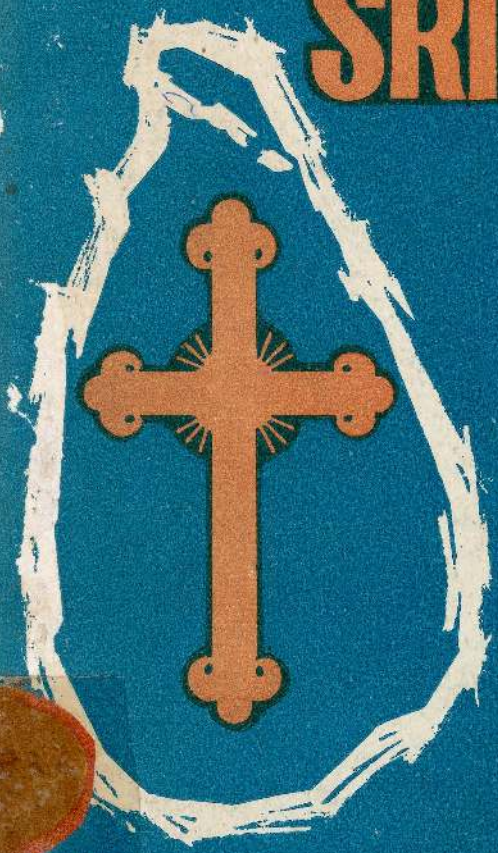
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN SRI LANKA



D.Kanagasabai Wilson

The Christian Church in Sri Lanka

Her Problems & Her influence

by

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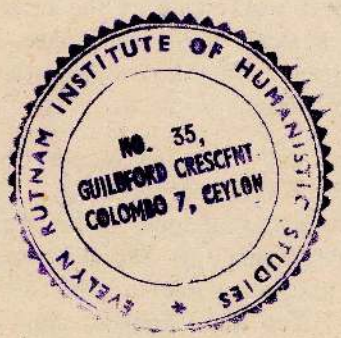
I am grateful for the invitation to write this foreword. Dr. Wilson's book is a timely and scholarly study.

The Christian contribution to the life of the community has of late been the subject of unfavourable comment. This book, therefore, meets a real need. It seeks to record what has been attempted and done, especially by the Methodist Church, in the education of children, the emanicipation of women, the breakdown of caste and the promotion of social and evangelistic work. One of the most interesting chapters is that which deals with the pioneering work of the Wesleyan missionaries in the nineteenth century to uplift the Veddah community.

Dr. Wilson does not seek to excuse Christians for their fears and failures, their complacency and lack of vision. Much good work was undone by inexcusable denominational rivalries, and some of the missionary methods adopted in the past, understandable in their day, may well be questioned today. Yet the Christian church can make good its claim to have loved and served this country and its peoples.

There is need for more books of this sort covering the work in the Sinhalese areas and the efforts of other Christian denominations. "The Church" says Dr. Wilson, "cannot be silent". Lest the Christian case and cause go by default, he has broken that silence. May others follow in the study of Gospel insights for Church revival and nation building in the contemporary situation.

† **Cyril Abeynaike**
Bishop of Colombo.



Preface

My interest in the History of Christian institutions in Sri Lanka arose as a result of my appointment as Chaplain of Wesley College, Colombo in 1949. Since then it has been a joy to pursue the study of the History of the Christian Church in the Island; and I was greatly helped by the material collected in the libraries of London and the archives of the different Mission Houses.

For six years since 1960 I worked as the Superintendent Minister of the Jaffna-Vannarponnai circuit of the Methodist Church. Travelling extensively, and having had access to original files, documents and letters of the early missionaries, I was able to collect a great deal of information on the Christian Church. Dr. G. C. Mendis, a revered teacher, (Reader Emeritus of the University of Ceylon) coaxed me to put ink on paper. The year 1964 was the Ter-Jubilee of Methodism in Ceylon and I was able to make my small contribtion to the Volume on the History of Methodism that was published to mark the occasion.

This present work was begun at the request of the Theological Text Books Committee of Pilimatalawa. I readily acceded to the request because I felt I had something to share with fellow students preparing for the ministry. I therefore hand over the fruits of my labour to those who will add to these pages in the coming years.

I am specially grateful to Miss Jill Newsham, the Editor of the Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record, for typing the script; to Mr. D. S. A. Hapuarachchige, the Executive Secretary of the Theological Text Books Committee for much patience, and to Mr. Shelton Wirasinha, Principal, Wesley College, for reading through the proofs.

I owe a debt to my wife Juanita and my daughter Dharshini for their forbearance and love while I was shut up within myself through many months.

Easter 1975 **D. K. W.**

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CHAPTER I

THE PRESENCE OF DIVERSE RELIGIONS

Buddhism and Hinduism had been established religions in the country for centuries, and it is a wonder that even eight percent of the population are Christians after more than one hundred and sixty years of Protestant missionary activity.

When the British occupied Ceylon the home government had agreed to maintain a connexion with Buddhism. It was by this "unholy connection", from the viewpoint of some of the British officials, it was possible for Sir George W. Anderson, the governor in 1850, to sign an Act of Appointment of a Basnayake Nilame to one of the largest Dewales in the island.[1]

The attempt of the Government to sever the connection led to religious disputes. The indignation of the Buddhists was further aroused by the Christian instruction imparted to non Christian children in mission schools. In fact many of the Buddhist monks believed that their religion was in danger. In one of the Colonial papers of 8th January, 1846, a reference is made to a visit of certain Siamese priests to Ceylon, who were sent by the King of Siam to search for books and relics of Buddhism. On their return they took with them a letter from a member of an ancient royal family in Ceylon. It represented Buddhism as in a state of decline in consequence of the government and other schools there established and the inducements held out to the people to engage in government employment.[2]

1. See Tracts No. 4765 df. (Brit. Mus. Library)
"Six letters of Vetus—On the re-connexion of the British Government with the Buddhist idolatry of Ceylon." (Colombo 1852)

2. See letter of the Rev. C. Greenwood to the Mission House, dated June 10, 1846. (Proceedings of the C. M. S. 1846-8)

The hostility and bitterness towards Christianity began to rear its head not merely among the Buddhists in the South, but also among the Hindus in the North. In 1848, the Rev. J. J. Johnson, a missionary at Chundiculy, wrote about the state of active opposition to Christianity thus:—"Certain young men are rising up and endeavouring to revive [the straightest sect of the Hindus. They have regular weekly sermons in the principal temple in Jaffna and unusual efforts are being made not only defensively, but agressively.[3]

Soon there apeared also books by able Buddhist and Hindu scholars, giving vent to their religious feelings and national aspirations. One of the most remarkable events in 1855 was the publication in Tamil of a work of extraordinary literary merit — "The Saiva Dhushana Parikarum". It defended Saivism and attacked Christianity. It did not adopt the old subterfuge that both Saivism and Christianity were from God, and that the former was intended for the Saivites and the latter for Christians. It undertook to prove that every one of the distinctive articles of the Saivite belief and observance had its parallel and warrant in the credenda and ceremonial set forth in the Christian Scriptures.

The aim of the revivalists was to further the growth and development of Saivism. Some of the prominent men of that time were Sankara Pandithar (1821 — 1891), Muttukumara Kavirayar (1780—1851) and V. Thamotherampillai (1832—1901) but the greatest of them all was Sri la Sri Arumuga Navalar (1822—1879). For more than thirty years he carried on a vigourous campaign criticizing the proselytising work of Christian missionaries. It was stated that irreligion and denationalization were the results of the activity of the missionaries. The movement set afoot by these reformers therefore had as its objective the revival of Hindu culture. The antagonism towards the approach of the Missionary became a subject for discussion in the Legislative Council. In 1884 Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan opposed the work of managers of Christian Schools thus :

3. Proceedings of the C. M. S. 1848.

"Hindu boys who, for the want of their own English Schools resort to the missionary Schools, have learnt to make mental reservations and are getting skilled in the art of dodging. The holy ashes put on at home during worship are carefully rubbed off as they approach the Christian Schools and they affect the methods of Christian boys while at school. I know of many cases in which even baptized boys and teachers, when they cease to be connected with such schools, appear in their true colours with broad stripes of consecrated ashes and rosaries, to the great merriment of the people and the deep chagrin of the missionaries. There is a great deal too much of hypocrisy in Jaffna in the matter of religion, owing to the fact that the love of the missionaries for proselytes is as boundless as the love of the Jaffnese to obtain some knowledge of English at any cost".[4]

The real clash of religious began after the Panadura Controversy in 1873,* and the establishment of the Buddhist Theosophical Society in 1880. The alliance of Buddhism with Theosophy was initiated by Mrs. Besant and Colonel Olcott. The influence of the movement was seen chiefly in the fields of education and propagandist literature. By 1897 the Buddhist Theosophical society had sixty-three grant-aided schools under its control. But the significant thing arising from the clash of religions was that at the time of the revival the largest increase of the Church took place. While it was true that in certain areas many Christian schools were losing their pupils, yet at other places larger and better schools were being opened which outclassed the non-Christian and government schools.

During this period of cultural renaissance and religious revival, both the Buddhists and the Hindus indulged in anti-Christian propaganda by means of books and pamphlets, and

4. See the Sessional Papers 1884.

* I. B. Horner (President, Pali Text Society, London) writing about this over 100 years later says "The Panadura controversy was very strange. I am glad to see it is now put in proportion." See Dialogue (New Series) Vol. 1 No. 2 p. 57 (May – August) 1974. N. C. C. Study Centre.

through the press. The glory of ancient Ceylon was idealized, and Buddhism was placed on a higher plane than Christianity, which was condemned as an exotic religion. A Sinhalese newspaper "Sarasavi Sandaresa", and the Saiva Paripalana Sabai (Society for the propagation of Saivism) began to challenge the unquestioned monopoly of the Christian missions in maintaining schools for the children of Ceylon. The Sarasavi Sandaresa, in one of its issues during June 1900, raised a cry of alarm over what had happened at Cotta and what was being done there. It pointed out that Cotta, which was once the glory of the Sinhalese Buddhist Kings, was likely to become a Christian district if the present progress continued.[5] Then again, "The credentials of Christianity examined in the East" was a cleverly written book, [6] which was a scathing criticism of the Bible itself. It contained chapters ridiculing Old Testament conceptions of God and Old Testament morality. There was variety in their method of attack, and the following quotation from a chapter of the book referred to is a good illustration.

"Where is the blame to be placed for the condition of the great mass of the population of Europe after 2,000 years of Christian teaching? Think of the unspeakable bestiality and immorality of London. Buddhism is not to blame for that. Think of the inhuman political creeds of the European Nihilists, Anarchists, Regicides. Buddhism is not to blame for them '.[7]

The popular "Buddhist Chronicle" also joined in the attack. Part of the policy of that paper was to pick out anything that appeared derogatory to Christianity. For instance, when Christian writers and speakers spoke of the gross materialism of the age, and half empty churches, and stated that England had no time for God and that America was in the same plight, the editor of the "Buddhist Chronicle" remarked :

5. Report of the CMS 1901.

6 This was a rationalistic book published by the Young Men's Buddhist Association in 1909.

7. Quoted in W. M. M. S Report 1921.

"They followed the mirage known as God and have failed. It would be better to follow and find time for good deeds, good words and good thoughts." [8]

This same editor, after admitting the sincerity of Christian missionaries and even expressing admiration for them, appealed to the Buddhist population thus :

"If you send your children to Christian Schools or in any way allow them to come under the influence of proselytising agencies, or if you help such agencies, you will be guilty of aiding and abetting those who are doing their best to destroy all traces of Buddhism in this land."

By such methods of attack, criticism and opposition the Buddhists made good progress in their educational work, so that the Census Report of 1901 remarked :

"The Buddhist has advanced at the same rate as the Sinhalese population (14%) but faster than in the previous decade (10.5%), the result of increased Buddhistic zeal and propagandism in the decade brought about mainly by the efforts of the Theosophical Society."

The Hindu revival in the North also gathered momentum by the economic prosperity of the Tamils. The Government of Malaya offered employment to English-educated young men from Ceylon. Indeed it is true to say that the Jaffna Tamils were in fact the pioneers who helped in the development of Malaya. The Hindus who were enriched showered their gifts on temples, schools and other public institutions. It was during the second and third decades of the present century that most of the Hindu schools were established.

The presence of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan in the Legislative Council greatly encouraged the Tamils ; he spoke eloquently at home and abroad about the greatness of Hindu culture and civilization.

Another factor which contributed largely to the Hindu revival movement in Ceylon was the Ramakrishna Mission.

8. Editor, the Buddhist Chronicle, 25th Dec. 1921.

Ramakrishna and later Vivekananda, were Swamis who lived at a time when there was much interaction between the Hindus and Christians in India. Hindu leaders and Swamis, from Ram Mohan Roy, founder of the Brahma Samaj (1882), to Gandhi and Radhakrishna, studied the Bible and breathed the Christian atmosphere. The Christian missionaries were making headway preaching the Gospel to the intelligentsia of Hindu Society in India. It was then that Ramakrishna Paramansa announced his message—"All religions are different paths to the same God, all religions are the same, people call it by different names, every man must follow his own religion."

The opposition movement was able to bring to bear its pressure on the state too. At the beginning of 1905 the State was compelled to enforce a stricter observance of the conscience clause. Religious instruction to non Christian children was permitted only if the consent of parents had been obtained. While the State prevented the teaching of Scripture to non Christian children, it acted rather partially towards the Buddhists in another matter of equal importance. Its claim to "religious neutrality" was lost sight of temporarily, especially in what was called the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance. By this it was provided that :

"It shall be lawful for the Governor of Ceylon to appoint a Government Agent of any district respectively to be a Commissioner for the purpose of controlling and assisting any one of the committees in the administration and management of the funds and property of the Buddhist Temples."

Protests were made by influential committees against the Legislative Council's doing anything which could be construed into Government patronage of Buddhism; for the Temporalities were bound up inextricably with Temple ceremonies. The Ordinance was passed in spite of protests.

It was in the first decade of this century that people were beginning to look upon education more as a concern of the State than of the religious bodies. The protagonists of the State system were given a fillip by two Russians

who came to Ceylon in 1915 from Petrograd. They came to inquire into the state of Buddhism in the island.[9] They encouraged the Buddhist Politicians and leaders to advocate a State system of education. They pointed out the blessings that such a system had already brought to Russia.

In their speeches and conversations with the leading residents they remarked that it was impossible for the children of one religious sect to be instructed in the schools of any other religious sect without their own religious views being interfered whth, surreptitiously or openly.

Since a secular system of education had already been proposed by some of the Missionaries, the suggestion of the two Russians was most acceptable, and it gave the necessary ammunition for further conflict with the Christian schools. The denominational schools were accused of proselytisation, and of using public funds to maintain schools which lacked a national interest. The missions antagonised the government even more by attempting to have separate teacher training institutions for each denomination. Since the majority of the government were non-Christians they resented the idea of the State having to pay a far larger proportion of public money to Christian institutions than to Buddhist or Hindu institutions.

The Christian institutions became the subject of debates in the council for several months in the years 1919 and 1920. Many felt that in a country where there were so many religions it was eminently desirable that the State should provide secular education.

The years following the war of 1939-45 were characterized by further changes. An important innovation was the decision of the Government to champion the cause of religion. It emphatically declared that a religious background is indispensable to a complete education, and that religious instruction must be provided in all state schools.[10] By this

9. See Legislative Council Debates 1915.
10. Report of the Special Committee on Education (Nov. 1943) p. 29.

declaration the State underlined the truth that religion is necessary for the full growth of the individual. To leave out God and to ignore religion in the school curriculum, it believed, is to precondition a child's mind to the idea that God does not count. This was surely a move in the right direction. But such a declaration was liable to be misunderstood because of the diversity of religions in the country. The question that naturally cropped up was whether the religious background necessary for a child ought to be Buddhist or Hindu, Islamic or Christian. The State therefore deemed it necessary to promulgate a special ordinance dealing with religious instruction. This ordinance, while insisting on a child being taught the religion of its male parent, was in fact undemocratic, because it denied a parent the liberty to decide what he considered to be best for the child. It was evident that the ordinance was framed to prevent conversions and hindered the progress of the church. So great was the pressure of public opinion on the Government that in 1961 there was almost a total take-over of Christian Schools by the State.

It may be of interest at this point to inquire into some of the matters which led to the reaction against the work of the missionaries in Ceylon. Apart from the growing objection to what has been called proselytism, the main charge against it is that it has been a denationalizing influence.

Undoubtedly during the British occupation a good deal of denationalization took place. Ceylon was in a backward condition when the British took over, and it was obvious that, in many respects, British institutions were superior to those in vogue in Ceylon. British officials, however, were inclined to go too far, and to think that everything British was good not only for Britain but for Ceylon, and that they were serving the interests of Ceylon by substituting British culture for Ceylonese. British Missionaries naturally shared these views to a considerable extent, and their conviction of the superiority of the Christian religion over all others worked in the same direction, since Sinhalese

culture was closely connected with Buddhism, and Tamil with Hinduism, while British culture was regarded as Christian. It was only gradually, through growing intimacy with the country and its people, that some of them came to realize their mistake.

From the first the British government took an interest in education, seeking to revive the schools which the Dutch had started in the maritime provinces. They naturally turned to the missionaries for help, and the number of both Government and Mission schools increased. At first these schools were mainly vernacular schools, but soon a demand for English arose, as, the Government being British, knowledge of English became necessary for Government service.

The Colebrooke Commission of 1829-32 introduced many reforms, administrative, judicial, economic and social, and on the whole marked a real advance. But the Commissioners went too far in the direction of copying the British model. In education, like Macaulay in India, they stressed the importance of English, and recommended that the English language should be made the general medium of instruction, and that English Schools should be subsidized, while inefficient vernacular schools should be closed down. [11]

The spread of English had many advantages in breaking down the divisions between different communities and giving access to modern knowledge. But because the knowledge of English was not only useful but also profitable, the rush for English led to a serious neglect of the vernacular. It is to the credit of Daniel Gogerly that he opposed the closing of Government vernacular schools, and used his influence to prevent this. [12] After 1832 it was the Government which at first had most of the English schools, but when the financial crisis caused by the failure of coffee came in 1881, these schools, with the exception of Royal College, were handed over to the various Christian denominations, and so the

11. History of Ceylon for Schools by Fr. S. G. Perera Vol. 2, p. 180.
12. "Social Policy and Missionary organisations in Ceylon 1840–55" —K. M. de Silva – pp. 157 – 164.

missionaries came to play a leading part in the development of English education, with its advantages and disadvantages.

Thus we see that the accusation often made that Christian missionary work had a denationalizing effect in Ceylon is not entirely without foundation. For the English schools created a gulf between the "English educated", to which class a good many Christians belonged, and the "vernacular educated", and the former tended to feel themselves superior, and to regard Western culture as better than Eastern.

However it would be wrong to give the impression that all Christian missionaries blindly carried out what was the official policy of the British Government, and ignored the cultural heritage of the land. Many wise missionaries like Kilner in earlier days. and Alec Fraser in the present century, insisted on the ideal of building on the past traditions of the country.

These then were some of the things that irritated the Nationalists, and helped to stimulate the Hindu, as well as the Buddhist Revival, during the last hundered years. However, it must never be forgotten that the impact of British traditions and Christian teaching have brought about many changes and made many impressions on the people of India and Ceylon which have been of lasting benefit. This has been frankly acknowledged on occasions by leaders in both countries.

In welcoming Queen Elizabeth, when on a State visit to India in 1961, President Rajendra Prasad said: "The British impact on India has been in many ways an abiding one. English language and literature plays a prominent part in our lives, and the whole English tradition colours and conditions some of our ways of thought. The influence of British jurisprudence can still be traced in our laws. Above all we have sought to develop the British methods of politics and government, adopting them to our own context."

In Ceylon the Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake, speaking at the Wesley College Jubilee celebrations in July 1949, soon after Independence, said:

"If it had not been for the missionaries who established schools like Wesley long ago, should we have been able to achieve Independence in 1948? I go so far as to say that, after four and a half centuries of foreign rule, it was the influence of these missionaries that enabled us to keep up the spirit of freedom and fight the battle in due course."

CHAPTER II

THE INTRODUCTION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In almost every country or colony [1] conquered and administered by Europeans in the past, there have arisen today various political and educational problems. However, it would not be true to say that these problems which confront the people in erstwhile subject countries are directly the result of maladministration on the part of the conquerors. On the contrary many of the policies of these European powers were inspired by some of the highest ideals ever conceived.

The administrators were eager to spread the enlightened ideas of their age; in fact they felt it to be their duty. Their aim, says N. Hans was:

"to associate the natives with European civilization and gradually raise them to a higher social level which eventually might lead to the creation of a new nation or their absorption in the controlling European nation, if all the circumstances were favourable." [2]

Even as far back as 1817, R. Fellowes, who wrote a "History of Ceylon" under the pseudonym "Philalethes" [3] suggested in it that the "enlightened liberal ideology, should as it were, be an article of export into British Colonies," and he chose Ceylon as the ideal field for the experiment.

1. e.g. British India, Burma, Malaya, Dutch Indonesia etc. See N. Hans. -Comparative Education p. 20 (Routledge & Kegan Paul) 1949.
2. N. Hans – op. cit: p. 20.
3. Philalethes – The History of Ceylon from the earliest period to the year MDCCXV (Lond. 1817)

"Ceylon offers the most auspicious theatre and most favourable opportunities for the emancipation of the people from that state of degeneration in which they are kept by the institutions of castes . . . ."[4]

Thus western civlization became a valuable commodity and was exported to Ceylon in the last century. In Ceylon the actual business of the transmission of western culture was entrusted by the government to the Missionary Societies. Now, the transmission of western culture to the people was, in itself, not a bad thing. But the weakness in this process lay in the fact that the administrators and the educationalists did not follow the wise ideal of building upon the past traditions of the country. It was assumed that there was nothing of intrinsic value in the culture of the Indian and Ceylonese races so that even a restrained writer like Bishop Whitehead was forced to comment thus:

"The age long quest after truth, the profound speculations of the universe and human life, the earnest seeking after God, the high ideals of womanhood, the stories of sages and heroes that have profoundly stirred the hearts of millions in every part of India for so many centuries, the religious poetry with its yearning for communion with God and profound faith in the love of God, all this is set aside as though it were simply a matter for ridicule and fit only for the waste paper basket."[5]

To ignore the spiritual and intellectual heritage of a country, to indulge in a crude contempt for all that was great and good in an ancient culture, was not the wisest way of raising the social level of the people in order to make a new nation of them; nor it was the best way of laying a stable foundation for a system of education.

Furthermore, men like Macaulay and Trevelyan[6] believed that the whole of India's cultural life would be transformed by making English the basis of a new civilization. Macaulay

4. Philalethes P. V.
5. Bishop Whitehead – Indian Problems. p. 131 (1924 edn.)
6. C. E. Trevelyan. the Indian administrators, brother-in-law and disciple of Macaulay.

in fact propouuded the "theory of filtration." He expected that those educated in English would act as a "filter" of Western culture and pass on the knowledge to the people in the villages. [7]

When the Missionary societies began opening English schools in the Island, there was a great demand for education in such institutions. This desire for such an education was a natural consequence of the high economic value of English in the life of the people. Not only did the various departments of government conduct their affairs in English, but even banking and commerce was translated in English. Thus proficiency in a foreign language became a requisite for future employment. The vernaculars and the national system of education were at a low premium and they lost their status in the eyes of the public. The Director of Education in his Administration Report of 1921, said: "the economic value of English, by means of which a livelihood may be earned, is being increasingly realized and there is no subject of the school curriculum on which so much importance is placed both by parents and scholars." [8]

Since "the cash value" of an education based on the vernacular was almost nil, no attempt was made in Ceylon to develop a modernized native literature. This accounts for the grave shortage of Christian literature in the national languages today. So desperate was the situation that the editor of a Church magazine in 1951 wrote as follows:

"The problem of Sinhalese Christian literature has been brought into focus by an article we publish in this issue. This is not the first time this subject has been brought before us. For over a quarter of a century it has come before us from time to time, but every time the labour of discussions and conferences produced little . . . ." [9]

It is also easy to understand the reason for the paucity of Sinhalese and Tamil Christian poets, hymn writers and journa-

7. See Macaulay's minute of 2-2-1835; see also Educational Records 11,365, Bureau of Education, India.
8. C. O. 57. 288 (P.A. 19)
9. See Ceylon Methodist Church Record Nov. 1951 "Wanted Christian Writers."

lists. It was respectable to be a writer in English, and to speak fluently in the language of the ruler gave one a badge of social superiority. By a social survey conducted in the University of Ceylon it was found that twenty-five percent of the students, chiefly Sinhalese and Tamil, spoke English as a home language.[10] Even so far back as 1910, the Governor Sir H.E. McCallum noticed this tendency of the Ceylonese to drift towards de-nationalization by the wholesale, indiscriminate adoption of Western civilization. This was largely atributed to the education imparted in the English schools of Ceylon,[11] and these were mostly Christian schools.

Contrary to the expectations of Macaulay a tragic situation arose. The "filtration of culture" from English into national life was not possible. Instead there was produced a class of people who not only did not convey their knowledge to the masses but who also formed a class by themselves and were out of touch with the masses. A wide gulf was created between the "English educated" and the "vernacular educated" population of Ceylon. The rapid spread of Communism in the country, the resurgence of a narrow nationalism and the anti-Christian propaganda today may be attributed to the conflict in the emotional life of the people. Michael West has pointed out that this "emotionally unstable" tendency among the people can be the outcome of a defective language situation.[12]

The grievance of the nationalists against the Christian schools was not entirely without foundation. For these schools had been partly responsible for the lack of social solidarity among the people. Instruction through a foreign medium had created a rift in society. The injudicious assimilation of all things western had led to the decay of nationality. Further, the Christian school undermined its efforts of promoting love and brotherhood among the pupils by causing disunity and emotional instability outside the school walls.

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10. University of Ceylon Review April 1951.

11. Sessional paper 11, Despatch No. 3, 1910.

12. M. West – Language in Education pp. 15, 16 (1932)

The extent to which the English educated people had been alienated from the cultural heritage of the country is best summed up in the words :

"Education was thus competely divorced from home life and had very little influence on it. Children became alienated from their parents, often forgot their own language, and were unable to converse with the older generation. They regarded education as a purely intellectual affair and did not think of using it in their everyday life. This type of education did not serve to raise the standard of home life but tended rather to cripple progress." [13]

It must be mentioned, however, that the first products of the Christian schools were men of sound learning and character, and they even advanced economically. The latter prospect seemed to be very attractive to many. And so in due course it was found that the Christian schools were patronised chiefly because of the economic motive, and the desire to improve one's social status by acquiring a knowledge of English. Manual labour came to be despised and "white collar" jobs were much sought after. Mr. Ormsby Gore in 1928 strongly criticised this feature of the educational system in Ceylon thus :

"The chief fault has been the over emphasis on the purely clerical and literary traditions . . . . The social consequences are seen in the vast army of competitors for every minor clerical appointment . . . . . and a large body of unemployed, disappointed, discontented youths with an English education of a kind and a Cambridge certificate of no commercial or intrinsic value." [14]

Further, by teaching in a foreign medium and neglecting the vernaculars the Christian schools deprived a pupil of his individuality and his power of self expression, which are essential elements that go to make the "full grown man."

