

# The Jaffna Vicariate

Appendix III

Demarcation Line in 1947  
The Ceylon District Diocese (Shaded)



Gnanamuthu Pilendran



# The Jaffna Vicariate

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## The Jaffna Vicariate

History is a critical study in which the events of the past are analyzed in their particular context and interpreted in the backdrop of the socio-economic and cultural life pattern of the people in the given situation. Thus, to understand the past events as accurately as possible, facts have to be collected from reliable primary sources, arranged coherently, understood objectively in their proper context and secondly, interpreted for the benefit of the present and future Society.

In this process, concerning the study of the Sri Lankan Church history one has to encounter many serious obstacles: 1) Major portion of the primary sources and considerable amount of secondary sources, on Sri Lankan Church has been written by missionaries themselves who were European and primary agents of evangelization. From their documents it appears that they were partial and very much pro-Christian and pro-European. A very pertinent question could be raised here. Can a historian be impartial in interpreting the delicate and sensitive issue like conversion besides, the affiliation of a historian consciously or unconsciously tends to colour his vision of history in the process of selection of material and interpretation. For example the Catholic historians who made a loud cry regarding the persecution of the Catholics by the Calvinist Dutch, have failed to see and realize the oppressive and brutal treatment of the Portuguese to the Hindus and Buddhist in the name of Catholicism.

Comparatively the indigenous inhabitants have not left any writings as primary sources on this subject. As such one is not able to know the views, attitudes, reactions of the natives regarding the activities of the missionaries and the imperial rulers on their conversion work. 3) As in almost all Third world countries, in Sri Lanka too, Christianity was introduced along with the support of colonial imperialism. 4) The arrivals of imperial powers to Sri Lanka were motivated primarily by economic as well as political reasons. 5) As the documents concerning the Church were written by religious agents

themselves, they paid special emphasis on the factors that either facilitated or prevented the spread of Christianity. Thus, they have viewed everything from religious point of view and other spheres of life such as political, sociological and cultural impact and the negative influence of Christianity have not been adequately highlighted. 6) The religious, linguistic and ethnic affiliation of an author or a student to a certain extent consciously or unconsciously, determines and influences the selection of events the interpretation of history.<sup>1</sup> ( Don Peter 1995, 154-56) The above stated factors certainly make the study of the Sri Lankan Church history more complex and difficult, especially in discovering the motives behind conversion in the correct historical perspective. At this juncture the contributions made by Fr. V. Perniola, S.J., to researches and students of Sri Lankan Church history, mainly Catholic Church history is commendable.<sup>2</sup>

He has rendered valuable service to researchers on Sri Lankan Church History by collecting documents from various archives in Sri Lanka and abroad and translating them from many foreign languages into English. Already he has published three volumes on the Portuguese period and three on the Dutch period and another eleven on the British period. His work on the British period is still in progress.

Documents concerning the second quarter of the 19th century were collected by Perniola from the Archives of the Congregation of Propagation of Faith in Rome, Archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome, Archives of the Congregation of the Sylvestrines in Rome and the General Archives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Rome, Colonial Office, London, Historical Archives of Goa, the National Archives of Sri Lanka, Archives of the Archdiocese of Colombo, of the diocese of Kandy, and of the diocese of Jaffna. These documents were reports, correspondences, and minutes of meetings, complaints, requests, explanation, and exhortations. Bishops, Vicars Apostolic, priests, viceroys, governors, captains, soldiers and ordinary people wrote these documents. Originals of these documents were written in French, Latin, English and Portuguese and Dutch.

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<sup>1</sup> W.L.A. Don Peter, "History of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka" in *Asia and Christianity*, Bombay, 1985, pp.154-56.



## Introduction

This study has been undertaken to identify the various issues which either facilitated or prevented the expansion of Catholicism and the way the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (SCPF) in Rome and the Oratorians, the Europeans missionaries and the indigenous Catholics in Sri Lanka responded to the different situations especially before and after the establishment of the Jaffna Vicariate.

History is a critical study in which the events of the past are analyzed in their particular context and interpreted in the backdrop of the socio-economic and cultural life pattern of the people in the given situation. Thus, to understand the past events as accurately as possible, facts have to be collected from reliable primary sources, arranged coherently, understood objectively in their proper context and secondly, interpreted for the benefit of the present and future Society.

