86 C.M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990), p. vi. This book was originally published in Madras in 1903.

87 Ibid., p. 69.

church, and so, concluded that 'Surely then we may say that the Syrian Church in Travancore has yet a glorious future.'[88]

The last of these early general histories of the Syrian Church to be included in this overview is E.M. Philip's *The Indian Church of St. Thomas*. Philip, a nephew of Edavalikel Philipos, felt it was important to write such a history from the Syrian Christian point of view,[89] arguing that it was a genuinely orthodox church of long standing and so deserved both sympathy and high regard.[90] Like its predecessors, this history concentrated upon the Church's external ecclesiastical relationships as well as upon the disputes over the legitimacy of its various metropolitans in India. Philip finished the book in 1907 and tried, but failed, to get it published in Britain. Instead, it was published in India after his death in 1914, first in Malayalam (1929) and then, much later, in English (1950).

Philip took direct issue with Rae (whom he frequently referred to as 'our critic') on three key points. He upheld the tradition that St. Thomas himself came to India in AD 52, citing indirect evidence in its favour and arguing that, while it could not be proven, Rae had failed to disprove it with his conjectures.[91] He also rejected Rae's neat division of the Church history into Nestorian, Roman and Jacobite periods, largely because he was not convinced that the Syrian Church to which the Kerala Christians were ecclesiastically linked had been consistently Nestorian prior to 1500; he saw it as a mix of Jacobite and Nestorian, with the Jacobite being the stronger part of the mix.[92] He was also firmly committed to the ecclesiastical tie with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch as historic; invaluable (as when the Patriarch visited Kerala in 1875–6 and reorganized the Church there);[93] and integral to the identity of the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church.

88 Ibid., p. 196.

89 E.M. Philip, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas* (Nagercoil: The London Missionary Society Press, 1950), p. i.

90 Ibid., pp. 5–6.

91 Ibid., p. 47. He also placed the arrival of a group of migrants under Thomas of Cana in AD 345, four hundred years earlier than did Rae. Ibid., pp. 70–5.

92 Ibid., pp. 130–58.

93 Ibid., pp. 259–61.

Philip devoted more than half of his history to the nineteenth century, and particularly to the CMS 'Mission of Help' and its consequences for the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church. While the mission had perhaps begun with the best of intentions as an act of friendship and solidarity at a time when the Syrian Church was especially vulnerable, it had proved to be anything but that in practice. Philip saw the C.M.S. missionaries working in collusion with the British Residents in Travancore—who had great influence with the Travancore government—to grant recognition to or to dismiss Metropolitans sent by the Patriarch of Antioch, and so divide and weaken his Church. He produced evidence to show that they insulted, violated, and robbed the Jacobite Church of both members and treasure. He considered their 'Mission of Help' to be similar in aim though gentler in methods to Menezes's earlier attempt to take over the Syrian Church.[94] He decided that the Syrian Christians were treated far better by the tolerant Hindu rulers of Travancore than by fellow Christians from Portugal and England.[95] In his concluding retrospect, Philip wrote that the Church's 'staunch attachment to her ancient oriental customs, and forms of worship and government is not more striking than the marked dislike she has consistently displayed to all Western innovations, whether Romish or Anglican.'[96] Philip clearly shared that dislike and this portion of his history has been criticized as being unfairly one-sided as a result.[97] His was a 'committed history' full of moral judgements which could not simply be dismissed because

94 Ibid., pp. 326–30.

95 Ibid., p. 418.

96 Ibid., p. 416.

97 While by no means exonerating the CMS missionaries, the following two histories of the 'Mission of Help' do take issue with Philip on the role which the mission played in the history of the Syrian Church. P. Cheriyan, *The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society, 1816–1840*. (Kothayam: The Church Missionary Society's Press & Book Depot, 1935); Eugene Lester Ten Brink, 'The C.M.S. Mission of Help to the Syrian Church in Malabar, 1816–1840: A Study in Protestant–Eastern Orthodox Encounter', unpublished PhD dissertation (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1960).

of both the line of argument and the substantial documentation it provided.

Although the Syrian Church had a very different history from that of the Catholic or the Protestant Churches, it is striking how similar nineteenth-century historical writing about them was. In all three cases, the roles of foreign actors and of those at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchies really constituted the histories, while the community was largely ignored. Both the Syrian and the Catholic Churches were plagued by jurisdictional disputes and these became major focal points for their historians. What distinguished this body of historical writing from the others was, on the one hand, its preoccupation with questions of origins and legitimacy, and, on the other, two important innovations: C.M. Agur's reaching out to a new readership by publishing in India for his fellow countrymen, and the spirit of what might be called 'ecclesiastical nationalism' in which E.M. Philip wrote his history.

