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EDITORIAL

Although Evangelical Christians in Asia form a minority of the Asian population, they are a fast-growing group. The situation in Sri Lanka is no exception to this rule. Christianity is Sri Lanka's third-largest religion, constituting approximately 8.0% of the population. Today, Christians are found all across Sri Lanka and in all walks of life. In many cases, conversion to Christianity through evangelical groups has enabled poor and marginalized people gain greater prosperity, self-confidence, and civic skills, a meaningful life; to become open-minded and enjoy the privileges of a democratic society. Christians have contributed significantly to and are well-represented in various spheres of national life in Sri Lanka. Evangelical Christians have taken the gospel to every nook and corner of the country even to the extent of alarming the other religionists of the country. Christian mission in this century reiterates the importance of Christian contact with non-Christians while evaluating the present condition of Christian witness in the world. It is our desire to make the Evangelical Christian aware of the issues of contemporary society.

The CTS Journal has been published since 2001. This is the sixth volume in the series. This volume inaugurates the practice of annual publication of this journal in order to encourage the participants to express their views on contemporary issues of the Church of Christ. This year, we have a number of articles from scholars from Sri Lanka and overseas.

This edition of the CTS Journal features eight papers on theological and historical issues, and six of them have particular relevance to issues in South Asia. We are truly happy to include these papers in the CTS Journal for it signifies our role as an evangelical vehicle of Asian theologizing – not only from our own constituency but also, whenever possible, from our evangelical partners.

The contributors, mainly younger scholars, bring in firsthand knowledge to the articles. The result is a groundbreaking work, indispensable to everyone concerned with the future of the region. Our contributors are Norman W Taggart *(The Irish in Sri Lankan Methodism)*, a Patron of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Former President (1997-1998) of the Methodist Church in Ireland; Derek Tidball *(Leaders as Servants: a Resolution*

of the Tension), a Visiting Scholar at Spurgeon's College London, UK, and Former Principal of the London School of Theology, UK; Roger E. Hedlund *(Methodology in Missiology)*, Editor of *Dharma Deepika* – the South Asian theological journal; Atul Y. Aghamkar *(Hindu Attitudes towards Christianity in Western India)*, Professor and Head of the Department of Missiology, South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, India; Ajith Fernando *(On Virginity)*, National Director of Youth For Christ Sri Lanka and a Bible Expositor with a worldwide ministry; Ivor Poobalan *(Exegetical and Interpretive Issues involved in Some Texts in Genesis 1–3)*, Principal of the Colombo Theological Seminary; Prabo Mihindukulasuriya *(Without Christ I Could Not Be a Buddhist: An Evangelical Response to Christian Self-Understanding in a Buddhist Context)*, Lecturer at Colombo Theological Seminary; and G. P. V. Somaratna *(A Brief examination of Medical Missions in Sri Lanka)*, Research Professor and Lecturer at the Colombo Theological Seminary.

It is our desire that the CTS journal will be a forum for interaction between academic and practical issues of the evangelical church in South Asia. This issue addresses different perceptions of concerns of the church regarding its ministry.

G. P. V. Somaratna

ON VIRGINITY

AJITH FERNANDO

INTRODUCTION

Deuteronomy 22:13-20 deals with maintaining the high value of marital sex. It has guidelines to protect people who have been unjustly accused of sexual sin. One of the themes that appears often in this section is how important it is for men and women to be virgins before marriage.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to say that when we speak about virginity we must apply it to both males and females, which is how this article addresses it. To apply it only to women would make us guilty of the sinful attitudes that plagued society through the centuries by demeaning women.

All this talk about virginity seems strange in an age where, in many circles, being a virgin is considered a thing about which an adult should be ashamed! The stunning statistic released by the US government that unmarried mothers gave birth to about 40% of the children born in the US in 2007 gives evidence of how this generation has rejected the biblical teaching about sex and marriage. In 1940, that figure was 3.8%.[1] Even more stunning is the statistic that 31% of the congregations in the US would accept a member of a cohabiting unmarried couple as a lay leader.[2] There is a lot of legitimate concern among Christians today about the growing acceptance of homosexual lifestyles. But I believe heterosexual sin is a far more prevalent problem in the church and there is a corresponding lack of emphasis on this

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[1] From a report "Changing Patterns of Non-Marital Childbearing in the United States," released by the National Center for Health Statistics. Reported by Gardiner Harris, *New York Times News Service,* and printed in the Bakersfield Californian, May 14, 2009.

[2] Cited in Ted Olson, compiler, "Go Figure," *Christianity Today*, May 2009, p.16.

problem. When advocates of homosexual lifestyles see opponents of such lifestyles paying so much attention to this issue without giving correspondingly serious attention to highly prevalent heterosexual sins, they could justify their branding of us as "homophobic"—i.e. haters of homosexuals.[3]

It would be true to say that in some areas we, who are under the New Covenant, need a somewhat different approach to sexual sin than what is found in the Old Testament. We know that the days of severe punishment for extra-marital sex are over, and under the New Covenant sinners can receive forgiveness for their sins and start a new life knowing that God has not only forgiven but also forgotten their sins (Jer. 31:34). A woman who had lived a very promiscuous life exclaimed, after her conversion: "In God's sight, I am a virgin."[4] That is how her fiancé should regard her before marrying her. Some are calling this "second-time virginity."[5]

Yet the promise of forgiveness for extra-marital sex does not take away from its seriousness. Jesus told the woman "caught in the act of adultery" (Jn. 8:4): "Neither do I condemn you". But immediately after that, he also told her: "…go, and from now on sin no more" (8:11). Paul said: "Neither the sexually immoral… nor adulterers… will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Then he says that some of his readers were also like this, but now they have been "washed…, sanctified…, justified." (1 Cor. 6:11). Hebrews 13:4 upholds the honour of marriage in relation to extra-marital sex when it says: "Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous". Adulterers and fornicators must give up their sin when they come to God and plan never to return to it; otherwise, a severe judgment awaits them.

Our belief in the importance of not having sex outside marriage is because of the great value we attach to sex inside marriage. People are so important

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[3] I owe this insight to my pastor friend Dr Matthew Ristuccia.

[4] This story was related by Becky Pippert at the Inter Varsity Urbana Student Missionary Conference in December 1987.

[5] See *Why Wait? 24 Reasons to Wait Until Marriage to Have Sex* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2005), p.6.

that they deserve the total commitment of one person until death. When people go from one sexual partner to another they not only cheapen sex, they also cheapen themselves. Ministers affirm the glory of marriage when they ask, in a Christian wedding service: “Will you love him/her, comfort him/her, honour and keep him/her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him/her as long as you both shall live?” The sexual and emotional satisfaction coming from such a relationship far outweighs that coming from extra-marital sex. We must teach our young people that they are special and that, if they are called to marriage, they have been reserved for one person who is to love them totally and be devoted to them for life. What freedom this gives! It opens the door to giving oneself fully to the sexual relationship with his or her spouse. You cannot abandon yourself fully to a person who is going to be with you only for a limited time. And the extent of deep enjoyment in sex is related to the extent of abandonment. Recent studies have demonstrated that married couples enjoy sex more than co-habiting couples.[6]

Being celibate until marriage, then, is ideal, not only because it is God’s law but also because it is God’s way to total sexual fulfilment in marriage. Tim Stafford says: “Virginity is a positive state... not the absence of experience, but the presence of potentiality, of openness, of the possibility of forming the strongest bond. Thus, it is to be treasured.”[7] The world may feed our children the idea that it is good to go to marriage with some sexual experience. We must counteract that by showing how much more valuable and enjoyable is the pilgrimage of discovery into the world of sex that one could have with the person who will be his or her loving spouse for life. There will be secret stories of mishaps and surprises to treasure and laugh at (just between themselves); there will be hurdles to overcome together through creativity and counsel; and there will be the freedom to enjoy sex without the guilt and restriction of having to hold back things from one’s spouse. It is worth waiting until marriage!

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[6] See Steven Tracy, “Chastity and the Goodness of God: The Case for Premarital Sexual Abstinence,” *Themelios,* Vol.31, 2 (January 2006), pp.54-71.

[7] In a personal letter to the author dated May 6, 2009.

In our ministry with youth, we have come to realize that one of the most important themes to communicate in the growth process of our youth is that God is truly concerned for them and has a wonderful plan—the best possible plan—for their lives. They have not seen such commitment that is devoted to their complete welfare in all circumstances. They have not seen models of the joy and fulfilment of a God-centred marriage. The world tells them it is OK to have sex outside marriage. Now, in a way that they have never experienced before, they are seeing attention paid to them by this person they are in love with. Under the delusion of such influences, they cannot resist the force of the physical attraction that leads them into a sexual relationship. Sadly, in Sri Lanka, we have even seen parents desiring and leaving room for their daughter to have sex with her boyfriend in the hope that that would bind him to their daughter and force him to marry her.

How important it is to convince our youth about the truth of Psalm 138:8. It says: “The LORD will fulfil His purpose for me; Your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.” I believe that convincing believers of the truth of this verse is one of the most important challenges in Christian nurture. They have been hurt by a lack of costly commitment and consistency in those they trusted to care for them. They do not have great hopes of experiencing deep happiness in life. So they settle for the second best—sex outside marriage. Their sights have been set too low! They are satisfied with too little! We have to show them that God will indeed care for them and “fulfil His [beautiful] purpose” for them and that His “steadfast love endures forever”—unfettered by time or circumstance. We will also show them the message in Proverbs[8] and the Song of Solomon[9] that delightful sexual pleasure awaits them in marriage, and that this is something to look forward to with eager anticipation.