In this process, concerning the study of the Sri Lankan Church history one has to encounter many serious obstacles: 1) Major portion of the primary sources and considerable amount of secondary sources, on Sri Lankan Church has been written by missionaries themselves who were European and primary agents of evangelization. 2) Comparatively the indigenous inhabitants have not left any writings as primary sources on this subject. 3) As in almost all Third world countries, in Sri Lanka too, Christianity was introduced along with the support of colonial imperialism. 4) The arrivals of imperial powers to Sri Lanka were motivated primarily by economic as well as political reasons. 5) As the documents concerning the Church were written by religious agents themselves, they paid special emphasis on the factors that either facilitated or prevented the spread of Christianity. Thus, they have viewed everything from religious point of view and other spheres of life such as political, sociological and cultural impact and the negative influence of Christianity have not been adequately highlighted. 6) The religious, linguistic and ethnic affiliation of an author or a student to a certain extent consciously or unconsciously, determines and influences the selection of events the interpretation of history.<sup>3</sup> (Don Peter 1995, 154-56) The above stated factors certainly make the study of the Sri Lankan Church history more complex and difficult, especially

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<sup>3</sup> W.L.A. Don Peter, "History of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka" in *Asia and Christianity*, Bombay, 1985, pp.154-56.

in discovering the motives behind conversion in the correct historical perspective. At this juncture the contributions made by Fr. V. Perniola, S.J., to researches and students of Sri Lankan Church history, mainly Catholic Church history is commendable.<sup>4</sup> **The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of transition and reorganization than expansion and growth for the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka.** With the arrival of the British, the Oratorian missionaries who had been serving the Catholics of Sri Lanka for the last 150 years were confronted with new situations and faced with new challenges such as; only a small band of sixteen missionaries were left behind; the non interested attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities of Goa and Cochin; the advent of various Protestant missionary groups; demand for English education from the laity; suppression of religious orders in Portugal and in the colonies under its rule; reforms demanded from the Oratorians in

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<sup>4</sup> Concerning the documents pertaining to our study, Fr. Vito Perniola, S. J. has rendered valuable service to researchers on Sri Lankan Church History by collecting documents from various archives in Sri Lanka and abroad and translating them from many foreign languages into English. Already he has published three volumes on the Portuguese period and three on the Dutch period and another seven on the British period. His work on the British period is still in progress. We use in this research as primary sources many translated documents from the volumes published on the British Periods of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka.

Documents concerning the second quarter of the 19th century were collected by Perniola from the Archives of the Congregation of Propagation of Faith in Rome, Archives of the Society of Jesus in Rome; Archives of the Congregation of the Sylvestrines in Rome and the General Archives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Rome, Colonial Office, London, Historical Archives of Goa, the National Archives of Sri Lanka, Archives of the Archdiocese of Colombo, of the diocese of Kandy, and of the diocese of Jaffna. These documents were reports, correspondences, and minutes of meetings, complaints, requests, explanation, and exhortations. Bishops, Vicars Apostolic, priests, viceroys, governors, captains, soldiers and ordinary people wrote these documents. Originals of these documents were written in French, Latin, English and Portuguese and Dutch.

We use many of his translated documents in this study. Citations from Perniola's work will be referred to as: VPB- covering the British Period. Volume will merely be given in numerical form.



their life: these were some of the challenges which necessitated the establishment of an independent Sri Lankan Vicariate on 3 December 1834 with Mgr. Vincent de Rosario as the Vicar Apostolic.

### **The Catholics complain to Propaganda**

On the demise of Mgr. Vincent de Rosario, the Sri Lanka Vicariate was in serious turmoil. Propaganda having realized that the opportune time had come to appoint a European and preferably an English national to be the Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka started to search for a suitable candidate, though conscious of the fact that the Oratorians would strongly object to the move. On the contrary, the Oratorians wanted one of them to be nominated as the second Vicar Apostolic. Mgr. Vincent de Rosario had proposed Fr. Caetano Antonio to be his successor. However, the first proposal to appoint a European Vicar Apostolic to Sri Lankan mission came from the Oratorian priests - namely, Fr. Sebastian Perera,<sup>5</sup> Caetano Antonio and Joquim Sebastiano<sup>6</sup> in their letter of 5 February 1838.<sup>7</sup> The Sri Lankan Church history has proved that three Oratorians had proposed the correct solution.

The Sri Lankan Catholics themselves on several occasions submitted reports and memorials to Propaganda explaining the pitiful state of the Sri Lankan Vicariate and pleaded with Propaganda to appoint a European Vicar Apostolic and to send European missionaries, preferably from English nationality. Though the request made by the Catholics on previous occasions was not given due importance, the

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<sup>5</sup> Fr. S. Sebastian Perera was the Superior and Vicar General of the Sri Lankan mission from 29 June 1826 to 28 June 1829. Fr. V. Perniola, s.j., *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The British Period*, vol. 1, p.3. Fr. V. Perniola s.j., has rendered valuable service to researches of Sri Lankan Church history by collecting documents from various archives in Sri Lanka and abroad and translating them from many foreign languages into English. Already he has published three volumes on the Portuguese period, three on the Dutch Period and another eight on the British period. Some more are to follow on the British Period. We use many of his translated documents in this study. Citation from Perniola's work will be hereafter referred to as: "VPB": covering the British Period. Volumes will merely be given in numerical form.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Joquim Sebastiano came to Sri Lankan mission on 6 March 1830. He was ordained in 1825. See VPB I, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> See, VPB I, p.207.

memorials submitted to Pope Gregory XVI on 9 May 1842<sup>8</sup> and 1 December 1842<sup>9</sup> were given due consideration and influenced the decisions of Propaganda. Both memorials describe many defects existing in the Vicariate and clearly reiterate that only nominating a European Vicar Apostolic and sending European missionaries could remedy the situation.