Twentieth Century Developments

The period between the outbreak of World War I and the achievement of Indian Independence was a period of great change for the Church and for India generally. Under Gandhi's leadership, the Indian National Congress ushered in a new era by broadening its base of support enormously, completely changing its structure and tactics, and posing so serious a challenge to British rule that the British decided to leave in 1947. As a result of the impact of the nationalist movement upon Indian life, ecclesiastical statesmen came to see that the future of Christianity in India would be very different from its past, and that their major task now was to prepare the Church in India for an uncertain future. It is, therefore, not surprising that during this period not only were no general histories of Christianity in India written and that the number of denominational histories declined, but also that the Syrian churches—which were for all intents and purposes free from foreign domination—became of increasing interest to historians.[98] It would seem from

98 H. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* (Manchester: The University Press, 1926); P. Cheriyan, *The Malabar Syrians*; F.E. Keay,

two articles on the study of church history written in the 1930s that, as the Indian Church came to replace the foreign missions as the centre of Christian concern during this period, Indian Churchmen felt that they had more of value to learn from the past experience of the Church in the West than from their own past.[99] Nevertheless, in response to the recommendations made by the Church History deputation sent to Asia by the International Missionary Council in 1931–2, the Church History Association of India was founded in 1935. It devoted its energies primarily to the location, collection and preservation of source materials. It did plan a three volume history, which was to maintain the now traditional denominational division, as well as some short sketches of pioneers and leaders of the Church, most of whom were foreigners, but neither of these projects came to fruition.[100] In 1941, 'The History of Christianity in India' became a separate optional course in Church History for theological students in colleges affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College.[101] Thus, while this pre-Independence period did not see much attention paid to the history of Christianity in

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A History of the Syrian Church in India (Madras: SPCK 1938); Rev. Fr Placid, *The Syrian Church of Malabar* (ed.) K.E. Job (Changamacherry: St. Joseph's Orphanage Press, 1938).

99 In 1933, A.J. Appasamy listed four issues on which the Indian Church needed guidance from the past, and he drew upon the Western experience to illustrate his point: church union; 'relating Christianity to the accepted doctrines and philosophical systems of India'; the *sanyasi* or monastic ideal; and great epochs of creative growth. To the first two of these, C.E. Abraham, writing in 1936, added the numerical expansion of the church under the impact of the mass movements, and the rise of communism and socialism in India. A.J. Appasamy, 'The Study of Church History in India', *National Christian Council Review*, vol. LIII (March 1933), pp. 123–8 (April 1933), pp. 185–93. C.E. Abraham, 'The Study of Church History in India', *The International Review of Missions*, vol. XXV (1936), pp. 461–9.

100 'Reports: Church History Association of India, Burma and Ceylon Report for the Year 1935', *National Christian Council Review*, vol. LVI (March 1936), pp. 160–6.

101 It remained an optional course until 1969 when it became a required course. United Theological College, *Year Book July 1940*, p. 17; *Year Book July 1941*, p. 21; *Year Book 1969–70*, p. 42.

India, some steps were taken in India towards the development of this field of study.[102]

Soon after Independence, two short general histories of Christianity in India appeared which indicate some of the significant continuities with and changes from the earlier histories already examined. Both were written by Indians and both were published in England. The first, written in 1952, was *The Cross over India* by Rajaiah D. Paul, the General Secretary of the recently formed Church of South India. Paul stated in his preface that he was not writing a history of Christianity in India. He saw his work as 'a meager, almost cursory, attempt to assess the process and worth of the Christian enterprise in my country in the past and its position at present, with an even slighter attempt to indicate what conditions may be in the near future'.[103] He began with a chapter on 'The Beginnings of Christianity in India' to show that 'the Indian Church, or at least one portion of it, is historically one of the most ancient Churches in the world; though, for all practical purposes, it must be considered to be one of the "younger churches"—to use the phraseology now familiar since Jerusalem 1928 and Tambaram 1938'.[104] After a brief survey of later history which included a (now familiar) chapter on 'Campaigning Methods' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Paul devoted the longest chapter to a series of biographical sketches of some early Protestant converts under the title, 'Some Heroes of the Indian Church'.[105] He then

102 C.W. Ranson's report on theological education in India, written in 1945, considered Church History to be 'the part of theology in which the Church in India is weakest', and noted that 'the dearth of books on the history of the Church in India is a heavy handicap to students. We still await a good comprehensive history of the Church in this country.' C.W. Ranson, *The Christian Minister in India, His Vocation and Training* (London: The United Society for Christian Literature, 1946), pp. 210–11.

103 Rajaiah D. Paul, *The Cross over India* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1952), p. 10.

104 Ibid., p. 13.

105 He wrote five other books of biographies of Indian Christians: *Chosen Vessels: Lives of Ten Indian Christian Pastors of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Madras: The Christian Literature Socciety, 1961); *Triumphs of His Grace: Lives of Eight Indian Christian Laymen of*

listed the achievements and failures of the Church in India and concluded with a chapter on the present situation entitled 'The Church in the New India'.