The world has effectively communicated to millions of youth its belief that sex outside marriage is pleasurable, good, and helpful. We have to do all we can to wrest back this generation, which the world has misled, to the biblical view of sex. If people know deep down that extra-marital sex is harmful and will take away true joy, pleasure, and satisfaction, then they will build

[8] See e.g. Prov. 5:15-20
[9] See e.g. Song 4:1-7; 7:1-10.

defences against sexual temptation. They will avoid getting themselves into situations that will lead to sexual urges going out of control. They will refuse the persuasion of the person who says: “If you truly love me, you will sleep with me,” saying: “If you truly love and respect me and my body you will wait till marriage to have sex with me.” Considering the power of human sexual urges, people need all the help they can to control such until marriage.

In his book, *True Sexual Morality,* Daniel Heimbach says some wise words on why adultery is so serious in the Bible. I will close this article with some of them.

> Without marriage, sex is simply wrong, and God takes it so seriously He makes adultery the ultimate paradigm for breaking faith with Himself…. God’s prohibition of sex outside marriage is stated so clearly and repeated so often, God seems to have taken extra steps to make sure we do not miss its importance.[10]

> The positive principles at stake seem to be that sex outside of marriage erodes and ultimately destroys the precious value of exclusivity and selflessness in the sexual relationship…. Adulterous sex can never be exclusive and selfless. By its very nature, adulterous sex rejects the value of keeping sex exclusive and is driven by self-centred interests that pre-empt our responsibility to always do what is best for others—in this case, those depending on us in the areas of marriage and family life. But the value of exclusive, selfless sex is so good that God never allows less. He prohibits sex outside of marriage to keep us from losing what is best.[11]

[10] Daniel Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), p.178

[11] Heimback, *True Sexual Morality*, p.181

EXEGETICAL AND INTERPRETIVE ISSUES INVOLVED IN SOME TEXTS IN GENESIS 1–3

IVOR POOBALAN

INTRODUCTION

Genesis commends itself to the expositor by virtue of its foremost position in the Judeo-Christian arrangement of the canon. It is also in more ways than one a book of "beginnings", and thereby, further advances its claim for our attention.[1] Add to this the fact that Genesis has been at the centre of some of the most important theological, historical, and scientific debates of the last two hundred years, and it becomes virtually impossible for us to read Genesis as just another book in the Bible.

The extra attention paid to Genesis by archaeologists, philologists, and historians has been of inestimable worth for the work of translators and exegetes. The discovery of *Enuma Elish* and *The Stories of Gilgamesh*, for example, has paid rich dividends in terms of our approach to the interpretation of the creation and flood narratives of Genesis. Also, the textual data unearthed in Mesopotamia and the Levant has helped much to determine the correct readings of previously obscure morphemes, as well as to determine the semantic range of certain terms and idioms in Genesis. And, incredible modern advances in Egyptology have made some of the patriarchal narratives – especially the Joseph stories – come alive by enhancing their ambience of historicity.

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[1] "Genesis is obviously a book concerned with origins – the origin of earth's creation, of humankind, of institutions by which civilization is perpetuated, of one special family chosen by God as His own and designated as the medium of world blessing." Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis – Chapters 1-17*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), p.2.

Nevertheless there is still much work to be done to help the contemporary reader get closer to answering the 'what-*did*-it-mean?' question. Several terms, phrases, and concepts in Genesis that have acquired wide acceptance as to their meaning may in reality either be disputed, hence requiring critical evaluation; or pregnant with semantic possibilities, and hence invite wider consideration. In what follows, we shall examine nine terms, phrases and concepts from Genesis 1–3. These by no means exhaust such issues even within the three chapters under consideration, and this fact only invites sustained studies of the Hebrew text of Genesis.

בָּרָא in Genesis 1:1-2:3

The triconsonantal root ברא is found 6 times in Genesis 1:1–2:3. In the OT, in its 38 occurrences in Qal, and 10 in Niphal, it is translated 'created'; when found in the Piel form it carries the idea 'to cut'; in its only occurrence in Hiphil (1 Sam. 2:29) it is rendered 'make fat'.[2]

The reason for the great interest in the etymology and semantic possibilities of the term arises from its theological import, particularly within the development of Christian doctrine: "In the past biblical theologians, eager to discover theological significance in individual words have overloaded *br'*, create, with theological freight…"[3] The influence of metaphysical speculation on the Christian understanding of God and the world no doubt has further predetermined how generations of Christians have read ברא in Genesis 1–2:3, where the exegetical problem is often framed in terms of *how* God created (therefore, technical and substantial analyses such as *creatio ex nihilo*) rather than *that* God created (therefore, bringing to the fore the possible polemical and theological thrust of the passage).

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[2] The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1979), p.135.

[3] Raymond Van Leeuwen, "ברא" in Willem VanGemeren ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), p.731.

<u>*Issues to be considered*</u>

1. The relationship of בּרא I (Qal, Niphal) to בּרא III (Piel)

   a) If both usages reflect a single root with the general sense 'to cut', 'separate', the latter "can develop logically into 'create'.''[4] However, one must be cautious: "In the OT the two verbal stems, if once combined, are kept separate… the basic meaning 'to cut' etc., does not echo anywhere in the usage of *br'* qal/niphal" (Schmidt).

   b) If the two reflect entirely different roots,[5] then בּרא (Qal) "must be understood via *its uses* in the OT texts."[6]

2. בּרא (Qal/Niphal) in OT use

   a) The verb is only used of God. That בּרא is predicated to God in every one of 48 references easily becomes its most important feature from a biblical-theological perspective: "To the extent that the OT reserves the verb exclusively for God, this type of creation has no analogy and is, therefore, beyond conceptualization" (Schmidt).

   b) It is often used to connote the emergence of something new, and hence is at home within the New Exodus theology of Isaiah (thus the preponderance of *br'* here) as it is in Genesis,[7] although Mathews cites Ps. 51:10a and Is. 57:19 as examples where בּרא "does not mean an altogether new thing."[8]

   c) Note: The pervasive tendency among commentators to emphasize the 'significance' (to our interpretation of בּרא), by the non-mention of

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[4] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), p.99; see Van Leeuwen, p.732.

[5] See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), p.14.

[6] T. E. McComiskey, "בּרא" in Harris, Archer, Waltke eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago, Illinois: Moody, 1980), p.127.

[7] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p.14.

[8] Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26: The New American Commentary* (USA: Broadman and Holmes, 1996), p.128.

material from which God 'creates'[9] may be seen as one of the louder arguments from silence, particularly in view of the fact that the text under consideration also uses עשׂה, 'he made' to denote God's creative activity, again with no mention of primordial substance. The sparing-use of ברא may therefore have other explanations (see below).

d) It is also noteworthy that the translators of the LXX saw no loaded technical meaning to ברא. Of the 46 times they encounter it, κτιζω is used to translate only 17. Further κτιζω is not used for Genesis 1. There, the LXX is content to adopt ποιειν.[10]

3. ברא in Genesis 1:1-2:3

Our discussion above highlights the importance of listening carefully to the text. Of the 6 occurrences of ברא, its first and last are in the framing sections – 1:1 and 2:3 respectively. This may, therefore, suggest a controlling role for the term in terms of authorial intention. Its second appearance is in 1:21 which describes the creation of the sea monsters, fish and birds. Nevertheless it is conspicuously absent when the emergence of *land animals* is mentioned. Within an ANE view of a tripartite universe (sea, heavens, and earth), the most unfathomable and uncontrollable realm was thought to be the sea (and to a lesser extent the heavens). Earth and its creatures, due to domestication, did not present as great a sense of mystery. The text, then, is making a theological statement that the God *who created the universe*, and *who also controls the sea and heavens*, is the God *who created humankind*.

In 1:27 ברא is used *thrice* in three successive clauses. On the one hand, the repetition highlights that humankind is the most significant aspect of the creative work of God. On the other hand, the repetition of a term previously used to describe the genesis of 'the heavens and the earth' and 'the sea monsters and birds' raises the implication of human worth to a level far higher than any ANE cosmology ever conceived possible.

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[9] See Wenham, p.14; McComiskey, p.127; Nahum Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary – Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p.5.

[10] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p.100.

צלמ and דמות in Genesis 1:1-2:3

In Gen. 1:26, God determines to make humankind, בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ 'in our image, according to our likeness'. Although this exact phrase is unique in the OT (Gen. 5:3, the closest parallel, has בִּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצַלְמוֹ 'in his likeness, according to his image') its importance in the Judeo-Christian doctrine of humanity has made it one of the most discussed portions of Genesis 1: "This passage is unique in the OT… but, as the basis of the church's *imago dei* doctrine, elicited the greatest interest in the history of exegesis" (Wildberg). Westermann concurs: "…scarcely any passage in the whole Old Testament has retained such interest as the verse which says that God created the person according to his image."[11]

צלמ – Occurs 17 times in the OT and conveys the basic meaning 'cut out' or 'hewn.'[12] The few uses and the lack of a verb from the root in biblical Hebrew suggest to Wenham "that the meaning must have been as opaque to the native speaker as it is to us."[13] Another root that has been suggested from time to time is צל, 'shadow', with מ added to it. This proposal is rejected by Westermann.[14] Other than the 5 occurrences in Genesis (1:26, 27 – twice; 5:3 and 9:6), צלמ is used 10 times to refer to 'physical image' such as models of tumours, pictures of men or idols. In Ps. 39:7 and 73:20 it depicts man's existence as a shadow.[15]

דמות – There is greater certainty about how this should be translated. The noun is an "abstract formation of the verb דמה, 'to be like', and is found alongside each other in Is 40:8". The word is used in Hebrew only when something is compared with something else.[16] Of its 25 occurrences, the highest concentration is in Ezekiel, who uses the word "with many shades of

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[11] Genesis 1-11, p.148.
[12] BDB, p.853; Wenham, p.29.
[13] Wenham, p.29.
[14] Westermann, p.146.
[15] Ibid, p.29.
[16] Westermann, p.146.

meaning [that] fluctuate between 'representation' and 'something which is like'''.[17]

How is the collocation of צלמ and דמוּת (with the particular use of the preposition בּ and כּ) to be understood? The prepositions are interchangeable (see 1:26, 27; 5:1, 3; 9:6) and so Wenham and Westermann agree that no great difference is suggested by the different prepositions: "'According to our likeness' appears to be an explanatory gloss indicating the precise sense of 'in our image''' (Wenham).[18]

History of Interpretation

Through the centuries, the phrase בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ, and particularly 'the image of God' has been all too open to be "pressed into the service of contemporary philosophical and religious thought".[19] Therefore, it has been interpreted 'soul' (Ambrose, the Enlightenment), 'rationality' (Athanasius), 'triune faculties of soul' (Augustine), and 'the state of original righteousness' (Reformers).[20] To the question 'In what does the 'image' and 'likeness' consist?' Wenham notes five solutions:[21]

1. Image and Likeness are distinct as 'natural qualities' versus 'supernatural graces'.

2. Image refers to the mental and spiritual faculties man shares with his creator.

3. The image is physical resemblance

4. The image makes man God's representative on the earth.

5. The image as the capacity to relate to God.

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[17] Westermann, p.147.
[18] Wenham, pp.28-29; Also see, Westermann, pp.145-146.
[19] D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man" in *Tyndale Bulletin 19* (1968), p.54.
[20] Ibid, pp.54-55.
[21] Wenham, pp.29-30.