### Memorials of the Catholics to the Pope

In 1937 the Catholics of Colombo presented a memorial to the Oratorians in which they called for reforms. Their demands were centred on religious instruction for the young, supervision of education in English by a priest, administration of the Sacraments to all the sick especially affected by cholera, administration of baptism on fixed days without distinction of persons, and following the prescribed rituals for all and celebration of the Masses on Feast days at fixed time. They also demanded that sermons be delivered in English, Portuguese and other vernacular and suggested that six laymen be included in the committee that manages the finance of the mission.

The repeated request presented by the Catholics to Propaganda for urgent renewal and reform had not been given due consideration by Rome. On the contrary, Rome had interpreted their genuine efforts as disobedience and revolt against the authority.<sup>10</sup> However, unlike the earlier memorials, the one sent on 9 May 1842, was given due prominence by Propaganda<sup>11</sup> and formed part of the documentations presented to the general meeting of Propaganda on 12 September, where the Sri Lankan situation was discussed in detail. This petition to the Pope was signed by 3050 respectable Catholics from Sinhala, Tamil and Burgher communities of Colombo.

The memoirists presented their case with statistics and stated that the number of ministers stationed in Sri Lankan mission were inadequate. The memorial states that the English-speaking people were compelled to make their confession with the help of an interpreter.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Bede Barcatta, *A History of the Southern Vicariate of Colombo, Sri Lanka*, Monte Fano Publications, Kandy, 1991, p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



Subsequently, English-speaking Catholics either neglected their spiritual activities or resorted to other sects or remain in a state of sinful indifference. The Catholics lamented that the first English Catholic School opened in 1839 with immense difficulty did not fulfil the expectations of the people. The control and supervision of the school by priests was not productive.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the people pleaded for a European Bishop with sufficient member of European priests to be stationed in this island to minister to the religious welfare of the Catholics.<sup>14</sup>

The accusations against the Oratorians were mainly that, they were more interested in the material benefits than in the well being and the pastoral care of the flock and scandalizing the people as a result. Gradually Rome too became convinced of the necessity of sending European missionaries to safeguard the Sri Lankan mission.

### **Efforts of Propaganda to know the real situation**

Having received confusing reports about the Sri Lankan mission, Propaganda requested Mgr. C. Bonnard<sup>15</sup> to investigate the actual local situation and to submit reports<sup>16</sup>. According to Mgr. C. Bonnard if the church in Sri Lanka was in a good state and if the Christians were very firm in their faith, it was due to the good disposition of the Christians and good character with which they are endowed.<sup>17</sup>

Mgr. C. Bonnard was of the opinion thought that if a European Vicar Apostolic of British nationality or at least someone who knows English well, was put in charge of the mission; he could obtain more privileges and do much to promote the good of religion.<sup>18</sup> For him the, European Vicar Apostolic should be "a polished and a wise person". He

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Mgr. Clement Bonnard was the Vicar Apostolic of Pondichery from 1838-1861. He was appointed as an Apostolic Delegate to visit the Sri Lankan mission and submit a report on the situation. Bonnard reached Jaffna on 1 May 1854 and after three days left for Negombo. Propaganda at its general meeting discussed the report submitted by him and reached a final solution. See Bede Barcatta, pp. 410-420.

<sup>16</sup> See Bede Barcatta, p. 196.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

foresees many dangers for the mission if the European Vicar Apostolic does not act prudently and wisely.

Furthermore, Mgr. C. Bonnard also recommended that the Fr. Caetano Antonio be appointed as the Vicar Apostolic and a European from the Congregation of St. Philip Neri could be given as a coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic.<sup>19</sup> If possible the coadjutor should be of English nationality or else a person with a good command of English language. Mgr. C. Bonnard advised that, missionaries could also attend to the spiritual needs of the English speaking Catholics in the Sri Lankan mission.<sup>20</sup> The views and recommendations of Mgr. C. Bonnard reveal the fact that he had a thorough insight of the situation of the Sri Lankan mission and its many limitations.

Fr. Bede Barcatta an eminent Sri Lankan Church historian comments that if Propaganda had followed the recommendations of Mgr. C. Bonnard and appointed "a polished and a wise" European in the place of Mgr. C. Bettacchini many scandals caused by the internal conflicts and confrontations could have been avoided.<sup>21</sup>

### **Mgr. Caetano Antonio the second Vicar Apostolic**

In order to maintain peace and harmony among the Oratorian missionaries working in Sri Lanka, Mgr. Vicente de Rosario before his death had proposed to Rome, to appoint Fr. Caetano Antonio as his successor. Mgr. Vicente de Rosario passed away on 29 April 1842 and the Vicar General Fr. Caetano Antonio<sup>22</sup> communicated this news to Rome. On 6 May 1842 seven Oratorians sent a letter of proposal and recommendation to Propaganda to certify the capabilities of Fr. Caetano Antonio to carry out the duties of a Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka.<sup>23</sup>

In the meantime Fr. Caetano de Rosario<sup>24</sup> learned about the appointment of Fr. Caetano Antonio as the Vicar General of the mission and the recommendation and about the proposal of the Oratorians to

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> See Bede Barcatta, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>23</sup> The seven Oratorians who submitted their petition were, Caetano Dias, Nicola Casimiro, Jose Perera, Matheu Caetano, Joseph Peter, Costanzo de Neves and Michal Philips. See VPB I, pp. 297-298.