Paul mentioned only three sources in his footnotes and provided no bibliography. His work is significant not for its scholarship but for the perspective from which it was written. This was the first Indian nationalist history of Christianity in India. It was a history of the Indian Church (which he, like his predecessors, clearly equated with the Protestant churches) rather than of foreign missions; Indian, rather than foreign, heroes were singled out for special attention; the role of the Indian churches in the ecumenical movement was given a separate chapter. Both the Indianization of the Church and the Independence of India were presented in a very positive light. Yet Paul's nationalism was both very Christian and very definitely moderate. It was Christian in that he was a strong advocate of evangelism and of the distinctly *Christian* contribution which the Church had made and should continue to make to India. It was moderate in that, while Paul favoured the political and cultural Indianization of the Church, he was, on the whole, appreciative of the contribution which foreign missionaries had made in the past, and he believed that "The Church in India cannot afford to dissociate herself from the Church in the West, and in the interests of Christianity should not be allowed to do so'.[106]

The other history written soon after Independence was *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan* by P. Thomas, a Syrian Christian, who wrote it in order to meet a need for 'a book giving a connected account of Christianity in India from the time of the Apostle Thomas, who preached the Gospel in India, to the

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the Early Days of Protestant Christianity in India, Every One of Whom Was a Triumph of His Grace (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1967); Changed Lives (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1968); *They Kept the Faith: Biographies of Gopeenath Nundi, Pyari Mohan Rudra, and Lal Behari Day* (Lucknow; Lucknow Publishing House, 1968); and *Lights in the World: Life Sketches of Maulvi Safdar Ali and the Rev. Janni Alli* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House,1969).

106 Rajaiah D. Paul, *The Cross over India*, p. 123.

present day'.[107] Thomas sought to overcome the denominational point of view of earlier Western writers by laying emphasis upon 'the Greater Church of Christ'. He also sought 'to put the history of Indian Christianity in its correct perspective' by describing the pre-Portuguese period in greater detail and by avoiding the earlier Western writers' 'marked antipathy towards Indian traditions, especially of Kerala'.[108] Thomas certainly succeeded in avoiding the strong Protestant emphasis of the earlier histories: he gave approximately equal space to Syrian, Latin Catholic and Protestant history, and also refrained from treating Protestant missions as the climax or the last word in missions. Furthermore, he devoted a chapter to 'The Early Malabar Church' to fill the gap he found in other works.

In his chapters on St. Thomas and the early Malabar Church, Thomas relied upon the usual Western sources and the above-mentioned Kerala traditions which he regarded as completely reliable.[109] For the rest of the book, the sources are rarely mentioned even when quoted, although a fifteen-book bibliography was provided at the end. Thomas obviously drew heavily, if not excessively, upon Edward Maclagan[110] for his chapter on 'Christianity in Mughal India'; upon Banerji[111] for his chapter on Begam Samru; and upon Kaye for much of his material on pre-1857 Protestant history. The post-1857 portion of his chapter on 'Progress of Christianity under the British' is so impressionistic that, aside from a few quotations to illustrate Christian responses to the nationalist movement, one wonders whether Thomas used any sources at all.

107 P. Thomas, 'Preface', in his *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan: A General Survey of the Progress of Christianity in India from Apostolic Times to the Present Day* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1954).

108 Ibid.

109 This same uncritical attitude towards tradition is reflected in the estimates he gave of the number of converts won by St. Francis Xavier (700,000) and Roberto de Nobili (100,000). Ibid., pp. 62, 72.

110 *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1932).

111 Brajendranath Banerji, *Begam Samru* (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1925).

For Thomas, the history of Christianity in India was the history of neither Christian missions—as it was for the nineteenth-century histories—nor of the Indian Church—as it was for Rajaiah Paul—but of the Christian community in India. This particular emphasis is reflected in the title;[112] in Thomas' non-denominational approach to his subject; in his discussions of the part which Christians played at certain times in Indian history; in his descriptions of Christian communities (especially in Malabar); and in the statement concerning the future with which the book ends.

> All this augurs well for the future, and as long as the present [Indian political] leadership lasts Christians as a community have little to fear. But whether the same liberal traditions [of government] will be followed after the passing away of the present generation, the future alone will show.[113]

Thomas's history, like Paul's before it, was significant not for the quality of the scholarship upon which it was based but for the Indian perspective from which it was written. In the years when Christians were still adjusting to life in an independent secular democracy, Thomas used history to affirm that Christians had a place in the new India, just as Rajaiah Paul had used history to define the important role which he believed the Church had to play in the present and the foreseeable future.

In 1961, the Christian Students' Library brought out the first general history of Christianity to be published in India primarily for an Indian readership. It was a textbook for Indian theological students in the Serampore system, titled, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* by Cyril Bruce Firth, a missionary in India of the London Missionary Society since 1930 and, at the time of writing, the Principal of the Union Kanarese Seminary in Tumkur. Firth sought to 'trace the outline of Indian Church History from the beginning down to the present time'.[114] In this outline, the first

112 Thomas mentioned Pakistan in his title but did not deal with it in the book.

113 P. Thomas, *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan*, p. 244.

114 Cyril Bruce Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1961), p. iii.

eighteen centuries received as much attention as did the nineteenth and the twentieth. There was also a good balance between Syrian, Roman Catholic and Protestant history from their respective beginnings in India to the post-Independence period. The organization was chronological up to the nineteenth century and topical thereafter as far as the Protestants were concerned.[115] The two chapters on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories of the Syrian and the Catholic churches (an innovation) dealt primarily with institutional developments. Only the title of his concluding chapter, 'The Emerging Indian Church', which is almost exclusively Protestant in content, betrays a denominational preference. For the rest, the book is, indeed, very balanced.