Maclver has pointed out that since individuality is that quality and power of self-determination and self-expression,

13. Elsie Cook – Ceylon, Its Geography etc. (1951 edit) p. 48.

14. See Cmd papers 3235 of 1928,

it is as necessary to the growth of personality as is the social environment. [15] But by the imposition of a foreign tongue the pupils' power of independent thought was crushed. He was called upon to bear the double burden of understanding what was being taught, and thinking in a foreign language. The result was that he became a hardened memoriser.

In the Ceylon Census Report of 1901, the late Sir Ponnbalam Ramanathan remarked that in schools where the medium of instruction was English, the children in the lower forms scarcely understood what was taught. A parrot like repetition of words, with little understanding of their meaning, was therefore necessarily encouraged. [16] This also meant that, in many instances, the mental individuality of a pupil was lost, and he had to fight hard to preserve his very soul. Professor Westermann, a leading authority on African languages, reminds us that the most adequate exponent of the soul of a people is its language, and to take away a people's language is to cripple or destroy its soul and kill its mental individuality. He was indeed right when he said :

"If the African is to keep and develop his own soul, and is to become a separate personality, his education must not begin by innoculating him with a foreign civilization, but it must be based on the civilization of each people, it must teach him to love his country, and the tribe as gifts given by God. One of these gifts is the vernacular. It is the vessel in which the whole national life is contained and through which it finds expression." [17]

There were certain other attendant evils which were equally distressing. Since the essence of this type of education was supposed to consist in passing examinations, the pupils turned out to be "crammers". They had no intelligent comprehension of their subjects but merely reproduced extracts from books. The teachers were also rendered helpless, and they had to resign themselves to the practice of producing cheap paraphrases of the

15. MacIver - Community pp 219-221 (Lond 1920)
16. Census Report 1901.
17. Colonial Office pamphlets African (May 1927) No. 1110.

literary works of English authors for the benefit of their pupils. These were committed to memory by the pupils and they were enabled to scrape through their examinations. It can be well realised that such a method of study could never yield good results; and in fact great numbers of pupils were mown down at the public examinations.

But the more serious effect of this system of education through a foreign medium was a bondage to words to which most Ceylonese were peculiarly prone. [18] The gulf between words and realities was widened. What the Sinhalese and Tamil mind required was exactly the opposite of this. It required an antidote to that sense of indifference to realities which is apt to be bred in their minds because of their popular belief in the doctrine of Maya.

This defective system also accounts for the vagueness and the lack of clarity in thought among those who were educated in this manner. Competence in speech and language is essential for clear thinking; and the language most naturally acquired and most beneficial for this purpose is the mother tongue, but that was neglected.

H. Head described the acquisition of the normal powers of speech as "the verbalisation of experience; if that process is incomplete as regards the mother tongue, it is very unlikely to achieve completion in a foreign language. The knowledge and use of the second language in such circumstances will be on the plane of mere verbalism." [19]

Commenting on this statement of Head, J. Firth says:

"Verbalism in place of verbalisation is a border line disorder common enough in Europe, but general enough among the educated class in countries like India which have adopted an alien culture . . . . Anyone with a dissociated service of words is a pathological case." [20]

18. Administration Report of the Director of Public Instruction 1895.
19. H. Head – Aphasia. (C.V. Press) 1896.
20. J. R. Firth - speech (Ernest Benn Ltd.) Lond. 1930.

If this statement is true then it logically follows that the Christian schools in Ceylon in the past were not producing men and women who were capable of growing to "full stature" but people who were to be sick and maimed for life, because of their inability to express themselves freely in speech.

Verbalism, volubility of speech and mimicry in words are common weaknesses even today. Many Sinhalese and Tamil Christians have not grown out of the stage of repeating the prayers they learnt during their infancy. Many are still unable to pray in their vernacular, unlike the Christian child in the village who not only prays intelligently, but is also clear in thought and expression.

In recent years the national languages have been introduced as the medium of instruction in schools, and Sinhalese and Tamil are also the languages used in the Universities. The official report in 1951 on the language policy in schools says[21] that Ceylon is also proposing the experiment of teaching a second language (English) to every child, when he has reached standard three.

It is indeed good that a knowledge of English should be made available to as many citizens in Ceylon as possible. But what seems to be of doubtful wisdom is to prescribe that the entire school population should from the standard three stage receive the training in a second language irrespective of their fitness for the task. The Spence Report recommends that no attempt should be made to teach modern languages to pupils who have no linguistic ability or who cannot hope to stay at school long enough to study them with profit. The average age of the pupil leaving school after the National Certificate of General Education would be 14 +. Therefore it is possible to foresee the difficulties that may confront the child in new Sri Lanka, who is burdened with the learning of a second language at an early age. The greatest danger is that he may be deprived of the very blessings that are likely to accrue through instruction in the mother tongue. The position of the schools

21. The Education (Amendment) Act, No. 5, 1951.

then may be the same as it was at the beginning of this century. The schools may still continue to turn out the "undeveloped" pupil. One of the main reasons for using the mother tongue in schools is to help a child to think clearly. This we know is vitally important for the intellectual and spiritual growth of a child. But when a second language is introduced before intensive reading and disciplined expression in the mother tongue is achieved, a child's capacity to think may be hindered and even his sense of originality may be crushed. It is preferable therefore to use the mother tongue as the sole medium in the primary school and the second language may be introduced at a later stage for those who would profit by learning it. Since the majority of the pupils will not stay long enough at school to study English or any other modern or classical language, the mother tongue for them would be the only key to "fulness of life", and the main instrument of culture. It would be the means of bridging the intellectual and spiritual gulf between different classes of people and for diffusing fresh knowledge among all sections of a disciplined, organised community. It would be the fundamental factor which would help to enlarge a pupil's vision and deepen his understanding. Above all it would be the most essential element in awakening a pupil to any creative fulness of life.

CHAPTER III

THE STATE'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE MISSION SCHOOLS IN THE PAST

In the past, not only ignorance but various superstitions, beliefs and customs influenced society in Ceylon; and in many instances children were not even accorded the "right to live". R. Knox says:

"Many women were childless, and when a child was born at an inauspicious time, or under an unfavourable planet, it was destroyed either by starving, putting its head into a vessel of water, or burying it alive." [1]

Poverty, superstition and illiteracy were the prevalent features at the time of the arrival of the British in Ceylon. Probably it was such a state of affairs that promoted Macaulay to state in his minute of 1835:—

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." [2]

While the intention of the administrators were good, yet adequate attention was not paid to important details in carrying out the plans. For one thing, in the early years the schools were faced with serious outbreaks of diseases such as fever,

1. R. Knox - An Historical Relation of Ceylon Ryan's Edition, 1911, (Glasgow) pp. 146 - 151.

2. See Macaulay's Minute of 2/2/1835, also C. E. Trevelyan - On the education of the people of India (pp. 146 - 151)

dysentery, cholera and small pox, and no proper medical facilities were provided. In the first three quarters of 1885 the Registrar General reported that there had been an excess of deaths over births, and that the deaths from fever alone during the year amounted to 21,523 as against 13,385 in the previous year. [3]

As an example of how such an unusual amount of sickness tended to minimize the attendance of schools, the record for 1803 of a Boys' School in the Southern Province is given below: [4]

February	— school closed, dysentery.
March & April	— attendance very low.
May	— No pupils.
June	— Average attendance 30.
July	— No pupils, school closed.
August	— do
September	— Attendance improving, average 51.

To counteract such difficulties the Goevrnment had earlier introduced certain regulations. For instance, in 1884 it was declared that:

"Children are not eligible for presentation in any aided school unless they have been vaccinated or have had the small pox." [5]

But in spite of these regulations, disease swept away many children in the schools. In Jaffna cholera caused much havoc to the schools of the American Mission. Further, the attendance at the mission schools was even more seriously affected than in government schools, because in the case of government schools there were paid officials like the Mudaliyar or the Ratemahatmaya whose business it was to see that the children in their respective villages attended the government schools regularly. But in the case of the mission schools the headmen, unless they were Christians, did not exert themselves, and boys

3. C. O. 57. 95.
4. C. O. 57. 128.
5. Schools Ordinance 1884.

often malingered almost unchecked when fever or other sickness prevailed. The question of attendance was also closely linked up with the development of local self government in the rural areas. For the advancement of such self government the interest in the village schools and of the education of the children was of supreme importance. But for the conditions of the achievement of this goal the ready co-operation of the Mudaliyars and headmen was also very necessary. Many of them, however, were unwilling to part with power and some even discouraged children from attending schools.

Another cause for the failure of children to attend schools was the absence from certain districts of village tribunals, and even more important was the fact that the villages in some of the Provinces were ill provided with regular means of communication. The Hon. Mr. Downall, the planting member for Uva, drew attention to this fact in 1885 in the Legislative Council. He said that, although schools had been opened from time to time in Uva, they dwindled and died away, because the people were apathetic to everything beyond their daily needs for existence; and from want of railway communication they were not stirred by civilizing and educational influences from outside. It is said that roads and railways are the great pioneers and schools follow naturally in their wake and prosper. But the missions of the Church of England, the Wesleyans and the Roman Catholics had an uphill task before them in Uva when they built the schools without the roads, which the State should have provided. [6] Even as recently as 1920 the Director of Education reported that the district with the lowest proportion of children under instruction was the province of Uva, where it was 1 to 33. He pointed out that the nature of the country, with its steep hills and long distances between villages and poor facilities for travel accounted largely for this. [7]

Moreover, in the wilder parts of the country a wholesome fear of elephants, bears and leopards militated against their attendance. At any rate it was not until the sun had risen

6. C. O. 57.95 (P. 74D)
7. C. O. 57.201 also C.O. 57.128

fairly high in the heavens, that the village paths were safe for young children. Hence many fresh hours of the morning session at school were also lost to children. Not only was it difficult for pupils to attend schools in the remote areas, but also it was not possible to secure the teachers for the schools in these places. Unmarried female teachers especially were reluctant to take up posts in villages where suitable accommodation was difficult to obtain. [8]

At the end of 1899 it is recorded that the total number of Government schools was 489 with 47,482 scholars, and the number of grant-in-aid schools was 1,269 with 111,145 scholars. These figures reveal that the State had placed too great a responsibility on the grant-in-aid schools for the education of its children; at the same time it did not make adequate provision to facilitate the work of the missions. For instance, there were whole areas of the country which were totally devoid of schools. The "Ceylon Friend", a Wesleyan journal reported that in 1890 in the Hambantota district there were only three schools (a Government, a Wesleyan and a S.P.G. school), and there was a population of about 27,000 and only two women were able to read and write. [9] The educational destitution of the people was well known to the officials in the district, but little was done to establish schools.

The spread of the tea industry in Ceylon was again another great drawback to regular attendance at schools. There was consistent demand for child labour on the estates. The wage earning capacity of the boys constituted a constant source of temptation to absent themselves from school. In 1905, it is said that in 678 estates hardly any children went to school.[10] Similarly, children also kept away from school to attend to various duties in connection with agricultural pursuits of the people. This was particularly so in the Trincomalee district.[11] It was only with the introduction of the Rural School's Ordinance, No: 8 of 1907 (Part V) that certain duties were imposed

8. C. O. 57.112
9. C. O. 57.128
10. C. O. 57. 162
11. C. O. 27. 128

on the Superintendent of every estate to provide for a system of compulsory attendance enforced by penalties.[12]

Along with the insufficient provision for educational progress, the State was also unequal to the task of dealing with social problems and matters directly connected with the instruction in schools. For instance, the caste notions of the people interposed a formidable obstacle to the establishment of schools in the early years. Since parents loathed the very idea of permitting their boys and girls to mix with children of low caste, the State considered it necessary therefore to make some concessions to this feeling. The children of lower castes were not allowed to sit on benches. Instead they were asked to sit on the floor. In the Northern Province separate kitchens were built so that children of high caste might cook their own mid-day meal.[13] At times the State even encouraged the observance of caste by building separate schools for the depressed classes. There were twelve such schools in the North.[14]

In the Kandy districts the Rodiyas were slow in availing themselves of educational opportunities because they were afraid of being refused the customary alms from the people if they had claimed equal treatment for their children in schools. Thus it was for over a century large section of the depressed classes suffered because of the apathy not only of the State but also of some of the Missionary Societies. The years 1927 and 1928, however, were notable in the history of education in Ceylon for the introduction of an important item of legislation referred to caste distinction in schools.[15]

For the first time the Education Ordinance provided that no pupil could be refused admission to a school on grounds of race, caste or religion. While this was indeed a big step in the right direction, yet no provision was made to secure that once a pupil was admitted into a school distinction of caste would

12. C. O. 57 170. Compulsory education came into force only in 1920
13. Brief sketch of the American Ceylon Mission, pp. 10, 11 (A.C.M. Press) 1849.
14. C. O. 57. 228
15. C. O. 57. 228

not be maintained. The question of equal seating in schools engaged the attention of the Department of Education only at a later stage. [16]

The indifference of the State to the needs of the backward communities during the greater part of the last century was even more apparent by its neglect of the education of Muslim girls. In 1892 Mr. J. D. Thomas opened two such schools in Colombo and Galle. [17] When these schools were opened, the former had 14 and the latter had 53 on its roll. These schools continued to function even in spite of the opposition of the Muslim Priests. [18] It was only in the succeeding years that the government established schools for Muslim children. In 1913 there were six such schools in which the Koran teachers were paid by the Government, and the number of children in those schools was 2,641.

The grant-in-aid schools, on the other hand, had 5,735 Muslim children and this included a good proportion of girls. However, in spite of all this, it was found that only 19% of the total number of Muslim children of school going age were attending schools. [19]

Similarly, there was no adequate provision made for the deaf and blind children. Even the missionary bodies realised the need for such an institution only in 1912. In November that year, the Church Missionary Society, largely aided by subscriptions collected locally and in England, opened a school for the deaf and blind in temporary quarters in Dehiwela. The present building was erected on a site which was the gift of the Hon. Mr. A. J. R. de Soysa. The institution is now managed by a Board of Governors and is generously supported by the public and by government grants.

Even as regards orphanages and reformatories,[20] it is true to say that apart from the State orphanages of Dutch times it

16. C. O. 57. 231 A
17. Proceedings of the CMS 1892, p. 160.
18. Proceedings of the CMS 1893 p. 169.
19. Proceedings of the CMS 1907, p. 271.
20. A Scheme for a Reformatory was suggested by the I.G. Prisons in his Administrative Report of 1880.

was the missionary societies who introduced into the Island the system of private orphanages. In 1935 it is recorded that, of the 30 institutions, 32 were conducted by religious bodies and 7 by private individuals. [21] The State did not maintain such institutions, and children were in danger of being exposed to ill treatment, cruelty and premature employment.

Turning now to the problems connected with instruction in schools, it must be said that the State did often hinder the work by its rigid regulations. For instance, the imposition of the fee of one penny had so decided an effect in keeping away children from the vernacular schools. It did affect the work in many assisted schools. [22] The government paid little heed to the conditions in the villages and expected every child to pay this fee for instruction. In order to obtain the necessary coin to pay the fee, coconuts or other garden produce had to be carried to the nearest bazaar by the children ; sometimes it was many miles. The Director of Public Instruction, Mr. W. J. Sendall, in 1870, however insisted that the payment of this fee should be abolished. Similarly, after the riots of 1915, a tax was imposed upon all, irrespective of nationality, for the purpose of compensating the Muslims. As the tax fell rather heavily on the small cultivators in the villages, it made them hostile towards the British administrators and to all forms of missionary work. [23] The defective system of government inspection, and the crowding of a large number of examinations into the last three months of the year, was also most detrimental to the efficient running of the Mission schools. During the last quarter of 1879, it was found that 288 out of the grant-in-aid schools were left for examination. The schools had to insist on having the examinations or else they would have lost Rs. 42,710/80 cents by way of grants. [24] The negligence on the part of the government inspectors even encouraged some of the teachers in mission schools to be dishonest. Their registers had false entries. But in 1880 Mr. Bruce, the Director

21. Ceylon State Council, Sessional Paper II, 1935, p. 27
22. Proceedings of the CMS 1848.
23. C. O. 57. 51.
24. C. M S. Report 1917 – 18. (p. 87)

of Public Instruction, secured greater efficiency by increasing the number of Inspectors, and exercising greater control over schools.

In the English schools it was found that, as the grant varied directly with the number of subjects taken, the pupils were entered for as many as 15 or 16 subjects. Whole classes were compelled to take subjects like Latin and Mathematics, for the sake of the few boys preparing for the Cambridge local examinations. [25] The boys were being taught to write Latin sentences when their knowledge of English was poor. Even more distressing was the fact that there were no facilities provided for a special study of Oriental literature. The only institution which attempted to train scholars in Sanskrit and Pali was the Vidyodaya College, which was under the management of the High Priest, Sumangala. The State made amends for this by offering a lump sum grant of Rs. 1,000/- per annum to the institution.[26]

There was little provision for infant departments. The few schools that attempted the teaching of young children did so on their own initiative and without encouragement from the government. The administration report of 1907 stated that in the lower standards of the English schools there was gross disparity of age. [27]

The overcrowed state of the curriculum and the scheme devised by the government for increasing the grants, so as to enable the managers to secure competent and capable teachers, were also a questionable advantage. Then again, the scheme of unification of the Director of Public Instruction in 1904, which banned all Indian University examinations and compelled all schools to prepare their pupils for the Cambridge and London examinations, deterred the progress of schools on national lines. As a result of this scheme more and more English was taught; the vernaculars and the history and geography of the Island were sadly neglected. But it was only during the years 1927 and 1928 that considerable changes

25. C. O. 57. 149
26. C. O 57, 90
27. C. O. 57. 170

regarding these matters were effected. The system by which payment was made to schools for different subjects taught was abolished. The new syllabus that was suggested was the negation of the idea of uniformity, and it encouraged the head teacher to adapt the work of his school to conditions prevailing in his district. While such a change prepared the majority of pupils for the life they were likely to lead, it also gave those of exceptional ability the opportunity to prepare for a special career. [28]

The old distinction between teachers in government schools and those employed by the management of mission schools was also abolished. Both classes were placed on a common scale according to their qualifications. A pension scheme was also devised for teachers in assisted schools, which gave the teaching profession a new status and made it a career with reasonable prospects. [29]

In regard to the provision of teachers for schools, here again it was found that the State was not very helpful. When the government ordinance promulgated with a view to extending elementary education in the villages as well as in the towns of Ceylon came into force on January 1, 1908, the Mission schools and the teaching staff were unequal to the strain of the new inrush of scholars. The situation was made more difficult because the regulations insisted on competent and certificated teachers. [30]

The Wesleyan schools alone had over 1100 teachers in the Island in 1912, and they needed many more for their schools. The position was almost the same with the other societies. Moreover, they had to be careful in the appointment of teachers because incompetent people were a hinderance and the Christian schools also disliked the idea of taking non-Christian teachers on their staff. The Christian schools got over the difficulty partially by bringing teachers from South India. But there were whole areas of the Sinhalese speaking districts where the

28. C. O. 57. 228 (P. A. 6)
29. C. O. 57. 222
30. C.M.S. Report 1908, p. 179.

teachers from South India could not work, because they did not know the Sinhalese language. The task of finding Christian teachers for the Church schools is still a major problem. The trouble began in the early thirties, when the State began to place obstacles in the way of the Churches to prevent the recruiting of missionaries from abroad. In a letter of G. D. Cranswick (Secy, C.M.S. London) dated 3rd Oct. 1939, to the Secretary of the C.M.S. in Colombo, he says:

"I gather that you are experiencing some difficulties about foreign staff, and there is some question about whether foreigners will be allowed at all on College staffs, and even if they are, we understand that support by government is doubtful."

The State has also restricted the number of Christian Training Colleges because there was the fear that these institutions might flood the land with more than the required number of Christian teachers. That was not a congenial prospect for the State. In this respect the State has infringed its own policy of complete neutrality, and has shown open hostility towards the Church schools.

Today the State is not only controlling the admissions into the University, which may be a move in the right direction, but is also controlling the number of candidates admitted into the Teacher Training Institutions.

With the rising tide of Nationalism, religion has become identified with politics. The present government, 90% non-Christian, is placing more and more restrictions and limiting Christian education. Under the constitution the government education department is in the control of Ceylonese and is dominated by Buddhists who are striving to eliminate Christian schools altogether.

The Church is indeed on trial in Ceylon in these days and it is difficult to foresee what the future may bring.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNISM

Communism is one of the greatest obstacles that confronts the Christian Church in Ceylon. The danger may not be immediate, but Communism is spreading and it constitutes a real challenge. Some time ago the New York Times [1] gave a table of figures showing the numerical strength of the Communists in different countries of the world. It stated that in Russia the figure was 6,000,000; the numbers for India were given as 53,700 and those for Burma were 4,000. Perhaps the numbers in Ceylon were so much smaller that it was hardly worth mentioning. But it is common knowledge that these figures have escalated beyond our expectation. Indeed, whole countries and governments have now declared themselves to be Communist countries. The insurrection of 1971 in Ceylon has proved that revolutionary methods and the attempt at a violent overthrow of the government were Communist sponsored. However, figures cannot be a safe guide, and it is not easy to assess the strength of the communists in Ceylon. But the October revolution in Russia proved that an insignificant minority can seize power wherever there is no organized opposition. By striking at strategic points, particulary dockyards, factories, the army, schools, colleges and universities, Communists have scored unquestionable victories. These techniques have been developed with consummate skill, and country after country has been overrun. In 1950 China loomed large in the eyes of the world. More than 5,000,000 had joined the Communist ranks in China, [2] and it was said that of this total many had been drawn from the schools and the Colleges. [3]

1. New York Times, March 16, 1947.
2. The Editorial, The Peking "People's Daily", July 1, 1950
3. This is the opinion of a number of missionaries who had returned from China.

One of the main features that forced Burma to succumb to Communism was the fact that the government in power was unable to arrest the political disintegration in the Burmese army.[4] The revolution in Indonesia revealed yet another of the tactics and methods employed by the Communists in the Colonies. The Communists made the Indonesian leaders focus all their attention on that one goal of Independence, whilst they themselves, though they ostensibly worked for freedom from exploitation, yet in reality began to spread Communist propaganda. So whilst the Indonesian leaders battled with the Dutch Government for freedom they ignored their actual foe, the Communists. It all seemed so ridiculous when within three hours of the Dutch Government's announcement in Holland on the 20th September 1947 that Indonesia had entered the Netherlands Commonwealth as a free and equal partner there was also reported from Indonesia the rise of a rival government.

Similar strategies and methods have been employed in Malaysia and India. In each of these countries the usual method is to exploit particular situations at opportune moments.

The Communist movement in Ceylon gathered momentum during the last three decades, and it was largely due to the impact of Western education on Society. The movement in Ceylon originally played the part of an organization for introducing reforms in society. But it was only in the early forties that it began openly as a definite left-wing in policy. As in many other Asian countries the leadership of the party is confined to educated and convinced Marxists. The Communist influence in the country is largely due to its personaliies. The President, Dr. S. A. Wickremesinghe, is well known in international circles. It was due to his popularity and his influence that the extreme South of Ceylon became a Red stronghold. Another prominent leader is Pieter Keuneman, a past President of the Cambridge Union, and presently the Minister for Housing in the U.F. Government.

The Left movement in Ceylon was originally divided into three groups, the Stanlinists and two Trotskyite groups. The

4. The Eastern Economist, Aug. 27, 1948.

Lanka Sama Samaja Party, one of the Trotskyite groups, came into being in 1935. Prominent among the leaders of these groups were Dr. N. M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and Mr. Leslie Goonewardene.

It was during the years 1945—47 that the Communists felt it necessary to adopt a more left-wing policy in order to consolidate their position and make new inroads into the working class movement. The three years that followed the end of World War II were years of economic difficulty and there was much dissatisfaction among public servants and urban workers. The Left wing parties therefore seized the opportunity and organized a partially successful strike in 1946, but in 1947 the general strike which they organized was a complete failure and it was a serious blow to their prestige. In the general election of 1947 the Communists contested over a dozen seats, often against Trotskyite candidates, but they were only successful in three constituencies. It was from this point onwards that they gradually gathered strength. They followed the example of other communists countries in attacking captalists and opposing the policy of the government in power. They began to attack colonial rule and the imperial powers. They denounced imperialism which they said was ruthless in its search for markets and its callous disregard for the people of Ceylon and other colonies in the East. By apparently convincing speeches the Communists were able to indicate that the main factors were all supposed to hold together and to involve one another—the Capitalist system, the search for markets, imperialism and its inevitable consequence of war. In the years succeeding 1950 the attack was against the Pro-American imperialistic policy which they said had brought the country to a state of economic ruin. The Communists alleged that in order to obtain a loan from the United States, the Ceylon Government carried out the "orders" of the World Bank Mission and closed down industrial projects, changed the land policy, and cut out what the bank considered wasteful expenditure." [5]

The social inequalities and the class divisions provided a fruitful field for the Communist Party. They believed that the

5. The Times of Ceylon (Evening Edition) October 24, 1953.

main stream of the population could be classified into three separate income groups. (a) The workers and the peasants.[6] (b) The clerks. (c) The staff officers. The leaders of the Party (mostly graduates of the middle class educated in British Universities) being moved by the poverty of the masses, were convinced that the only solution to the situation in Ceylon is a social revolution. They gained popularity with large sections of the population when they declared that political independence without a social revolution was a mere substitution of "brown capitalism" for "white". In fact they said that "the independence granted in 1948 was a fake," because it was inconceivable that the white capitalists would give up their tributes without a struggle. It was clearly a deal between the white capitalists and the brown to enable both to continue their exploitation. Genuine independence, they said, would come only when the workers and peasants took matters into their own hands.

In the schools the distinction between the "vernacular educated" and the "English educated" was another source of much controversy and attack. The distinction between those who had adopted western customs and manners, the alleged socially superior, and the masses of the rural areas who are looked upon as the inferior element in the population, was fully exploited by the Communists. They pointed out that the period of colonialism had quite wrongly encouraged the people to associate respectability with a certain dress, a certain language and work that is least physical. Such an attitude had been developed not merely among the teachers but had even become part of the pupil's outlook. This they maintained inevitably led to a snobbishness and class distinction. They therefore demanded equality of opportunity for all in the educational sphere.

Communism made yet another stride in its advance when the leaders declared their movements to be "non-violent".[7]

6. The workers and the peasants were further divided into three groups of equal status (I) The urban workers (II) The estate workers (III) The peasants.