Conclusion

The view best supported by ANE parallels is #4, which sees image as a representative of something, most often of a god or king. G. von Rad: "As earthly rulers erect images of themselves in the provinces as signs of their presence, so too has God put human beings on earth in his image and likeness as a sign of his majesty."[22] The 'image' of the god was exclusively thought of, whether in Mesopotamia or Egypt, to be the king.[23] In an Egyptian reference Amun Re addresses Amenhophis III as, "my very own image, which I have put upon the earth. I have permitted thee to rule over the earth in peace."[24] The association of 'rule' with 'image' is found also in Genesis 1, and further strengthens the argument for a similar *sense* for צלמ. However, in Genesis, 'humankind' has taken the place of the king. This then makes the scripture once again an engaged theology speaking to the presuppositions of the time. It challenges the notion of a hierarchy of human worth. By 'democratizing' (Wenham) צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים it makes humanity (as a corporate entity) the vice-regent of the Creator on earth. To Clines this means that humanity is "to deputize in the created world for the transcendent God," which makes humanity, "the visible, corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God" and, "the image comes to expression not in the nature of man so much as in his *activity and function*" (italics added).[25]

To a final question as to whether 'image of God' is restricted to humanity before the Fall, Genesis implies the opposite by affirming its continuance by way of the reaffirmation in Genesis 9:6.

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[22] Cited in Westermann, p.151.
[23] Westermann, 152-153; Wenham, pp.29-31.
[24] Westermann, p.153.
[25] Clines, "The Image of God in Man" p.101.

The Use of רָקִיַע in Genesis 1:1-2:3

The noun רָקִיַע is used 9 times in Genesis 1:1-2:3. It is translated 'expanse'[26] 'firmament,'[27] and 'dome'[28]. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (BDB)* sees it as fundamentally denoting an 'extended surface, (solid) expanse'.[29] The LXX adopted στερεωμα, and the Vulgate, *firmamentum*.

The issue in translation is whether to conceive the word as an equivalent of the modern concept of 'the sky' or 'atmosphere', or whether it is a term whereby the reader may detect an ancient interpretation of phenomenological observation which believed the earth to be covered over by a solid mass.

The idea of an 'expanse' lends itself more easily as a synonym of 'atmosphere', whereas the usage of 'dome' or 'firmament' conveys the idea of a solid sheet or cover extending above the earth and meeting the earth at its horizon.

Mathews is convinced "the 'expanse' is the atmosphere that distinguishes the surface waters of the earth… from the atmospheric waters or clouds…".[30] For Waltke, it is "the atmosphere or sky".[31] Based on the description of the רקִיַע as "a divider between the waters" Wenham thinks "the firmament occupies *the space* between the earth's surface and the clouds" (italics added), although he remains ambivalent as to the exact nature of the רקִיַע.[32]

At the other end of the spectrum, Westermann (quoting Gunkel: "This heavenly sea is originally heaven itself, which is described as a crystal-clear mass of water suspended above 'the sea of glass' of Rev. 4:6") views רקִיַע as

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[26] *NIV*; Mathews, p.150; Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), p.62.

[27] Wenham, pp.2-3; David Toshio Tsumura, "uyqr" in Willem VanGemeren ed. *NIDOTTE*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), p.1198.

[28] *NRSV*.

[29] BDB, p.956.

[30] Mathews, p.150.

[31] *Genesis*, p.62.

[32] *Genesis 1-15*, pp.19-20.

a solid mass: “In earlier times the heavens were almost always regarded as solid.”[33] Sarna notes that the term is unparalleled in the cognate languages. He prefers to make a choice only between ‘a gigantic sheet of metal’ and ‘a solid layer of congealed ice’. On the basis of Ezekiel 1:22 he opts for the latter.[34]

The most thorough treatment of רקִיַע has been attempted by Paul Seely.[35] Having surveyed the notion of ‘the sky’ among several ‘scientifically naïve people’ including the Sumerians, Egyptians, and Babylonians, he concludes that all without exception thought of the sky as a solid mass:

- As to the ‘Biblical-Grammatical’ meaning (see p.237f) he asks the pertinent question whether, “any statement or phrase appear(s) in the OT which clearly states or implies that the *raqia* is not solid?”

- As for שׁמַָיִם, which Genesis 1:8 says was what God called the רקִיַע, Seely sees ‘heavens’ as broader in meaning than *raqia*, and encompassing not only *raqia*, but the space above and below it as well.

- The fact that the text speaks of the birds flying, על־פְּנֵי רְקִיַע הַשָּׁמָיִם (upon the face of the *raqia* of the heavens) and not *in* the *raqia* is telling.

- Also Gen. 1:14f speaks of the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. The great lights are ‘set *in* the רקִיַע’.

- Further, for a description of the separation of the tangible lower water from the water above by ‘air’ or ‘atmosphere’ (non-solid) the choice of רקִיַע would be, ‘particularly unfortunate since its verbal cognate *raqa‘* (“stamp, beat, spread out”) is used of hammering metal into thin plates.

[33] *Genesis 1-11*, p.117.

[34] *JPS Torah Commentary – Genesis.*

[35] “The Firmament and the Water Above – Part I: The Meaning of *raqia* in Genesis 1:6-8,” *Westminster Theological Journal 53* (1991), pp.227-240.

- Finally, the statement in Ezekiel 1:26 that mentions Ezekiel's vision of the *raqia* supporting a throne with a man on it, suggests to Seely one of the strongest arguments for *raqia* to be a solid mass.

<u>*Conclusion*</u>

On the basis of the etymology and an awareness of ANE cosmologies, along with the implied meaning of the term in the context of OT literature as a whole, it is best to interpret רָקִיעַ as a solid expanse or dome. Although this conceptualization flies in the face of our modern, scientific understanding of the natural world, this fact should present no insuperable difficulties for the exegete if she were to see Genesis 1:1-2:3 as a piece of communication to a readership that shared in common the ANE worldview of the 2nd millennium BC. This communication, we may venture to say, was (and is) inspired not in its assumptions about the natural world, but in its assertions about the God whom the Hebrew people worshipped.

The Meaning of אֵד in Genesis 2:6 and the Implications for Interpretation

The translation of אֵד in Genesis 2:6 has a history of great diversity; from the LXX, Vg. and Syriac, understanding it to be a "spring" or "fountain" (LXX uses πηγη, 'fountain'), to it being rendered "rain cloud', "vapour" or "mist" in ancient Aramaic versions. Today the EVV reflect this ambivalence: "mist" (KJV, RSV, NEB); "flood" (JB); "streams" (NIV, NRSV).[36] The word occurs only here in the MT, while its cognate אֵדוֹ occurs in Job 36:27. In its Genesis context how אֵד is understood affects the interpretation of the narrative considerably. For example if v6 is rendered, 'And a mist went up and watered the whole face of the ground', the reader will be at a loss to understand how this logically follows v5 which emphasizes the *barrenness* of the earth *on account of the absence of rain.*[37]On the other hand on what grounds does JB translate, 'flood', and Wenham use, 'fresh water ocean'? How does אֵדוֹ (Job

[36] Also see Wenham, 58; David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1-2* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1989), p.94.

[37] See Wenham, p.59: "If there was such an abundant water supply for the land (v.6), why did v.5 convey the impression of an arid wilderness barren through lack of rain?"

36:27) contribute to the interpretation of Genesis 2:6? We must also consider how the verbs יַעֲלֶה and הִשְׁקָה clarify אֵד in the context of 2:6.

Wenham translates, 'But the *fresh water ocean* used to *rise up* from the earth and *water* the whole surface of the land'.[38] He sees the phenomenon in positive terms. Consequently, he postulates that the only reason for the "impression of an arid wilderness" (in spite of the 'abundant water supply') is "man's absence".[39] This positive estimation is also seen in Hamilton: "The picture is not one of total aridity. Though rain does not yet pour from the heavens, an *'ed* does rise from the ground to water the earth's surface."[40] Mathews however states the problem quite succinctly: "Was the absence of plant life due to a lack of water or too much water?"[41] Some scholars get past the difficulty of reconciling the aridity of v5 with the mention of אֵד in v6 by positing the conflation of two sources.[42] Three considerations have propelled modern interpretations of אֵד: its predicate in 2:6 ('watered the whole face of the ground'); the use of the allomorph אֵדוֹ (Job 36:27); and comparative philology (Sumero-Akkadian *id* and *edu*).[43] After his exhaustive study of the etymology of the term, Tsumura favours the idea that אֵד is a 'loan word directly borrowed from Sumerian *ede*, while 'אֵדוֹ is a loanword from Sumerian *via* Akkadian *edu*'.[44] Both mean "high water", i.e. the water flooding out of the subterranean ocean.[45] Kidner's argument is compelling in that he holds to the integrity of vv.5-6. The latter is understood as 'a twofold expansion of 4b'. The phrase there, 'In the day that the Lord God made earth and the heavens', is given specific content first by the negative statement of

[38] *Genesis 1-15*, p.58.