Firth drew heavily upon both the nineteenth-century histories discussed earlier, except Kaye,[116] and the monographic literature which had grown up during the years since Richter's history was written. Of these more specialized histories, the ones he quoted most frequently were: A. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in India* (1926); E.M. Philip, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas* (1956); L.W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas* (1956); and E. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India* (1957), on the Syrian Christians. J.C. Houpert, *A South Indian Mission: The Madura Catholic Mission from 1535 to 1935* (2nd ed., 1937); and D. Feroli, *The Jesuits in Malabar* (2 vols., 1939, 1951), on the Roman Catholics. J.W. Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India* (1933); E.G.K. Hewat, *Christ and Western India* (1950); B. Sundkler, *Church of South India* (1954); and E.A. Lehmann, *It Began at Tranquebar* (1956), on the Protestants. On the other hand, references to primary sources are very few in number.

Firth was both critical and fair in his treatment of his sources, especially of the first eighteen centuries. His discussion of the St. Thomas tradition is still one of the most lucid and perceptive available. His treatment of such controversial subjects as Menezes and Diamper or de Nobili and the Madura Mission focuses attention on the issues involved in quite a dispassionate way. The nineteenth

115 In this, he generally followed Richter.

116 The Church–State issue in the nineteenth century was of little interest to Firth.

century posed greater problems for him because, as he has indicated in his Preface, the subject became so vast. Firth saw a lack of comprehensiveness as his problem and sought to use a topical approach to deal with it.[117]

As the title indicates, Firth's is an institutional history of the Church. One reads about its expansion, important activities, leading personalities, major problems and inner life, ending with the story of its gradual cultural and administrative transformation from 'foreign mission' to 'Indian Church'. The shift in the unit of study from mission to Church corresponded to the institutional changes which the Church had undergone by 1961; so, too, did the shift from a readership of foreign 'donor' to Indian 'future leader'. While Firth's view of the Church was much broader than that of his nineteenth-century predecessors—embracing as it did the non-Protestant as well as the Protestant churches—his retention of the institutional framework meant that it could not be much more Indian than theirs.

The publication of Firth's *Introduction* coincided with two other events which affected the writing of the history of Christianity in India. The first of these was the revival in 1959 of the Church History Association of India (CHAI), which had been dormant since 1940, and the publication of the first issue of its *Bulletin* as a small research journal in August 1961.[118] The Association's membership rose from five to twenty-five that year and in just a few years exceeded one hundred.[119] In 1963, the Southern and the Northern Branch were formed, the former holding its first conference in June 1963, and the latter in October 1965. The first All-India conference was held in 1971. During this period Roman

117 Cyril Bruce Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History*, p. iii.

118 World War II, as well as the death or retirement of CHAI's early leadership, was held responsible for the Association's decline. Earlier, the *Bulletin* had been only a newsletter. 'Report: The Church History Association of India (A History of the Association from 1935 to 1960)', *The Indian Journal of Theology*, vol. IX (1960), pp. 166–8.

119 D.A. Christadoss, 'Church History Association of India: A Statement of Work: 1941 to 1961', *Bulletin of the Church History Association of India* (August 1961), p. 5 (hereafter *Bulletin*); and 'From the Secretary's Desk', *Bulletin* (February 1963), p. 19.

Catholics joined the Association,[120] as did a number of Hindus and Sikhs.

Also, at this juncture (1960), Kaj Baagø arrived from Denmark to teach Church History at United Theological College in Bangalore. Even though the revival of the Church History Association of India and the publication of its *Bulletin* were not his work, probably no single person deserves more credit for the professionalization of Church History in India than he does. Baagø's contribution to this process was fourfold: developing post-graduate studies in Church History at United Theological College; making additional source materials available to students and scholars in India, especially by microfilming materials available in archives abroad;[121] starting *The Indian Church History Review* in 1967 as a much more substantial successor to the *Bulletin of the Church History Association of India*; and, especially, posing a serious challenge to the perspectives from which the history of Christianity in India had been written.

In September 1962, Baagø wrote an article, 'On the Teaching of Church History in India', in which he noted how foreign the teaching of Church History was and how necessary it was to teach it from an Indian point of view.[122] Although the article was concerned with general Church History, this became Baagø's concern for Indian Church History as well, because he wanted Church historians to become part of the movement for the indigenization of the Indian Church. Baagø did not write a general history of Christianity in India, but indigenization was a major theme of his

120 'The Regional Conference in Bangalore June 1963', *Bulletin* (November 1963), p. 1. When it was first formed, the Archbishop of Calcutta had expressed an interest in it but that was about all. 'Reports: Church History Association of India, Burma and Ceylon Report for the Year 1935', *National Christian Council Review*, vol. LVI (March 1936), p. 166.

121 Kaj Baagø, 'The Microfilming of Indian Church History Archives', *Bulletin* (September 1965), pp. 2–6. Baagø also compiled *A Bibliography* for the Library of Indian Christian Theology (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1969).

122 *Bulletin* (September 1962), p. 7.