7. cf. Ceylon News, Vol. 18 No. 45 12th Nov. 1953 p. 15

They were obviously appealing to the Buddhist and Hindu masses of Ceylon by preaching the doctrine of Ahimsa. Thus the Communists in Ceylon were undoubtedly unique and different from the parties in other Asian countries such as India, Burma, China and Indonesia. In Ceylon the party was a reformist group, which sought to fulfil its mission by apparently peaceful and non-violent means. That its tactics were correct became evident when it scored a convincing victory in the Colombo Municipal elections of 1949. Greatly encouraged by the successes, the Communist party began to sponsor peace committees and even literary associations in young people's clubs and institutions.[8] Early in 1952 some of the leaders of the Party and a few of its fellow travellers who had returned from Peking organized an "Exhibition of Chinese Paintings" and were successful in attracting hundreds of pupils and students from schools and Colleges. Later the Party propagandists made a big noise of what were claimed to be Buddhist relics from Communist China.[9]

By colouring their propaganda speeches with religious doctrines they gained the sympathy of the masses and also of the educated public. Some of the Communists even argued that they had an equal right to public funds to educate their children in their "religious atmosphere." Their claim was just and reasonable, for is it not true that the Weimar Constitution in Germany distributed grants equally to Catholic, Protestant, and Marxist Schools?[10] So clever was this method of approach that many wondered whether a movement which sought to introduce reforms in the political, social and economic sphere by peaceful means did not merit their support and encouragement. In fact many youths began to leave the Christian Church to join the ranks of the Communists. The Church tried to prevent this leakage by strengthening their youth movements. Soon the Government, also realising the danger that confronted the country, even attempted to help the different religious bodies, but in so doing adopted wrong measures to meet the challenge. It issued thousands of picture posters to churches,

8. cf. Ceylon News Dec. 3, 1953. p. 11.
9. cf. Ceylon News. Political Notes Vol. 18 No. 50 p. 11.
10. N. Hans – Comparative Education p. 241.

Buddhist and Hindu Temples and Mosques with drawings of such places of worship being demolished by the Communists, and with the caption : "Save the Church from the Communists" or "Save Buddhism from the flames of Marxism."[11]

Revolution by peaceful means, however, is never the ideal of the true Communists. The "hartal" of August 12, 1953 which entailed the loss of many lives in Colombo was definitely Communist sponsored and brutally violent in its methods. Marx and Engels have also said : "We are not among the Communists who believe that our goal can be won by the exercise of love alone. No salt, sad tears are wept by us in the moonlight deploring the misery of mankind, our profound depression being followed by an ecstasy of delight at the thought of a golden future; our day is one of earnest endeavour; it needs the whole of each man's exertions. This love and sob stuff is nothing more than a kind of mental self-enervation which deprives those addicted to it of all capacity for energetic action . . . ." [12]

Furthermore, experience in the South East Asian Countries has proved that the Communists will exploit every situation and use it for their own ends. One would have thought if the Communists in Ceylon had worked "underground", it would have been justifiable and right according to their code of ethics. Instead they make no pretence about it at all. It does not matter to them whether they are believed or not. Hence they do not hesitate to be brutally frank, and no opponent could turn round on them and say that they had not been warned. Early in 1951, there was published in "The Ceylon Observer" some sensational news about the inner working of the Party, and also some of the Party's directives in which Communist members were urged to be prepared for the coming struggle.

Communism has spread to every part of the country. Through the length and breadth of the island the villages have been visited by Communist agents. Almost every rural area in

11. Such posters were received by the present writer, when he was a Minister in the Colombo City Mission in 1946.
12. Quoted from the Communict Journal 1849.

Ceylon has heard of the blessings of Communism. Within 15 or 20 years [13] the Communists have been able to instruct the villager and the labourer in the elements of Communism, while Protestant missions have not been able to carry the Gospel to the remote areas even after 160 years of work in the island. The Communists were successful chiefly because they appealed to the adventurous and enthusiastic nature of the young people. The Communists organised visits, for the benefit of the prospective recruits to the Party, to poverty striken areas so that they may witness for themselves the appalling conditions in the rural districts. Once they were made aware of the poverty, ill health, ignorance and degradation of the masses there was youthful insistence in a widespread social revolution. This was particularly evident among some of the senior students in the colleges. The Communist party has even a wider field of activity in the University. where the process of introduction and recruitment is aided by the activities of certain staff members of the particular faculty. Study groups are organised. To start with the Party line is not allowed to colour the subjects discussed and freshmen are inevitably attracted and impressed by the brilliant dialectics of the staff who conduct them. With the passage of time the subjects for discussion gradually change and the Party line becomes apparent. The Communist grip on stndents in the University is undoubtedly a heavy one. [14]

Communism has now crept into the life of the village schools too. During recent years teachers who are communists have attempted to sow in the minds of children the seeds of hatred towards the present system of Government. In the Republic of India Communism was legally banned for a few years. Although no official declaration had ever been made against Communism in Ceylon, yet serious measures had been adopted by the State to prevent it from making inroads into the schools. Some teachers in Government schools were dismissed and others interdicted as a safety measure.

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13. The original Lanka Sama Samaja Party, one of the Trotskyite groups came into being in 1935 (Ceylon News, Vol. 18, No. 51 p. 11)

14. Ceylon News - Dec. 3rd. 1953 p. 11.

The power the Communist groups wielded was most felt during the premiership of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike. The Government was harassed by the frequent strikes and unrest amongst the labour forces. Not only had the country to face heavy financial losses in the Port and in the mercantile sector but these strikes almost broke the back of the government.

Two decades ago Communism in Ceylon was more a substitute for religion, and had many striking similarities to Christianity. Just as the early Christian underwent martyrdom for the sake of the faith, so also the Communists were willing to suffer imprisonment or loss of career for secularised religion.[15] Communism had given to these people a new vision, a sense of direction, an ideal, and a cause to fight and die for. Although it is true Communism breeds wherever there is poverty and that the Communists in Ceylon are vehement in their protests concerning bad social conditions, yet it seems clear that many internal factors also drive men into the Communist cause. If Communism was directly due to poverty, then one would expect the ranks of the Communist Party in Ceylon to be filled by the poor and the down trodden. Instead we find hundreds of people in stable positions forming the Communist Party; and the leaders of the Sama Samajist Parties and the other Left Wing groups are lawyers, doctors and wealthy landlords. Many members of the clerical service and teachers, men with security in the shape of a good income and a pension at the end of their career, have also identified themselves with the Communists. These men are in dire need not so much of the material blessings of life but of a faith, something that can satisfy the deep longings within them. They are impatient with the religions that tolerate the atrocities and injustices on earth. They ridicule Hinduism which has conveniently worked out a caste system. This they say is a matter of vested interest. It is the class domination of the Brahmins, the ruling class who help to perpetuate the system. "How could", say the Communists, "the inequalities of the caste system be given divine sanction and be attributed to the inexorable law of Karma?" Surely, they argue, it is the work of selfish man.

15. cf. Ceylon News, Feb. 11th 1954 p. 4.

The Communists are antagonistics towards ths life of renunciation and the curbing of all desires that Buddhism advocates. Such a religious attitude, they say, reduces people to hopeless despair and encourages men to accept their present human sufferings as part of their Karma, which from their point of view is unthinkable. The Communists believe that they can seek redress here and now, while the wheel of history moves slowly to the inevitable goal of Communism.

The Christian Church again, they say, is a tool of Capitalism and binds together the oppressed classes by preaching the doctrine of a loving heavenly father, and seeking redress in heaven for the injustices on earth. They therefore stir up the masses by reminding them of the programme of the Communist international adopted at the sixth world Congress in 1928.

"The fight against religion, the opium of the people, occupies an important position among the tasks of the cultural revolution. This fight must be carried on persistently and systematically. The proletarian power . . . . uses all the means at its disposal to conduct anti-religious propaganda."

While there is this fatal contempt for honoured religious traditions and disrespect for worship of images in shrines or pictures and relics of tombs in Churches, among the Communist members, there was growing up among them a new loyalty—an unconditional devotion provided with the desire to serve the Soviet Union and Communist China. Some of the Communist groups in the island were willing to indulge in traitorous activity to Ceylon. [16]

In India there were many tokens of the familiar pattern of Communist infiltration and advance. A missionary report of 1952 had this to say:

"It is always dangerous to predict the future in politics. There are many acute observers of the present positions in India who foresee the possibility that in five years or less the whole of the Country may pass under Communist Government. [17]

16. See Ceylon News Vol. 18, No. 51, p. 11.

17. M. M. S. Pamphlet – "1952 year of Preparation."

At the speed they were moving in Ceylon, it was impossible to predict when and where they would next strike. Until the late fifties they were gradually gaining ground. The strikes and the hartals were the weapons of breaking down governments. Communism was a challenge not merely to the Church but to the country as a whole. In a Communist dominated society, which was the intention, there would no doubt have been provided a system of education based on the Philosophy of Communism. It was also likely that knowledge would have been adjusted or co-ordinated to buttress a particular theory. This would have been done so thoroughly and systematically that an individual could not have helped but thought all the while in terms of such a theory. Such a system would of course have been a negation of the Christian ideals in education.

Soon after the advent of the United Front Government in 1970, a new constitution was written and the Republic of Sri Lanka came into being. Sri Lanka then witnessed some of the most rapid social changes that had ever taken place in the country during this century.

The United Front Government which is a coalition of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party with the Left wing groups, has outlined a programme of action that will lead them to their declared objective—"a socialist democracy." Hence their march forward is being pushed with determination. At the same time it is a continuous process of liquidation of the economic power of the capitalist class. Not only the United Front Government, but the masses of youth aligned with them and other sympathisers of the Left wings are impatient and unhappy that forty family groups own a total investment of Rs. 273 million. Of this, eleven family groups own Rs. 205 millions or 51% of the total investment in the private sector.

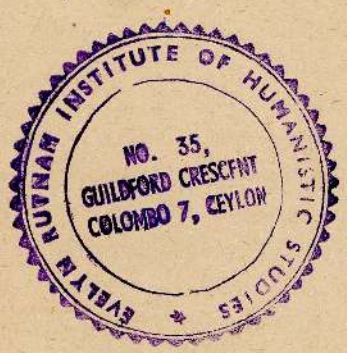
Nothing so spectacular as this venture has ever been initiated by the Protestant Church during its existence of more than 160 years. Equality of opportunity in education was indeed an

attempt of the Church to bridge the gap between the privileged few and the down trodden masses of the land. But this was like a drop in the ocean. Moreover, the discrepancies between the rich and the poor and the disadvantages of the majority of the children of the land were too great to be overlooked and for too long a period. But the United Front Government quite proudly boasts to have achieved their object even before their scheduled time has lapsed. The common man has now a place in the sun. It can of course be said that enactments were made under emergency; laws were promulgated and programmes were implemented almost under the threat of extinction for those who opposed the forward march of the Socialists. But the Government's claim has always been that they are a People's Government and have been given a mandate by the people to fulfil the pledges in their manifesto. The achievements in the years 1973 and 1974 have been the introduction of a ceiling on income, a ceiling on land, a ceiling on houses and the successful completion of Land Reform. Within a period of two years over half a million acres of privately owned land passed into the hands of Government. Absentee Landlordism as was practised for centuries ceased to exist almost overnight. And the ordinary villagers came into their own. It was the beginning of an agrarian revolution. Its socio-economic repercussions were felt throughout the country. Furthermore the land reform policy has given the biggest boost to the food drive towards self-sufficiency. It has given a new meaning and a new status to agriculture. Self preservation for the peasant is assured. He is no longer an alien in his own land. He is part and parcel of his own land. He has now found his own identity.

While the Christian church (Protestant) in Sri Lanka during the past 160 years or more could not claim to have made the rapid progress that the United Front Government had achieved in a few years, yet it is still proper to question the methods employed by the Government to gain these ends. Is the art of

establishing social equity by methods bordering on plunder and by setting people on fire with feelings of hate, revenge and the like justifiable? Has not the unplanned nationalisation of institutions, and industries produced a newly affluent class? Has not the Government fostered the monstrous growth of state capitalism? This is indeed the very opposite of what the Government intended.

In the face of all this, is it not true to say that the Communism that confronts us today in the form of a march towards a Socialist Democracy, needs critical examination? The Church cannot be silent; for silence speaks louder than words.



CHAPTER V

INTER CHURCH RELATIONSHIP AND CHURCH UNION.

It is recorded that Harvard had "no small satisfaction that, when the first English clergymen landed here, our house was the first into which they entered on their arrival in Colombo, and our pulpit the first from which they began their missionary career." This was the testimony of the pioneer Wesleyan missionary writing in 1818.

In the early period of missions a good relationship prevailed and the cordiality between the church of England missionaries and the Methodists is a marked contrast to the bitterness that arose later on. The influence of the Oxford Movement which laid special emphasis on the authority of the Bishop had its repercussions in Ceylon too. The leaders of the movement recalled the Anglicans to their Catholic traditions. Methodism, they said, was outside the Catholic Church, and its ministry and its sacraments were not valid. Hence the influence of the Oxford Movement was felt in Church relations in Ceylon shortly after 1838.

The Baptists and the Wesleyan Missionaries shared one another's chapels and frequently spoke on the same platforms at public meetings. However, there was not much fellowship with the Roman Catholics and the Protestant denominations during the early years. In the North there was a definite attempt on the part of the missionaries to cooperate and the records state that there was a monthly meeting to which the Wesleyans and both the C. M. S. and American

missionaries came together for fellowship and prayer. At the first meeting in August 1819, the topic was "Brotherly Love."[1] The Wesleyan missionaries had as their motto John Wesley's words, "Friends of all and enemies of none", and comity began with a partition of the field. The American missionaries confined themselves to a purely Tamil area amongst the people in the Jaffna peninsula. Similarly when the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society arrived in the North, a distinct territory was assigned to them. All this was done by common consent, thereby avoiding the waste caused by overlapping and needless rivalry. In those early years the denomination of a convert was commonly determined by topography rather than Theology.

In 1841 Dr. E. B. Pusey in England accused the Methodists of heresy, and this led to the deterioration of good relationships with the Anglicans; the Methodists found themselves drawn closer to the free Churches. This strained relationship was felt even in Ceylon. Gogerly in 1843 wrote that nearly all the Ceylon clergymen were "high Puseyites" and was distressed to note that Wesleyan ordinations were declared invalid. Gogerly even appealed to London for understanding and kindness. At the installation of Bishop Chapman in 1845, the Bishop in his sermon said that "the Church of England is the only safe church." Remarks of this nature naturally hurt the feelings of free Churchmen. Dr. Andrew Kessen who was in charge of the Normal school, wrote later that the Bishop was "virulently opposed" to Wesleyan principles and work. The situation was grave at Kurana in 1847, when the registrars (Thombo holders) tried to oppose the Methodists using the Bishop's patronage. When Gogerly protested then Governor Torrinton categorically stated that he would not tolerate discrimination against any denomination. Disagreements came to a head with the burial ground dispute at Moratuwa in 1850. Worse still was the personal animosity shown by Rev. Cornelius Senanayake appointed to the chapliancy at Moratuwa. The new chaplain

1. "A Century in Ceylon" 1816-1916. Helen I. Root.

advised Anglicans not to allow Wesleyan services in their houses and not to attend weddings and funerals of Wesleyans.

There was a difference in attitude when Dr. P. C. Claughton succeeded Bishop Chapman in 1862. At his enthronement he preached an evangelical sermon in which he stated that "Whatever is Christian in this island we shall invite with us; whatever is heathen we shall invite to us." So free was his friendliness that Spence Hardy remarked, "I suppose that never before did a real bishop fraternize with non-conformists to the same extent." Bishop Claughton even asked to preach in Wesleyan chapels, this was truly a new era in the ecclesiastical history of Ceylon. But this was frowned upon by the High Church party, and soon the Bishop began to realise that it would be difficult to effect a reunion between the two churches.

As far as the relationship between the Protestant and Roman Catholic church it must be said that it was distinctly unfriendly. John Stott wrote in 1844, "Eight Catholics have recanted during the year and are doing well. We still labour among that deluded people with a prospect of success." In 1847 Percival writes of Jaffna, "Two have renounced the errors of the papacy, and by public recantation joined the Protestant church. In the same year John Walton wrote of Trincomalee, "The distribution of copies of the sacred writings and of religious tracts during the year has been exceedingly large. A most encouraging feature in this department of labour has been the avidity with which the word of divine truth has been sought by many of the Roman Catholic population, and their disposition to search the sacred writings for themselves."

It would have been a poor witness on the part of the Christian Church to be involved in bickerings and squabbles within the Christian fold. At the same time such occasions did arise because of the privileged position the Anglican Church enjoyed. Ever since Ceylon became a separate diocese in 1845, the payment of the Bishop's stipend, and that of several chaplains was from public funds.

Furthermore, until the "central school commisson" was appointed the Anglicans held an advantageous position in educational matters from 1834-1841. The agitation for disestablishment came to a head in 1870. This was based on the impropriety of using public funds to subsidize the Christian church. There was no doubt also a not unnatural feeling of jealousy on the part of other Christians because of the special treatment given to one church in particular. Alongside the rivalry and frictions that arose from time to time cordiality and friendly feelings also varied according to the attitude of individual members of the different denominations. An interesting incident is referred to in an early church magazine,[2] which illustrates the point. An Anglican young man named Richard Peiris married a Methodist young lady, and the Bishop at that time, hearing of this, wrote to him saying how surprised and sorry he was to hear of his "wretched fall." He and his wife lived happily for many years, and he was ever afterwards called by his friendes, and delighted to call himself, "Richard Fall Peiris."

It is true that through the advent of different missions almost all the important provinces and towns in the island were confronted with the Gospel. There were many missionaries to evangelize the land. But the divided Church was in itself a stumbling block to non Christians. It was a weakness to which the non-Christian always referred. Together with this there developed the unhealthy rivalry between the different missions, and particularly noticeable in the educational field. Teachers from one mission school were drawn away to another Chrstian school of a different denomination by the prospect of some material gain.

Right from the inception of the missionary enterprise in 1812, schools were established and were looked upon as agencies for evangelism. After more than 75 years of missionary activity a report of the Methodist Mission in Ceylon in 1890 said:

2. See "The Ceylon Friend" – 1881.

"To those who look beyond the present and see the Church of the future, there is in this great crowd of school children in Ceylon the promise, not only of a large Church, when the seed sown is touched into life by the Spirit of God, but also that of an instructed church with its trained and disciplined youth ready to enter the ranks of an indigenous ministry when it shall please God to call them."

May it not be that this hope would have been realized to a much greater degree than it had been in the succeeeding 75 years, if the denominations had acted unitedly instead of competing with one another?

Until 1902 the different churches had their own programme of activity and there was hardly any idea of comity and co-operation. There was however an organization known as the "Christian Alliance", with the Rev. J. A. Spear as its first President. This group met for fellowship and prayer and exchange of views. In 1902 there was gathered in Madras a Decennial Conference, and 250 delegates from over 50 different Missionary Societies met to discuss the Problem of Mission Comity. The Bishop of Madras presided at this Conference and wisely and ably steered the meetings. He exhorted the delegates to work together and reminded them that the principles of division of labour and comity should prevent any society from entering upon work in areas which were effectively occupied by another society. The Rev. A. E. Dibben of the Church Missionary Society was appointed to bring the subject before the various Protestant Missions in Ceylon.

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 was the great occasion which gave the impetus towards the reunion of Churches. There was a greater interest among the laity to work towards a more effective unifying of the separate churches, The visit of Dr. John R. Mott to Colombo in 1912 not only brought zest and enthusiasm for closer cooperation among the churches but also led to the formation of the National Christian Council of Ceylon.

More practical steps began to take shape in the founding of the Ceylon Training Colony in 1914 by the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches. Then there were preliminary discussions and papers were read by the Bishop of Colombo and the Rev. A. E. Restarick on Church Union.

At the Wesleyan Synod of 1920 a statement on comity among Missions was adopted. Some of the mattters dealt with were arbitration and conciliation, territorial arrangements, transfer of mission agents, relation of any one church to the members of other churches, Baptism and admission to Church membership. It was in this same year the Church in Ceylon examined the statement issued by the Lambeth Conference under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The central theme of the discussions was the "Broken Fellowship of Christendom". Immediately following this was the important statement issued by the Chairman of the South Ceylon District Synod, the Rev. A. E. Restarick. In referring to the organic and visible unity of the Church, he pointed to the difficulties that Methodists would have to face in accepting the kind of Union proposed where episcopal ordination would be obligatory and to the implications of the directions concerning inter-communion. Ever since this period, the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" was annually observed in Christendom.

One of the most eventful features in the life of the Church in Ceylon was the erecting of a chapel in the Peradeniya Traininig Colony. It was eventful in that there were two conditions laid down in this project.[3] One was that the Bishop of Colombo cooperate with the Chairman of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the opening ceremony, and the other was that the chapel be not "consecrated." In September 1924, the Rev. A. S. Beaty for the W. M. M. S. and the Rev. A. G. Fraser for the C. M. S. together declared the foundation stone to be "well and truly laid." The Rev. G. Basil Jackson, who was Principal of this institution from 1930-1941 described the Chapel thus:

3. See P 371. A History of the Methodist Church in Ceylon (1814–1964)

"Departing from all conventions of ecclesiastical architecture, and taking as our model the best of the magnificient heritage of art and architecture of the old Kandyan kindgdom, we have designed a chapel which is at once adapted to the climate of the country and to the conception of beauty of those who will use it." An effort was also made to make use of forms of worship that were natural to Ceylon, for example services to be held in connection with the sowing and harvesting of the paddy."

The situation was slighty different in the North. It wras translation work on the early versions of the Tamil Bible that brought the Churches together in Jaffna during the second half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the century the Jaffna Bible Society held on an average about 12 meetings a year during the moonlight seasons from April to August, called Union Meetings, and held in the field of each denomination. There were also three day conventions since 1891, and these are carried on right up to the present day. In the Old Dutch Church in the Fort, it is said, "the people went begging for seats, the organ loft was not empty, and we noticed that two or three in the high pulpit were surveying the audience with magisterial air."[3] These conventions brought into Christian fellowship many of different churches and gave the character of visible unity

It was out of the Jaffna Bible Society that the Jaffna Christian Union was founded in November 1907. Bishop Kulendran in his History of the Jaffna Christian Union (1957) says: "The fact cannot be denied that the Convention has provided an annual opportunity for Christians of all denominations, from all parts of Jaffna, to come together and derive common inspiration from these meetings."

Reviewing the period 1915-1921, the Rev. J. A. Barker writes:[4] "United effort is expressing itself in the activities

3. See the Ceylon Friend 1891.
4. See the North Ceylon District Report (1921) of the Methodist Church.

of the Jaffna Christian Union", and goes on too tell of evangelistic work in the Vannarponnai district of aggressive Hinduism.

A notable event in 1922 was the Union of Teachers Training for women. The first United Christian Women's Teacher Training was begun at Vembadi, where Miss. M. Murgatroyd continued to be in charge of training until 1927, when in accordance with the arrangement that each mission should in turn "house" the Training School, it was moved to Kopay under Miss M. Hutchins, the C. M. S. Missionary. In 1930 the Training School was transferred to Uduvil under Miss L. Clark of the American Mission.

From 1940 until the present time the Protestant churches had realized more than ever before that their objectives were the same. They knew that were confronted with a task far too great for any of them alone, and turned their thought to the possibility of organic union. The very fact that many leaders of the Church were closely linked with the Student Christian Movement both in the U. K. and in Ceylon in their University and College days made it easier for their cooperation and striving towards a united Church. This was true of Robert Stopford (Former Bishop of London, and one time Principal of Trinity College, Kandy), Graham Campbell (former Bishop of Colombo), Basil Jackson, Robert Nelson, John Timmins, S. K. Bunker, Lakdasa de Mel (former Metropolitan of India) Bishop Harold de Soysa, Bishop S. Kulendran, Rev. Fred de Silva, Rev. Dr. W. G. Wickremesinghe, Rev. D. T. Niles, Rev. Celestine Fernando, Bishop Cyril Abeynaike, Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe and many others. In this respect the World Student Christian Federation has done the Church in Ceylon an incalculable service in helping the leaders of the different churches to understand and respect each others views and traditions.

The United Theological College at Bangalore is another of those ventures in inter-church relations. Here ordinands from different traditions are trained for the work of the

Ministry of the Church. This College was begun in 1910 in South India. But in 1963 the Theological College of Lanka was founded at Pilimatalawa, where the joint training of Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists is undertaken. The attempt here is to build together a fellowship that will continue when these candidates go out to take up their work as ministers of the Gospel.

The initial move towards Church Union was taken in 1934 when Church leaders met at Trinity College, Kandy, to discuss the problems relating to this subject. There was then formed a Society in Ceylon called the "Friends of Reunion." It was, however, in 1940 at the South Ceylon District Synod that the Rev. G. Basil Jackson proposed: "The Synod of the South Ceylon District requests the Provincial Synod to issue an invitation in the name of the Methodist Church in Ceylon, addressed to the Churches named below, asking them to appoint representatives to a joint committee whose terms of reference should be "to discuss and report upon the possibility of forming a scheme of Reunion for the Christian churches of Ceylon."

The Churches to whom the invitation was sent were the Church of Ceylon, the Presbyterian Churches, the Baptist Church and the South India United Church. With the acceptance of the invitation by the Churches, there was set up in November 1940 the Joint Committee on Church Union. The Dutch Reformed Church, however, which was one of the Churches in the Presbytery of Ceylon, withdrew from the Negotiating Commitee in 1952. And the Jaffna Council of Negotiating Churches is today the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India. It has been demarcated as a separate Diocese of the Church of South India so that it is able to remain in the Ceylon negotiations.

The history of the Union Scheme for the Church of Lanka has been a long one. But some of the characteristic features of the scheme may be outlined as follows:

(1) The uniting Churches acknowledge one another's ministries to be real ministries of the word and sacraments, and confidently expect that these ministries hitherto separate will, when united, be used for yet fuller manifestation of God's power and glory.

(2) The uniting Churches hold the Faith which the church has ever held in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, in whom men are saved by grace through faith.

(3) The uniting Churches receive and accept the Holy Scriptures as containing all things necessary to Salvation, and as the standard of faith.

(4) Forms of worship which before the Union were generally accepted and used in any of the uniting Churches shall not be forbidden in the Church of Lanka.

(5) The Uniting Churches believe that, while the operations of divine grace cannot be limited, the two sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord were ordained by Christ Himself as means of Grace by which we are united to God and through which God works in us.

(6) The uniting Churches recognise that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational elements all have their place in the order of life of the Church of Lanka, and that the episcopate, the presbyterate, the diaconate and the congregation of the faithful should all, in accordance with their several functions, have responsibility and exercise authority in the life and work of the Church, in its governance and administration and in its evangelistic and pastoral work, in its discipleship and in its worship.