[39] Ibid, p.59.

[40] Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, p.154.

[41] Genesis 1 – 11:26, p.195.

[42] See Wenham, p.59; Derek Kidner, "Genesis 2:5,6: WET OR DRY," Tyndale 17 (1966), pp.111-112: "It was only to be expected therefore that various scholars would find the two verses incompatible and deduce from this either a disturbed sequence or a composite narrative."

[43] See Kidner, "Genesis 2:5,6: WET OR DRY," p.110.

[44] *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2*, pp.93-116.

[45] Ibid, p.115.

v.5 “not yet…not yet…not…none”, followed by the positive statement of v6.[46] The whole (2:4b-6) recalls 1:2 and is hence paraphrased:

> When God made earth and sky these were not initially at all as we know them now. Not even the wild growth existed on earth, still less the cultivated crops. Even the familiar heaven with its clouds and rainfall were not yet in evidence. On the contrary the whole earth was inundated by waters that welled up again and again from within it.[47]

This explains both v5 and the use of יַֽעֲלֶה. Nevertheless it must be noted that the use of הִשְׁקָה poses some difficulty because the word is never used to denote “destructive flooding.” [48]

This study demonstrates that it is safe to see אֵד as meaning ‘high water’ coming up from the subterranean ocean and inundating the land until Yahweh acted to exercise control and bring order (hence the need for נהר to stream *out* of Eden). Consequently the different presentations of 1:2f and 4:4f assert the same theological point: God acts upon the seamless disorder, symbolized by מים or אֵד to establish an organized environment for the nurture of humanity.

The Trees in Genesis 2:9 and the Expression ‘Good and Evil’

Genesis 2:9 attests that Yahweh created an environment in Eden that included ‘all [kinds of] trees’ that were aesthetically pleasing and practically necessary for the human pair. The writer then states: וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הַגָּן ‘And the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’. The text is not explicit if this is a statement about *two* trees, or *two descriptions* of *one* tree. The unfolding narrative (see esp. 2:17; 3:1-7, 11-13, 17, 22-24) has suggested to most readers that here we have a reference to two trees. However, it must be noted that although the ‘tree of life’ is found frequently in the Scriptures (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19), the title ‘tree of the

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[46] Kidner, p.112.

[47] Ibid, p.113.

[48] Tsumura, pp.121-122.

knowledge of good and evil' occurs only twice – 2:9, 17 respectively. It is conspicuously absent in Genesis 3, although possible allusions are made by 'the tree', or 'the tree in the middle of the garden', or 'the tree from which I forbade you to eat'.[49]

The idea that the narrative 'is concerned with one tree only' was first advanced by Budde in 1929, and is reiterated by Westermann: "He has shown that there is only one tree in the body of the narrative, 3:2, 3, 5, 11, 12, and that it is qualified in two ways – the tree in the middle of the garden, 3:3, and the forbidden tree, 3:11".[50] Most commentators, however, see two trees.[51] This conclusion may be arrived at fairly by reading the narrative 2:4-3:24 as a whole:

1. In 2:9, two titles are introduced – 'tree of life' and 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil'.

2. In 2:17, man is commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3. In 3:1-6, the narrative assumes the reader's familiarity with the categories introduced in 2:9, 17. Hence, when one reads that to eat from the tree 'that is in the middle of the garden' would be to be 'like God *knowing good and evil*' the closest antecedent, the forbidden tree of 2:17, informs the hermeneutic.

4. The matter is put beyond dispute by the use of the word גמ in 3:22. This verse suggests that having eaten of the tree, man and woman have 'become like God knowing good and evil'. Now, in contrast to the previous divine self-deliberations that culminated in the creation of humanity (1:26) and the creation of woman (2:18), we hear another divine self-deliberation that results in the banishment of humanity from the nurture of the garden. This is because "he might reach out his hand and take *also* (גמ) from the tree

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[49] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p.213.
[50] Ibid, p.212.
[51] See Wenham, p.62; Mathews, p.202; Hamilton, p.162.

of life, and eat, and live forever" (NRSV). The implication then is that they had eaten of the one, and so had to be prevented from partaking of the other.

So, we may safely conclude that the absence of the title 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' in chapter 3, may be attributed to literary artistry and brevity, rather than to an underlying confusion as to the exact number of trees that were in 'the middle of the garden'.

In what manner would the forbidden tree provide *the knowledge of good and evil*? Five views advanced in the history of interpretation are: 1) This phrase stands as *a description* of the consequences of disobedience. 2) Moral discernment. 3) Sexual awareness. 4) Omniscience (by reading 'good and evil' as a merism denoting all that is to be known). 5) Wisdom (esp. the use הַשְׂכִּל in 3:6).[52] Both commentators prefer to see הַשְׂכִּל as a clue that 'wisdom' is in fact the promise of the tree: "Contrary to expectation, man is allowed to eat of the tree of life, but not of the tree of *wisdom*, for that leads to human autonomy…"[53] Hamilton on the other hand prefers to see 'good and evil' as a *legal idiom* for moral autonomy - the ability "to formulate and articulate a judicial decision."[54] This reading has the advantage in that it sits well with most other OT passages that use this very same idiom (Gen. 24:50; 31:24, 29; Deut. 1:39; 1 Kgs. 3:9; 22:18). "What is forbidden to man is the power to decide for himself what is in his best interests and what is not."[55] Sailhamer agrees:

> The inference of God's command in Genesis 2:16-17 is that God alone knows what is good for human beings and God alone knows what is not good for them. To enjoy the "good" we must trust God and obey him. If we disobey, we will have to decide for ourselves what is good and what is not good. While to modern men and women such a prospect may seem

[52] Wenham, p.63; Mathews, pp.203-206.
[53] Ibid, p.87.
[54] *The Book of Genesis*, pp.162-166.
[55] Ibid, p.166.

> desirable, to the author of Genesis it is the worst fate that could have befallen humanity.[56]

A Comparison of the Accounts of the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1 and 2

Wenham calls Genesis 2:4–3:24 "the first story in the Bible" in which "Hebrew narrative art is seen at its highest."[57] If Genesis 1:1-2:3 sets out to present *God* – as the originator of the universe who appoints humankind to the position of vice-regent of the earth – Genesis 2:4-25 is completely focused on *humanity* in its relationships and responsibilities. It has been fashionable in the past to see the narratives of Genesis 1 and 2 as evidence of two sources P and J.[58] However, such an analysis becomes unnecessary when we give credence to the logic evident within the narrative, i.e. the possibility that 2:4-24 *expands* on the major theme of 'humanity' introduced in 1:26ff.

> Chapter 2 is not another creation story. As such it would be singularly incomplete. In fact it presupposes knowledge of much of the preceding account of creation. Many of the leading ideas in the earlier account are here reiterated, though the mode of presentation is different.[59]

In Genesis 1:26ff humans are: created in God's image; differentiated as male and female; and given authority over the earth in God's stead. In 2:4–24 the reader is helped to understand the relationships and responsibilities that *being human* entails. The comparisons are both striking and informative:

1. Genesis 2:7 contrasts with 1:26-27 in that whereas the latter emphasizes humanity as the divine image-bearer, the former asserts his origin in the עפר of the earth. This would explain to the reader his awareness of human frailty.

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[56] John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), p.101.

[57] *Genesis 1-15*, p.86.

[58] See the discussion in Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, pp.152-153.

[59] Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary*, p.16.

2. In 1:28 human beings are commanded to have dominion over the rest of the animal kingdom. The *naming* of the animals and birds in 2:19-20 picks up this same theme of exercising dominion.

3. Gen. 1:27 only mentions the differentiation of the sexes. Gen. 2:18-25 elaborates, in a blend of prose and poetry, how exactly this differentiation is to be understood. So, in 1:26f the impression is that male and female were created independent of each other. However, 2:21-22 spells out woman's creation *out of* man to be a 'helper' for him. Further, 2:23 demonstrates that man exercises authority over woman by his act of *naming* her.

4. Whereas 1:26-27 bases the equality of the sexes on their mutual sharing of the *imago dei*, 2:21-24 shows an equality based on 'their essential constitution'.[60]

5. The creation of woman receives attention unparalleled in the ANE.[61] Mathews comments: "This full description of woman's creation is unique to the cosmogonies of the Ancient Near East. The Hebrews' lofty estimation of womanhood and its place in creation was not widely held by ancient civilizations."[62] This fact is brought to sharper relief when we note how the author uses only one verse to describe the creation of אדמ but goes on to devote *six* to introduce the creation of אשׁה.

Genesis 1 introduces humanity as the product of the creative power of a majestic, sovereign being – אלהימ. By using the unique compound name יהוה אלהימ the narrative of Genesis 2 shows humanity as enjoying a covenant relationship with its creator. God fashions man personally like a potter; breathes into his nostrils the breath of life; plants a beautiful garden for his nurture; deliberates about his need for a companion; 'builds' (בּנה) a

[60] Mathews, p.213.
[61] Hamilton, p.177.
[62] *Genesis 1 – 11:26*, p.212.

woman who ‘matches’ the man perfectly (כנגדו, lit., ‘like opposite him’),[63] and presents her to the man.