<sup>24</sup> Fr. Caetano Antonio See Ch. 3.



Rome, to nominate the latter as the Vicar Apostolic. Fr. Caetano de Rosario not only objected to this move but also wrote a letter of protest to Rome and stated the reasons why Fr. Caetano Antonio was not a worthy candidate to the office of Vicar Apostolic. He gave a detailed description of how Fr. Caetano Antonio opposed the nomination of Mgr. Vicente de Rosario; and the double-dealings of the latter with the Vicar General of Cochin with the intention of delaying the publication of the briefs; and his lack of loyalty to the decision of Propaganda<sup>25</sup>

While the Oratorians were involved in internal conflicts over the nomination of the next Vicar Apostolic, Propaganda was searching for a suitable European candidate to respond positively to the repeated and urgent demand of the people.<sup>26</sup> Rome was much reluctant to confirm Fr. Caetano Antonio as Pro- Vicar Apostolic because Propaganda seriously doubted regarding his loyalty to the Holy See.<sup>27</sup> But Fr. Caetano Antonio was also notified that considering the good of the mission, Propaganda intended to take other steps in spite of the outstanding merits of the Oratorians.<sup>28</sup>

When this decision of Rome reached the Sri Lankan Oratorians, nine of them wrote to Propaganda on 26 November 1842 explaining the local situation and stating the reasons why one of the Oratorians should be nominated as the Vicar Apostolic.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the Oratorians gave an assurance to Rome that they would resolve their disputes among themselves and would carry out whatever suggestion would be prescribed by the Holy See for the good of the mission. Subsequently, the conflict between Fr. Caetano Antonio and Fr. Caetano de Rosario was amicably settled through a compromise, according to which the former would be the bishop and the Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate while the latter would be the real power in running the Vicariate i.e. the secretary of the Vicariate.

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<sup>25</sup> He succeeded Bishop Vincente de Rosario in 1843 and died in 1887 at the age of 79. For more on Caetano Antonio, see Bede Barcatta, p. 206.

<sup>26</sup> See VPB I, pp. 304-307.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> The nine Oratorians were, Caetano de Rosario, Matheo Caetano, Caetano Dias, Joao Salvador, Nicolao Casimiro, Pedro Phelipe, Joze Pedro, Antonio Francisco, Michael Phelipe.

According to Fr. Bede Barcatta, this reconciliation must have taken place probably in August 1842 during the Oratorian annual meeting and the fear of losing the mission to the European missionaries would have been the motive behind this reconciliation<sup>30</sup>

Rome on its part was searching for a suitable English-speaking candidate to be nominated as the Vicar Apostolic. As suggested by Mgr. C. Bonnard the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith at its general meeting held on 8, May, 1842 decided and decreed to petition to his Holiness for the nomination of Fr. Caetano Antonio, as the Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Sri Lanka.<sup>31</sup> By the brief "*Cum per Obitum*" Fr. Caetano Antonio was nominated Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Ceylon and by the same Apostolic letter Pope Gregory XVI nominated him the bishop of Usula in *partibus*.<sup>32</sup>

Though Vicar Apostolic Mgr. Caetano Antonio had the best of intention to initiate renewal and reform in the mission, due to the compromise made with Fr. Caetano do Rosario, he was forced to abandon his plans and was able to do only what his "powerful"<sup>33</sup> secretary allowed him to do. In later stages he regretted over his own appointment as the Vicar Apostolic.<sup>34</sup>

### **Arrival of the European missionaries and the objections of the Oratorians**

Propaganda was fully aware that the move to send European missionaries to Sri Lankan mission would be strongly objected by the Oratorians and the *Padroado* supporters. At this juncture, it was indispensable for Propaganda to placate the Goa Oratorians and integrate gradually the European clergy in the Sri Lankan mission. Initially, Propaganda tried to recruit missionaries from Italian

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<sup>30</sup> See Bede Barcatta, p. 208.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307. The expression "*in Partibus*", more fully "*in Partibus infidelium*" meant a bishop who had no residential See, was assigned one of the ancient Episcopal Sees which are actually in territories inhabited by non-Christians.

<sup>33</sup> In the actual running of the mission the Secretary was more powerful than the Vicar Apostolic himself. This led to much disturbance and disorder in the administration of the Vicariate.

<sup>34</sup> See VPB I, p. 406.



Oratorians, hoping that the Indian Oratorians would welcome them. But this project failed.