(7) With respect to the initial ministry of the Church of Lanka the uniting Churches desire the unification of the ministries of the uniting Churches at the inauguration of Union.

The scheme of Church Union in Ceylon has been succestsively considered and revised. It was first printed in 1949. Then the second revised edition came out in 1953. The hird revised edition was published in 1955. And

finally the third revised edition, amended, came out in 1964. And at every stage there was always room for discussion, comments and amendments. At that stage the Negotiating Committee sent down the scheme to the various churches for voting and approval.

The scheme was still open for comments, but that in no way was to be an obstacle to the decisive vote. Any comments or amendments suggested were to be considered only after Union. From 1966 onwards the Churches had to educate the people and enlighten them on the scheme itself. It was an uphill task and tension was mounting. There were those who were die hards and wanted no change from tradition. There were others who were for Church Union but not for this scheme (especially certain aspects). In spite of the mounting opposition from a vociferous minority by the latter part of of 1971, all Churches had voted in favour of the Church Union Scheme. Then at a meeting of the Negotiating Committee for Church Union held at the Methodist Headquarters in Kollupitiya on 17th. November, 1971, a Time Table was proposed by Bishop Wickremasinghe seconded by Bishop Ambalavanar that the following dates be accepted as a schedule for guidance :

(1) Advent Sunday, 1972, for the inauguration of the Church of Lanka ;

The Sub-committees appointed were :

(*a*) Legal question—Bill before Parliament
(*b*) Financial Structure
(*c*) Institutions within the Church
(*d*) Missionaries, their recruitment, Pastoral care
(*e*) Publicity and Prayer sheets
(*f*) Relation with dissenting members of negotiating churches
(*g*) Functional Committees on Religious education ; Theological training, lay training, social issues, liturgy, Youth work, Women's work etc.

(2) Sub-commitees to report by the end of May 1972.

(3) The electoral body to meet by the end of June 1972.

(4) The inaugural committee to meet at the beginning of August 1972.

It was at this stage that 3 members of the Church of Ceylon challenged in a court of law the vote on Church Union taken at the 86th Annual Sessions of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Colombo on the 27th, 28th and 29th October 1971. The voting was as follows:—55 voting for the resolution, 11 against, and 3 abstaining out of 69 members of the clergy who were present. It was pointed out that there were 90 members of the clergy in all. The plaintiffs by their averments in the plaint, took up the position that the voting did not reflect that the consent of two thirds of the entire order of the clergy had been obtained for the acceptance and approval of this Resolution.

The case was heard by a Muslim judge, I. M. Ismail, and an Interim Injunction was issued on 5/7/72 "restraining the Bishop of Colombo and the Council from acting upon the said Resolution and from holding the special session for the purpose of submitting a Bill, or of approving the submission of a Bill to Parliament, for the establisment of a new Church of Sri Lanka, and from representing to Parliament that the governing body of the Church of Ceylon had consented to the establishment of the Church of Sri Lanka".

Nearly two years passed by before the case against the Bishop of Colombo was inquired into again, restraining him and six others from taking any action upon the basis of the resolution on Church Union. This time the case was heard by Mr. K. C. E. de Alwis the District Judge of Colombo on the 20th June, 1974.

The Judge in the course of his judgment having dealt with the averments contained in the plaint and answer said:—"The pivotal question is whether the resolution passed at the 86th annual session of the Diocesan Council constitutes an act of altering a CONSTITUTION, which alteration seemed to be assailable unless done with the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of Colombo and two thirds of the whole order of the

clergy and two thirds of the whole order of the lay representatives. I have underlined the word "constitution" because the meaning of that word is a matter of controversy."

The Judge in clarifying the meaning further, said: "It seems to me that Section 29 (1) (d) of the Ceylon constitution (order-in-Council) has been drafted on an assumption that the wording in Sec. 8 has a meaning which it seems to me is the true meaning.

I therefore hold that **constitution** in Section 8 means the body of rules passed by the Dioccsan Council, and not the composition of a Synod, Assemblies, or Conventions, which may, however, itself be a topic in the Constitution. Therefore if this Constitution were to be altered according to Section 8, it is imperative that it be done at a Synod, Assemblies, or conventions, where the consent of the Bishop, two thirds of the order of clergies and two thirds of the order of the lay representatives has been obtained."

"The Council which passed the resolution resolved to enter into the Union on the basis of a scheme. The identity of the Church of England was preserved when the Church of Ceylon received statutory recognition by Act No. 6 of 1972 by the use of the words "be deemed to be a continuation in Section 4."

According to the "Scheme of Church Union" (as amended in 1963) it is recorded that when the uniting Churches have expressed their decision to come together the Church of Lanka will emerge and be recognized as the legal continuation of the Uniting Churches by which it is formed, and in it will vest on proper legal instrument being executed, the right, title claim, estate and interest privileges and obligations of each of the Uniting Churches.

"When a successor succeeds a predecessor there is inherent in the change an alteration. When the church of Ceylon comes together with others there emerges the Church of Lanka the Constitution of which must necessarily be different from the constitution of the Church of Ceylon, which since 1972 is identical with and is the legal continuation of the

Church of England by reason of the perservation of the identicalness in Section 4 of Act No. 6 of 1972."

"The legal sub-committee of the negotiating committee approved a draft bill which states that: "The Church of Sri Lanka shall be deemed to be a continuation of and identical with each of the Uniting Churches." This shows that these drafts men have been mindful that in the very act of Union the existing churches may loose their identity and have thereby tried to preserve it."

In giving his judgment the Judge, Mr. De Alwis cited the Law Times 718 (case 20 in 1869) and referred to an order restraining the Directors of a Company from continuing to promote a Bill in Parliament was sought to be set aside, and the Judge in that instance, Lord Justice Gilford, said:

"My view is that it is the duty of the Court simply to hold its hand, not to interfere in favour of one or the other; not to express any opinion as to the propriety of this bill or any clause in it."

"The above dicta of His Lordship are apt in this case. Even if an amendment to the constitution is imminent it seems that in this case a minority of a religious community seeking to frustrate the ecclesiastic objectives of the majority, depends on the very right they share in common with the majority to frustrate the design of the majority."

"It would be a case of one man's food being another man's poison. If the court gave a declaration on the first point of the prayer not to speak of the second part, the majority would be without a remedy if they could not take up the matter to parliament. This would amount to a travesty of justice. If the defendants were to go to Parliament with regard to the dispute in the instant case, the question is of such public importance, that it is the best thing that could happen."

"For the several reasons set out above, I do not think that this a suitable case to grant a declaration restraining the plaintiffs action with costs. Enter decree accordingly."

The Judgment was given on June 20, 1974, and the 89th Session of the Diocesan Council has passed by but Church Union is still not a reality. The sin of division still persists, and "May they be one" is still the prayer of the Christian Community in Sri Lanka.

Postscript

Since writing this chapter and while the Manuscript was being prepared for the Printers, further developments have taken place.

A special session of the Diocesan Council of the Church of Ceylon was held on July 10th 1975 to vote on the Church of Sri Lanka Consequential Provisions Act, that is to be presented to the National State Assembly.

The Vote on the proposed Bill to implement Church Union which required a simple majority has now obtained a substantial majority.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORK AMONGST GIRLS AND THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

When the first missionaries began their work one of the greatest obstacles in the way of their progress was the caste problem. But once they set their minds on the task ahead of them, they found that they were able to face the situation bravely. Greatly encouraged by the success of their work among the boys they now decided to start educational work among girls. The American Missionaries were the pioneers in this field.

These missionaries desired that every boy and girl in the land should be able to read and write, just as it was unthinkable that their own children in America in 1820 should grow up as illiterates. But it was here that they were going to be confronted with some of the most difficult situations.

The idea prevailed, according to an early mission report, that for a woman, learning to read and write spoiled her modesty, endangered her chastity and rendered her insubordinate to the other sex. Little girls when first brought into the schools could hardly overcome their sense of shame so as to go on with their studies. [1]

Those who gave up their daughters for instruction were subjected to no small degree of reproach and ridicule for this departure from national immemorial usage. [2] Not only were the people generally averse to the education of girls, but the adult women themselves would have it so.

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1. J. E. Tennent - Christianity in Ceylon p. 157
2. Brief sketch of the American Ceylon Mission (ACM Press 1849)

"What have I to do with learning?" Of what importance will a knowledge of letters be to my daughter? It will only degrade her. It is inconsistent for a woman to learn. It is not our custom".[3]

These were some of the remarks made when missionaries pleaded with them for the education of their daughters. In spite of these prejudices the work was started. There was an early conviction that no progress could be made unless women of the island were educated. The women played so great a part in the training of their children, that if they were allowed to continue to live a life of ignorance and slovenly habits that would necessarily have its repercussions on the children.

Christian David, a Tamil pupil of Schwartz, the celebrated missionary of Travancore, once said that the conversion of one woman is of more importance than that of six men. Similarly, the C.M.S. Report for 1848 stated: "It has been calculated from experience and observation, by some of the oldest missionaries in the province, that the training of one female is on the whole, equivalent in value to that of five boys; and we think the future years will prove the correctness and the truth of this remark."

It was realised early that the girls of the island ought to be given the same opportunities as the boys were then having. Notwithstanding the severe opposition to female education, unceasing efforts were made to attract girls to the schools. In the early years it was possible to have access only to the children of low caste. But in 1850, Tennent says, many of the pupils and candidates were from most respectable families, and daughters of persons of property and influence in the district. [4]

It was quite clear that the chief aim in educating them was to convert them from the worship of the Hindu deities to the worship of the true God. Thus conversion was to be both of the heart and of the mind through education.

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3. Missionary Register 1820 pp. 110, 142
4. Tennent – Christianity in Ceylon p. 160, 161

The work progressed slowly and little groups of girls had to be collected together and special instruction was given them. House to house visitation had to be made in order to advise parents to send their children to the classes. So great was the difficulty in persuading the mothers to send their girls that some of them had to be bribed in one way or another. Tempting offers of cloth were promised to the girls. It is even mentioned that "at all stations in the first years, a small gold necklace was given to each girl who could read fluently the New Testament in Tamil." [5]

But this method of enticing children was not continued for long. The girls were taught to sew their own jackets in addition to reading and writing. This in itself was a very great attraction and more scholars were coming in daily. It was at this stage that regular schools were started. These schools were originally conducted by wives of missionaries, and later as the numbers increased regular teachers were appointed to run the schools. In these schools along with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and the principles of the Christian religion, all the ordinary branches of female education were communicated both in Tamil and in English; and combined with this intellectual culture, the girls were carefully trained conformably to the usages of their country in all the disciplines and acquirement essential to economy and domestic enjoyments at home. [6]

The school organised by the American Mission began in 1824, and very soon after that the Church Missionary Society, the Baptists and the Methodists began their work among the girls of the island. Special mention must be made about the boarding school for Sinhalese girls at Mattakuliya, which was opened by the Baptists in 1846. This was run by the wives of the missionaries for the first fifty years of its existence. It was a free school and was supported for many years by public subscription and the sale of the girls' needlework. The main feature of this institution was that it was an Anglo-vernacular school till 1932, bilingual till 1948, and is now following the policy of the State.

5. Tennent – op. cit. pp. 156, 157
6. Missionary Register 1882, p. 123

As in the case of the work among the boys, it was realised that all the efforts of the missionaries in the schools were of no avail unless the home influence also was in keeping with Christian tradition. The children were taught the faith, and the Christian way of life in the schools, but in the homes they lived according to their old customs and manners. The need for boarding schools was felt greatly, and soon the missions were planning such institutions. There were of course numerous difficulties. The parents were unwilling to let their children "lose caste" by allowing them to partake of meals provided in the mission schools. In several schools there were separate kitchens apart from the main buildings of the school, and there the children were allowed to cook their own food and eat it according to their custom. This was indeed a good practice because the girls soon learnt to be efficient housewives as well.

The girls in many of these boarding schools were given a free education, and were maintained by generous benefactors from the Churches abroad. A novel feature arose out of this practice. Each of the girls was named after the person who was responsible for her support. Thus it was common for a girl whose name was Annamah to be renamed Anne Payson or Mary Walton after her benefactress. [7]

It is interesting to note that at the proceedings of the fifth annual meeting of the Church Missionaries in Ceylon, held at Cotta, on the 24th October, 1823, it was resolved:

"That in the Sinhalese parts of the island, there are difficulties in giving the children the names sent out by the Committees, though they can be sufficiently distinguished to be individually pointed out as receiving the benefit intended for them by their respective benefactors." [8]

The early missionaries adopted the custom partly from the desire that each girl might have a sponsor who would be interested in her spiritual growth, and so pray for her conversion. It has also been suggested that when the missionaries found it

7. Tennent – op. cit. p. 179
8. See Iournal c. CE/M. 2. 1823 – 27.

very difficult to pronounce the names of village girls, they got over the difficulty in this manner.

In later times, at Baptism a Hindu or a Buddhist convert was also compelled to forsake the name that was given him or her at birth and adopt a Christian name. This practice is now being discontinued and converts continue to be known by their names which they received at birth.

Two of the greatest missionaries who promoted the work among the girls were Messrs. Percival and Kilner. Percival was a scholar of marked distinction, and it was said of him that,

"He was the greatest Tamil scholar Methodism has ever had. He translated the whole Bible into Tamil, and his version of Church offices is still being used in Jaffna. He opened the Central School in Jaffna and for some years there existed a form of co-education in that school, the majority of pupils being boys. John Kilner was another missionary with conspicuous gifts, a commanding personality and above all a strategist. He recognized that schools were evengelistic centres of the highest value, and schools for girls especially seemed to him to be of major importance. Kilner inaugurated an elaborate scheme for the Tamil district and he was responsible for establishing twenty schools for girls in the Northern and Eastern provinces." [9]

There was remarkable success achieved in the work among the girls of the North. In his report for 1848, the Rev. J. T. Johnson said that the female seminary at Nallore was the most hopeful and important branch of education, because it prepared mothers for the rising generation. It has been calculated from experience and observation by some of the oldest missionaries in the province that close attention had to be paid to the work of training girls in order to build a new nation for the future. Similar progress was made in the South, under the guidance of missionaries like the Rev. A. Armour (Anglican), the Rev. J.

9. Findlay and Holdworth – W.M.M.S. (History Vol. V) dp. 42, 43

Chater (Baptist) and the Rev. B. Clough (Methodist). By 1828 there were sixty five such schools and the work progressed steadily. There was also another missionary, the Rev. Andrew Kessen, who was employed by the government to organise what was known as the native Normal Institution. He was described as a student in the morning, a school master in the forenoon, a pastor moving from hut to hut in the afternoon, a preacher in the evening and a tutor at night. Such was the ardent enthusiasm of these men, and because of their unshakeable faith they were able to do great things.

While the missions were spending their money and energy upon the work amongst girls, the government was unable to take over any serious responsibility in this direction. [10] For one thing the government could not find teachers for the staff of girls' schools, nor was it going to force education on a section of the community who rejected it outright. Further, the missionaries were able to persuade parents to send their daughters to school, but the government had neither the power nor ability to win the parents over by persuasion and reason.

However, it was only in 1841 that the government was able to make a start in this direction, and that only with the co-operation of the missionaries. In that year a "superior school for girls" was founded in Galle by the Ladies Society for Female Education in the East. Miss Douglas was sent to take charge of the school at Galle, while Miss Twiddy was appointed to a similar school in Jaffna. An important feature of these two schools was that, though they were not organised on the same basis as the mission schools, yet they were directly under the influence of the missionaries. [11]

In 1828 Sir Richard Ottley, the chief Justice of Ceylon, in an address delivered at a meeting of the Auxiliary Missionary Society, referred to the progress of education, especially in the schools conducted by Christians of different denominations. He said that :—

10. See C. O. 57, 95. (P. 78D) 1885
11. Findlay and Holdseorth – W.M.M.S. (Vol. V) ch. 2

"In Ceylon about 9,000 children are now receiving instruction in the doctrines of Christianity; and many of them are making progress in different parts of general education."

One of the important centres in the Colombo area where a large girls' school was established was at Cotta. Along with the boys school it progressed steadily under the guidance of the Rev. J. F. Haslam and Miss Bailey." [12]

By 1858 in every important town girls schools sprang up and it was found that these schools proved to be the most fruitful part of the mission garden. The schools were well staffed and they had help by way of personnel from the Ladies' Society for Female Education in London. [13] These missionaries were trained at the Normal Training College, Westminster.

While the usefulness of these institutions in the towns should not be underestimated in any way nevertheless, it must be said that there was far too much concentration in the urban areas and self centred interest on the part of the missions. Often the missions even overlapped in their educational ventures. It was so noticeable a feature that, after more than a century of missionary activity in Ceylon, the Survey Commission [14] of 1942 reported that there were in the island no less than 9,800 villages entirely without Christians and a further 780 villages with only one.

One of the sad episodes in the history of the schools at this juncture was the ravages of cholera which broke out in 1866 and thousands of children in these schools died. At that time of the epidemic the churches played their part in assisting the relief work of the government amidst the dying children.

When the grant system was established by 1871, the Girls' schools also availed themselves of the assistance offered by the government and opened themselves for inspection. [15] The grant

12. Proceedings of the C.M.S. 1840
13. W.M.M.S. Report of 1858
14. This was a Commission invited to report on the work of the Methodist Church in Ceylon. It was presided over by the Rev. Frank Whittaker (Former Bishop in Medak in the C. S. I.)
15. cf. "At the foot of the Vembu Tree", p. 27

was calculated on the "payment by result" basis. Proficiency was measured by means of an educational test and a cash value was attached to proficiency in each subject. This system of grants payment was open to abuse. In order that the schools might obtain higher grants the backward children were requested to keep away from school on the day of inspection, so that the percentage of passes should not be lowered by the certain failures. But this system of "payment by results" was changed in 1925. The basis of the new system in 1925 was average attendance. The general state of affairs in the mission schools for girls in the island can be gauged from a government pamphlet dealing with "Education 1870—1900." It says :

"Regarding the education of girls in the seventies, the outstanding difficulties were that parents hesitated about educating their daughters and that few women with the requisite ability could be persuaded to undertake a school far from home. The prejudice aganst girls' schools was however now dying. Monitors partly met the difficulty of obtaining teachers, and for a few years men assistants were also employed in girls' schools. These began to show as good results as boys schools. But still the number of girls in school remained about one-eighth the number of boys. It was felt that the missionaries were more trusted by the people in this matter and the pioneer work in female eduation was left to them."

There is also a statement found in the Wesleyan Synod Minutes of 1876. It says: "The opposition to girls' schools has almost entirely disappeared. The necessity and value of female education is now pretty generally admitted . . . One of our greatest wants is properly trained teachers and we have to look to our central boarding schools to supply this present need."

Since education among girls was now accepted as the normal thing, many began to seek admission into schools of their own accord. It also became necessary for girls schools to charge a modest fee. This fee along with the government grant introduced in 1871 helped the schools to

tide over their financial difficulties. The fees however were not too high and were within the reach of many parents. Some schools charged Rs. 10/- and Rs. 5/- per term.

In 1880 the government introduced a revised code. Mr. Bruce, who was the Director of Education, brought about changes of policy in the Girls' schools. Hitherto most girls' schools had only six standards, but now according to the revised code the work of the schools was divided into eight standards. The syllabus was also redrafted. Penalties were laid down for falsification of registers and a grant was refused in respect of children over twelve in Standard I and all over nineteen years of age. The sound educational principle envisaged in the revised code is evidenced in the syllabus. The study of the geography and history of Ceylon, for example, was introduced in the lowest classes, the history of India in standards VI and VII, and of England in standard VIII. Scripture was taught in all classes, and was one of the most essential feature in all the mission girls' schools. English was taught after the fourth standard had been passed in the vernacular.

It was between the years of 1880 and 1900 that girls' education gathered momentum and began to have a widespread and permanent influence in the country. Evidence for this is had from the report of Miss Hay, Principal of the Girls' Boarding School at Galle. She says:

"Over twenty of the old girls who have passed out during the last few years are engaged in teaching today, some in public schools and others in private ones. And perhaps one of the most significant and practical proofs of the benefits obtained by children through residence in our boarding schools is seen when we visit their homes and observe the great change for the better which is conspicuous in not a few instances." [16]

Similarly, the Director of Public Instruction in 1880, Mr. Charles Bruce, also paid a glowing tribute to the work of some of the mission schools. He says:

16. W.M.M.S. Report 1900

"The American Mission girls' schools at Udupiddy and Uduvil, the Roman Catholic Convent schools, and the Wesleyan schools at Jaffna and Point Pedro are noble institutions, and the career of the girls in after life, which is watched with affectionate interest by the managers, leaves no doubt of the beneficial and civilizing influence which they extend around them. It is always a matter of regret to me that a very few of the persons interested in education in Ceylon have an opportunity of witnessing the admirable arrangements of these schools." [17]

Thus it was that many girls were being influenced by these schools and by 1905 the official return for all Ceylon gave 12,829 girls to 52,375 boys in aided schools. In 1880 of the 883 aided schools only 4 were private schools. All the rest were denominational schools. (202 of thess were R. C. schools.) [18]

Not only were the girls given an academic training, but they were also instructed in housecraft; and the missionaries played a useful part in building Christian homes. They even encouraged the girls who were under their care to marry Christian young men who were teachers and pastors. Indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that often they arranged the marriages of their girls. So highly valued was the work of these girls schools at the beginning of this century that it was said: "If the wish be to multiply a thousand fold the number of Christian homes in the East during the next generation, we would say let a proportionate increase be made in the number of boarding schools and gather in the girls."

In course of time the Christian community in the island became a strong body and an influential one. They filled many important posts in the government and also played an active part in the life of the country. At the same time an unfortunate situation arose as a result of

17. C. O. 57 No. 82
18. C. O. 57 No. 82

the age old dowry system. There were found to be many Christian girls who were unable to enter into matrimony because they possessed no wealth or property to be given as dowries to their partners. The missions, therefore, arrested this "waste in the Teachers' workshop" by starting classes for the training of teachers. Girls who were over nineteen and had completed their school education, were now given further opportunity of pursuing their studies and they were selected as teachers to assist in the mission schools. These training schools were started at Cotta and Baddegama, Jaffna and Kandy.

While the missionaries were following this new venture, the government was planning to give a special training to fit girls for household management. [19] Under the direction of Miss Evans and Miss Gibbons, Government schools inspectresses, girls were taught habits of industry which would prove beneficial to them in their future homes. Schemes for starting domestic science classes were also prepared.

The Christian missions did not stop with the training of teachers as the final goal in girls education. They now felt that the time was most opportune to introduce higher education in their girls' schools. The most striking illustration in this direction was the Girls' High School in Colombo (now called Ladies' College) which was organized by the Church Missionary Society. The school was opened on 10th February, 1900, by Misses L. E. Nixon and E. Whitney. It was a school designed for the higher education of the daughters of the upper classes of all nationalities. The record of 1900 says: "They started with two girls and at the end of the year the two had increased to twelve, of whom three were boarders. These twelve girls represented Tamil, Sinhalese, Jewish and English homes but all speaking English with perfect ease.

Miss Nixon conducted classes on the Acts of the Apostles, Old Testament History, The Life of our Lord

19. Report of the education committee 1911 - 12

and the Church Cathecism. Miss Nixon taught the elder girls English, French, German, Latin and Mathematics. Miss Whitney took the Drawing Classes and some of the Bible classes and was also responsible for house keeping."[20]

From these small beginnings the school has grown rapidly through the past seventy five years. It would now compare very favourably with any institution of its kind in any part of the world. While more Colleges of this kind were being established in Colombo, Kandy and Galle, the older institutions were enlarging their borders by adding Collegiate departments. Buddhist Educational Societies and Hindu Boards of Education were similarly establishing institutions of higher learning and advanced studies to promote the work amongst girls and the liberation of women in society.

Some of the girls institution went a step futher in preaparing their students for the Calcutta University Entrance examinations, and later there was an influx of students pursuing their higher studies in the Indian Universities at Madras and Calcutta. When they returned to the island many served in their old schools as teachers and headmistresses.

In the North the Vembadi Institution had the proud distinction of producing the first Tamil lady Medical Officer, who graduated at Edingburgh and Dublin in 1911.[21] From the institution at Chundikuli came the first woman graduate in science, who got her London degree in 1926.

When the University College was started in Colombo in 1921 there were a conspicuously small number of women students. University Education was not popular among women at that time. But by 1st. July, 1948 the number of students in the University was estimated to be 1,612, of whom 277 were women. While the number of men increased from 1,312 in 1947 to 1,335 in 1948, the number

20. Proceedings of the C.M.S. 1900 – 01

21. At the foot of the Vembu Tree (Centenary Edition) p. 52

of women increased from 242 in 1947 to 277 in 1948, [22] and a good proportion of them were products of the mission institutions.

After twenty-five years of University Education and with the establishment of six campuses, and the possibility of a seventh to be opened soon, the number of women in the University is even greater still and girls are steadily knocking at the doors of the University. The professions are eagerly sought after by them, as they are by the women in the countries of the west.

It is also true that quite a number of the girls who have had a higher education in the University settle down to a quiet home life. This is largely due to the social customs and conventions of the people of the Island, which many believe ought to be preserved. For the average Christian girl in Ceylon education is really a means to an end. It is the business of learning how to deal with men and women in the ordinary affairs of life in a spirit of love and service. It is illustrated by the words of an old girl's message to her school at its centenary celebrations:

"There are opportunities for a woman to help suffering humanity which a man cannot easily take. As a mother she holds the balance of power for the Kimgdom of God. If the woman fails, the world fails". [23]

There are a few girls' schools today who have celebrated their centenary, whilst many more have entered their seventy-fifth and fiftieth anniversaries. These schools have helped to shape the life of the country in ways that cannot easily be described. The Rev. Robert Bond, the President of the Methodist Conference in London in 1938, in sending his greetings to the first girls' school established by the Methodist Mission in 1938 said:

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22. Administrative Report of the Director of Education for 1949
23. At the foot of the Vembu Tree p. 184

"The number of scholars in the school through these years may possibly be estimated, but what the influence has been upon the community through those whom it has trained is beyond anyone's power to compute."

During the past twenty-five years, women have been more closely interested in the political and social life of the country. The Prime Minister of our country is the first woman in the world to hold such an office in any country and this speaks well of the education imparted in our schools. There are also an array of other women who have rendered valuable service in social welfare work. These factors have made political independence a reality and women's liberation a fact indeed.

CHAPTER VII

HEARING THE CRY OF A CASTE-LINKED PEOPLE AND BREAKING DOWN CASTE DISTINCTIONS

This chapter and that which follows deals with caste and slavery pertaining to the Northern and Eastern parts of the island. And the work of the Missions in the first seventy five years of their existence presents a notable monument to the service of faithful men and women. The Church that grew after seventy five years remains a testimony to the power of the Gospel, and a strong apologetic of the Christian faith.