A History of the National Christian Council of India 1914–64,[123] which is still one of the very few overviews of twentieth-century history based on primary sources available. It also forms the subject matter of most of his other works, which are concentrated on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and of which *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* is the largest and most important.[124] His understanding of indigenization was far more radical than that of any of his predecessors.

> Indigenization does not mean the mere adoption of certain Indian customs—sitting on the floor, building churches in Dravidian style, etc. The Indian Church may adopt such customs and still remain a foreign body. Neither is indigenization simply the introduction of certain Sanskrit terms in Bible translations or sermons, however important this might be. Real indigenization means the crossing of the borderline. It means leaving, if not bodily at least spiritually, Western Christianity and the Westernized Christian Church in India, and moving into another religion, another culture, taking only Christ with oneself. Indigenization is evangelization. It is the planting of the gospel inside another culture, another philosophy and another religion.[125]

In his historical writing, therefore, Baagø paid special attention to Indian efforts to emancipate the Church from foreign domination, whether in the realms of administration or theology, and to establish continuities between Indian churches and Hindu philosophy, culture and religion. In both these processes, the central figures were the well-educated Indian Christian 'leaders' or 'rebels' who were cast in the roles of heroes, while the main hindrance to prog-

123 Kaj Baagø, *A History of the National Christian Council of India 1914–64* (Nagpur: National Christian Council, 1965).

124 Kaj Baagø, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1969). Others are: 'The First Independence Movement Among Indian Christians', *Indian Church History Review*, vol. I (June 1967), pp. 65–78; 'The Discovery of India's Past and Its Effect on the Christian Church in India', in John C.B. Webster (ed.), *History and Contemporary India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1971), pp. 26–45; *The Movement around Subba Rao: A study of the Hindu-Christian movement around K. Subba Rao in Andhra Pradesh* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1968).

125 Kaj Baagø, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, p. 85.

ress was either missionary opposition or missionary domination of Church structures. For example, the National Christian Council could not and did not come out in support of the Indian nationalist movement until the Council itself was dominated by Indians;[126] the main reasons why the Christo Samaj, which represented 'The First Independence Movement Among Indian Christians', failed, was missionary opposition and the dependence of too many Indians upon missionary support.[127] Moreover, the indigenization of Christianity was brought on by developments outside the Church such as the rediscovery by Hindus of their past in the area of theology,[128] and the Indian nationalist movement in its political and cultural aspects in the case of institutional changes.[129] In short, Baagø's nationalist perspective on the history of Christianity in India—in contrast to that of Rajaiah Paul—parallels that of the early extremists (for example, Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Brahmabanhav, etc.) who tended to equate the Indian with the Hindu; to lay stress more upon Hindu than upon Christian or Western forms and inspirations; to heighten the inherent conflicts between the Indian and the Western.

In Baagø's view,

> Church History is not merely the history of the Christian religion, it is the history of the movement connected directly or indirectly with the name of Christ. It comprises therefore in a way all religions and philosophies and cultures and is, rightly conceived, a universal history. It stretches back to the beginning of mankind's history and it points towards a kingdom of God upon earth.[130]

Nevertheless, Baagø remained basically a Church historian. He wrote primarily about developments within the Church and relied

126 Kaj Baagø, *A History of the National Christian Council of India*, pp. 18, 63–64.

127 Kaj Baagø, 'The First Independence Movement Among Indian Christians', p. 77.

128 Kaj Baagø, 'The Discovery of India's Past and its Effect on the Christian Church in India', pp. 32–42.

129 Kaj Baagø, *A History of the National Christian Council of India*, passim.

130 Kaj Baagø, 'Indigenization and Church History', p. 27.

almost completely upon Christian sources for doing so. However, as indicated by his study, published in 1968, of a Hindu-Christian movement outside the Church led by Subba Rao in Andhra Pradesh,[131] Baagø was clearly moving towards the limits of his field as he defined it when he left it to join the Danish Foreign Service.

The gradual professionalization of 'The History of Christianity in India'—through the creation of programmes of advanced learning; the development of libraries and archives; the establishment of a scholarly association with its own journal, conferences, and debates on questions of aims and methods in this field—has not been fully reflected in the general histories of Christianity written since Firth. Two Roman Catholic histories written for the Eucharistic Congress at Bombay in 1964 came too soon for these developments to have much influence. Aloysius Soares's *The Catholic Church in India: A Historical Sketch*, although written in an ecumenical spirit with a chapter on Protestantism and dependent upon P. Thomas for quite a bit of material,[132] is for the most part an institutional history in which questions of hierarchy and jurisdiction loom large.[133] (Soares was much less sympathetic to the Portuguese and the Padroado than was D'Sa.) George Moraes's *A History of Christianity in India from Early Times to St. Francis Xavier: A.D. 52–1542*[134] was quite a lengthy study of a period about which comparatively little was known. The result was a combination of useful summaries of material drawn from Portuguese sources (for example, on the St. Thomas Christians, various missions, and the Padroado itself) on the one hand, and either large quantities of extraneous material (for example, on the details of Portuguese military and diplomatic activity or the history of syphilis in India), or conjectures, often laboriously made (for example, connecting St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew) on the other, which

131 See footnote 123.

132 Aloysius Soares, *The Catholic Church in India: A Historical Sketch* (Nagpur: Government Press and Book Depot, 1964). This, he acknowledged in his Preface.