### **Fr. Orazio Bettacchini**

At a crucial period in the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, when Propaganda was desperately in need of European missionaries, Orazio Bettacchini an Italian from the Oratory of St. Philip Neri at Citta de Castello willingly submitted himself at the service of Propaganda. In response to the repeated appeals of the Catholics of Sri Lanka for European missionaries, Bettacchini was sent by Propaganda to the Sri Lankan mission. He set foot on Sri Lankan soil on 28 November 1842 and was received by the Oratorians "as a brother" and the mission met all his expenses.<sup>35</sup>

Bettacchini was requested by Propaganda to send reports on the true state of the Sri Lankan mission and the missionaries.<sup>36</sup> Within one month of his arrival he had sent four reports without much objectivity in his observation.<sup>37</sup> From the reports drafted by Bettacchini one could see that he was prejudiced against the Oratorians, biased in his judgment and suspicious of all their activities. All acts of kindness of the Oratorians towards him were interpreted as seeking his support to elect one of the Oratorians as the new Vicar Apostolic. Due to his sharp criticism, attitude of rivalry, quick temper and hasty decision making, he had earned the enmity of the Oratorians very early in his missionary enterprise.

At the same time Bettacchini induced the Vicar Apostolic Caetano Antonio, to ask for European missionaries from Propaganda. Furthermore, Bettacchini had constantly exerted pressure on Propaganda to send more European missionaries and two major reasons motivated him to do so. Firstly he wanted to find a solution to the urgent problem of shortage of priests. Secondly he was firmly consolidating the position of European missionaries against the Goan Oratorians.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See VPB I, p. 318.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 357-358.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 314-325.

<sup>38</sup> See R. Boudens, *Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony, Immensee, 1979*, p. 44.

As promised to Bettacchini, Mgr. Caetano Antonio himself wrote to Propaganda requesting for more European missionaries. Rome on its part was seriously searching for European missionaries and a European Vicar Apostolic. This led to the arrival of the next batch of missionaries namely Frs. Maria Joseph Bravi, Froilano Oruna and Fiorenzo Garcia. But before their arrival another European, Fr. Andreas Reinaud had already been working in Sri Lanka.

In the meantime Propaganda Fide decided to nominate Bettacchini as the coadjutor to Mgr. Caetano Antonio.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Pope Gregory XVI on May 1845 by the brief "*Quum nobis compertum*" appointed Bettacchini as the Bishop of Torona and coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of the Island of Sri Lanka with right of succession and special care for Jaffnapatam.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the long-standing demand of the Sri Lankan Catholics and the search of Propaganda for a European Prelate were fulfilled with the nomination of Bettacchini as the coadjutor. Even after Bettacchini's nomination, the issue was not yet brought to a happy conclusion. Subsequently, vehement opposition came from the side of the Oratorians against Bettacchini's nomination.

### **Frs. Joseph Maria Bravi, Froilano Oruna and Fiorenzo Garcia.**

Following the request of Mgr. Caetano Antonio Propaganda sent three missionaries,<sup>41</sup> Joseph Maria Bravi, Froilano Oruna and Fiorenzo Garcia. They landed on Sri Lankan soil on 14 August 1845. Initially, the three new missionaries were accorded a cordial welcome by the Vicar Apostolic and the fourteen missionaries gathered in Colombo for the annual meeting and the celebration of the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Maria Bravi arrived in Sri Lanka on 14 August 1845. He succeeded Mgr. Caetano Antonio as the second Vicar Apostolic of Colombo on 24 January 1857 and died on 14 August 1860. Froilano Oruna was born in Cuba – central Spain in 1815 and became a Cistercian monk he came to Sri Lanka on 14 August 1845. See Bede Barcatta, p. 356. Fiorenzo Garcia was born at Toledo, Spain on 1 August 1815. He came to Sri Lankan mission on 14 August 1845. See Bede Barcatta, p. 356.

<sup>42</sup> See VPB II, p. 49.



Incidentally, the three missionaries brought also the bull of nomination of Bettacchini as coadjutor of Colombo. When the nomination was announced, the attitude of the Oratorians towards the new comers changed completely.<sup>43</sup> In the Colombo Cathedral they were provided with inconvenient accommodation. All the three were housed in one room in spite of the fact that there were two other vacant rooms.<sup>44</sup> They were sent by Propaganda with the specific mission of starting a seminary for the formation of native clergy and schools for the education of Catholic children. But, they were assigned to missions far distant from each other, to prevent them from having communication among themselves.<sup>45</sup>

The new missionaries were not allowed to participate in the annual general meeting held on 19 August 1845. Besides, the Oratorians decided to pay only two pounds sterling per month for a person to meet all his expenses.<sup>46</sup> The secretary Fr Caetano de Rosario expressed his anti-European attitude openly stating that, they (the Oratorians) had planted the mission and it was their sole right to enjoy its fruits.<sup>47</sup> In the meantime, Rome continued to search for more missionaries.