The Christian church in North Ceylon has grown from one of the most conservative sections of the Tamil community. Hindus in North Ceylon are harder to win because of their rancient faith and religious tradition, and their historcal background of caste observance. The views of educated men and youth may even be materially modfied by the influence of the Gospel, but the Hindus of North Ceylon as a Community have revealed the fact that they are capable of withstanding the influence of education and social neighbourliness ; caste organisations acted as a strong barrier. [1] The caste system was based on the fourfold division of Brahmins (Priestly), Kshatriyas (warriors) Vaisyas (Pastoral), Sudras (Menials).

The Rev. Phillipus de Mello, whose merit as a Tamil scholar is well known, in his "Table of Castes" gives a vivid description of the division of castes as it existed then. [2] The

1. C. M. S. MSS. C/CE/0. 20.
2. Simon Casie Chetty - The Caste, Customs, Manners and Literature of the Tamils pp. 23, 24 (1934).

Brahmins were confined only to Jaffna, and in 1836 their total scarcely exceeded a few thousands. During the period of the Dutch their ancestors were converted to the Christian faith. Hence Baldevs who was a missionary in Jaffna during the Dutch rule, states that Brahmins were men of great morality, sober, clean and industrious in their habits.[3] They believed that they were descended from Brahma; and although they bore Christian names and knew the Ten Commandments and other truths of Christianity, still retained many of their older superstitions. Though they professed to be Christians they were really Hindus by conviction and caste tradition. When religious toleration was established during the British period, these Brahmins became the priests of the Hindu Temples in Jaffna.

One of the interesting features about the caste structure in the Tamil areas of the North was that the farmers and cultivators (referred to as (Vellalas) constituted the chief caste, and amongst them there were many groups formed which were the results of occupational differentiation. For instance, there was the group known as Koviars. These were domestic servants of the Vellalas. The Nallavars were the slaves of the Vellalas and their special duty was to pluck the coconuts and to gather liquor.[4]

The Vellalas were the dominant caste and formed the bulk of the population, and even so all the members of caste were not equal. This caste structure was not only peculiar to Jaffna but applied equally to the Tamils of Batticaloa. There was a constant influx of the Tamils of Jaffna and the Vanni district into the region of Batticaloa. It was therefore natural for them to carry with them their tradition and laws, namely the Thesawalamai, to the land in which they settled down.[5] This is amply supported by the dispatches of Sir Alexander Johnstone, the Chief Justice in 1815.[6] So that the Tamils who are Hindus

3. cf. ' A Collection of Voyages and Travels" 3rd Ed. Vol. 3 ch. 17
4. H. W. Thambiah – Laws and Customs of the Tamils in Ceylon p. 59
5. ibid. p. 89
6. C. O. 54 / 123. p. 143

hold their religion with intelligence and conviction, but are strongly bound by the chain of caste. The Roman Catholics had sought to evangelize the people for over 300 years ; and it was in this context that the Protestant Missionaries launched their mission amidst Hindus strongly entrenched in the beliefs and practices of hoary tradition. The doctrine of Karma influenced both the man-in-the-street and the educated man. The problem of getting rid of Karma was urgent, not only to get out of the cycle of births and deaths but also from the tangled web of caste. This is expressed in a significant poem in Tiruvacagam :

"In the strong grasp of deeds,
I lay, hidden amid illusions shrouding gloom,
Thou binding with rare cords of virtue and of sin,
Didst clothe with outer skin, enveloping with worms and filth
worms within my nine-gated dwelling foul bewildered,
By the five senses sore deceived—
To me, mean as I was, with no good thing, Thou didst grant grace,
That I, with mind erewhile embruted—pure one! should
Become comingling love, in soul-subduing rapture melt."[7]

The Tamils of low caste believed that they suffered various hardships because in some previous lives they had done evil Karma. Indeed rarely did anyone attempt to improve their position, for it was felt that the men of low caste were only reaping the consequences of their actions in accordance with the well-ordered system of Karma. It was in such a context that Governor Mackenzie, who was a great believer in the social benefits of education, suggested to Russel in the Colonial office about the urgent need for educating the masses, [8] and the necessity of teaching all children to read in their native language before they attain the benefit of instruction in English works. The primary aim of education was religious, to convert them

7. Manikkavaccakar's Tiruvacagam, translated by C. V. Pope, Tiruvacagam p. 5
8. See C. O. 54/179 Mackenzie to Russel No. 42, 11 March 1840 also Mackenzie to the Bishop of Madras, 2 March 1840.

not only from idolatry and pagan ways but also from ignorance, superstition and caste prejudices. It was also an avenue for the transmision of Western culture. There was no attempt at this stage to consider the deeper political implications of the widening of educational opportunities for the masses. They little realized that education was going to be the panacea for social evils. The reform of education advocated by Mackenzie and ably supported by the Wesleyan Missionaries, was not only going to lead to political freedom but also going to provide a solution for the prevention of social disability. The records of the Wesleyan Mission of 1850 underlined the importance of imparting education through the English medium because it was felt that such an education was eminently fitted to weaken the strongholds of Hinduism. [9]

However, the State too had expressed its attitude to caste in the political reforms of 1883. The Colebrooke-Cameron Commission had recommended the abolition of the ancient system of forced labour. Such labour was conscripted on the basis of caste. The abolition of compulsory labour to the Crown through these reforms was the most effective blow against the caste system during this period. In 1843, when the government introduced further reforms in the jury system, [10] caste considerations which hitherto were given a place of undue importance in the administration of law, particularly on an issue relating to compulsory labour or the obligations of service tenure, were dealt another death blow. The British jury system was introduced to Ceylon by the Charter of Justice of 1810, and the Proclaimation of 23 November 1811 clearly outlined the procedure of the preparation of Jury lists. The requisite qualifications of Jurors consisted of persons "resident in their districts who by their character and condition may be deemed qualified to sit upon juries, distinguishing them into their respective classes and castes." This system was exploited by a section of the population of the upper class; and it was even possible for an

9. A/R North Ceylon Wesleyan Mission 1850, p. 15.
10. Report of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 1843 Sessions pp. 121 - 156.

accused to be tried by a jury belonging to a particular caste. However, later the whole system of caste distinctions in the selection of juries was strongly condemned. J. N. Mooyart, the acting Colonial Treasurer, expressed the attitude of the government thus: "Caste as a social distinction, is incompatible with the progress of civilization. Hereditary privileges not based on personal merits are favourable to a stationary condition of society, and preclude salutary changes and improvements. The Principle no longer is recognised; and its opposite is clearly enough admitted on all sides to be a desideration." [11]

The Government did wisely to establish a uniform judicial system for the Island for all communities and races, and equality before the law was a seeming reality. [12] Even before this charter of Justice of 1833 was introduced, it was pointed out by Sir Alexander Johnstone (9th chief Justice) in his despatches, that the Tamils in the peninsula of Jaffna had a customary code of their own called the Thesawalamai. The applicability of the Thesawalamai to the various castes of Tamils seemed to be just and equal. The despatches state, "The Thesawalamai is in general binding upon all the natives of Jaffna, either Vellalas, Chetties, Brahmins and all other castes without any disinction." [13] While law and justice demanded that Nallawas or Kovias were to be treated on equal terms with the Vellalas, yet the Vellala would not accept the man of lower caste as an equal outside the law courts. Even as recently as 1968 there was unrest among the low caste Hindus of Jaffna who were forbidden temple entry. The law is in favour of the low caste people but in practice the people of high caste prevent them from entering certain temples in Jaffna. The Ceylon Daily Mirror of March 9, 1968, reported that: "Two Brahmins named K. Thangavel Ayyar and D. Siva Subramaniam Ayyar of Thondamanaru were found guilty of obstructing a man of depressed caste named M. Ilakunan of Chettiyoor from entering the Selvasannithi Temple at Thondamanaru to worship there. They were fined Rs. 100/- each."

11. Proceedings of the Legislative Council 1843, p. 154
12. The Colebrook-Cameron Papers (Ed. G. C. Mendis) Vol. 1 Introd. pp. XLIIIff.
13. C. O. 54/123 p. 49

It is true that the ideal of equality before the law was a great step towards the speedy erosion of caste. But in actuality the law by itself could not eradicate caste distinctions, nor could high ideals motivate the Hindus who were bound by caste traditions. Slowly but steadily the missionaries were able to influence at least many of them to change their views on caste. It was more by life and example that caste barriers were broken down, and often it had to be by educating the younger generation. While the administrators and rulers regarded the natives as creatures to be governed, the Church regarded them as "Brothers for whom Christ died." The missionaries conveyed to them in their most impressionable years the truth that man is the image bearer of God. In so doing they appealed to the common humanity in man, and emancipated the children of low caste and raised the degraded ones to the high vantage ground of Christian liberty and civilization." "There was a family feeling in the school dormitories. The Principal, at the close of the working day, turned father, entered the dormitory at bedtime and chatted to boys of all castes. Often he sat with a cluster of youths around, it may be, the bed of a sick little "tamby".[14] He entered into their lives irrespective of any caste labels they carried. Love in action repeatedly witnessed by the school family evoked in them the response of love. They began to see the deepest need for the spirit of understanding and service. The gospel of the equality of fellow children penetrated into their homes and brought about the silent revolution in their lives. "Few experiences are more so satisfying than to see the moral "swerve" give place to the straight deal, to see the fear of shame, so universal in boys, so extraordinarily acute in a Tamil boy, give place to the practice of confessing a fault, to see the leaden casket deliberately chosen by the Bassanio we love. It is good to find it increasingly possible to appeal to a boy's honour and to find masters increasingly relying on this, rather than on the fear of the cane, or the cut of the tongue." [15] Good relationship and fellow feeling were inculcated not by compulsion but by a response to the outpouring of generous

14. See sketches of life and work in the North Ceylon District of the Wesleyan Mission field, 1921. p. 29

15. cf. Rev. Harold Bullough – The Tamil Boy at School. p. 27

love and devotion. Family clannishness and individualistic caste differentiations soon yielded to social sensitiveness and corporate consciousness. Through practical work and social service, the Boy Scouts who were gathered together from all strata of the community in the Northern areas, performed corporate action. By cleaning up a slummy quarter with a very ancient and fish-like smell, or relieving the distress of people at times of an epidemic or disastrous floods, not only was espirit de corps being fostered, but also the genius for team spirit and the knowledge in Jesus Christ "there is neither barbarian or Scythian, bond nor free." [16]

It is true that the statistical returns were disappointing as regards the number of converts. There was even the growing feeling amongst some of the missionaries that the work of evangelisation was being interfered with by the excessive zeal for work in schools. But this was indeed the preparatory work of leavening society wiih Christian ideals. About the middle of the century Sir Emerson Tennent, the colonial secretary of Ceylon in 1848, wrote to Dr, Rufus Anderson, secretary of the American Board, these words:

"The number of professing converts recorded by your people may be small, but at Jaffna and more especially in the vicinity of your stations, even those of your pupils and hearers who still profess to be heathen, exhibit a far advance towards Christianity in their conduct and life. Practically their ancient superstition has been shaken to its foundation, and the whole fabric will shortly totter to the ground, and give place to the simpler structure of pure and practical Christianity." [17]

The schools were found to be one of the most effective fields of operation against caste. A good proportion of the pupils who attended the schools were taught free, while others paid a modest fee. There was an interesting feature about this whole scheme. Those who were received on charity were

16. Col. 3 : 11
17. J. V. Chelliah - A century of English Education pp. 62, 63

supported by benefactors from England and America and such pupils were given names designated by the benefactors. For instance, a child by the name of Kandiah took on the designated name of Walton.[18] Very soon children in the mission schools, both Christian and non-Christian, who were charity students, were recipients of two names—the name of the father and the name of the benefactor. By 1855 the records show a whole list of children in schools with foreign names, which although it stultified the identity of the traditional caste, yet in fact created another kind of caste, especially among the Christians. The Christian community as a whole was looked upon as a separate caste by the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy. Though this was distasteful to the Hindus because they could not conceive of people of high and low caste mixing freely together in the churches and schools, yet it was a testimony to the fact of equality within the Christian community. Rev. Stott, a missionary in Batticaloa, was once forced to write thus:

"These heathens don't seem offended at the lime burners becoming Christians, but their coming to the very chapel where their Christian relations come," [19]

The Hindus were strongly of the opinion that association with members of a lower caste tended to pollute those of a higher caste. So not only did the caste Hindu object to mixing freely with those of lower caste, but he was even opposed to his relation, who had become a Christian, mingling freely with those of a lower caste group-whether the lower caste group be Christian or Hindu. But this was where the Christian Church as a whole was an effective witness to the Gospel of equality and love which was being proclaimed.

If the Boys' schools were a veritable training ground for the breaking down of caste prejudice, the Girls school was even two-fold more beneficial a place to translate into

18. cf. Tennent – Op. cit. p, 179, also see Journal C. CE/M. 2. (1823–27)
19. Wes. MSS. Cey. 1. Rev. Stott, 5 April 1842

practice the theory of brotherhood and fellowship. In both vernacular and English schools, girls of various caste groups, and even the "untouchables",[20] shared all parts of school life together, eating, drinking and playing, with no distinctions. The slightest deviation from custom in matters of caste observance often meant disobedience and brought sorrow to many parents. The task therefore was not merely to educate the girls but also the mothers in their homes. The Rev. Samuel Niles drew attention to this vital aspect of the work in a paper entiled "The imperfections of the native Church of this district. What are they?" The resolution submitted to the District meeting by the sub-committee that reported on this paper was as follows:

"That with regard to such superstitious observances as still linger among some of the members of the native Church, it is recommended that our office bearers and ministers do set before, both in public and private, the evils to which these prejudices lead, and that with the view of preventing the growth of these evils, prominence be given to those doctrines of Bible which are calculated to overthrow these superstitious notions, and that particular attention be paid to this point in the day and sabbath schools and in the catechumen classes."[21]

Christian girls were taught to respect human personality and treat an individual as one of worth. Not only at school functions but also in public life, at weddings and funerals, girls and mothers were trained to take a decided stand. Women of vision and breadth pushed forward their husbands to social progress. All encouragement was given to girls in earnest about this matter, to marry husbands equally keen about wiping out this evil. Christian young men and women set the pattern and became the leaders among a caste bound society. A century later this is being attempted on a wider scale by the state of Madras. An editorial in the "Ceylon

20. A phrase used by Mahatma Gandhi for the lowest caste was Harijans which means "children of God."

21. cf. Minutes of the Native District Meeting held at Batticaloa, June 25th 1869.

Daily News",[22] under the caption "Caste Barriers" states: "The Government of Madras deserves commendation for its decision to award gold medals to couples of different castes married in the State. Satyavani Muthu, the Welfare Minister of Madras, who is himself a so-called" untouchable" has made the announcement to newsmen at Tiruchinapalli."

The system of Dowry as practised in the Northern parts was in itself another great and crying evil. The girl with the largest dowry was ensured of an early and prosperous marriage. Very often Tamil girls of fine mind and character have been married to inferior and unworthy men, because the dowry they possessed could not attract young men who were their equal in intellect and ability. But this system also had its blessings. Young men of high caste were willing to marry girls of a lower caste for the sake of the wealth and dowry the girls possessed. This was another method by which caste barriers were removed and it is so even now. Money and dowry appears to be an effective solvent of the caste system. But the Church in the North District was deeply concerned about this social evil (the dowry system). The ministers resolved that "so far as we ourselves are concerned, we will discountenance the practice in our own families, and use every means in our power to remove this baneful evil from our Church."[23] During the latter part of the 19th century the Methodist ministry tried very hard to devise ways and means of preventing this evil from spreading. The records of minutes of the meetings held in the eighteen seventies clearly show that the problem of caste and dowry were a grave hindrance to the progress and growth of the church. A desperate attempt was made to rid the Church of such evils. Some of the local ministers who strove hard towards this end were men like Reverends R. N. Setukavalar, D. P. Niles, and Joseph Benjamin. In 1872 Joseph Benjamin, who was not only a scholar but one who had studied the social issues of the day, read a paper before the North District Native Ministers Meeting. It was entitled

22. The Ceylon Daily News, Sat. July 20th, 1968
23. See N.C.D. minutes 1869 p. 25

"Mixed Marriages,[24] their history, the evils." This was not merely thought provoking and inspiring, it was also acclaimed to be a very useful contribution for the upbuilding of the life of the Tamil community and the church. The meeting unanimously resolved that this paper be printed and widely circulated.[25]

So systematic and thorough was the attempt to obliterate the evils of caste and dowry, that when the North Ceylon Wesleyan Collegiate Department was established, it was clearly and openly stated that the objects of this institution were:

(1) To secure a sound and advanced Christian education for the children of our churches and thereby obviate the risks of our people sending their children to scholastic establishments not favourable to Methodism.

(2) To lay hold of the mind of the heathen youth and lodge lasting and saving impression therein.[26]

That was not all; every student on admission had faithfully to promise that they would discountenance the practice of demanding a dowry as a condition of marrige, and also discountenance the practice of cross-cousin marriages. This was definitely a step to prevent a Christian from marrying a Hindu. However, some tried to enter into such an alliance on the clever pretext that they were breaking down caste barriers by marrying one of lower caste. In reality it was not so; it was the dowry that became the attraction, and in seeking that they forsook their faith and also violated their caste principles. While there were always the black sheep in any community, yet it must be stated that the Christian church was able to induce youth to see their country's deepest need, and they were able to claim the noblest for Christ and Ceylon. Harold Bullough[27] writing about the Tamil boy at school, states that a large proportion of the Tamil ministry came out from the Collegiate institution

24. Mixed marriages meant Hindu-Christian marriages. Such marriages were often entered into for the sake of higher dowries.
25. See N.C.D. minutes, June 14, 1872.
26. cf. also J. V. Chelliah – A century of English Education p. 92.
27. Harold Bullough was principal of the Jaffna Central College.

in Jaffna, and they became the leaders of the Tamil community, fostering a family life devoid of caste prejudices

From 1860, when the work of pioneering and experiment gathered momentum, the Christian Missions continued and were engaged till 1920 in the less spectacular but more important task of building a living church. The church had to be purged of superstition and prejudice and be nurtured in indigenuous life and culture, and be rooted in Jesus Christ Himself.

The need for trained women workers was an urgent necessity, for they were the people who had easy access to the Tamil home and to women, and they could be instrumental in breaking down the barriers of tradition and caste.[28] But in the face of the customs of Tamil Society and of the Northern country, to get young unmarried Tamil women to offer for work as Bible women, deaconesses, nurses, was indeed an insuperable difficulty, but to get girls to be trained as teachers within the sheltering walls of a Boarding school was not impossible. When girls who were inspired by the life and message of missionaries offered themselves for service it was no uncommon experience to find them withdrawn at the persuasion of parents and other relatives. But the bold step was taken and Training institutions were started. Women missionaries who were known and trusted by the people were chosen. At Puttur the Wesley Deaconesses took the initiative,[29] at Kalmunai it was Miss Clegg and later people like Sister Hayden who pushed the work forward.[30] Sister Hutchins of the C.M.S. later was engaged in the work of rehabilitating women who had gone astray. Ventures such as these were necessary to break down false pride and ignorance. There was also a belief that if a girl of high caste were to handle a bed-pan or a sputum mug she would be doing the work of an untouchable, and would therefore be considered an out caste of society. The thought of the nobility of the nursing profession was still unthinkable in the 1880's in Jaffna and in the Island as a whole. It was the influence of the Ameri-

28. Christian David once said "The conversion of one woman is of more importance than that of six men."
29. cf. Edmund Strutt – A missionary mosaic from Ceylon p. 131
30. See Ventures in Training p. 6, Under the Palms, 1921.

can Missionaries that helped to bring this new idea to birth. To care for the sick and infirm was indeed the heart of the Gospel and it had to be translated into practice. Soon it occured to people that in lowly service prejudice wilted and there was genuine satisfaction in being ministering angels. These workers were thus trained and equipped and sent to lonely village stations to serve the people.

It was in the village that custom and prejudice remained impregnable, but the trained workers of the Church toiled unceasingly in the service of their fellows and helped in leavening society around them.

On the men's side of the work an experiment was attempted at the Teachers' Training school at Arasadi [31] and at Nallur. Young men who had completed their Normal training and had served for a year as teachers in village schools, were brought back to Arasadi for further instruction. The important thing about this venture was that the selected trainees were an array of men of assorted caste groups. Caste distinctions were broken down amongst them; they learned to live and serve as equals in the institution. After another year of further instruction in religious knowledge, methods of evangelism and training in Sunday school work, they went out to the schools in rural areas. The schools brought children of several castes under one roof, and inspite of the traditional taboos on food [32] or water [33] there was brought about, as it were, a social revolution. The Tamils were anxious to acquire an education and thus progress in life., and so caste distinction was overlooked and they filled the portals of the schools. It was advantageous to have a man of the highest caste as the head teacher of the school. By virtue of his caste status he had the necessary influence to attract children to the school. [34] But the church did not use that handle for its own ends, because it advocated eqality of opportunity and proclaimed the Gospel of love. Moreover, the insistence of the

31. Ibid. p. 6
32. Tennent – Christianity in Ceylon, pp. 145-47
A brief sketch of the American Mission in Ceylon pp. 10 – 11
33. Students of high caste objected to the use of common wells which had to be shared with boys of other castes.
34. Tennent – Ceylon II p. 157ff. Christianity in Ceylon pp. 330ff.

missionaries on equality corresponded with, and indeed supplemented the principle laid down by the law of the State itself. The ideal of equality before the law was actually worked out in practice by these new ventures in training and adopted by the Church. Even more important than these ventures was the simple and effective witness of the average Christian. When high caste Hindus objected to the conversion of low caste men and women to Christianity and threatened converts, [35] men like Mudaliyar Daniel Somanadar (an eminent convert in the Eastern Province) and Christian David in Jaffna, gave the converts the support and the encouragement needed.

In almost every town there were devoted men who witnessed and encouraged others to follow Jesus Christ. In Point Pedro it was Charles Sinnatamby—the Headmaster of the Central School. In a letter to Edward Strutt he wrote: "The seed sown by you in my heart has not lain dormant; because by the help of God, I was able to bring two of my brothers and my only sister to Christ. Thank God they are all good Christian families now." [36]

It was this day to day testimony of "Christian men of caste" [37] that truly established equality within the Christian community and undermined the traditional caste pattern of the society around them. Such influence has been gathering strength through the years, so that Hindu society itself will not tolerate for much longer this miserable spectacle of man lording it over man with no more reason and with no more cause than accident of birth.

In Christian lands it is perhaps redundant to say to inquiring souls: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." [38] This sharp alternative, however, was most poignant and presented itself as a powerful challenge to a caste linked society. The example of simple farmers and

35. Wes. MSS. Ceyl. 1. R. Stott, 5 April 1842
Also A/R C.M.S. Station Nallur, 1842.
36. cf. A Missionary Mosaic from Ceylon p. 136 - E. Strutt.
37. This was a phrase used by Rev. R. Stott for Hindus of high caste who became Christians.
38. Matt. 10 : 37.

villagers as converts leaving home and family to follow Christ, amidst fear, opposition, and threats of bodily harm, was in itself the best weapon that was wielded against the barrier of caste.

While the missionaries carried out the work of evangelism through the Church and school, pulpit and press, they were ever mindful of the fact that they were first and foremost "ambassadors for Christ." Their main task was to "win souls for Christ." The education they imparted in schools was to equid boys and girls for life and to nurture them to full growth. It was not an education designed to train people for ultimate political freedom. And yet that was a by-product of the education in the schools of the missionaries. The growth to manhood in Christ and the "glorious liberty of the sons of God", [39] into which heritage the converts of a caste bound society entered, gave them a different outlook in life. The converts began to work for the liberation of their unfortunate brethren who were still steeped in the old system of thought. No one had attempted to improve the position of the outcastes in society, because it was believed that they were reaping the consequences of their past karma. If the fruits of a free society were to be enjoyed by all, and if human rights were to be guaranteed to every individual, then the social position of the Nallawar, and Pallar, and the Pariah had to be raised. They had to be freed from the thraldom of fear and this was attempted courageously by the Christian church during this period of the late 19th century.

The present labour movement and epecially Communism of the 20th century, are striving hard to break down the old system of Karma. The Communist leaders say that the depressed classes suffer simply because of man's selfish organization of society. It is not necessary to attribute to karma the evils connected with poverty and accident of birth. The Saivite Hindus however, have viewed with suspicion such attempts of communists to break down caste distinctions in North Ceylon. The recent activities of Buddhist Bhikkus said to be Communists, in the

39. Rom. 8: 21.

guise of peacemakers, who were attempting to convert Saivites to Buddhism, were viewed with grave concern and deep sorrow by the Hindus. [40]

The Hindus are now using a particular section of the customary Law of the Tamils to perpetuate caste. In protesting against Communist-Buddhist overlordship, they state:

"According to Section 4 of the Thesavalamai Law, caste diputes should be settled according to the customs and usages in the Northern Province, and we do not think that the Buddhist Bhikkus from the South are experts in the Thesavalamai Law. Any action contrary to the said provision would be an infringement of the Thesavalamai Law. [41]

The above illustration is an indication of the die hard attitude of the Hindu fanatic of the observance of caste even in an enlightened age in the 20th ceutury.

Much that was achieved during the latter part of the 19th century was no doubt due to the education imparted in the Christian schools, designed for much more than conversion to Christianity. The facts of history bear evidence of this. The increasing effort of every Christian community is to work together for good, until the day when, in short, that now odious word "toleration" would have been brought back to its primitive meaning, "the bearing of one another's burdens."

40. See Ceylon Daily Mirror, March 16, 1968.
41. cf. "Subversion by Some Monks in the North" Ceylon Daily Mirror, March 16, 1968.

CHAPTER VIII

FREEDOM FOR THE OPPRESSED SLAVE

One of the characteristic features of Christianity in the North and the East of the island during the middle of the last century was its concern for the uncared-for classes of the people. It was sensitive to the miserable conditions of the poor, and missionaries and ministers strove hard to soften the harsh conditions under which the Koviyars, Chandars, Pallas and Nallavars lived. The Home Mission stations were not only an expression of Evangelistic concern but were also the fields for social uplift work. The work at Muttur and Manchantoduwai amidst a poor and down trodden society, and at Tirukovil and Komari amidst lime burners, are indeed the evidence of social sympathies of Methodists. So was it also the concern of the missionaries of the American Mission when they launched out at Varany and Pungudutivu; and equally noble was the service rendered by the C.M.S. clergy when they laboured amidst the blind at Kaithady and rehabilitated fallen women, and unmarried mothers in the cottages set up at Killinochchi.