133 Soares stated that his was not a connected history but a series of highlights in Church History. Another major highlight for Soares, then President of the Catholic Union of India, was the present.

134 Bombay: Manaktalas, 1964.

represented a broadening of, rather than a change in, the earlier Western institutional perspectives.[135] Stephen Neill's *The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan*[136] was written, it would seem, to elucidate some of the missiological problems that history raises. But, while using some articles of *The Indian Church History Review* and attempting to bring the history of the Church into a somewhat closer relation with Indian history than had Firth, it did not face up to the challenge Baagø had posed. His perspective, therefore, was, for all intents and purposes, the same as that of Firth.

Christianity in India: A History in Ecumenical Perspective (1972) was a landmark in the sense that it was written by Roman Catholic, Syrian, and Protestant historians. However, it was a composite rather than a single history written from a single perspective. Some of the chapters were based on primary and others on secondary sources; some authors used a large number of footnotes and others gave only a bibliography. There are chapters which are chronicles,[137] vindications,[138] fairly detached studies of limited subjects,[139] and broad interpretative surveys of major periods.[140] T.V. Philip's chapter on 'Protestant Christianity in India since 1858' and his 'Conclusion' showed most clearly the great changes which had taken place in the 1960s. Almost all his secondary

135 The broadening comes in Chapter VII which contains a lot of descriptive material on the St. Thomas Christians in the sixteenth century, not found in earlier general histories.

136 Stephen Neill, *The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan* (Madras, Delhi: CLS-ISPCK, 1972).

137 N.J. Thomas, 'The Eastern Orthodox Church in India 1653–1972', in H.C. Perumalil and E.R. Hambye (eds), *Christianity in India: A History in Ecumenical Perspective* (Alleppey: Prakasam Publications, 1972), pp. 194–210.

138 George M. Moraes, 'The Catholic Church under the Portuguese Patronage', in ibid., pp. 129–70.

139 E.R. Hambye, 'Medieval Christianity in India: The Medieval Church', in ibid., pp. 30–7.

140 A. Meersman, 'The Catholic Church in India since the mid-19th Century', in ibid., pp. 248–66; T.V. Philip, 'Protestant Christianity in India since 1858', in ibid., pp. 267–99.

sources came from the 1960s and his perspective was very close to that of Baagø. For him, this period was one of emancipation: first, from the old system of belief and oppression (as in the case of the depressed classes and the tribal people) and, then, from foreign domination. Philip concluded with a statement which was a total rejection of the nineteenth-century approach both in its Indian-centredness and in its ecumenical outlook.

> Till recently, the Church in India has been understood in terms of Western missionary expansion. Church historians are only now beginning to recognize the fact that while foreign missions have played an important role in the life and growth of the Indian church, its history is best understood as an independent story. This history, from an early period of the Christian era up to the present, is the common possession of all Christians in India. The history of Christianity in any part of India is an integral part of the history of the church anywhere in the country. The history of the Church in India is much larger and richer than our denominational histories, whether Roman Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox. The Indian Church has a history and a tradition of its own. This understanding of the unity of history is essential for maintaining its integrity and wholeness.[141]

Recent Histories from an Indian History Perspective

Meanwhile, similar developments were taking place in the field of Indian history generally, although on a much vaster scale. The Indian History Congress was organized in 1935 and, with a few exceptions, has held annual meetings at which scholars have presented papers. It has never published a journal but, instead, has published the proceedings of its annual meetings. *The Journal of Indian History* has been in existence since 1923 and in recent years has been supplemented by *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* (1961); *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (1963); *The Indian Historical Review* (1974)—the last two of which are of a very high standard—as well as by numerous smaller journals. Although the Comprehensive History of India project

141 Ibid., p. 300.

of the Congress, begun in 1943, has produced so far only two volumes—one on the Nandas and Mauryas and one on the Delhi Sultanate—the sheer quantity of books on Indian history by Indian historians has increased enormously, especially in the last fifteen years. In 1963, the University Grants Commission organized a seminar on Postgraduate Teaching and Research in History in order to stimulate improvement in the quality of historical studies at the university level.[142] Subsequently, training seminars have been held for college teachers as well.[143] In the former, a lot of attention was given to clarifying aims and developing courses of study; in the latter, emphasis was placed upon historiography and research methodology. The creation of the Indian Council of Historical Research in 1972 has given added impetus and financial resources to historical research. In short, the field of Indian history has developed enormously, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in recent years.

The changes in the aims and methods of Indian historians since the end of the nineteenth century have also been very great and so can only be briefly touched upon here. The first significant change was brought about by the inevitable nationalist reaction to British rule and to British historical writing on India. This took the form of a greater exploration and glorification of the Indian as opposed to the British imperial past on the one hand and an attempt to 'set the record straight' concerning the British record in India on the other.[144] The perspectives from which nationalist histories have

142 *Report of the Seminar on Postgraduate Teaching and Research in History* (New Delhi: University Grants Commission, 1964).