### **European as a Coadjutor - Vicar Apostolic and Objection of the Oratorians**

They all in one voice expressed their strong protest, rebellion and disappointment over the nomination of Bettacchini. The Oratorians refused to accept Bettacchini as their coadjutor; in clear and loud terms expressed that, they would disobey the authority if Rome persisted in installing Bettacchini; threatened to join schism and abstain from any mission work. They intimated their stand to the Vicar Apostolic and to Propaganda. Furthermore, the Oratorians requested the Vicar Apostolic not to publish the brief and not to confer Episcopal ordination upon Bettacchini until they receive from Rome a favourable reply to their petition.

On 22 August 1845, Mgr. Caetano Antonio sent a letter to Propaganda, informing the reactions of the Oratorians and their stand

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

over the nomination of Bettacchini.<sup>48</sup> On 23 August a letter of protest signed by nine Oratorians was sent to Propaganda stating the reasons why, they had decided to object the nomination of Bettacchini.<sup>49</sup> In their letter they categorically stated that Bettacchini was not a suitable candidate for the post of coadjutor detailing many negative qualities.

The Oratorians in the same letter demanded that one among them should have been nominated as the coadjutor. The tone of their letter clearly reveals their anger, rebellious attitude and discouragement over the nomination of Bettacchini. The Oratorians also accused Propaganda of overlooking their merits and favouring the Europeans in the nomination of a coadjutor.

Again on 31 August 1845, a second letter of protest with the same content as the previous with eighteen signatures of the Oratorians was sent to Propaganda. Now in this tensed situation amidst the strong opposition of the Oratorians the man at the centre, Bettacchini, found himself in an embarrassing position. The Catholics presented an address with more than one thousand signatures requesting him not to decline the offer of Bishopric and the coadjutor of Vicar Apostolic post. But on the contrary, if he were to accept the post he knew well he would earn the virulent antagonism of the Oratorians. Thus, on 12 September 1845 Bettacchini wrote to the Prefect of Propaganda Cardinal Franzoni seeking his advice and direction. In the letter he mentioned that he was even prepared to renounce the new appointment.

The Oratorians on 10 October sent a third letter of protest to Propaganda, placing their complaint that on account of their submission to the directives of the Pope they were unable to go back to Goa. The reaction and the negative attitude of the Oratorians over the nomination of Bettacchini greatly surprised Propaganda. Thus, Rome decided not to reply and ordered Mgr. Caetano Antonio to proceed with the Episcopal ordination of Bettacchini.<sup>50</sup> In the meantime, Bettacchini urged by the people and also having realized that the postponement of the publication of the Bull may bring adverse consequences, requested the Vicar Apostolic to publish the Bull. Mgr. Caetano Antonio though initially raised certain objections, later consented and published the Bull on 5 October 1845, at St. Lucia's Cathedral before a great concourse of

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-36.

<sup>50</sup> See VPB II, p. 88.



people.<sup>51</sup> On 8 February 1846, Bettacchini received his Episcopal ordination from the Vicar Apostolic Mgr. Caetano Antonio.<sup>52</sup> Except the Secretary Caetano de Rosario all other Oratorians were present at the consecration ceremony. But, even Caetano de Rosario urged by Fr. Bravi participated in the dinner hosted by the Vicar Apostolic to honour Mgr. Bettacchini on the following day.<sup>53</sup>

### **Bettacchini's first visit to Jaffna and his observations**

According to the directives of the Bull of nominations and the invitation of the people of Jaffna,<sup>54</sup> immediately after his Episcopal ordination Bettacchini planned to visit the Jaffna missions. But the Vicar Apostolic requested him to postpone his Jaffna visit to avoid further scandals.<sup>55</sup> The Vicar Apostolic had further stated that the Oratorians working in the Jaffna region had written to him to say that they would not accept the authority of Bettacchini in Jaffna.

Fr. Oruna describes the visit of Bettacchini to Jaffna as one with all kinds of insults and protests. But Bettacchini considers his pastoral visit to Jaffna as a successful event. According to Bettacchini, when he reached Kayts a big crowd of people and three Oratorians received him.<sup>56</sup> After three days of stay and a celebration of Solemn Mass, he proceeded to Jaffna on the following day where thousands of people and twenty British soldiers received him with much joy and a big demonstration.

On seeing the religious state of the Catholic people of Jaffna Bettacchini lamented over the utter ignorance of the people, regarding religious matters and the many abuses prevalent in their life; he also commented on the discouraging situation of educational facilities provided for the Catholic children in Jaffna.<sup>57</sup>

On his return from Jaffna, Bettacchini having fully realized the numerous limitations and defects prevalent in the mission was deeply convinced that some serious measures had to be taken for its reform and

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

development. Thus, on 12 February 1846 he suggested to the Prefect of Propaganda, certain changes and requested immediate implementation of them for the prosperity of the missions. 1) To instruct the Vicar Apostolic to permit the Coadjutor to perform his duties. 2) That the Secretary Caetano de Rosario being the real obstacle for any reform and the person behind all oppositions against the Europeans, be removed from his office immediately. 3) The Sacred Congregation should change its former orders that all European missionaries ought to go to the North. 4) That all missionaries are admitted to the annual meetings and all be treated just as the Goans. 5) That the subsidy received from the Propagation of Faith be sent directly to the coadjutor. 6) New orders to be issued regarding erecting a seminary. 7) More European priests to be sent to the Sri Lankan mission.