Finally, we note the emotional, poetic response of the man in v.23 denoting the intimacy that has ever thereafter characterized to large measure the relationship between the sexes, and the narrator’s concluding comment in v.24 that has become for all generations of Jewish and Christian communities the definitive statement on marriage.

The Serpent in Genesis 3

One of the best known images from Genesis comes from the story of the dialogue between Eve and the serpent (נחשׁ) in chapter 3. נחשׁ is the most general term for snake in the OT (corresponding to οφις in the LXX), and could be used for any of the over thirty species of snakes found in Palestine. The OT has a number of more specific categories: פתן (cobra), צפע (adder), שׁפיפן (viper), שׂרף (Flying Serpent), among others. It is used a total of 31 times, and most often bears connotations such as danger, evil, and destruction.[64] Significantly נחשׁ is found *five* times in Genesis 3, and the portrait we find there is not discussed, or alluded to anywhere else in the OT. Such imagery is used again only in the NT, particularly in Revelation 12:9-15; 20:2.

What then is the significance of נחשׁ in the context of Genesis 3? It is noteworthy that ‘serpent’ bore rich symbolism in the whole of the ANE and was a chief character in mythological narratives whether in Mesopotamia, West Asia or Egypt. One Egyptian text, ‘The Repulsing of the Dragon’ shows how *Re* is daily confronted by a serpent-adversary. A common personification of evil was the serpent (*apep* or *aphopis*) who threatens to return the world to chaos.[65] This abhorrence of serpents is also found among the Hittites and in Ugarit as

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[63] Wenham, *Genesis 1- 15*, p.68.

[64] “Serpent” in *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (IDB)* (Tennessee: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 289-291; Robert Stallman, “vjn” in Willem Van Gemeren ed., *NIDOTTE*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), pp. 84-88.

[65] W. Hallo and L. Younger, *Context of Scripture (COS)*, vol. 1, p.32.

well.[66] In the epic of Gilgamesh we find the most interesting collocation of ideas also reflected in the Bible: the desire for immortality, the plant of life, and *a serpent* who steals the plant of life from Gilgamesh and hence frustrates his plans for immortality.[67] The plague of poisonous serpents in the wilderness (Num. 21:4-9) would have been a recent memory for the generation of the exodus. While we cannot with certainty know which of these ideas added to the connotations associated with נחשׁ in Genesis, the symbolism was universal: "The snake was universally feared in the ANE and symbolized sovereignty, life, fertility, wisdom, chaos and death."[68] However, we may detect that Genesis 3 doesn't simply repeat borrowed ideas. Rather, it employs the categories polemically to underscore a theological point.[69] In this case "… [it] introduces the snake as one of God's creations, not a dualistic counterpart of Yahweh."[70]

At the same time, the writer could hardly find a better anti-God symbol than the serpent. Later (3:14-15), the narrative will unfold to show how the serpent is stripped of even its created glory – from being 'crafty' (ערוּמ) it will be 'cursed' (ארוּר) above the other animals: it will be reduced to crawling on its belly, and it will eat dust (a metaphor for humiliation).[71]

The mention of the serpent in Genesis 3 is shrouded in ambiguity. The OT nowhere offers a commentary or explanation. But Luther, in common with a strong tradition says: "The devil was permitted to enter beasts, as he here entered the serpent. For there is no doubt that it was a real serpent in which Satan was, and in which he conversed with Eve".[72] However, Westermann disagrees: "One cannot… conclude that the serpent is a demon or a divine being opposed to God. The text says nothing about such enmity toward God. The serpent has its place only in the incident of the temptation, and is

[66] Ibid, p.150 and pp.295-298.
[67] See Wenham, pp.72-73; Westermann, pp.213-214.
[68] Stallman, p.85.
[69] Mathews, p.233.
[70] Stallman, p.85; see also, Westermann, p.238.
[71] Ibid, p.86.
[72] Mathews, p.233.

introduced only for this."[73] At the least it may be agreed that the serpent is presented as *imagery* for evil. This is further accentuated by the use of the verb נחשׁ 'to practice divination, observe signs' within the Pentateuch (Gen. 30:27; 44:5, 15; Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10). God's expressed abhorrence towards this practice, and the frequent association of Near Eastern divination formulae with serpents, adds 'a more sinister nuance' to the serpent in Genesis 3.[74]

From a theological point of view, one is struck by how effectively the writer uses the serpent-imagery to discuss the problem of evil:

- The introduction of the serpent underscores the fact that evil *does not* originate with human beings who were created 'very good' (Gen. 1:26f)
- The serpent functions to represent all that is evidently anti-God in the created order.
- At the same time the serpent symbolism only functions to explain the *reality* of evil, *not the origin* of evil.[75]

What Does 'The Serpent Deceived Me' Mean in Genesis 3:13?

In response to the interrogation by יהוה אלהים in Genesis 3:13, the woman answers, הַנָּחָשׁ הִשִּׁיאַנִי וָאֹכֵל, 'the serpent *deceived* me and I ate'. The verb נשׁא (used here in the *hifil*, as in 15 out of 16 occurrences in the OT) is translated 'to cause a deception'. This idea is well reflected in 2 Kings 8:29/ Isaiah 36:14 where the king of Assyria asks Hezekiah not to be 'deceived' into thinking God would save him, and urges the people not to let Hezekiah 'deceive' them with such false hopes. However, Genesis 3:13 is the only occasion when נשׁא is used in the Pentateuch, and this raises questions about what exactly the woman might have intended. Etymologically it has been

[73] *Genesis 1-11*, p.238.

[74] *The Book of Genesis*, p.187.

[75] See Mathews, p.232; Westermann, p.239: "The origin of evil remains a complete mystery.... The temptation stands as something absolutely inexplicable; it appears suddenly amid the good that God has created. It will remain there as a riddle."

argued that נשׁא is closely related to the adjective שׁוא "ineffectiveness, falseness."[76]

In the light of the latter possibility it is significant that שׁוא is the key idea found in the 3rd commandment (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11): "You shall not *misuse* (שׁוא) the name of יהוה your God" (lit. "you shall not lift up to *falsehood*").[77] Here then, contrary to the commonly held notion that to 'misuse' the name of Yahweh is to employ 'Yahweh' or 'God' in a light and frivolous manner, Shepherd argues, the meaning is rather to do with using 'the Lord's name in giving false testimony'. In addition, its "juxtaposition to the first two commandments, which deals with false gods, and the fourth commandment, which has to do with worship, may suggest that what is being forbidden is syncretistic worship."[78]

It must be remembered at the outset that the first *readers* of the Genesis text could not antedate the community of the exodus, which means that the laws at Sinai, and the experiences of the wilderness would prominently inform their presupposition pool. Consequently when the woman says: "The serpent הִשִּׁיאַנִי and I ate", it is not implausible to imagine that the first readers related this to its cognate in Exodus 20:7 and understood the hifil as "the serpent *caused me to be deceived*, i.e. to falsify who God really is, and I ate". Does the context support or dispel such an interpretation?

The dialogue in 3:1-5 and the woman's consequent action in 3:6-7 forms the background to 3:13. Here, it is immediately apparent that 'God' is the central theme of the dialogue. The serpent frames his question with, "Did *God really say*…" This draws the woman to express her 'theology' (vv.2-3), which in turn enables the serpent to launch a 'frontal attack' on God's person (name?) with the counter, לֹא־מוֹת תְּמֻתוּן, 'certainly you will not die' or 'it is not certain

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[76] E. Carpenter and M. Grisanti, "avn" in Willem Van Gemeren ed., *NIDOTTE*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), pp.182-183: "The word is considered to be related to saw, deceit, the hi. of the form arising directly from "saw," and the ni. being a secondary development. This seems to be acceptable based on present knowledge."

[77] Jerry Shepherd, "שׁוא" in Willem Van Gemeren ed., *NIDOTTE*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), p.54.

[78] Ibid, p.54.

you will die'. This usurps the authority of what God has said (God's word), followed by casting doubt on God's intention. Together they lead to the woman's folly.[79]

Within this understanding of 'being deceived' it becomes readily apparent that Genesis 3:1-13 would function as the grid through which the Israelites were to understand their penchant for idolatry and syncretism (cf. The Golden Calf incident in Exodus 32), whereby they elevated in their lives claims that ran counter to the demands of Yahweh and of His revelation of Himself. Every time they 'lifted up to falsehood the name of Yahweh', i.e. adopted a position that falsified (שׁוא), by their choices and actions, who God really is, they were 'being deceived' (נשׁא) to partake with Eve in a decision that leads to death (מות), the utter alienation from their creator.

The Meaning of שׁוּף in Genesis 3:15

שׁוּף is found only in three texts in the OT (Gen. 3:15; Job 9:17; Ps. 139:11). As such, it does not bear a clearly established meaning. It is thought to be a cognate of the Akkadian *sapu*, 'to trample or bruise'. A second form שׁוּף (II) may derive from שׁאף, 'to grasp or pant after.'[80] The uncertainty surrounding Genesis 3:15, and the vast literature that has been generated as a result, has been compounded by the suggestion that both aforementioned meanings may be reflected in the two uses of שׁוּף in the verse![81]

This tension was set in motion centuries ago when the Vulgate chose to use two different words in Genesis 3:15. When 'the seed of woman' is the subject it chooses *coterere*, 'to crush'; when 'the serpent' is the subject it uses *insidiari*, 'to lie in wait'.[82] On the basis that "the two actions are different, corresponding to the different bodily forms of the parties," Westermann

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[79] Hamilton, p.189: "First he has directed the woman's attention to God's Word, now he directs her attention to God's inner thoughts."

[80] Cornelius Van Dam, "[Wc" in Willem VanGemeren ed., *NIDOTTE*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), pp.66-68.

[81] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p.80.