The little village schools[1], at Blackheath, Tambiliville, Kurumanvally, Mandoor, where there were as few as 40 and 45 children in each school, were as sacred a trust as the big institutions in Jaffna or Batticoloa. The Churches had their own financial provision for their poor members.[2] In times of special

1. See N.C.D. Minutes 1883 - under Question XX. "what is the number and state of the Day Schools?"

2. The Poor Fund was made up of the collections received at the Services of Holy Commuuion, and was distributed to the poor members of the congregation.

distress, collections were made throughout the connexion to relieve suffering. [3] The Ministers were to be found on platforms where social and benevolent movements were advocated. The great preachers like Daniel Poor Niles and Joseph Benjamin often preached on the Christians' duty to the poor and the oppressed. One of the most eloquent of Weslyan preachers, Henry de Silva of Point Pedro, preached repeatedly on the Social obligations of the Church, and one of the special duties assigned to him was attending to the "secular work of the circuit." [4]

But it would be an exaggeration to state that in this matter of social obligation the Church had fully awakened to its responsibilities. Nor was it humanly possible for the Church to wipe out the system of domestic slavery which had been bequeathed to the British Government in Ceylon from Dutch times. Very early in the British period, it was Sir Alexander Johnston who drew the attention of the mission to this vital problem of slavery. Indeed it was he who compelled the Dutch Burgher population in the island to manumit their slaves. Sir Alexander Johnston then appealed to the Church Missionary Society in particular, and to the other societies in general, to help the liberated people to make a proper use of their freedom. [5] It must be stated here that there was a distinction between slavery among the Sinhalese and slavery among the Tamils. The Sinhalese bondsmen were for the most part personal attendants, and so slavery was of the mildest from. Dr. Hayley says: "It was of the same type as household slavery in ancient Greece and Rome, not the bondage of the West Indian plantations." [6] The slaves of the Tamils were chiefly labourers on the fields; also the Thesawalamai code states that the slaves of Jaffnapatam were the recognised status of four castes; Koviyars,

3. Cholera and Famine were prevalent in the early years.
4. The work of social uplift was then considered as "secular work" (See N. C. D. Minutes 1872).
5. cf. File C.CE/E. 1. (15). Letter of Alexander Johnston dated Colombo, Sept. 20, 1816.
   The census returns of 1824 revealed that there were 15,350 slaves in the Jaffna district.
   See also – H. W. Tambiah – "The Laws and customs of the Tamils of Jaffna" – pp. 83-87.
6. Hayley – Kandyan Law, p. 133

Chandars, Pallas and Nallavars.[7] This was one of the vital differences between slavery in the Sinhalese areas and the slavery among the Tamils. In Jaffna slavery was linked up with the caste system prevalent there. Moreover, the British Government also recognised the customary laws pertaining to slavery in Jaffna, and provisions such as these were made;

"All questions that relate to those rights and privileges which subsist in the said Province between the higher castes, particularly the Koviyars, Nallavars, and Palla and the other, shall be decided according to the customs and ancient usages of the Province."[8]

However some of the officials who administered the government in Ceylon, and a few of those who directed affairs from the Colonial office in England, could not tolerate a system such as this. Enlightenment of the age and the pricked conscience of the administrators was steadily moving towards a speedy abolition of slavery. Hence it is found that between 1816 and 1844, regulation after regulation was passed with apparently little effect on the slaves in Jaffna, where the masters seldom emancipated them voluntarily. By section 7 of regulation 8 of 1821 the slaves of the Government were set free; and it states that, "Although the British Government had invariably refrained from exercising any dominion over the persons of Koviyars, Nallavars and Palla castes, yet a formal declaration of their freedom was necessary."

And section 2 of this same regulation 8 of 1821 states that masters would be paid compensation for manumitting their slaves, but no effective change took place.[9] The Colebrooke Report published in 1831 states that: "The Malabar slaves[10] have not come forward in any numbers to redeem their freedom by purchase but many children have been enfranchised under the

7. Thesawalamai Code Sect: 8 (1) The British regulations on slavery refer only to three castes, the Koviyars, Pallas and Nallavars, which means that by the middle of the Nineteenth century the Chandars were free men not slaves.
8. Ceylon Legislative Enactments Vol: 1, 1796 – 1883. p. 107.
9. Ceylon Legislative Enactments. Vol. I 1796 – 1883. p. 68.
10. Meaning the slaves of Jaffnapatam.

Regulations. These laws are objected to by the Malabar proprietors, who have complained of the compulsory manumission of these slaves; but as the gradual extinction of slavery in Ceylon may be accomplished with so little sacrifice the regulations of 1818 and 1821, with some modifications should be maintained, and their operation extended to the Kandyan provinces where personal slavery to a limited extent also prevails." [11]

James Stephen and Glenelg at the Colonial office were no mean persons to contend with. They were very anxious to rid the country of this system of slavery. Glenelg did wisely to call for a report on slavery in the island and also insisted on an estimate of the amount that would have to be paid by way of compensation to slave owners. However, he instructed Governor Mackenzie to keep silent on the question of the payment of compensation. [12] Changes took place rapidly in other parts of the island but not in Jaffna; and Anstruther's memorandum of 23 November 1840 reveals a most interesting, and at the same time a sad feature about slave owners and slaves in the Jaffna district. The appointment and the arrival of Justice Jeremie made slave owners suspect that an Emancipation Act was to be promulgated.

"Slave proprietors fancied that his appointment must have something to do with slavery and began to call in their slaves and to look to their titles on the hope that some measure of emancipation was in progress." [13] The slave owner in Jaffna tried to exploit this situation with a mercenary motive, and the attempt to traffic in human lives for monetary gain was the most unhappy feature of slavery in Jaffna. It is surprising to note that even though there was compulsory manumission of slaves, yet these slaves did not avail themselves of this privilege.

Many perhaps due to economic reasons, preferred to remain slaves. Under the Law of Thesawalamai, the master allowed the slaves to possess the properties, the slave took the produce

11. Quoted by H W. Tambiah – op. cit. p. 86.
12. C. O. 55/79 Glenelg to Mackenzie, No. 143 of 21 Nov. 1838
13. C.O. 54/203. No. 63. 17 March 1843.

from such properties, but the master had the right to resume possession in certain contigencies. [14] Hence the economic factor was the biggest impediment towards emancipation.[15]

For the most part the Nallavar and the Palla slaves were allowed to live away from their masters, but they had to perform the duties and services for the government[16] which fell upon their masters to render. In return for such services the masters had to maintain and support the slaves.[17] The masters had the right to insist on male children of the slaves, to look after his cattle, and such children had to be maintained and supported by the master. Furthermore it was also the duty of the master to provide for all expenses that may be incurred by the female slaves in giving birth to a child. [18]

It was no wonder then that the miserable poverty and, in many instances, the apathy and woeful neglect of opportunies made it impossible for slaves to set themselves free.

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14. cf. Tambiah. op. cit. p. 76.
15. ***Emancipation***. This is the only voluntary mode of freeing a slave known to the old Law of Thesawalamai. A distinction was made between masters who had no children and those who had children. The Code states: "When a man, whether married or not had no child or children and intends to emancipate a male or female slave inherited by him, he is obliged to announce his intention to the school master of the Church to which such female or male slave belongs, and to request that he will publish in the Church his intention on three successive Sundays in order that his community, especially those wishing to oppose such intention may get the notice thereof in due time and be able to institute such claims as they think they have to such slaves and should any person come forward during the time that such publication takes place both they as well as the person wishing to emancipate the slave must submit to the decision of such arbitration as they choose to appoint thereto; yet if a married man bearing no children wishes to emancipate a male or female slave appertaining to his wife's dowry he must do so with his wife's consent. And such emancipation must further take place in the manner heretofore stated with respect to a single man; but husband and wife having children may emancipate one or more slaves according to their pleasure. , When a person has a child by his own female slave, he may emancipate such children without the consent of his heirs and may also make some donation to such child out of his hereditary property."
16. Mackenzie called it "Government slavery"
17. C. O. 44/123, p. 46. also T. VIII. 5.
18. Thesawalamai VIII. 5.

However, at this juncture, about the middle of the 19th century, there were extraneous factors that indirectly influenced thought on the evils of sweated labour. Leading personalities like Charles Kingsley [19] and Frederick Denison Maurice in England, were exercising their influence through their writings, and in Industrial enterprise and in Educational work. There were also "Tracts on Christian Socialism" which began to emphasise the truth that Christians were members of a Society and it was their bounden duty to consider the need of their less fortunate brethren and the underprivileged. Charles Kingsley's "Water Babies" was a text book widely used in the Wesleyan Mission schools many years later. [20] It was exiciting; at the same time it exposed the evil of employing children as cheap labour, (as chimney sweeps). What a parallel it was! Children of Nallavas and Pallas were cowherds and grasscutters and coconut pluckers, and this was exactly what books like "Water Babies" and "Cheap Clothes and Nasty," denounced. They were a scathing criticism of the evils of sweated labour and were

19. Even before Charles Kingsley, William Blake in his poem "Songs of Experience" (Holy Thursday) drew attention to the miseries of the boy chimney-sweeper, Wordsworth too, in his poem "On Lucy Gray" and "Intimations," showed a new interest and sympathy in the child. It was in this period that Bell and Lancaster were demanding a better education for children, and the father of Peel securing an Act (1802) for their better treatment in Industry.

The Ragged School Union was started in April 1844, and Shaftesbury (Lord Ashley, as he was then) was invited to be President in November of that year. In this year appeared Mrs. Browning's "Cry of the Children."

20. The most widely read of Charles Kingsley's works among the English educated classes and in some of the mission schools, were 'Water Babies", "Cheap Clothes and Nasty" and "Alton Locke" (Charles Kingsley 1819 – 75). His hymn was an added influence.

"And hasten, Lord, that perfect day
When pain and death shall cease,
And thy just rule shall fill the earth
With health and light and peace;
When blue the sky shall gleam,
And ever green the sod,
And man's rude work deface no more
The paradise of God." (M.H.B.)

fiercely protective of the rights of the poor and the uncared for class of people. F. D. Maurice's teaching and writing on the love of God and the Kingdom of God, enabled many to derive their impetus for social activity. [21] And similarly the ministers and missionaries in Ceylon began to realize that the Church could not supinely acquiesce in the divorce of the material from the spiritual side of man's existence. The live concern for children and toiling slaves increased throughout the nineteenth century.

In "The Ceylon Friend" of 1814, p. 309, it is stated: "At the last annual meeting of the anti-slavery Society, held in Exeter Hall, London on the 17th May, it was moved by Sir George Stephen, seconded by E. N. Buxton Esq.; "That this meeting feel it to be due to the national character that the remnants of slavery, as at present existing in Ceylon, and alleged to exist in St. Helena, should be forthwith abolished, and recommended government, and the court of East India Directors' to complete the great work of Slave emancipation throughout the wide extent of the British Dominions."

It is revealing how strangly there was this intermingling of ideas at this time. [22] There seemed to be a change in attitude in some of the administrators of the Colonial office even a little earlier. James Stephen was one who was most concerned about the extinction of slavery and somehow through the various despatches received from Ceylon, he had an inkling that death to slavery in Ceylon would be a matter of time. The Ceylon Government's policy during the time of Governors Mackenzie and Wilmot Horton was to let the masters neglect the registration of their slaves. This was a matter of tactics and when the occasion arose those slaves whose names were not on the register were emancipated. This was repeatedly done and scores of slaves were freed. This is an illustration of the stricken conscience, willing to set free slaves, at the same time

21. F. D Maurice's teaching was considered so unorthodox, that he was deprived of his Chair in Divinity at King's College, London.

22. It may be that the petition sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Anti-Slavery Societies might have prompted the officials to take serious notice of the problem of slavery. See C. O. 54/193. also C. O. 54/208.

not desirous of wounding slave owners by denying them their age old privileges and rights as masters. In one of the despatches it is recorded,[23] "It used to be said by Sir W. Horton and others that slavery in Ceylon was a mere name—that the cheapness of human labour disposed everyone to become a slave owner—that the slaves were kept rather as an affair of pomp and ceremony than with a view to profit—that to register them over again would be bad policy—that it would revive dormant rights and create in the minds of the owners vague hopes of compensation which would lead to the assertion of obsolete titles—that there were praedial and personal slaves whose condition was essentially different and whose registration it might therefore be unwise to blend together in the same law, supposing any law on the subject expedient."

The repeated non-registration of slaves forfeited the rights of the masters to own them ; and since the masters preferred to lose their slaves rather than pay the fines imposed on them even at the first offence of non-registration, slavery began to fizzle out. Stephen says :

"In all countries, and at all times, the multiplication of the species and the consequent cheapness of labour have been the invariable causes of the natural extinction of slavery. On the operation of these causes in Ceylon, we have hitherto relied. But it seems that almost all the slaves have been forfeited from non-registration." [24]

Public opinion itself had begun to change, and the value of state action was gaining ground. It was felt not only by the Colonial office, but even the Ceylon Government realized that since these classes of the Community were unfairly handicapped, the state ought to intervene. Protective legislation therefore was imperative. Hitherto slavery was recognized as a "necessary evil." Regulation after regulation was formulated earlier, all within the framework of the Thesawalamai Code. [25]

23. See C, O. 54/203 No. 63 of 17 March 1843.
24. Stephen's minute of 28th Nov. 1840 on Anstruther's memorandum.
25. In 1821 the inhuman practice of maltreating and killing slave's was abolished by proclamation dated 3rd January 1821 (1833 Enactment Vol. I p, 214,

But regulation 20 of 1844[26] section (1) enacted, "that slavery shall no longer exist in the Colony, and that all persons at such a time being slaves shall thereupon become free, and entitled in every way to all the rights and privileges of free people, any other law or ordinance to the contrary now in force notwithstanding." Section (3) repealed all laws and ordinance tolerating slavery.

According to documents available at the Jaffna Kachcheri, and diaries of former Government Agents, it is quite clear that though slavery was officially declared ended by law yet the depressed classes remained as de facto slaves of their masters. As mentioned earlier, this was probably due to economic factors. Long after the ordinance of 1844 which abolished slavery, it is recorded that the Palla and Nallavar community who were slaves wanted to dispose of their dead in a manner they preferred, that is by cremation. Prior to 1844 the remains of the dead of the depressed classes were buried and not cremated. But this privilege was denied them by the high caste people. Hence the records reveal that there were clashes between the high caste people (the former masters) and the depressed class community (the former slaves) even as late as 1895, in the villages of Atchuvely and Neervely. The records also show that in Jaffna Town bodies of high caste Hindus were cremated at a crematorium known as the Villoondi grounds, and this was exclusively used by them since 1815. The depressed classes had their own burial grounds, then known as "Thookumarakadu", which was about fifty yards from the Urban Council premises (behind the present Town Hall).

Even in the Law courts there were cases of unlawful assembly brought before Judges of the Supreme Court, because high caste people prevented depressed class people (also Her Majesty's subjects) from honouring their dead, and that too by preventing a dead body being carried to the grave to the sound of the tom-tom.[27]

26. Cap 62, the abolition of slavery ordinance.

27. H. W. Tambiah. op. cit, p. 87.

His Lordship Burnside, C.J. in summing up said :

"I trust that none of the ancient rights of the Malabar inhabitants of Jaffnapatam will be jeoparadized.[28] Notwithstanding the contention and the venerable authority on which it is based, I make bold to hold that the Malabar inhabitants of the provinces of Jaffnapatam, whoever they may be, must one and all be subject to the universal proposition of law applicable to the whole colony, that the people cannot take the law into their own hands, and seek to administer it after the fashion of Judge Lynch."

To cite one more instance to prove that although slavery was abolished de jure in 1844, yet the Koviyars and Pallas and Nallavas were de facto slaves of their masters[29] because it was advantageous from the point of view of economic security. Furthermore, caste impinged in various ways on the structure of Tamil Society and slavery was so linked up with the caste system that it seemed that no amount of legislation could alter the system. What was needed was a revolution of the heart.

In 1899 Kanthappar, the plantiff, sued Kanthappan[30] and some others as his service tenants and not as tenants at will and failed to prove service. The defendant claimed the property adversely to the plantiff. The Judge held that the plantiff had failed to prove service and the defendants had prescribed to the land. In delivering judgement the Judge said :

"Since 1844 the Koviyars have not been slaves, they have become free men—in many cases they did not break the old ties —they preferred to render services and to work for the families of the former masters rather than quit the homesteads in which they and their ancestors had lived from time immemorial. Such, I think was the position of these defendant ancestors towards the family of which the plaintiff is one. It depended

28. This was a reference to the privileges and rights of masters and slaves according to the Thesawalamai Code.

29. Even today vestiges of the past remain. See "Ceylon Daily Mirror" 12/3/68. 'Opinion'.

30. See H. W. Tambiah op. cit. p. 88.

on the mutual goodwill, or on contract express or implied. The legal rights of the Koviyars as to the acquisition of land by long possession were the same as the rights of Vellalas. These rights were regulated by ordinance." [31]

It was in such a context that the missionaries and the ministers ventured to deal with the problem of slavery in the Tamil areas. It may appear that they were a bit reluctant to enter the fray and join the government on this issue. On the contrary they were wise not to make an open attack and pit themselves against age old tradition and customs. They realized that an indirect approach was preferable to a frontal attack.

Hence it is found that right from the very beginning the Church approached this problem cautiously and at the same time treated the matter with a deep sense of urgency and dire need. In a letter written to London on December 9, 1816, John Bartholomeusz (in point 8 of this letter) outlined a plan for superintending the education of the Koviyar, Nallava and Palla slaves. [32] It was also suggested that subscriptions be raised and benefactors found for the Church Missionary Society in London, for Africa and the East.

To instil in this class of people a new sense of values by teaching and training them as individuals of worth was the task of the school and Church. It was not simply a new status or a sense of respectability that was inculcated, this they acquired in any case within the Christian community.

But each individual was sought after and nurtured as a "pearl of great price." The biblical teaching and the education imparted helped them to gain a new attitude to life. They soon began to realize that they were free beings. The old shackles of tradition, superstition, caste, and servility were broken down within the fellowship of the Church, in service to one another. The influence of the Church and the impact of the Christian school on society was so great that an unfriendly critic was

31. Tamb. Rep. 77/85
32. cf. File C. CF/E. 1. (14).

forced to remark that the energy of the Tamil man was evaporated away by a knowledge of English, and that the industry of the Tamil man was paralysed by an English education. The Christian school was attacked for dislocating the various members of the social system, and it was convenient at times for many to asperse missionary principles and operations.[33] In a paper read at the "Monthly meeting" of the missionaries in Jaffna in 1870, in reply to this charge of social dislocation, "that the Tamil when educated in English is lifted out of his proper position; he ceases to be able to endure the sun, and despises his father's vocation," a missionary was compelled to make these remarks:

> "What is meant by "the proper position" of a man? Are we to understand that caste is to be anglicized, and receive the legislative sanction of the western world? The hereditary trades, professions and occupations, are to be the model of this people's 'proper place'? .... Are we to understand by 'the proper place' of a native, that he is to toddle, in unbroken generations, in the footprints of his father and grandfather? Why, this would hurl thousands of deserving men from their hard won eminence into the degradation of a drowsy cowherd,[34] or an organized scarecrow."[35]

It is impossible to overlook the influence of the Christian Church and mission schools on the life of the Tamil people during this period of its history. Looking carefully into the condition of the slave population, who were educated in these schools, one would discover, the changes of thought, feeling and action through the years. A commu-

33. See "the Friend" (a Monthly magazine of Literture and Religions in Ceylon.) 1870. p. 67.

34. This is a reference to the Koviyar slaves. Koviyar is derived from the words Ko and Idayar - which means cowherd. They were cowherds brought from various tribes in S. India during the Dutch period. (See Early Settlements in Jaffna - Sivananthan 1933 edition, Kuala Lumpur pp. 18, 19)

35. See "The Jaffna Tamil as the material on whom the Christian Churches have to work." (The Ceylon Friend 1870).

nity's life, progress, happiness and power depend on the staple of common ideas, or that community's notions. Thought governs life, changes of thought indicate the presence of forces, and those forces were at work bringing about the decay of old ideas and freeing the enslaved, clearly proving the power of God's word, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8. 32)

The time was when the Brahmin was feared more than the gods. The Palla slave would never walk ahead of his Vellala master; he would always cringe and bow before him and never look him in the face; or a Nallavar woman would never walk the streets wearing a jacket or a blouse in the manner of the wife of her master. She would cover her skin and ward off the rough weather and cold wind with a loosely wrapped cloth round her body. But a neatly cut blouse fitting her slim body was un-thinkable for a slave to adorn herself with.

Among one of the greatest changes showing the results of Christian teaching is the altered claims and position of women in Hindu Society. This is profoundly true among the depressed classes.

> "She is a new power, and often a power for good .... woman is less and less a prisoner in her home. It is clear to any ordinary mind that when she has as thorough an education as the other sex, she is not likely to be frightened by ghosts, ghouls, and hob-goblins. Common sense has a chance of rooting itself; and with the growth of common sense among the women, nine-tenths of Hindu superstition flies away." [36]

With the demolition of the servile attitude and the rescue to freedom that came through education and growth in the Christian fellowship there was born in them a daring spirit of migration to other places and countries in quest of better fortune. Even if a slave whose father was a tree climber or a cowherd or a lime burner had cast away the ancestral pattern

36. Rev. J. Kilner – Modern aspects of Local Hinduism. (The Friend — March 1872)

of life, and entered the professions, he may still be despised in society; but there was always a place for him in a bigger town, in Colombo [37] or Kandy, or abroad in Malaya or Burma.[38] This was not an escapist attitude or even the spirit of inquisitive ardour, but more than that it was venture for a name and a fortune, once the depressed state of servility was overcome and a new hope and courage and faith was born through the impact of the Gospel on Hindu children in Christian institutions.

There also grew the general conviction that it was possible for a person from the depressed classes to forsake hoary tradition and the faith of their fathers and embrace Christianity without being deemed mercenary minded.

The life and work of the missionaries had left a lasting impression on the minds of those who came into contact with them. Rev. John Kilner says, "having to confront the very palpable facts, of the superior skill and attainments of the foreigner, have superinduced a change in the temper which estimates the Christian as a man, a scholar, and a citizen. When once the first brush is past, friends and relatives fraternize with the Christian convert as much as before. Moreover there are to be found clearly defined instances of voluntary surrender of emolument and postion, for the sake of benevolent and Christian purposes." [39]

One of the most transforming ideas, notwithstanding all that the Hindu shastras said to the contrary, was that the various nations of men are really of one race, derived from a common stock. Caste and the slavish mentality underwent a radical transformation. The schoolroom, the Law Courts, the Kachcheri, and the merchants' office were daily rubbing off the acute angles of this most consummate pharisasm. The Bible

37. *Owing to the Exodus of a large number of Tamils from Jaffua to Colombo, work in Jampettah Street was begun in 1868. The Church (Wesleyan) was built in 1871.*

38. *See D. T. Niles, "Whereof we are witnesses" p. 37. "Indented labour took Tamil Christians to remote parts of Asia and Africa."*
See J. Kilner – Modern aspects of Local Hinduism. (March 1872 p. 36 The Friend).

teachings as to the common origin of man were admitted; and science, and circumstances were daily supplying illustrations and comments on those teachings. [40]

However, it must not be assumed that in this task of freeing the oppressed, it was all smooth sailing; for seldom did the people from the Tamil community come forward in large numbers professing to be Chrisians, as was the case of the mass movement in South India. But the Church never turned its back on the people; even in remote areas in the Eastern provinces, the winning of such people for Christ was more intensely desired and prayed for. This is simply evidenced by the records of the early years of the missionaries. What better proof is there than the testimony of a descendant of one of the first of the converts of the Methodist pioneers in Jaffna:

In a sermon on the text "Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were digged." (Is. 51.1). D. T. Niles says, "Here is a call to remember from where we have come. As I face this call, my mind goes back to my father's grandfather who was a Hindu lad growing up in a poor home in a little village in Ceylon. Anxious to get an education and entrust himself to someone who would look after him he walked to the nearest mission station and gave himself to the missionary who was there. On the day of his baptism a few years later he gave his witness in these words: 'I went looking for shelter and found a shell and in that shell I found a pearl."

My mind also goes back to my great grandmother, who was the eldest of six daughters. A missionary, going for a walk through the village, came one day upon a little scene—a mother

40. *See the N.C.D. Minutes of 1881. The minutes reveal the extent of the teaching methods in schools. The advance courses in science, and religion, Comparative Study of Hinduism and Christianity for the Senior classes, the production of a new Tamil Hymn Book and Lyrics to deepen faith were all achieved.*

See also "Assimilating Scientific Secular values" – Religion and Society Vol. ix, No. 1, 1962 pp 45, 46, Ram Singh says, "Neither Scientific Methodology nor electricity is respector of caste . . . The Sudra's touch does not really pollute the Brahmin; Science has destroyed that belief, partly by bringing in equality at the individual level and partly by emphasizing the sense of observation."

and her six daughters sitting round a pot of gruel. They were obviously poor. The missionary said to the mother, 'Would you like me to take your eldest daughter and look after her.' The mother consented; the girl had no choice.

As the girl followed the missionary, she prayed to her God to deliver her from the hands of the foreigner. So the story begins concerning the rock from which I was hewn and the quarry from which I was digged." [41]

The background of the captivity of the people of Ceylon was also political. They were dominated by foreign powers—the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British for over four hundred years. To be under political bondage and to serve foreign masters was bad enough. It had its own repercussions, and the subservient attitude prevailed among the people for centuries. However, with freedom and the power to rule, a nation regained its prosperity and its inherent rights. But to break away from the yoke of tradition and the chains of caste and slavery which bound our ancestors for centuries, was something that could not be achieved fully by law and compulsion or by man's effort alone. And so D. T. Niles says again:

"There is a slavery from which we were rescued. We were not merely powerless ourselves, but no one who was a man could have rescued us. The exhortations of morality, the wisdom of philosophy, the discipline of mysticism, even the practices of religion, were powerless to set us free. God stretched out His arm in mercy and found us. God became our God in Jesus Christ. . . . . This memory of a captivity from which we were delivered is what must feed our determination to accept with gladness the captivity into which we have been brought . . . . . We must either be captive to power or be captive to love. We shall have either to undertake the tasks that power sets us, or the tasks to which love beckons us. The cry for freedom will always be wedded to the responsibility for new tasks." [42]

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41. *See D. T. Niles – "The Power at work among us" Epworth Press, London p. 144.*
42. *D. T. Niles. op. cit. pp. 146, 147.*

The impact of the Church on the life of the people in the provinces of the North and East filled the villages with thoughtful God-fearing men, and their descendants stressed the importance of freedom, equality and brotherhood. Men like Joseph Benjamin,[43] Christian Perinpanayagam, James Appapillai, R. N. Setukavalar, were the stalwarts of the latter part of the nineteenth century.[44] The chief emphasis of these men was on public questions which contained an ethical issue. They attacked ignorance, superstition, social vices, and caste discrimination and intemperance. The concern for and the extent of the careful nurture of the Church and the converts is evidenced in the questions asked of the ministry regarding the members entrusted to their care. Question XXXIII of the Minutes of the North Ceylon District of 1882 is as follows:

> "Have our regulations with regard to the visitation of the heathen been attended to?"