Bishop Bettacchini again in his letter of 16 March 1846 emphasized his helplessness and requested Propaganda to grant him some special facilities independent of the Vicar Apostolic. But Propaganda refused to comply with the request of the coadjutor.

In his exhortation the Cardinal Prefect advised the coadjutor to be prudent and patient in his dealings with the Vicar Apostolic to win over his confidence. But, Bettacchini was totally disappointed and unsatisfied with the reply of Propaganda.

In the meantime, the Oratorians headed by Caetano de Rosario; the Secretary compelled the Vicar Apostolic to suggest to Rome to divide the Vicariate into two. The Northern Vicariate to be administered by Bettacchini and the Europeans and the Southern by the Vicar Apostolic and the Oratorians with Matheo Caetano as the coadjutor.<sup>58</sup> As a reply to the request of the Vicar Apostolic on 13 April 1846, Propaganda informed him that it would consider his request.<sup>59</sup> But, Bettacchini strongly objected to this move.<sup>60</sup> For him, if all Europeans were to leave the South, the urgent need for schools and religious education of the Catholic community in the South would be severely neglected. Other European missionaries like Garcia<sup>61</sup> and Bravi<sup>62</sup> also objected to the division of the Vicariate.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*



Thus, Propaganda prudently sought the advice of Mgr. Bonnard regarding the proposal of the Vicar Apostolic Caetano Antonio.<sup>63</sup> Mgr. Bonnard recommended the division of the Vicariate but not the nomination of a Goan as the coadjutor of Colombo.<sup>64</sup> On 13 April 1846, Propaganda wrote to Bettacchini about the proposal of the Vicar Apostolic to divide the mission and requested him to express his opinion.<sup>65</sup> Bettacchini while supporting the division, opposed the nomination of a Goan Oratorian as the coadjutor of Colombo for the following reasons; 1) All abuses of the Oratorians had to be brought to an end. 2) Goan Oratorians are not capable of providing the urgent need of education, particularly English education. 3) The Southern Catholics themselves were not in favour of the Goans.<sup>66</sup> Bravi and Garcia<sup>67</sup> also supported the stand taken by Bettacchini.

### The Establishment of Jaffna Vicariate

Though officially, Bettacchini was the coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic, his pastoral activities were limited to that of an ordinary parish priest. He was not permitted to exercise any of his ministries as a Coadjutor.<sup>68</sup> In his parish of St. Philip Neri's Pettah, as a simple parish priest he administered the sacraments; preached the word of God, visited the sick, and attended to the spiritual needs of his flock.<sup>69</sup> Even though the sacrament of confirmation had not been administered by the Vicar Apostolic for a long period due to his ill health, Bettacchini was not invited to administer the same.<sup>70</sup>

In the meantime the relationship between Bettacchini and the Oratorians became more and more antagonistic and strained. Bettacchini fully realized that certain severe measures had to be adopted to counteract the nefarious plans of the Oratorians. Bettacchini, in a state of frustration and despair, impatient as he was, all of a sudden decided to go to Rome even without the knowledge of the Vicar

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>64</sup> See R. Boudens, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>65</sup> See VPB II, p. 59.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 152-155.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 216-218.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*,

Apostolic and the permission of the Prefect of Propaganda.<sup>71</sup> He left Sri Lanka with a firm determination of either renouncing his post as coadjutor or obtaining a portion of the Vicariate, which he could administer independently without the interference of the Goan Oratorians. Just before his departure, writing to Bravi from Galle on 17 January 1847, he stated, "I will try to persuade the Holy Father to deal a death-blow to the Goanese Hydra."<sup>72</sup>

Bettacchini who was present at the meeting and convinced Propaganda to yield to his demands regarding removal of the Secretary Caetano de Rosario from his office and the division of Vicariate. By the brief "*Pro Apostolic Muneris*" of 17 Sept 1847, Sri Lanka was divided into Colombo and Jaffna Vicariates.

On 17 September 1847 by the brief "*Iam inde*" Bettacchini was appointed by Pope Pius IX as the Pro-Vicar Apostolic of the Northern mission with necessary and expedient facilities<sup>73</sup> while retaining also the office of coadjutor of the Southern Vicariate. This appointment of the coadjutor was communicated to the Vicar Apostolic by the brief "*Salutare imprimis*" on 19 September 1847, by the same Pope Pius IX.<sup>74</sup>

As far as Bettacchini was concerned, his mission to Rome was a success. Propaganda granted him all what he wanted; specifically a separate and an independent area to be administered by him without any interference of the Oratorians and the removal of the Secretary Caetano de Rosario from his office.<sup>75</sup>

### Synthesis and Evaluation

To introduce renewal and reform in the Sri Lankan mission, several attempts were made by the Sri Lankan Catholics to obtain assistance from many responsible quarters. The number of memoranda sent by the people to the Oratorians, to Propaganda, to the Holy Father and to Mgr. Bonnard was clear evidence and indication of their sincere

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<sup>71</sup> See VPB II, p. 247.