[82] Marten Woudstra, "Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15," *CTJ 6* (1971), pp.194-195.

prefers to render the first use of שׁוּף as 'crush', and the second as 'snap at'.[83] Such an approach (though for quite another reason!) is followed in the *JB* and *NIV*.[84]

The effect of the latter two translations is to support the traditional catholic and evangelical emphasis on Genesis 3:15 as the *protevangelium* which, from Iranaeus to the present has seen in this verse the first promise of the coming messiah in Jesus Christ.[85] These translations also convey a sense of finality to the envisaged-conflict, which is read back from the standpoint of the cross of Christ. Saydon argues that the use of the Hebrew 'conative imperfect' תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ supports this understanding.[86] He proposes that the "correct translation is 'he will attack you in the head, and you will try to attack him in the heel.'"[87] However this is by no means the only way Genesis 3:15 has been read. A number of critical scholars have not seen here the promise of a messiah.[88]

Since the contexts of Job 9:17 and Psalm 139:11 lend themselves to support some variation or latitude in the translation of שׁוּף, we are forced to revert to the *context* of Genesis 3:15 as the best guide in appropriating the intended meaning. Woudstra identifies *four* basic questions that arise: 1) Should a relatively weak word ('strike at') or a stronger ('crush') be used? 2) Should one and the same word be used in both occurrences? 3) What is the exact meaning of שׁוּף? 4) What is the temporal scope of the activity here envisaged in the context of the divine pronouncements upon man, woman, and serpent?[89] The verse itself presents a basic emphasis on 'enmity' (איבה) between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent. This noun occurs again only in Numbers 35:21; Ezekiel 25:15; 35:5. In the latter two it bears the sense of 'perpetual conflict'.[90]

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[83] *Genesis 1-11*, p.260.

[84] See Woudstra, p.195; Hamilton, p.197.

[85] Westermann, p.260; Walter Wifall, "Gen 3:15 – A Protevangelium?" *CBQ 36* (1974), p.361.

[86] P.P. Saydon, "The Conative Imperfect in Hebrew," *VT 12* (1962), pp. 124-126.

[87] Ibid, p.126.

[88] See Hamilton, p.197; Westermann, p. 260.

[89] "Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15," p.200.

[90] Wenham, p.79: "Both this context and the other passages suggest that long-lasting enmity is meant."

Exegetes have long focused on the רוֹשׁ (head) and עקב (heel), and extrapolated the idea that whereas Satan's head will be crushed, thus totally annihilating him, the 'seed of woman' will only suffer attacks, which although painful, will not be life-threatening.[91] The peculiar syntax of 3:15 however may suggest that the real emphasis is not on the bodily parts, but the theme of perpetual enmity that God will establish between the woman's offspring and the serpent's. The clause literally reads: "He will strike you, head (רֹאשׁ יְשׁוּפְךָ), and you will strike him, heel (תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עָקֵב)". To suggest that striking the head is *more fatal* than striking the heel is to ignore a reality most familiar to people living in environments which included poisonous serpents (cf. Num 21:6-7). To be struck on the heel by a serpent was as fatal to humans as being struck on the head was to serpents.[92]

Wifall arrives at Irenaeus' conclusions by a very different route. He sees Genesis 3:15 as written from the standpoint of Davidic Royal Ideology, and only thus messianic: "As Yahweh has crushed the ancient serpent 'Rahab' (Psalm 89:11), so now David and his sons will crush their enemies in the dust beneath their feet (Psalm 89:24; 2 Samuel 22:37-43)".[93] Martin argues that the LXX provides "the earliest evidence of an individual messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15, to be dated in the 3rd or 2nd century BC".[94] Following most translations, we suggest that the same word (preferably 'attack' or 'strike') be used in both instances. Further, although the verse may bear a 'sensus plenior'[95] that points to salvation through Christ, its contextual reading points primarily to the irony explained by Wenham: "Those who had been in league against their creator will from now on be fighting against each other".[96]

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[91] Mathews, p.245: "The impact delivered by the offspring of the woman "at the head" is mortal, while the serpent will deliver a blow only at the heel."

[92] *IDB*, pp.289-291; Woudstra, pp.202-203: "But is a snake bite, even when aimed at the lowly heel, meant to be any less lethal than when a man strikes at a serpent's head?"

[93] "Genesis 3:15 – A Protevangelium?" p.362f.

[94] R. A. Martin, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *JBL 84* (1965), pp.425-427.

[95] See William LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration and Sensus Plenior," *Tyndale Bulletin 29* (1978), pp.56-57.

[96] *Genesis 1-15*, p.79.

METHODOLOGY IN MISSIOLOGY

ROGER E HEDLUND

INTRODUCTION

Because missiology is inter-disciplinary, methodology is a critical and complex issue. Critical, in that method must be clearly stated, and is variable according to each academic project. Complex, because each academic discipline has its own distinctive method or approach. Methodology separates missiology as an academic discipline from missionary training which is basic preparation of missionary candidates.

Definition

At the outset it may be helpful to decide on a definition of missiology. Dutch missiologist Johannes Verkuyl suggested a theological definition of missiology could be: "The study of the salvation activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout the world geared toward bringing the kingdom of God into existence."[1] He added that missiology's task was critical investigation of "the presuppositions, motives, structures, methods, patterns of cooperation, and leadership which the churches bring to their mandate" as well as related human activities.[2] Catholic missiologist Karl Muller defined missiology as "the systematic study of the evangelizing activity of the Church and of the ways in which it is carried out. It is the scientific study of the missionary reality of the Church in which scientific discipline and missionary charisma enrich each

[1] J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p.5.

[2] *Loc.cit.*

other."[3] From an ecumenical perspective, missiology relates theology to "the starting point and goal of the gospel's journey through the world and the problems encountered on that journey."[4] In other words, "missiology studies the movement of Christianity in the world, the ways in which Christian faith becomes attached to different contexts."[5] If that is so, in the Indian context, missiology must include the study of religions alongside theological study, as J. C. Gamaliel insists: "Missiology must be squarely based on systematic, exegetical and historical theology but is informed by the social sciences and the study of religions leading ultimately to an integrated inter-disciplinary approach. Evangelisation, research and apologetics are brought together in the discipline of missiology."[6] Gamaliel's perspective is particularly important in establishing missiology as something more than a branch of theology. As an inter-disciplinary approach it will involve more than one academic methodology. It will encourage a mature appreciation of the complex that is human life and experience within which mission is carried out.

Academic Methodology

Methodology is central in any academic thesis, without which the project may qualify as a scholarly paper or report but does not constitute an academic thesis such as is required for any recognised advanced academic degree regardless of the number of words, chapters or pages. A thesis must have a researchable subject, a goal or purpose, and a provable proposition or thesis statement. Original research must be directed to establishing the validity of this thesis. This will be done not by a mere collection of arguments or quotations—which might produce an acceptable term paper or report, but

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[3] Karl Muller, "Missiology: An Introduction" in *Following Christ in Mission: A foundational Course in Missiology* ed. Sebastian Karotemprel, (Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1995), p.21.

[4] F. J. Verstraelen, A. Camps, L. A. Hoedemaker, M. R. Spindler, eds., *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction: Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p.6.

[5] *Ibid*., p.2.

[6] J. C. Gamaliel, "Introduction: Evangelisation, Contextual Apologetics and Research" in *Missiology for the 21st Century: South Asian Perspectives* eds., Roger E. Hedlund and Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj, (Delhi: ISPCE, 2004), p.1.

does not constitute an academic thesis. The key to academic research is methodology appropriate to the field of inquiry.

For purposes of academic study, it seems to me there are two viable approaches to missiological research. One possibility is to assume a multi-disciplinary approach that presupposes a research topic that is truly inter-disciplinary. Potential pitfalls are many, the foremost being a temptation to carelessness, a failure to differentiate and master the differing methodologies of the disciplines involved. This approach also runs the risk of rejection by the larger academic world which is strict about its disciplines. If more than one disciplinary approach is justifiable, that must be clearly stated and defended, and the thesis outline and conclusion must bear this out. A multi-disciplinary thesis has many advantages; however, one must be aware that it may be difficult to defend.

The other procedure is to carefully state a thesis proposition which clearly restricts itself to one major academic discipline, be it history, anthropology, sociology, theology, philosophy, religion, biblical studies, economics or politics. The researcher then must master one discipline's methodology. The danger here is that the student might not become appropriately exposed and informed by the broader scope of mission studies, which might have a bearing on his research subject. Moreover, cross-disciplinary studies are increasingly possible and common in today's academic marketplace. Students of missiology need awareness and appreciation of the several methodological approaches embraced by the discipline, and more than a cursory knowledge of the issues involved.

Crisis of Methodology

That the issue is critical is borne out by several recent glaring failures.

Example One: last year a student in one graduate institution produced a thesis with no methodology. The paper described a field situation and told about a need, but was unable to propose a solution. What was the problem? The student had collected information, but had failed to conduct goal-oriented field research, hence had no proposition to defend. A simple

solution might have been to propose a solution which then could have been field-tested over a period of time, adjusted, adapted or abandoned and substituted, the results of the experiment described and processed in academic format as a provable missiological dissertation.

Example Two: in another college, two master's candidates wrote two somewhat-related but different theses, both using the same field questionnaire—a procedure never permissible (or legal) in any reputable institution in the academic world. Obviously there was no clear thesis statement or academic methodology followed. At best one of the two should have been disbarred for plagiarism or expelled for copying.

Example Three: an ethics professor at a leading institution wrote a paper for publication without revealing sources which had been lifted verbatim from the internet.

Example Four: a graduate student in another college wrote a thesis utilizing one methodology, then critiqued his subject using a different discipline, failing to produce any provable thesis.

Each of these is an example of methodological confusion and failure calling for drastic overhaul and correction.