143 Published reports are available for two: John C.B. Webster (ed.), *The Study of History and College History Teaching* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1965); John C.B. Webster (ed.), *History for College Students* (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1966).

144 See R.C. Majumdar, 'Nationalist Historians', in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 416–28. Johannes H. Voight provides a fascinating case study of one aspect of this process in 'Nationalist Interpretations of Arthashastra in Indian Historical Writing', in S.N. Mukherjee (ed.), *St. Anthony's Papers Number 18: The Movement for National Freedom in India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 46–66.

been written have varied from the obscurantist and religious revivalist to the secular liberal and Marxist. Secondly, Indian historians have broadened the range of historical studies from the political, military and administrative to the social, economic and cultural in order to gain a deeper understanding of the history of the Indian people rather than just of their rulers. With this, there has come a corresponding broadening of the range of sources which historians have used. In no other area have more significant advances been made than in this. Finally, with respect to the methods of historical research, there is a growing number of historians who consider history to be one of the social sciences and who, therefore, make considerable use of social science theory when formulating research questions, and of social science techniques, especially statistics, in analysing their sources.[145]

Some historians of India—not all of them Christian—have written valuable monographs, or portions of monographs, on Christians and Christianity in India. In 1965, Muhammad Mohar Ali, a Bangladeshi Muslim historian, published his doctoral dissertation, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities 1833–1857*. As his conclusion indicates, Ali was more interested in the history of Bengal than in the history of Christian missions or the Christian Church. Since this was a neglected area of Bengal history, he studied it.[146] His work dealt with the response, first, of the Hindus in and around Calcutta, and then, of the zamindars in the mufussal areas. Sisir Kumar Das's *The Shadow of the Cross: Christianity and Hinduism in a Colonial Situation* (1974) did much the same thing. Das, then Reader in Bengali at Delhi University, examined the confrontation of these two religions and its impact upon Bengali literature, from Ram Mohan Roy to Rabindranath Tagore. David Kopf in *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (1969) examined the roles of William Carey and Alexander Duff, among others, in the process of modernization from 1773 to 1835. Robert

145 See S. Gopal, 'The Fear of History', *Seminar*, no. 221 (January 1978), pp. 71–4.

146 This is implied in the Preface. Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities 1833–1857* (Chittagong: The Mehrub Publications, 1965), p. vii.

L. Hardgrave, Jr, in his *The Nadars of Tamilnad* not only devoted a full chapter to the role Christianity played during the first half of the nineteenth century but also referred thereafter to the contributions of individual Nadar Christians to the history of the Nadars' rise to prominence during the past 150 years. In these, and other such, studies,[147] it was the missionaries who received by far the most attention; except in Hardgrave's study, the Indian converts were either totally ignored or relegated to secondary roles. My study of social change as well as of Christianity, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India*, analysed the foreign missionary and the Indian members of the community, separately and in relation to each other and, together, to the rest of North Indian society. All these studies make use of non-mission and non-church sources, whether newspapers, novels, government reports, or anti-Christian tracts. In them, various techniques of literary (Das) or sociological (Kopf, Hardgrave, Webster) analysis, including statistics (Webster)—often used by Indian historians—are employed. In all of them, except perhaps my own which tries to have it both ways, one sees the history of Christianity in India from the Indian rather than from the Christian end of the looking glass, so to speak. The result has been an academic history of Christianity in India in the sense that the historians' intended readership was more academic than churchly, and their own aims and methods were shaped more by the academy or university than by the Church.

Towards a New Perspective

The foregoing analysis suggests that several important changes have taken place in the historiography of Christianity in India during the past 150 years. The first of these is the marked change in the

147 Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr, *The Nadars of Tamilnad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). For other studies see, for example, Sushil Madhava Pathak, *American Missionaries and Hinduism: A Study of their Contacts from 1813 to 1910* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967); Kanti Prasanna Sen Gupta, *The Christian Missionaries in Bengal 1793–1833* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1971).

kinds of people involved in this endeavour. During the nineteenth century, the historians, publishers and intended readers were all Western and, so far as the general histories were concerned, Protestant. During the course of the twentieth century, Indians—and Catholics and Syrians—joined the ranks of the historians, publishers and intended readers. Of even greater significance, however, is the fact that by the 1960s, both the historians and their readers were no longer exclusively Christian. Hindus and Muslims had started writing doctoral dissertations on various aspects of the history of Christianity in India for an academic, and largely non-Christian, readership. The increased diversity of historians and readers has meant that a much wider range of aims and perspectives, and even biases, is being brought to bear on the subject now than was the case seventy-five or even twenty-five years ago, so that the churchly preoccupations of the nineteenth century (Protestant versus Catholic; Church and State; missionary methods; Padroado versus Propaganda), as well as of the twentieth century (the indigenization, unity, and mission of the Indian Church) are not the sole concerns of historians and their readers as they once were. This broadening of the social and intellectual context in which the history of Christianity in India is now written increases the complexities and, therefore, the difficult choices, that historians must face in selecting aims, subject matter, and appropriate methods of research and presentation. Christian historians who desire to 'indigenize Church History' must now keep this broader, and broadening, social and intellectual context in mind.