<sup>72</sup> Hydra in Greek mythology was a nine headed monster to which as soon as one head was cut off two sprang in its place. This was a nick name given to the Secretary Caetano de Rosario by the European missionaries. See Burlington Universal Dictionary, p. 194.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p. 291.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p. 297.



endeavours. While these memoranda contained the actual defects of the Oratorians, their demands were centred on the Sacraments and other necessary requirements of Catholic life. The memoranda presented by the Catholics to Propaganda, though containing very legitimate and reasonable requests, was turned down by Propaganda authorities as a diabolical conspiracy and revolt against the newly elected Vicar Apostolic.

As for the Oratorians, they were lethargic and neglected their duties. They expected the people to adapt themselves to the convenience of their pastors, travelled about in horse drawn coaches or were carried in palanquins - thus leading comfortable lives, unmindful of any comments or criticism by their superiors or by the people at large.

Bettacchini was totally dissatisfied and strongly condemned the lifestyle of the Oratorians. In the same way several other Europeans confirmed the views of Bettacchini. The observations and the comments of Mgr. Bonnard proved beyond doubt the accusations of Bettacchini.

Propaganda on its part made sincere efforts to know the exact situation of the Sri Lankan mission. The assessments of Mgr. C. Bonnard after his visit to Sri Lanka, revealed a deep understanding of the situation of the Sri Lankan church, mainly regarding the danger posed by adherence of the Goan clergy to the *Padroado* cause. Had Propaganda seriously followed the suggestions of Mgr. C. Bonnard and appointed "a polished and a wise" European in place of Mgr. Bettacchini, the Sri Lankan mission could have been saved from many scandals, in-fights, conflicts and confrontations.<sup>76</sup>

Propaganda was fully convinced that to carry out its long-term plan, it was necessary to placate the Oratorians and integrate the European element immediately. At a stage when Propaganda was searching for a European Vicar Apostolic, the Oratorians demanded that one of them should be appointed to that office. Thus, Fr. Caetano Antonio was appointed as Vicar Apostolic in line with a suggestion made by Mgr. C. Bonnard.

As was expected by Propaganda, the arrival of the European missionaries was bitterly resented by the Oratorians who considered the presence of the European missionaries as a serious threat to their existence in the Sri Lankan mission. They also saw it as a sign of

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<sup>76</sup> See Bede Baracatta, p. 204.

disapproval and non-recognition of their services lasting over a hundred and fifty years.<sup>77</sup> The hostile and antagonistic attitude of the Oratorians turned into outrage when Bettacchini was appointed Coadjutor to the Vicar Apostolic of Sri Lanka.

In spite of the many objections and oppositions of the Oratorians, Bettacchini, due to his indomitable character and the support of a considerable number of people, managed to withstand all challenges. Though Bettacchini was content with the welcome accorded to him in Jaffna, he lamented the deplorable state of the spiritual life of the people and expressed his total dissatisfaction about the situation. The suggestions presented by Bettacchini to the Prefect of Propaganda on Jaffna Vicariate were centred on the spiritual renewal that needed to be brought about urgently.

The position of Bettacchini as the Co-adjutor continued to create tension and turmoil among the Oratorians. They were determined to harass and humiliate Bettacchini in all possible ways. The Coadjutor on his part was fully convinced that some radical measures had to be taken to counteract the conspiracy of the Goans.

At this juncture the decision of Propaganda to divide the mission into two Vicariates and to entrust the administration of the Northern Vicariate to Bettacchini and the Europeans was an equitable and prudent solution to the many problems encountered by the mission. When Propaganda sought advice from various responsible and competent people connected to this issue, they all expressed their opinions favourably to the decision of Propaganda.

For the Oratorians, the establishment of the Jaffna Vicariate and entrusting its administration to Bettacchini and the Europeans created an opportunity to get rid of their most hated enemy and dictator. For Mgr. Caetano Antonio, this would bring an end to the in-fights, conflicts and confrontations in the mission. Bettacchini initially objected to the move, as this would lead to the neglect of the educational needs of children and the necessary reforms in the South. But now he changed his mind as an independent Vicariate had been entrusted to him to plan out and implement reforms free from any interference by the Oratorians.

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<sup>77</sup> See VPB II, pp. xiii-xiv.



## Conclusion

Now, Bettacchini has been entrusted with a separate and independent Vicariate to be administered without any interference of the Oratorians and cater to the pastoral needs of the flock entrusted to him. Though his mission was clear to him, namely fostering deep spiritual renewal among his flock, he had to face many challenges. As the first Vicar Apostolic of the newly erected Jaffna Vicariate, his pioneering mission was rather demanding and challenging.

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