Missionary Methods/Choice of Methodology

So, how can one decide on a methodology? Take for example the study of *dialogue*, which seems to be a case study of "missionary methods.", or even can be classified under religious studies. However, a recent evangelical publication, *Christians Meeting Hindus*, based on the writer's PhD dissertation, clearly follows a theological/historical methodology. The outcome is a careful historical analysis of the practice as well as a theological critique of Hindu-Christian dialogue in India. The author struggles with difficult questions which engage Christian evangelists in the Hindu world and

concludes that the present situation calls for a new theological method linking common human experience with inter-religious praxis.[7]

This highlights the point that methodology in the study of missiology should be distinguished from strategy formulation or a study and prescription of missionary methods. Missiology is disciplined reflection upon the missionary task in its many dimensions. Methods in *mission* are endless and constantly changing – a vast subject in itself, and but one aspect for missiological reflection. See, for example, Jongeneel's two volumes on the *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries* which deals with both the study of missiology and the practice of mission.[8] The Fellowship of Indian Missiologists (FOIM), judging from its conferences and publications, tends to blur the distinction between study and practice. However, a member, Joseph Mattam, has pointed out that methods in mission are conditioned by theology which has resulted in changes taking place over the centuries.[9] This complex relationship between theology and practice, then, must be reflected in missiological engagement with the issues raised.

Significant changes that have been underway in the academic world must be borne in mind when making one's choice of methodology. Fresh revelations on life and society leading to the establishment of new academic disciplines needs to be thought through before a choice is made. The student will do well to be conversant with current academic debates and voices and not merely rely on old and comfortable clichés, which may betray that the study is more about strategy than a deep analysis of issues.

Relevance of Appropriate Methodologies

[7] Bob Robinson, *Christians Meeting Hindus: An Analysis and Theological Critique of the Hindu-Christian Encounter in India*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2004), p.340.

[8] Jan A. B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19thand 20th Centuries*, Parts I and II, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995 and 1997)

[9] Joseph Mattam and Krickwin C. Marak, eds., *Missiological Approaches in India: Retrospect and Prospect*, (Mumbai: St Pauls, 1999), p.7.

The relevance of methodology for academic respectability goes without question. As Jongeneel points out missiology is a broad discipline which employs several methods and cannot be studied in isolation from religious, biblical, theological and ecclesiastical studies.[10] For example, evangelicals are said to prefer a deductive approach in which they seek to apply Scripture to the present context, whereas ecumenicals seemingly follow an inductive method in which the situation determines the hermeneutic.[11] Missiology, says Jongeneel, needs both induction and deduction. Likewise, in the debate over missiology from above (centered in God, salvation history, and the church) versus missiology from below (humanization, liberationist and dialogical), Jongeneel finds the former rooted in the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul, whereas the latter are derived from the Synoptics and the Acts of the Apostles.[12] The nature of the subject requires variety in missiological methodology.

The relevance of missiological methodology is demonstrated in several contemporary studies. Lamin Sanneh for example has shown the missionary impact on culture in language formation and social renewal beyond the intentions or inhibitions of the translators: "Translatability is the source of the success of Christianity across cultures."[13] From its earliest stages the gospel has been able to express itself in multiple cultural expressions, often aiding the development of vernacular languages.[14] Peter Phan establishes the necessity of an Asian methodology for doing theology in the pluralistic religious context of Asia. "A genuinely Asian theology must be rooted simultaneously in the religiousness of the poor and the poverty of the religious."[15] M. M. Thomas affirmed the centrality of Jesus Christ in an ever-changing ideological-theological quest in which he identified Mahatma

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[10] Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission*, pp.174, 175.

[11] Jongeneel find this differentiation in David Bosch, but draws his own conclusions, pp.177,178.

[12] Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission*, p.181.

[13] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), p.51.

[14] *Ibid*., p.76.

[15] Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), p.103.

Gandhi as "an interpreter of Christ's way of love in the realm of politics."[16] "Both in Jesus and Gandhiji, non-violence is a way of life; it is a creed rather than a policy or an expedient method."[17]

A recent work by Brian Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, devotes careful attention to the importance of engagement with its practitioners in order to authenticate the study of religion and the need for scholarly voices leading to mutual understanding.[18] The point is valid and particularly applicable to the study of missiology.

An example of the significance of biblical studies for missiology is shown by Brian Wintle whose exploration of the Pauline letters demonstrates something of St Paul's approach to people of other faiths.[19]

The power of the study of indigenous Christianity is that it moves Asian-initiated Churches from the periphery to the centre, exemplified by Paul Joshua's exploration of the Bakht Singh movement which experienced dramatic growth from one assembly in 1941 to more than 200 local congregations in 20 years and over 2000 assemblies by 1990.[20] The Indian-instituted churches engage the popular culture through a holistic spirituality responding to the searching questions and issues that arise in everyday life offering meaningful answers, thereby effectively reinterpreting Christianity in the present context.[21] The study of such new Christian movements falls within the framework of phenomenology of religion with relevance for religious studies and has tremendous implications for missiology. That as

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[16] M. M. Thomas, *Ideological Quest within Christian Commitment 1939-1954*, (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1983), p.16.

[17] *Ideological Quest,* p.5.

[18] Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.182.

[19] Brian C. Wintle, "Paul's Proclamation in the Context of Religious Plurality" in *Mission in Context: Missiological Reflections, Essays in honour of Roger and June Hedlund* ed. C.V. Mathew, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), p.165ff.

[20] Paul Joshua, "Assessing the Road Ahead: Challenges and Prospects for the Study of Indian Instituted Churches" in *Mission in Context: Missiological Reflections* ed. C.V. Mathew, pp.184,186.

[21] *Ibid*., pp.187-188.

much as 90 percent of the members of some IICs are from non-Christian religious backgrounds is of startling importance for conversion studies. “IICs offer missiology a living laboratory from which one may be able to decipher answers to some of the most perplexing questions.”[22] This has serious implications for how to teach and train within the Church, but also as to what to teach—the need for a theology which answers the questions being asked by the ordinary people of the towns and villages and cities.

In all these cases cited, where inductive and deductive approaches have been employed, methodology has been crucial. Their evident success in both deepening and expanding the study of missiology into deeper and new areas has been due to the sound methodology employed.

CONCLUSION

As the discussion above demonstrates, methodology for doing missiology will be variable and selective as determined by context and by the issues one decides to focus on. The choice of issues and context then will determine what methodology is used. Skilful use of that particular methodology will in turn help in an analysis of the subject and also contribute to mission. If “Contextualization is most fundamentally a problem of knowing God within the limitations of culturally specific human contexts,”[23] and missiology focused on the activities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit within those specific contexts, may our methodology guide our analysis and practice of mission in the world today.

[22] “Assessing”, p.204.

[23] Charles Van Engen, “The New Covenant: Knowing God in Context” in *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today* eds., Dean S. Gilliland, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989), p.75.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF MEDICAL MISSIONS IN SRI LANKA

G P V SOMARATNA

Christianity was present in Sri Lanka in the Anuradhapura Period although not in a very prominent way. Sri Lankan archaeologist, Paranavitana, mentions that there was a Christian monastery in the fortress of Sigiriya in the fifth century.[1] Christian monasteries of this period served as centres of medicine in other parts of the world.[2] However, Christian medical missionary activity in Sri Lanka owes its origin to the colonial period, which began at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The missionaries of the colonial era were the product of a European intellectual milieu. They brought Western medical knowledge to Sri Lanka from the very early years of evangelism. Therefore, the Christian medical missions have offered more than four centuries of service to the people of Sri Lanka, although their role and contribution may not seem adequate when compared with the health needs of the entire country.

The missionaries in the nineteenth century utilized four main methods for evangelism. They were preaching, teaching, printing and medicine. Except for printing, the other methods go back to the very beginnings of Christianity. Although the printing press was in use among the Christian establishments at the time of the arrival of the First Roman Catholic missionaries in Sri Lanka, a systematic use of the printing press really took place in the nineteenth century. The other three methods were continued to be used from the cradle of Christianity.

[1] S. Paranavitana, *Story of Sigiri*, (Colombo, 1972).

[2] A. J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids, 2004), p.157.

The beginnings of medical evangelism can be traced to the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles. The New Testament clearly teaches that compassion and concern for others is a basic principle of Christian living. There are reminders regarding the care of the sick in the New Testament. One reference in James (5:14) reads: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.” This verse would suggest that the church, or at least some within the church, continued to render service to those who were ill.

The approach of medical missions is broader, seeking to reach both the spiritual and physical needs of those whom they served. This is a part of the Great Commission—to go and “make disciples of all nations.” The medical mission played an important role in evangelism in Sri Lanka. However, medical missionary activities did not extend to all parts of the Island. They were not equally distributed across the nation. There was a larger concentration of Christian medical work in the Jaffna peninsula than in other parts of the country.

When epidemics like dysentery, cholera, and smallpox took heavy tolls on life the missionaries provided much-needed assistance.[3] No other religious establishment dared to enter an area infested by plagues. In fact, Buddhist monks vacated their temples and villages on hearing such news and sought asylum in other parts of the country.

Medicine surpassed all the other methods of evangelism because it served Christians and non-Christians alike. It overcame barriers of class, caste, race and faith because it was based on the basic Christian motive of compassion.