Clearly related to this change is the trend towards the greater professionalization of the field. Hough and Kaye were amateur historians who worked mostly on their own. Today, there is a growing community of academic historians with well-organized means of sharing the fruits of their research with each other. Along with this professionalization has come a kind of 'revolution of rising expectations' with regard to the quality of the histories produced; historians are now under more pressure than before to meet with rising professional standards of excellence. The implication of this development is not that from now on all histories of Christianity in India must be scholarly histories, but rather, that all histories, whether scholarly or popular, must be based upon scholarly his-

tory or be dismissed as impressionistic and distorted, or as mere religious tracts.[148]

The third change which has taken place is that historians of Christianity in India are now using a far greater diversity of source materials than they were previously. The number of specialized secondary works in the form of books and articles has increased enormously since Hough's day, as have efforts to gather and make available primary sources. Even more significant is the fact that academic historians no longer rely exclusively upon Christian sources but use such non-Church sources as press reports, government documents, regional language literature, and Hindu and Muslim religious publications in order to understand those aspects of the history of Christianity which interest them. The result has been not only new perspectives upon the Christian past but also new critical problems in dealing with evidence. It is no longer possible for historians to share Hough's or Sherring's total confidence in the trustworthiness of mission reports when faced with the conflicting evidence found in Hindu or Muslim or government sources.

Finally, the pace of change itself has changed. From Hough to Firth, the biggest change in perspective was in their contrasting views of the Roman Catholic Church. For the rest, the continuities are far more impressive. Each historian relied heavily upon his predecessors for information, for methods, and for perspectives. They all used Christian sources almost exclusively and adopted a moderately or an extremely uncritical attitude towards them.[149] Hough's preoccupation with missionary methods was just as strong in Richter, and was by no means absent in Paul or Firth. Everyone, from Hough to Paul, used the same scheme of periodization, dividing 1900 years of history into the Syrian, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant eras. Kaye's Bengali bias reappeared in Richter; all the Roman Catholic histories surveyed shared a Bombay–Goa bias. Most important of all, the institutional framework continued from

148 This was brought home to me in a remark made in a review of my book to the effect that, 'All too often comments on religious movements themselves become tracts for the times'. 'The Missionary Impact', *The Sunday Statesman*, 6 June 1976.

149 Sherring and Thomas were the worst in this regard.

Hough to Firth. Of course, Paul and Firth laid greater stress on the Indian Church than on the foreign mission as the institution of significance, but even they saw the shift from the latter to the former as a rather smooth and orderly transition, thus stressing institutional continuity rather than a break from the past.

Then came the revolution of the 1960s: a rapid diversification of the community of historians and readers; marked advances in the professionalization of Indian Church History and Indian history generally; and the sharp change in the perspectives introduced by Kaj Baagø and other advocates of indigenization on the one hand and the academic historians on the other. So sudden has this change of pace been that many historians of Christianity in India, trained before the 1960s, have been unable to adjust to the new situation. The result is a kind of mixture of aims and methods found in the most recent general history of Christianity in India, *Christianity in India: A History in Ecumenical Perspective* (1972), and in the articles which have appeared in *The Indian Church History Review* over the past twelve years. Only a few articles have been written on pre-Portuguese history. Catholic historians have confined their attention almost (but not quite) exclusively to pre-nineteenth-century history, whereas Protestants, again with a few exceptions, have confined theirs to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While mission and institutional studies— Catholic and Protestant—continue to abound, there is also a good number of social and cultural histories of Christian communities and articles on Christian attitudes towards and involvement in social and political movements. The same kind of mixture exists in Indian history generally, as a smaller revolution took place there too in the 1960s but, whereas Indian historians appear now to be sharply divided on methodological and ideological grounds,[150] similar tensions have not yet appeared among historians of Christianity.

It is in the context of the recent rapid development of the field that one must see the pronouncement of the Church History Association of India's editorial board—mentioned at the outset of

150 See S. Gopal, 'The Fear of History'; Romila Thapar, 'The Academic Professional', *Seminar*, no. 222 (February 1978), pp. 18–23; Ashis Nandy, 'Self-Esteem, Autonomy and Authenticity', ibid., pp. 24–7.

this essay—that earlier perspectives on the History of Christianity in India stand 'in serious need of revision'. The editorial board criticized earlier historians for having treated the history of Christianity in India as 'an Eastward extension of Western ecclesiastical history. Stress has been laid upon either its internal history or upon its 'foreign mission' dimension so that the Church is viewed as a relatively self-contained unit which acted upon and was acted upon by the society outside.'[151] In its place they proposed 'to write the history of Christianity in the context of Indian history' by focusing attention upon the socio-cultural history of the Christian people of India, by using a framework which is both ecumenical and national, and by using the region as their basic working unit. This is indeed a 'New Perspective' requiring new research methods, but it is also one which is in keeping with the developments which have taken place in the field during and since the 1960s.[152]

151 'A Scheme for a Comprehensive History of Christianity in India', p. 89.

152 Ibid., pp. 89–90.