Question XXXIV is:

> "Have our regulations with regard to the superstition of the heathen; the dowry system; the wearing of jewels and the observance of the Sabbath been observed?"

It was the oppressed class that benefited most by the unremitting pressure the missionaries and ministers brought to bear on the former masters (the high caste community) by stirring their conscience. The cry of the Church during these years between 1880 and the end of the century was, "Let us not only save people's souls, but let us sanctify their circumtances."

With the prevalence of social distinctions, and the barriers of illiteracy, ignorance, superstition and poverty, serious crime also rapidly increased during this period and the island was face to face with a critical state of affairs.[45] It seemed to many

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43. *Joseph Benjamin offered his services for missionary work in Madras in 1882. The Minutes states: "Mr. Benjamin's appointment marks a new departure in the history of this district and indicates a new stage of growth." (See Minutes of N.C.D. 1882).*

44. *See N. C. D. Minutes 1882.*

45. *See the Administrative Report of the Inpector General of Prisons for 1880.*

that compulsory education would be the panacea for all the evils of the day. Therefore persistent demands were made by a large section of the population, and the argument took some such form as "open a school and close a jail." The work of the Mission schools was indeed the permanent foundation of the structure of the Tamil community that emerged slowly to freedom.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE SERVICE OF A PRIMITIVE TRIBE

Robert Knox, who wrote in 1681,[1] after a captivity in Ceylon lasting 20 years, accurately described the primitive people in the forests of the Eastern province thus :

"Of these natives there be two sorts wild and tame. I will begin with the former. For as in these woods there are "wild beasts," so wild men also. The land of Bintan is all covered with mighty woods and filled with abundance of deer. In this land are many of these wild men. They call them Veddahs, dwelling near no other inhabitants."

These primitive people believed in the cult of their dead spirits, whom they worshipped in time of distress, which were propitiated by ritual dances. The Veddahs, the aborigines of Ceylon, feared their dead and whenever death stalked their homes they used to abandon them, and they went in quest of new cave homes. They also invoked the blessings of the Nae Yakka (spirit of the dead relative). The common spirits whom they worshipped were Nae Yakka, Gale Yakka and Dola Yakka.

R. Stott, writing about the state of the Society at Batticaloa in 1841, mentions that his register shows that 255 baptisms were from the Veddahs in Bintenna.[2] He goes on to describe the Veddahs as "a class of wild men living mostly in the rocks and mountains of the interior and chiefly subsisting on yams, honey, jungle fruit and wild animals." The Veddahs

1. R. Knox – An Historical relation of Ceylon (Ryan's Edition 1911, Glasgow) see also C. G. Seligmann – The Veddahs (C. U. Press 1911, p. 6)
2. cf. N. C. D. Minutes 1819 – 47 p. 452.

hunted the deer and the Sambhur with bows and arrows. It was the custom for a Veddah to carry in his betel pouch a piece of dried human liver. The purpose of the dried human liver was to make him strong and confident to avenge insults. He would bite off a piece of the dried liver and chew it, saying to himself: "I have killed this man, why should I not be strong and confident and kill this other one who has insulted me?" [3] Such a practice led people to think that the Veddahs were not only murderers but even eaters of human flesh; and so even a man like J. Gillings, who laboured in this field but had not much knowledge about the customs and practices of the Veddahs,' went so far as to accuse them of cannibalism. [4]

Sir James Emerson Tennent, in a book published in 1859, [5] states that Mr. Atherton, A.G.A. in conjunction with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries, attempted to civilise the Veddahs. In 1839 "Cottages were built for them in their own district, rice land assigned to them, wells dug, coconuts planted, two communities were speedily settled at Vippamadavo." However, the suggestion to improve the condition of these primitive people was originally made by Lord Glenelg to the Rt. Hon. J. S. Mackenzie, when the latter was appointed Governor of Ceylon.

In a long despatch dated October 2 1837, there was also the clear injunction to promote "the moral and religious education of the people of Ceylon," and "to convert the heathen." Glenelg wrote, "You will also ascertain whether it would not be practicable to encourage the establishment of a Church Missionary station at Badulla, or at Bintenne, or in any other position in that part of the country which is inhabited by the wild tribes of the Veddahs. It would be most desirable to endeavour to civilize this tribe and as there are roads from Kandy to Bintenne and to Badulla respectively, and also connecting the two latter villages, the difficulty of communicating with the natives will not, I hope, be very serious. It appears that in

3. C. G. Seligmann – The Veddahs, p. 208.
4. Tennent – Christ anity in Ceylon – Vol. II p. 447.
5. Tennent – Christianity in Ceylon – Vol. II p. 447.

former times they used to collect wax and pay it as a tribute.[6] They might now be encouraged and invited to bring the same article to the missionary station—not as tribute, but in order to dispose of it in exchange for some of the necessaries and conveniences of civilized life."[7]

Although the challenge to civilize the Veddahs was directed to the Anglicans, nothing seems to have happened. Mackenzie, true to his spirit of dedication and service, reminded them of the urgency of this task.[8] Obviously the Colonial chaplains were not interested; but the Wesleyans had already established their station at Batticaloa, and the evangelistic zeal of Ralph Stott enabled him to break new ground. In 1839, as mentioned earlier, contact with the Veddahs had already been made, and when in 1840 Stott's preaching produced a revival, it spread to the villages. In a report of the Batticaloa station to the Synod in 1847. Ralph Stott states:

"As I shall probably leave Batticaloa for England in a few months, I think that a succinct view of the work of God on this station from April 1840 to the present may be as suitable for the Report of the present year as anything I can furnish . . . . About July 1840 I visited Bintenne in company with Mr. Atherton for the purpose of, at least once, making known Christ to the wild men of the jungle. We found them living in the shelving rocks of the mountain in a state both of body and mind little superior to that of the wild beasts among which they roamed. I told them that there was one God, that men are all sinners, and urged them to receive salvation. After two days I returned concluding that, as they were at such a distance, so scattered, spoke a language which I did not understand, and seem so careless about everything spiritual, I could spend time better among the Tamil people on the coast, who resided in the thickly populated villages within a few hours ride and felt a desire to save their souls."[9]

6. In the Report of Lt. Col. Colebrooke, one of His Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry upon the Revenue of Ceylon, dated 31st. Jan. 1832, it is stated that the tribute from the Vederatte amounted to £61.
7. Despatches from the Secratary of State 1837, No 18 of October 2.
8. See Bishop Chapman's Visitation Journal 1846.
9. cf. N. C. D. Minutes 1819–47, p. 536.

Even a convinced evangelist like Stott was discouraged by the poor response of the Veddahs at the start. At the same time the other Wesleyan Missionaries themselves were divided in their opinion concerning the wisdom of undertaking the work among these primitive people. Then there was also the difficulty caused by the lack of understanding between the two personalities of Stott and Percival. Stott's zeal for direct evangelism blinded him to the value of educational work, which some missionaries regarded as a secondary means of evangelism. Percival, on the other hand, was quite convinced of the value of his schools as religious and evangelistic agencies. Those two crossed swords frequently, and the District meetings with Percival in the chair and Stott as Secretary, during the debates on the evangelistic task of the Mission was the scene of many a vigorous duel. However, there was a sudden turn of events, and the mission to the Veddahs was viewed with sympathy when some of these primitive hunters visited Stott at Batticaloa and asked for Baptism.[10] This unexpected response led Stott to throw himself heartily into efforts on behalf of the Veddahs. This event clearly showed that light had shone upon their minds, and the impact of their Revival spreading through the District at this time was shared by these people also. After this first visit of the three Veddahs to Puliyantivu, when they declared their intention to renounce their devil dancing and embrace Christianity, thirty other Veddahs came to Stott a few months later and did the same. Stott's concern for the Veddahs became greater. It was also providential that Atherton who was both Government agent and District judge, and his lady had been awakened and converted during the Revival, and they graciously united themselves with Stott and his mission. Atherton and Stott were able to visit the Veddahs frequently, give them regular instruction and place schools among them.[11] In fact, Stott believed now that if the Veddahs were settled in one place, they would embrace Christianity because they appeared simple and docile.[12] Schools were opened, and Stott the evangelist seemed to have compromised with the policy of Percival,

10. Miss: Not; IX, 593, Stott's letter of 9 September 1840.
11. cf. N. C. D. Minutes 1819 – 47, p. 536.
12. Miss. Not. IX, 593. Stott's letter of 9 September 1840.

who was a firm believer in using schools for the conversion of people. These schools were actually supported by the Governor Mackenzie, who was himself an ardent advocate of the work of uplift among these primitive people.

Mackenzie implemented the plan outlined by Glenelg, by identifying himself wholly with the Wesleyan Mission and subscribing £25 a year for the establishment of two schools. Atherton and Stott also picked on two Christian school masters to carry on the work in this lonely outpost. [13] The government gave its blessings to this venture when the Legislative Council made an annual grant of £200, and the schools were referred to as "Mackenzie Schools." After Mackenzie left Ceylon the schools were paid for by the Mission. However, the work went on among the Veddahs until nearly a whole village renounced devil dancing (which was the only religious ceremony they performed) and manifested a wish to embrace Christianity. The work flourished and the prospects seemed to be encouraging, so that Stott reported: "The whole number of adults that now came over is 230. (This was in 1842). Taking off 30 for deaths in 5 years, there remain about 200 and their children. When these wild men became Christian they were at once willing to live in villages and cultivate. Government being apprised of this came forward to their assistance, built their houses, gave them land and supplied them with tools to cut down jungles and cultivate the ground, and with food during the time they were working. This succeeded, and they are now, with few exceptions, living in villages, cultivating." [14] By 1843 the work had progressed so steadily that the Wesleyan Mission had even created a Circuit in this area, and called it the Bintenne Circuit under the Batticaloa station. However, the work was carried on but not without its difficulties. If a firm foundation had to be laid it had to be on the ground of the younger generation. The children of the Veddahs had to be rescued from the magical spell of the woods and the evil spirits which they venerated. But how was this to be done without a ready

13. See under Batticaloa – State of the Society and Schools for 1841. (N. C. D. Minutes, p. 452)

14. N. C. D. Minutes 1819 – 47. p. 537.

supply of teachers? None from the town of Batticaloa were willing to spend their years in the heart of the wild areas. Hence Stott in a report states:

"With regard to schools among them we have considerable difficulty. The children have little relish for learning, and the parents know as little of its advantages. We also find it very difficult to get suitable teachers who are willing to live in the depths of the jungle. And all the Singalese in the jungle, who can read and write, are devil dancers and wizards, who would undo everything we do. We have likewise difficulties in getting suitable catechists.....we must do the best we can, and pray that God would raise up suitable men for the work."[15]

There was also another difficulty from outside. The traders who were chiefly Moors who went into the Veddah villages with their cheap wares and goods, tried to exploit these primitive ignorant people. They were bent on bartering away trinkets, bits of cheap jewellery and other less valuable articles for the much relished venison and bees honey and spices which sometimes the Veddahs had collected even at the risk of life. Indeed, the Moormen opposed the work of social amelioration among the Veddahs, according to Stott because the Moors preferred "to keep the Veddahs in their former ignorance, that they may cheat them better in bargaining with them."[16]

During Stott's seven years in Batticaloa, it is recorded that he baptized more than 900 persons of whom 669 were adults. When he left, the Batticaloa membership had risen from 40 in 1840 to 176 with 140 on trial.[17]

The work founded by Atherton and Stott was solid and the three village settlements formed the spring board for advance action into other Veddah territories. It was thus that civilisation spread and soon a fourth village enjoyed

15. N. C. D. Minutes 1819 - 47, p. 537.
16. Miss. Not. X. pp. 56, 57.
17. See synod Report of 1847.

the benefits offered by the government.[18] The Veddahs in these villages had by 1846 learned to live as a settled community; agriculture became their daily pursuit. Much grain was planted and cotton growing in this area of virgin soil was undertaken by a wild tribe who had now become civilized farmers. So impressed was the Bishop of Colombo by the transformation that had come over the primitive hunters that in his visitation journal of 1846 he wrote: "The undoubted aborigines of the island, they are now for the first time gathered together, and brought within the reach and blessings of civilization - reclaimed from a wild barbarism instead of being exterminated or altogether disappearing from some unknown cause, before the footsteps of civilisation." Government helped Stott and Atherton sympathetically in their endeavours to collect the veddahs from their jungle retreats and settle them in villages. In 1847, the year of Stott's return to England, thirty Veddahs were baptized at Venloos Bay,[19] so that it is true to say that this whole mission would not have been promising were it not for the support given by the Government to the Wesleyan mission. Governor Mackenzie outlined the policy, but it was the Wesleyan Mission that was responsible for the work and the superintendence of the Veddahs in the villages, ably supported by Mr Atherton. It was no doubt an uphill task because the mission had to be supervised from Batticaloa, which was the seat of operation for the Bintenne circuit. Rev. R. Pargiter, writing in June 1845, reported favourably regarding this work to the Missionary Society in England.[20] But the Bishop of Colombo, though impressed by the results of the mission of the Veddahs, was reluctant to attribute a word of appreciation to the untiring zeal of the Wesleyans. Instead he grudgingly remarked: "If all their work was as well done as it is here, we should have less reason and far less inclination to blame them. Were all their efforts directed with a single eye to God's glory than to their own numerical increase, the cause of Christianity would gain much and they themselves would lose nothing."[21]

18. See the Bishop's Visitation Journal 1846, Part II S. P. G. MSS.
19. See centenary edition of the C. M. C. R. p. 59,
20. Wes: MSS. Cey. I 30 June 1845.
21. Bishop's Visitation Journal, 1846. Part II.

The success of the venture so far narrated was followed by a series of events and disasters that were equally pathetic. Stott was no doubt gratified by the economic and material prosperity that had come over the Veddah community, but he was blissfully unaware of the gross ignorance of the converts of the very elements of Christianity.[22] No Christian Mission could be of abiding value to a community unless it is not only related to the economic and cultural background of the people, but also rooted in the life of Jesus Christ, and this was where the mission to the Veddahs was found woefully inadequate. The Veddah converts were not taught the simple truths of the Bible. The Bishop was surprised at their ignorance when he questioned them. He mentions in his journal: "I asked them who made the sun to shine and the rain to fall, and the trees to grow. Answer: God. Where does God dwell? Answer: we don't know. Who was Jesus Christ? Answer: We don't know. I was afraid of proceeding much further, and told them that they should have a school, not for the children only, but for themselves."

Since the mission to these primitive people was not built on the solid foundation of the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ it showed signs of collapse at the first signal of danger. The failure of the coffee enterprise in Ceylon at this time and the economic depression in England in 1847, was the first blow to fell the "growing plant" of the Christian Church in the Veddah villages. The shortage of funds produced by the "stop the supplies" agitation at home hindered the work of the Wesleyan Mission at Bintenne.[23] The reduction in the grants to the mission made it impossible to pay the teachers. The lack of funds and underpayment of teachers meant the loss of schoolmasters and the schools themselves. Hence the schools at Bintenne were closed in 1848 because "it was found impossible to collect and keep together a sufficient number of scholars to make it worthwhile paying the teachers that amount of salary which they require in consideration of their living in such localities."[24]

22. Wes MSS: Cey. II Stott – March 1846.
23. cf. Centenary Edition of C. M. C. R. p. 59.
24. A/R North Ceylon Mission (Wesleyan) 1849 p. 37.

During these years of the mission frequent visits were paid by Stott and J. Philips and an exhorter[25] to the villages in Bintenne, but early in 1845 Stott was subject to attacks of jungle fever; this later meant that he had to leave the country, much against his wishes. The District meeting of 1845, realising the urgency of the situation, recommended that "Brother Stott be given the permission he requests assured that he will not desert his post unless driven to do so by the imperiousness of circumstances.[26]

It was in 1847 that finally Stott had to return to England for health reasons. In the meantime Brother J. Philips and James Gillings, who had been in the District since 1843, took charge of the mission at Bintenne. Of Philips it is recoded that "he is a zealous and devoted labourer, and greatly esteemed by the different classes of the community on all our stations where he is known".[27] But although the District meeting of 1847 judged it expedient to station Brother Gillings at Batticaloa, yet it was the arduous nature of the work, and the perilous journey through jungle territory, that made Gillings unwilling to visit the Veddah villages quarterly as was done by Stott and Philips. However, he salved his conscience by opening up work among the Muslims on the coastal areas around Batticaloa, and wrote to the Society in London that this new work among the Muslims neccessitated his restricting the visits to the Veddahs.[28]

These primitive people who had been closely supervised and nurtured in village settlements at Bintenne earlier were now tending to retrace their steps back to jungle life for want of proper care and guidance. From the time the schools in the villages were given up for lack of funds and teachers in 1847, the Veddahs gradually began to lose interest in agricultural pursuits and settled life. Their crops were neglected and what survived were destroyed by wild

25. Report of Brother Stott, N. C. D. Minutes, 1st. April 1844.
26. N. C. D. Minutes 1845, p. 499.
27. N. C. D. Minutes 1845 p. 499.
28. Wes. MSS. Cey. II, 7 J. Gillings 8 Nov. 1849.

animals. Although the mission to the Veddahs was showing signs of failure, because these primitive people were "too migratory to allow of any continuous and systematic effort for their instruction and evangelisation",[29] yet sporadic attempts were made to keep the mission going. In one of the reports it is recorded that at Venloos Bay there were village Veddahs residing on the sea coast and supporting themselves principally by fishing.

"We have visited them occasionally and have had a catechist living amongst them nearly a year. We have reason to believe that several more will soon join them, and as they live comparatively near and speak the Tamil language, we shall be able to make provision for their spiritual wants than for the Veddahs of Bintenne."[30]

By 1849 it was quite evident that the work among the Veddahs at Bintenne had to be abandoned by the Wesleyans. At the same time there was the lurking fear amongst them that the Anglicans would take over the work unless reinforcements soon arrived and the Wesleyans reoccupied it. Gillings in his report that year, wrote thus: "It is indeed a cause of sorrow that such a field should be either allowed to be uncultivated or given over to another party after having been begun by ourselves. With our present agency and means we cannot supply it."[31]

James Gillings did not have a happy career in the Veddah colony, but he and his wife proved to be very successful missionaries in the Madras district many years later. In a letter dated November 29th. 1871, Madras, Gillings says: "Last Sunday I again took the first class of the Royapettah Sabbath School, and in the evening preached at Black Town to the best congregation I have yet seen....."[32]

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29. ibid.
30. Minutes of the N. C. D. 1819 - 47. p. 539.
31. Wes. MSS. Cey. II J. Gillings, 7 April 1849.
32. cf. Wesleyan Missionary Notices, 1872.

But James Gillings' attitude towards the work in the Veddah colony in 1849 was a helpless confession of defeat and despair. The Missionary Society in England too was unable to do anything at this juncture. What was worse was the fact that a schism in the Batticaloa church robbed the Veddah mission of some of its best supporters.[33] Atherton, who had been a loyal supporter of the Wesleyan Mission to the Veddahs, now went over to the Anglicans, and he began to work with equal enthusiasm against the Wesleyan Mission.[34]

Atherton went to the extent of getting the one remaining Veddah Instructor, who had been a Wesleyan by education and profession, to transfer his membership and those of the Veddahs under his care, to the care of the Bishop of Colombo. Gillings protested vehemently against this action in getting the Veddahs under to transfer their allegiance to the Bishop of Colombo. In spite of the many representations made to Viscount Torrington, who was the Governor of the time, nothing seems to have happened. The rivalry between the Anglicans and Wesleyans remained unabated and the work amongst the Veddahs suffered in consequence.[35]

The mission to the Veddahs flourished at one time. It was a formidable undertaking and exacted unselfish devotion in the face of a rigorous climate. uncharted territory and a people who did not understand the work of the missionaries. It collapsed only because Government subsidy was withdrawn and the Wesleyans found it impossible to maintain this project unaided. The intrusion of the Anglicans into this area was unkind and it did neither themselves nor the Veddahs any good.

In the records of 1855, the Rev. J. Kilner wrote thus:

"Instead of the once flourishing Veddah settlements he saw "dire disease and misery - an alarming amount of both."

33. CMCR Centenary Edition, p. 59.
34. A/R North Ceylon Mission (Wesleyan) 1851 p. 66.
35. Ws. MSS Cey. II, Gillings. 9 Aug. 1851.

However, the story does not end there. Almost fifty years later, with dauntless courage, work was opened by the Wesleyans amongst the coast Veddahs north of Batticaloa, with more lasting results. These people were more easily accessible; they proved teachable and responsible. The Kaluvankerni church of today and the church at Amirthagali, a village near the mouth of the Batticaloa lake, are some compensation for the losses suffered at Bintenne many years earlier.

CHAPTER X

EVANGELISM THROUGH THE SCHOOLS.

Almost every one of the pioneer missionaries started by learning the languages of the country. They felt that if they were to get to know the people in the towns and villages they had to study the national languages. Some of them even became the scholars of the land. With freedom of worship guaranteed to all people during the British period, the missionaries began to compile grammars, dictionaries and word books, and to translate the Bible itself. Along with the literary activity one of the primary tasks of the mission was to engage itself in the actual business of teaching and training children, and so schools were opened.[1] The vernacular schools that were established had a value beyond their immediate educational work, in that they served as evangelistic centres and gave to the teacher-evangelist and the missionary an introduction to the homes of the people.

In a letter dated November 9, 1820, interesting details are mentioned concerning the schools at Naloor managed by the Rev. Joseph Knight. There were six schools under his care where the boys were taught reading, writing in sand, committing to memory the Lord's prayer, the Ten Commandments, the First Cathechism, Sermon on the Mount etc.

1. In 1831 the Private sector catered to 91% of the student population. (i. e. Protestant Mission Schools 46%, the Roman Catholic schools and other bodies 45%) while the government sector had only 9%. Today after over 140 years, the position is almost exactly the reverse: the Government sector being 92% and the private Sector only 8%. (See Young Socialist, Vol. 4, November 1968. p. 93.)

The children were brought by the master to Mr. Knight's house on Sunday mornings before 9 a. m. to hear the word of God.[2]

In another journal dated 19th. June 1821, of a Wesleyan Missionary Mr. Stead, reference is made to six schools in the Point Pedro area which he visited, and also of the schools at Naloor which Mr. Knight managed.

The Rev. Spence Hardy stated in his "Jubilee Memorials"[3] that the Wesleyan Mission had schools in almost every important village on the Western coast of Ceylon and even in many parts of the interior, and he doubted the wisdom of running so many schools. He would rather have wished that they had cultivated a small portion well than so large an area imperfectly.

The path of the mission schools was by no means easy. The missionaries found it difficult to get efficient teachers even though the government subsequently assisted them by opening a Normal school for the training of teachers.[4]

That was not all; the frequent rains of the interior, the scattered nature of the population, the prejudices of the people and their indolent habits rendered it impracticable to maintain the order and discipline that the missionaries would have wished to see characterize their schools. Moreover, the priests of the temples opposed the children going to a Christian school and many of them were often heard to remark of Christianity — "This religion teaches nearly the same things that our religion does." It was also common to find people saying, "When we come to the Christian Church we worship Jesus, when we go to the temple we worship our God." In order to combat this difficulty more effort was put into the work in schools, so that by 1832 there were 235 Protestant mission schools and 90 schools under the direct control of the government; while the number of Roman Catholic schools in 1837 was 118.[5]

2. cf. Journal C. C/E. M. I (1819 – 23.)
3. See pp. 266 – 7.
4. L. J. Gratiaen – Governme.t Vernacnlar Schools (1870 – 1900) Colombo 1933.
5. Sessional Paper XXIV, p. 15.

While vernacular education was being advocated by the missionaries, the curriculum consisted chiefly in teaching reading and writing in Tamil, and arithmetic, and of course instruction in Scripture. The missionaries were greatly concerned that along with these elements noble principles should be conveyed to the tender impressionable minds of the children by personal example. Moreover, they were also aware of the fact that the opinions of men and women could often be traced to the first books they read, and so men like Lynch and Squance wrote sermons in Tamil on Olas[6] and circulated them. This was a beginning in the way of Christian literature until printed text books were supplied for the first time to the children in 1834. Under the sanction of the British and Foreign Bible Society the Scriptures were also distributed to the schools. Assistance in the work of printing and circulating the Scriptures was rendered by the American Mission Press in Manipay, and the Cotta Press in 1834. In that year the whole of the Old Testament, New Testament and an edition of the common prayer book was completed.[7] In the subsequent years the Bible was used as a regular text book, not merely in the mission schools, but even the Government of Ceylon in 1849 introduced it into its schools. It is said that the Marquis of Tweedale, while Governor of Madras, wished to do the same in that province also but the court of Directors refused its sanction.[8]

One of the important features of the education imparted in both the missionary and government schools at that time was the stress laid on the teaching of Christianity. In the annual report of the Wesleyans in 1849, it is recorded that "the education given in the institutions is essentially a Christian education. Instruction is so communicated that Christianity is made to appear the end for which all the mental processes are conducted."[9]

6. Dried strips of palmyrah leaves.
7. James Selkirk – Recollections of Ceylon p. 345. (Lond. 1844). also Arnold Wright (Editor) Twentieth Century impressions of Ceylon (p. 281 Lond. 1907).
8. Tracts on Education – A statement on the formation of a Christian Vernacular Education Society. (Brit. Mus. Libr. No. 8306a. 1)
9. A/R North Ceylon (Wesleyan Mission) 1849 p 14.

Governor Mackenzie believed that education in the vernacular was the one way of attracting the children into the schools, and at the same time he said this would pave the way for English education, to equip young men for public employment and to introduce Western culture. Furthermore, Mackenzie emphasized the necessity of teaching all children to read in their native tongue before they were able to acquire the benefits of instruction in English.[10] It must be stated here that Mackenzie was greatly influenced by the Rev. D. J. Gogerly and the experience of some of the Wesleyan Missionaries. The cause of Vernacular education progressed because of the prominent place given to the Translation Committee during this period,[11] and because little or no fees at all were charged, enabling the inhabitants to send their children to school.

In providing the necessary books in the Vernaculars the missionaries helped to stimulate a taste for literature. The acquisition of Christian thought and ideas was facilitated. The mother tongue became the moulding instrument for the communities; for no people has ever been christianized through a foreign tongue. The miracle of Pentecost indicated for ever the duty of the Christian Church to tell her blessed message "To every man in his own tongue wherein he was born." But the missionaries did not pursue this policy resolutely for long; instead they established schools where the medium of instruction was English (as reported earlier) and Anglicization caused the best and most ambitious pupils to leave the Vernacular schools in order to learn English.

In order to push forward the work in Government schools during the time of Sir Wilmot Horton (Governor),

10. C. O, 54/179 Mackenzie to Russel, No. 42 of 11 March 1840· Mackenzie to the Bishop of Madras, 2 March 1840.

11. C. O. 55/184 Mackenzie to Russel No. 135 of 12 Aug. 1840 also wes. MSS, Cey. 1. Gogerly's letters of 9 Feby. 1839 and 15 Sept. 1840.

the First School Commission was instituted in 1834.[12] Under this Commission the expected result was not gained. Education in Government schools progressed very slowly; there was insufficient provision, and a shortage of good teachers. But on the 27th. March 1841, Governor Stewart Mackenzie, acting on the instructions from the Secretary of State for Colonies, declared that the school commission of 1834 was dissolved, and that it was to be substituted by a new commission known as the "Central School Commission," for the instruction of the people in Ceylon.[13] It consisted of nine members, three of whom were a clergyman of the Church of England, a presbyterian minister and a Roman Catholic priest or layman. The duties and obligations of the new Commission were stated as follows:

"To promote the religious education of such of the community as belong to the Christian faith; and the funds under their management will therefore be equally applicable to this purpose. It is highly desirable that Sunday Schools should be established and perhaps that an hour daily should be set apart for religious instruction; and such instruction may be conducted by school masters of the establishment, provided it is most clearly and distinctly made known that it is not obligatory upon those scholars who bring conscientious objections to attend religious instruction, which should be arranged so as not to interfere with secular education."

The importance of vernacular education and the system of translations in order to create vernacular literature for the masses, was constantly stressed by the Rev. D. J. Gogerly, his Wesleyan Colleagues and the Bishop Middleton of Madras.[14] Indeed the Bishop agreed totally with them and Mackenzie that such an education was a means of converting the people, and "the translation of the Holy Scriptures

12. See Dr. C. E. Bonjean, Denominational Versus Common Mixed Schools (Examiner Press. Colombo 1861)
13. C. S. O. see the minute signed by P. Anstruther, Colombo 26 May 1841.
14. cf. the correspondence between Mackenzie and the Bishop of Madras, 2 March 1840.

into the dialects of the island" would be the best means of spreading Christianity. But neither the new schemes, nor the policies of the new Commission were implemented successfully because there were sectarian interests. Gogerly and the Wesleyans were pressing for State support, the Anglican clergy were throwing difficulties in the way of the Commission and insisting on the patronage by the State of the Established Church schools, and for a greater share of the Government funds for themselves; and at the Colonial office there was James Stephen who opposed Vernacular educataion and treated with contempt the weighty arguments of Governor Mackenzie and Gogerly who spoke in favour of it.

The minute of 27th. March 1841 had the clause which stated that the Commission was at liberty to grant sums[15] in aid of any private schools which they considered worthy of encouragement, but always on condition that they should have the full right of inspection and examination, without interfering in any way in the management. Perhaps the generosity of the government at this juncture may be attributed to the economic prosperity of the island, or it may have been a kind of gesture on the part of the Christian administrators of the government. For it must be stated here that the established Anglican Church in Ceylon was an integral portion of the State.[16]

At the same time it must be mentioned that government schools in the North proved to be unsatisfactory, and the government had no alternative but to allot grants to the Missionary Societies to perform the work which it was unable to do. The Sixth Report of the Central School Commission gives an account of the schools which were aided by the Government in 1845. £200 was allotted to the American Mission, £150 a year each to the C. M. S. and

15. Colebrooke says that even earlier the government gave pecuniary assistance to the religious societies which had established Christian Schools in the North.
(see Colebrookes Report in Ramanathan's Law Reports 1820-33)
16. see Tracts No 4765 df 5 (Brit. Mus. Libr.)

the Wesleyans. The Wesleyan missionaries not only built new schools but equipped them well and gave through them a better education than the government could have done. The financial assistance of the government could have greatly speeded up the progress of the Wesleyan schools but self interest and denominational differences reared their ugly heads. In fact in 1845 Rev. D. J. Gogerly and the Rev. Andrew Kessen, who were advocates of the Vernacular Education Scheme, were informed by the Colonial Secratary, Philip Anstruther, that the Government was even proposing a grant of £1000 towards this scheme. But very early in the stages of its existence, the Central School Commission was involved in a painful collision on educational matters with the European Colonial clergy. The Anglican clergy felt that Gogerly was wielding far too much influence over this scheme of Vernacular education and tended to oppose him. So that Gogerly was provoked to state, "Had I been a minister of the Episcopal Church instead of a Wesleyan missionary, the plan would have been instantly adopted.[17]

Furthermore, the clergymen of the church of England asked for special privileges in virtue of the pre-eminence of their station. The controversy arose as a result of an application for funds in supply of "chaplain schools,"[18] made by the Ven. Archdeacon J. M. S. Glennie. Even the Chaplain schools in which there were only fifteen boys or girls, demanded and received a grant equal to three quarters of the whole expense.[19] The Anglican clergy also objected to having their schools inspected by anyone who was not a member of the Church of England; aud they said that they would be placing themselves in a subordinate position, if they superintended schools over which Romanists and Dissenters exercised a visiting power. In the meantime grants were being given in varying proportions to some of the different denominations, and naturally the expenditure on education

17. Wes. MSS. Cey. 1. Gogerly, 22 Nov. 1844.
18. The sixth report of the Commission says that in 1845 the schools were classified thus (a) chaplain schools (b) Minister's schools (c) Private schools.
19. See Resolutions passed by the Commission, 5th. Feby. 1842.

by the State mounted from £2,999 in 1841 to £11,415 in 1847.[20] Soon the question of grants-in-aid became the object of much discussion and on 3rd December 1857, Dr. Chapman, the Anglican Bishop of Colombo, sent a petition to the Governor of the Legislative Council asking for the appointment of grants-in-aid to all schools of Christian instruction. At the same time the Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, Bishop Bravi, pointed out to the Central School Commission that it was improper for the Commission to allot grants to any of the missionary schools, because it was violating "the principle of liberal education," on which the commission was established. The Commission realized that it had made a mistake and decided to frame a new set of rules for grants-in-aid which were applicable only to private schools and not to schools supported by any Religious Society or Missionary body. This provoked the Anglican Bishop who then protested to the Governor in these indignant words:

"To clog the unfettered resolution of the council, with conditions which scarcely any will accept, is rather to obstruct than assist the object. It evinces less zeal for the advancement of education. than is uniformly and most reasonably expected from a school commission entrusted with all the resources and confidence of Government for all that important work."[21]

Repeated representations of this nature compelled the Legislative Council to pass the following resolution on 24th November, 1858.

"That this council is of the opinion that grants-in-aid of education (as already sanctioned by them) should be given to schools whether connected with missionary bodies or not; but subject to the Department minute of 6th July 1841."

The victory gained by the Anglican Bishop was in a way beneficial to the other societies as well, and for a few

20. Sessional paper XXIV, p, 16.

21. C. H. Bongeen - Denominational versus common Mixed Schools, p. 73ff. (Examiner Press, Colombo 1861.)

more years education became the monopoly of the missionary bodies; and the Protestant Christians were reputed to be the most progressive educational body in the island. Moreover the Wesleyan Missionary Society enjoyed a double connection with the Government. Firstly, since the Government had not sufficient teachers of its own, it had to seek the assistance of the European clergymen or others trained by them. Secondly, since the established church was officially connected with the Government, Protestant Christianity was invested in its eyes with pre-eminence. This was recognized in practice in the alliance between the Wesleyan Missionaries and Government, both in the field of religion and education. But this state of affairs did not last for long, for early in 1865 this combination of Government and missionary education was regarded by many as unsatisfactory, and the Legislative Council appointed a sub committee, "to enquire into and report upon the state and prospects of education in the island and the amount of success which had attended the working of the present system of education."

The report of the sub-committee of 1865 displayed scholarly ability and judicial acumen in its compilation. The sub-committee had not only to find a solution to the religious difficulty and determine anew Government's connection with education, but it had also to decide the very existence of the School Commission. It decided to do away with it; and the appointment of a Director of Public Instruction was agreed upon.[22] The Department of Public Instruction was then created by Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor, early, in 1869; and from January 1, 1870, grants to aided schools depended on the ascertained results of secular instruction[23]. Thus there came into operation a scheme which fostered a friendly rivalry among the various denominations and the Government committed itself to a new educational connection that was neither religious nor anti-religious. It only sought to marshal all the educational forces in the cause of the progress of education.

22. Sessional Paper VIII of 1867, p. 25.
23. See C. O. series 57. No 51, p. 289, 1870.

The supervision of education by Government led to a rapid development until the financial crisis of 1882. This was due to the collapse of the coffee boom; and the numerous schools opened by the Government between 1870 and 1890 were handed over to the missionary bodies. This was the period when the mission schools were confronted with great difficulties. The ferment of religious controversy which began with the rebellion of 1848 was very much alive even in the nineties. The rebellion arose as a result of the attempt of the Government to shake off its connection with Buddhism. The Government finally dissociated itself from the administration of Buddhist ecclesiastical affairs in 1853. This offended the Buddhist monks and chiefs; also the attempts of the Governor and his colonial secretary to increase revenue by unjust taxes.[24] But that was not all; there were difficulties caused by the State itself. The policy of the Government during the latter part of the 19th century was a striking contrast to that during the Governorship of Sir Hercules Robinson more than twenty five years earlier. Governor Robinson in fact wooed managers of schools to accept the State grants-in-aid, with the very minimum conditions. But his successors adopted a different attitude. Code after code was manufactured in the Public Instruction Department, until at length the conditions imposed seemed to imply a regular official embargo on the work of education. Hence in 1891, out of a population of 3,000,000 of which 700,000 were of school going age, it was found that only 165,000 were in the registers of the Government, missionary or Private Schools. Even worse was the fact that while only 30% of the male population was literate, hardly, 5% of the females were able to read and write.[25]

Through the years of stress, the part played by the Wesleyan Missionaries and the Christian Vernacular Education Society cannot be overlooked. Indeed if it had not been

24. See J. M. Henderson - The history of the Rebellion in Ceylon under Lord Torrington's Governmert (Lond 1868.)

25. cf. Census Report of 1891.

for the criticized and abused publications of the Society, even this measure of success gained in the extension of education would have been impossible.[26]

Here it must be said that, since education was not compulsory, parents could not be persuaded to send their children to school. Further, tt was also pointed out by the Commission appointed later in 1905 that parents refused to send their children to schools which failed to observe the conscience clause. The commission viewed this situation with great concern. It said that there was something anomalous in a system under which funds raised by taxation were being used to change the religion of the taxed, (cf Ceylon Legislative Council Debate, 1919).

One of the most important contributions made during the close of the 19th century was when the Standing Committee of the Wesleyan Synod and some members of the American Mission advocated a system of State education as the only solution for compulsory attendance.[27] This indeed surprised the other missionary bodies, because if the suggestion had been accepted, then that would have meant the end of the evangelistic task of the mission schools.

It would be fitttng here to consider why the Wesleyan and the American missionaries held this particular view.[28] Perhaps, because of their constitution and of their desire to keep free from Sectarian difficulties, the Americans were compelled to argue for secular education. But it is difficult to understand why the Wesleyan Managers in Ceylon advocated a secular state system of education, The Wesleyan Methodists in England have stood not for secular but for Unsectarian State Schools. Perhaps these Wesleyan Managers (the two of them were English) were influenced by the American Missionaries; or it is very likely that they were eager to avoid

26. See Report of the Director of Public Instruction 1879.
27. cf Sessional Paper XXVIII, 1965, p. 4.
28. The Missionaries who took a prominent part in the discussion were: W. H. Rigby and E. M. Weaver (Wesleyans) J. H. Dicksons and C. G. Brown (Americans)

denominational rivalry in the schools of Ceylon. While those are just surmises, we must not overlook certain other considerations. It must be remembered that these missionary bodies were not in favour of a conscience clause, because they were keen on giving a wholly religious education to Christian and non-christians alike. The raison d'etre of their schools was the teaching of Christianity. Their aim was to Christianize pupils as well as to educate them.[29] The standing instructions to the Wesleyans who were sent out as Missionaries were: "You are teachers of religion and that alone should be kept in view."

The schools of the Wesleyan and the American Missions were also largely subsidized from their home countries for this main purpose - the conversion of the natives. Since the educational authorities did not allow them to do this in their own way, they felt that their mission as an educational body was over.[30] Or the other alternative for them was to refuse all government grants and maintain their schools as independent institutions. But this they were unable to do because the total number of Wesleyans in the Island was 14,991 and that of the members of the American Mission was only 2,246.[31]

It must be said to the credit of the Wesleyan missionaries that they strove hard, along with the American missionaries, to build up a literate community in the island through the Vernacular schools. In spite of the shortage of staff and the difficulty of equipping the schools with trained teachers, the missionaries, aided by government funds, carried on their work of education. Through school and chapel, press and pulpit, they aimed at "winning souls". The Methodists were ever mindful of the solemn injunctions contained in the standing instructions of the society, "Your particular designation is to endeavour to promote the religious instruction and conversion of the ignorant pagan, and neglected black and coloured population".

29. See W, M. M. S. Report Vol XXVIII p. 109.
30. See W. M. M. S. Report Vol. XXX p. 85.
31. See Census Report of 1890.

It was shortly after the Government advocated a system of State education that compulsory attendance was enforced. The mission schools in non-Christian areas were rightly closed, and Government schools were establised in purely non-Christian areas.

When objections were raised by members in the Legislative Council that compulsory attendance in schools could not in any way connote the suggestion of compulsory Christianity, the managers of Christian schools realized that their schools could no longer be an instrument for evangelizing the land. The latter part of the nineteenth century therefore became the period of constructive achievement aud building up of the work in Sunday schools.

A reference must be made here to the forthrightness of the missionaries like Rev. W. H. Rigby (chairman) and Rev. E. M. Weaver (secretary). Throughout the discussions with the Government during this period they laid themselves bare to severe criticism but they s[illegible] by their convictions.

In a reply to the questionnaire of the Wace Committee dated 26th. May, 1905 Rigby and Weaver wrote,

"We agree that compulsion will be the only solution of the educational difficulty in the Colony and if the Government thinks that the time is ripe for such a change of system we should agree to its introduction. Such a system must necessarily be secular. There shall be no teaching of any religion and religious matters should be excluded from the reading and other school books. In such a system of education we are of the opinion, as a Christian Mission, we could not cooperate; and should it be introduced we should feel compelled to recommend our Home Committee to withdraw at once.

It is our view, sine qua non, that any system of compulsory education should be controlled and administered by the Government directly and not through the agency of private individuals or corporations."[32]

32. The Wace Committee Report, Sessional Paper XXVIII, 1905 p. 26.

The argument of these missionaries was against the the teaching of religion in schools run by the state. Not only should religion not be taught but "religious matters should be excluded from reading and other school books as well." Such an attitude raises doubts in the minds of the critic as to the earlier claim of the missionaries that the Christian school and its religious atmosphere was an influence for good in the education of children. Their frank statement pregnant though it be with sincerity, was nevertheless a contradiction.

Moreover, the Chirstian missionaries openly confessed that their schools were evangelistic agencies. Their work was facilitated by fees and monies contributed by those of other faiths (Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims). In fact only a very small minority of children belonged to the Christian community.[33] and to announce that they would withdraw from educational work if a State system of education was introduced and compulsory attendance enforced was truly a betrayal of responsibility. But that was the policy of the missionaries at that time. However, fifty five years later, in 1960, when the State undertook full responsibility for education in the island, the Christian churches handed over almost all their schools (a few remained as private schools) to the Government.

At the same time the Churches expressed their readiness to cooperate with the State's Ministry of Education in promoting religion in schools.

33. It is recorded that 83% of the Government grants went to the Christian schools. The Christian population in 1905 was only 9.8% of the total.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL.

One of the greatest challenges that confronted the Christian Church in Sri Lanka during the latter part of the 19th century was to face up to the open denial of the uniqueness[1] of Christianity, and reply to the popular belief that all religions lead to the same goal. There was also the more subtle propaganda that was let loose that we must accept the faith of our forefathers and not fall into the temptation of being "Denationalized." Buddhism was meant for the Buddhist, Saivism was meant for the Hindu and the Gospel for the Christian. There is no perfect religion; each serves the needs of the group that professes it.

It was also argued that there could be no question about the uniqueness of any religion because God was essentially unknowable. No man has seen God and He transcends all human thought and wisdom. There is a mystery surrounding His nature. While that is true, the Christian Gospel points out that human reason unaided and by itself cannot obtain knowledge of God. The Grace of God is essential. In Hinduism also God's grace is operative. Dr. T. Isaac Thambiah says that the workings of Grace, Icchā Sakti, are represented as God's incessant striving and seeking to save souls.[2] Thāyumanaver, in his opening lyric on God, says

> "That in its infinite fulness of loving Grace
> Foldeth the worlds that are, all things:
> Grace that in graciousness willeth all life to lie
> In Him the life of life's essence."[3]

1. See the "Friend" Nov. 1870.
2. T. I. Thambiah, "Paslms of a Saiva Saint" p. CXXIII.
3. ibid. p. 3.

Even such knowledge aided by the Grace of God is tainted by the sin in man. Hence, the announcement of the good news of Jesus begins at that point, that God has revealed Himself in Christ, and that Christ Himself declared "He who has seen me has seen the Father." If God has thus willed to reveal Himself, then it is possible to know God. It is true that it is only partial knowledge - but it is enough knowledge for salvation; and so the declaration that God is unknowable seems to be arbitrary.

That was the heart of the message preached by the missionaries. The very first sermon preached on Ceylon soil by the first band of Wesleyan Missionaries proclaimed this good news of salvation. Thomas Squance's text on the occasion was 2 Cor. 10:14 "We have come as far as unto you also, in preaching the Gospel of Christ."

In seeking to articulate the message of the Gospel in practical terms schools were established, for it was firmly believed that only a "new creation in Christ" is the answe to the prayer of the child;

> "From the unreal lead me to the Real
> From darkness lead me to light
> From death lead me to immortality."[4]

The schools were therefore directed towards the true attainment of knowledge (Vidya) and wisdom (Jnana) and towards dispelling darkness and ignorance (Avidya).

Education in the Christian school was not simply imparting knowledge, but it was a preparation of the child for full development of personality, to become "the full grown man." Christian education promoted a life of active service and self-sacrifice, because "full growth" is never complete until "the vine bears its fruit." It was an education of the "whole man," which enabled an individual to live both as a child of God and a servant of God. It freed him from the thraldom of fear and superstition and broke down the barrier of caste distinctions. The whole task of the Christian

4. Brihad Aranya Upanishad 13:28

mission was to produce an enlightened community and in so doing build up a stable church, which would be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. In this the Mission indeed scored a success, for in a period of nearly seventy five years the missionaries built up a team of ministers who were truly men of God and steeped in the national traditions and cultural heritage of the country. The transition from a Mission to the Church took about seventy five years, and by this time most of the denominations were steadily growing towards self support, and selfhood.

In the early days a new convert to the Christian faith or a new member of the Church was always encouraged to become literate and to free himself from caste bondage. The raison d'etre of Christian work was to infiltrate society with the knowledge of God and bring to being a fellowship of love and service. In modern Sri Lanka the promotion of literacy and the eradication of caste prejudice are official goals of a socialist state. But how far fresh legislation or ideals in politics and the enthusiasm of policy makers could bring about a renewal in society is yet to be seen. Surely the dignity of womanhood and the freedom for women in Sri Lanka and the leadership of a Woman Prime Minister in the land - these were achievements not through legislation or by enactments, but these were acquired through education, knowledge and public opinion. What was said then by the Church in the 19th. century is still true today. It is only a change of heart and mind that can generate love toward fellowmen. In the realm of the Church, and the Gospel which it proclaims, a person's dignity is rooted in God's love for him which issues in love for fellow beings. Hence the man of low caste, or the slave who is a tree climber, the outcast or the helpless woman, are all part of the "koinonia." The lowly service rendered by them and their human functions are sacramental means of social togetherness and mutual assistance. Christ's church as prototype is the community of forgiving love; and might it not be true to say that this manner of community will eventually be the goal of all societies? This can be said only because Christ's

Church offers the basis for human dignity and for the social values which enhance it. The Koinonia guards against individualism and tries to overcome legalistic social barriers. This fellowship of love gives men "a foretaste" of true personal community. In saying this, one does not deny that there can be relationships in secular society at large which are in the nature of "foretaste".

But the truth is that for the Christian the fellowship in Christ reveals the essence of personal community. Because of her deep insight into the human situation, and because of her experience in fellowship, the Church is a prototype of God's intention for the entire human family. May that not be the answer to the problem of caste and slavery and for the liberation of women?

The congregational nature of the Church symbolizes a basic element in life, i. e. the character of community. It acknowledges "the common humanity of all men." And thus it was very early in her existence the Church brought succour not only to the aged, the orphans, those whom the State was not likely to help, but also to a primitive people - the Veddahs. Ralph Stott and James Gillings were the key men who inspired socio-political action, Concrete action in terms of service, was rendered to this backward community for the first time. They were gathered together and brought within the reach and benefits of civilization. For the first time the Veddah was greeted as "brother man". From the scattered caves and jungle haunts there was gathered together a "Veddah Congreration". It was once the "Church in the jungle" that later turned out to be the "diaspora" that needs to be reclaimed for Christ in this enlightened age. And not to venture out again in service and social uplift work would perhaps be injurious to the Church.

At such a time as this (the last quarter of the twentieth century) from the midst of a people who live in unchanging poverty and misery, there is emerging a new way of interpreting the Gospel message, which seeks to bring relief and comfort to oppressed people. This is

popularly called the "Theology of liberation". The key word linked to this theology is the word "development". and Sri Lanka belongs to the countries of the Third World which are struggling to free them selves to grow to fulness. The Church in Sri Lanka today has a new mission in the context of nation building and development.

The Church and her institutions of education and social welfare can no longer be the substitutes for what must be the eventual sharing of this world's goods. The creation of an international life style within the budget of the world's resources which God has provided is the goal towards which we must move, This is a hard and painful lesson to be learned in terms of co-operation, trust and mutual support both within and without the borders of our country.

The Christian Church must infuse its life into the world in this mammoth task. She ought to create the cultural and intellectual climate in which nations can realise this sense of humanity. From the Church there should come forward leaders who would share this concern, and who can be appointed, to act for the future. The need is for men and women who will attempt to make life for all on earth more bearable so that it will not become unbearable for all. This is the significant contribution that the Church in Sri Lanka can make for mankind's responsibility. Either there will be a common future or no future at all. And so future history will be decisive.

In concluding, it must be remembered that it was the Christian understanding of eschatology that spurred the pioneers on to strive and work in expectation of the establishment of a "redeemed community". The compelling force of the pioneers was nothing else but the certainty of the Lord's coming and the uncertainty of when it will be. It was in the light of that End, that the Church that came into being in Sri Lanka derived its impetus. In the present age with closer co-operation with non-Christian thought and action in the interest of nation-hood and cultural unity, it is asked whether it is not possible to discern Christ in the secular? Indeed the task is even greater still. It is to discover in attempting any work of mercy, whether men become "invisible members of the mystical body of Christ."

1. ABBREVIATIONS

B.M.S.P.A.	—	Baptist Missionary Society Periodical accounts
C A. and L.R.	—	Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register
C. CE/E.I. (14)	—	Files containing Original letters and
(15) etc.	—	documents found in C.M.S. House, 6 Salisbury Square, London.
C.O.	—	Colonial office (C.O. 54, C.O. 57 series) records found in the Public Record office Chancery Lane, London.
C.M.C.R.	—	Ceylon Methodist Church Record
J R.A.S.C.B.	—	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch
M.R.	—	Missionary Register
W.M.M.S.	—	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society reports
C.M.C.R.	—	Ceylon Methodist Church Record
N.C.D.	—	North Ceylon District

2. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

1. At the Public Record office, Chancery Lane, London. The volume C.O. 54, series 1—150 contain despatches of the Governors to the Secretary of State for the colonies. The series C.O. 55 contain despatches from the colonial office to the Governors of Ceylon with commissions and instructions.
2. The Sessional Papers (S.P.) laid before the Ceylon Legislative Council contain valuable information regarding the policies outlined by the Government.
3. At the Library of the Commonwealth Relations office, London, the Lawrie MSS contain papers relating to Law and History of Ceylon.
4. At the Government Archives in the Vidyodaya University, Gangodavila; The Mackenzie Manuscripts consist of despatches, reports and letters of Governor Mackenzie.

3. MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

1. The C.M.S. Archives contain a large volume on Missionary work in Ceylon. The material is arranged under C. CE. Ceylon Mission.

   C. CE. EI. Early Correspondence. C. CE. L. Letter Books (outgoing) C. CE. M. Mission Books (incoming). C. CE. OI.—C. CE. 20 contains original letters etc.

2. The S.P.G. Archives 'E' MSS contain numerous letters and reports, referred to as "Missionary Returns".

3. The Methodist Missionary Society, The Wesleyan MSS are a valuable Source of information. The letters sent by the Missionaries from Ceylon have been preserved but their journals and diaries are missing.

4. The Diocesan office at Vaddukoddai, the Jaffna College Library and the Public Library in Jaffna have much information not only about the Church of South India (Jaffna Diocese), but also regarding the Culture and Social customs and traditions of the Tamils.

5. The annual Reports of the Baptist Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, the Society for the propagation of the Gospel, and the Wesleyan Missionary Society, describe their progress and their achievements through the years.

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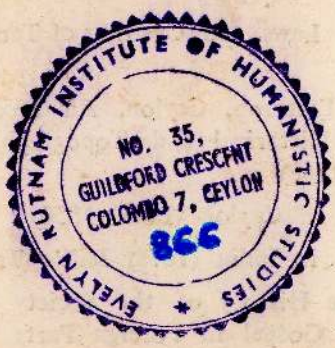

H. A. J. Hulugalle

Says

The influence of the Christian Church in Sri Lanka has always been pervasive rather than spectacular. Public assemblies, processions and music have their place but it is the example of good lives inspired by faith that sustains it and promotes its work.

The establishment of the Church in a non-Christian country has never been free from problems and it is well that they should be reviewed from time to time.

There were occasions when missionaries found themselves at cross-purposes when confronting the Buddhists and Hindus, who formed the majority, but under God's grace the Church was successful in making its impact at all levels on the national life.

How did this come about? Western missionaries were often not only men and women of saintly character, prepared to deny themselves and undergo hardship; they were persons of intellectual calibre. They came to Ceylon not in pursuit of a career but offering themselves to God's service and that of their fellow human beings.

They helped to educate the people and prepare them for self-government. By insisting that master and servant were both sons of God, they fought against the injustices of feudalism with its class and caste systems. They underlined one's obligations to one's neighbour and emphasised the sanctity of the Christian home.

The Church in Sri Lanka has a good record and its future is assured if it works in a spirit of unity, peace and concord.

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