Early Catholic medical care

The Portuguese Missionaries were the first to bring colonial Christianity to Sri Lanka. Their missionary activities which began in the 1540s lasted till 1658. The first to come under Catholic missionary control in Sri Lanka was the island of Mannar on the north-western seaboard. The earliest Catholic

[3] SLNA (Sri Lanka National Archives) 20/104 March - April 1898.

hospital was the one set up by Fr. Henriques in 1550 in Mannar, which catered mostly to the Portuguese residents.[4] Within a short time, another one was set up at the cost of the Christians for the people in the area. The Portuguese captain of the Pearl Fishery Coast at that time was very supportive of the project.[5] This hospital was maintained through the alms of the Christians, and the fines which were imposed for various offences.[6] The captain who collected these funds offered them to the hospital. Since the sum collected from alms and fines was not adequate to provide the needs of the hospital adequately, Fr. Henriques made a special collection for the hospital, weekly, from his congregation. According to Jesuit reports, in 1591, the two hospitals were incorporated into one and served all communities. Vellala and Karaiyar communities and local as well the Portuguese were able to share the medical facilities in harmony.[7] The Roman Catholic medical work was used as an aid to missionary work.[8] The two hospitals in Mannar continued to be maintained by the charity of the local Christians. The King of Kandy, Karalliyadde, and his queen died in one of these hospitals in 1580.[9]

The Colombo hospital building was constructed in 1598.[10] The sick were lodged in the Franciscan convent in Colombo before the hospital buildings were ready. This was a result of the missionary interest in charitable work. It was to be run with the revenues from the customs house of Colombo.[11] The hospital in Colombo followed the principles embodied in the hospital in Goa, which was managed by the Franciscans. A French visitor to the hospital in 1608 states that the beds “are beautifully shaped and lacquered with red

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[4] Don Peter, *Education in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese*, Colombo, 1978, p.300.

[5] M. Quere, *Christianity in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese Padroado 1597-1658*, Colombo, 1995, p. 145, 205-206.

[6] John Suresh Kumar, "Christian Medical Care in Tamil Nadu'', *Indian Church History Review*, pp.91-108.

[7] V. Perniola, *Catholic Church in Sri Lanka in the Portuguese Period*, vol. II Dehiwela, 1991,p. 123. (Hereafter VP, Portuguese Period)

[8] Henry Otis Dwight, *Encyclopedia of Mission*, 1904, p. 445; S. G. Perera, *The Jesuits of Ceylon*, p.14.

[9] S. G. Perera. *The Jesuits of Ceylon,* p.18

[10] P.E. Peiris, *Ceylon: The Portuguese Era*, II, p. 92; Tikiri Abeyesinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, p. 216.

[11] Abeyesinghe, op. cit., p. 216.

varnish; some are chequered and some gilded, the sacking is of cotton and the pillows of white calico filled with cotton. The mattresses and overlies are of silk or cotton adorned with different patterns and colours."[12]

Eventually there were other hospitals in the chief garrison towns of Galle, Mannar, and Jaffna. These hospitals were managed by Catholic priests. Hospitals were intended to serve Christians as well as unbelievers. Many local Christians served in the hospital as a part of their religious devotion. They contributed freely towards its upkeep. Some soldiers who felt the call to serve God spent some time in nursing the sick in the hospitals. One such soldier became a Franciscan friar and another two became Jesuit priests.[13]

Jesuits engaged in medical work in the areas in which their missionary work was undertaken. Sick soldiers and residents in the parishes were the beneficiaries of these ministrations. During the periods of famine and pestilence, the missionaries supplied medicine as well as rice and clothing to the affected people.[14] During times of war and riots, the missionaries helped to nurse the sick and the wounded.

The predominant health problems that the missionaries had to treat were of infectious etiologies, protozoan, bacterial, and fungal infections and sicknesses attributable to poor hygiene and lack of good quality drinking water. Common complaints in this period were diarrhoea, fever, sickness caused by worms, and skin rashes. Most adults complained of musculoskeletal pain and fever.

The epidemics which largely overwhelmed the mission in this period required medicine. When there was a deadly or virulent epidemic disease like smallpox, cholera, or malaria, the missionaries took care of the faithful as

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[12] Gray Albert and H. C. P. Bell; François Pyrard, *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*; London, Hakluyt Society, 1887-1890, p. 156.

[13] S.G. Perera, *The Jesuits of Ceylon*, p. 14.

[14] *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, Colombo, Vol. II, 1916, p.22; Fernão de Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon. Tr.* By S.G. Perera, Colombo, p.952

well as the non-Catholics. For example, Jesuit fathers took care of the sick and dying in Mannar in the epidemic of 1564.

When this pestilence broke out and killed 4,000 persons in Mannar, the Catholic priests did their best to alleviate suffering, and served the patients with great devotion and charity. During the times of epidemics, the hospitals were unable to accommodate all of those who were affected. The overflow was housed in rooms in private houses of citizens who considered it a pious duty to be benevolent to the sick.

The church gathered every possible resource to handle such emergencies, regardless of the possibility that the missionaries could become affected by the plague.[15] It is reported that during the famine of 1606, the Jesuits distributed "canja, which was a kind of rice meal" daily to three hundred and some times five hundred, people in Mannar. There is a special mention of a Jesuit priest who was "taking care of the sick in the hospital" in Colombo during this period.[16]

The Franciscans, Dominicans, and the Jesuits,[17] in chronological order, were given the responsibility to look after the work of the hospital in Colombo. However, the lack of support from the government made their work difficult. Therefore, the last group, Jesuits, abandoned the burden of carrying on duties in the hospital in Colombo.[18]

Misercordias[19] were founded in Colombo, Galle, Negombo, and Jaffna. They provided medical assistance to people in addition to their services as welfare institutions. The institution called *Santa casa de misercordia* had no difficulty with regard to funds as this unique Portuguese institution had royal support.

[15] VP, *Portuguese Period*, I, 421-3; VP, *Portuguese Period*, II, 42-43.

[16] VP, *Portuguese Period*, II, p. 253.

[17] VP, *Portuguese Period*, II, 167; 254; 282.

[18] M. Quere, *Christianity in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese Padoado*, p.206.

[19] Misercordia was a room set apart in a monastery for the use of those monks whose health or age required some relaxation or the observance of the monastic rule.

When the pestilences affected the people the services of the missionaries were taxed to the utmost. When the epidemic was cholera or smallpox, it claimed many lives.[20] Fr. Baradas writing to Acquiaviva regarding the epidemic in 1613 at Matiyagene says:

> These people are very terrified of the smallpox. While the disease spreads, they flee far from it as from a pestilence, parents abandoning their children, and wives their husbands. When the gentiles see anyone afflicted with a similar disease, they venerate him with uplifted hands and flee away, since in them they recognize the revenge of God.
>
> For this reason they exceedingly marvel at the Father visiting them lovingly. From visitations of this sort not a little gain arises, for many infants and not a few of the dying are baptized. A pagan priest of the idols, and one most skilled in their laws, accompanied the Father one day as he visited those infected with the disease. Greatly admiring his charity in treating the sick, from whom he himself shrank away, he imbibed an excellent opinion of the law of Christ, and straight away embraced it despising the idols.[21]

The people feared contracting the disease. Pestilences were a common occurrence in this era. They devastated the area affected by it. In 1609, a Jesuit priest writing about the situation in Jaffna says: "They even supply the patients with remedies for their ailments, and had they not done so too many of the patients would either have died, or at least have suffered longer."[22] The priests visited them and dispensed medicines. They also gave the inhabitants general instructions relating to the case of the sick, and elementary knowledge of hygiene and health.[23]

The Catholic missionaries recognized the use of herbs in the treatment of patients by the Sinhalese, very early on. However, the incantations that frequently accompanied their use were abhorrent to them. They, however,

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[20] *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon in the East Indies*, Reprinted in the Ceylon Historical Journal, Dehiwela, 1958, p. 181

[21] VP. *Portuguese Period*, II, p.365.

[22] Letter of Christianpher Joam, Dec.1, 1909, CALR, II. 1916, p.22; VP, *Portuguese Period*, II, p.282.

[23] Don Peter, *Franciscans and Sri Lanka,* Colombo, 1983, p. 303.

learned some medical practices from the locals. For example, they learned from the Sinhalese that the beli fruit is helpful in healing a mild diarrhoea condition.[24]

Oratorian Fathers

Catholic missionaries were expelled from the country after the Dutch conquest in 1658. Since 1687 some Indian Oratorians began to minister to the people in secret in the Dutch-held area as well as in the kingdom of Kandy.[25] Their work in attending to the sick eventually earned the admiration of the king of Kandy as well as that of the people.

Fr. Joseph Vaz, who was the first missionary of the Oratorian mission, displayed concern and compassion for the sick in Kandy when the smallpox epidemic broke out, in 1697. The Buddhists attributed it to the malefic influence of the devil, as according to them the devil enters the bodies of people to bring about contagious diseases. Therefore, they turned away from the people who had contracted the disease. The king abandoned the city with many of his courtiers and withdrew to the countryside.[26] Joseph Vaz, who remained in the city, took care of the sick, who had been cast into the jungle. He put up a shed with branches of trees to shelter them from wild beasts. He gave food to all; arranged for places where they could rest; provided covering to those who were naked.[27]

A Catholic priest reported that: “Those struck by the disease are abandoned by all; fathers abandon their children and wives their husbands leaving them to die without any remedy or food. Thus the sick die more of starvation than

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[24] Fernao de Queroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon,* Colombo 1930, Vol. III, p. 1085; Joao Ribeiro*, Ribero’s history of Ceilao*, Colombo, 1909, pp.155-157; P.E. Peiris, *Ceylon: The Portuguese Era*, Vol.II, p. 109n.

[25] R. Boudens, “The Catholic Church in Ceylon from 1658 to 1796", *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. 2, 1953, pp.*255-258;* S. G. Perera, *Historical Sketches,* Colombo, 1962; Bede Barcatta, *A History of the Southern Vicariate of Colombo Sri Lanka*, Colombo, 1991, pp.52-69.

[26] V. Perniola, *Dutch Period*, II, p. 150.

[27] *Vijitavalle Rajavaliya*, British Museum MSS, Or 6606; W. L. A. Don Peter, *Studies in Ceylon Church History*, Colombo, 1963, p.146;

as a consequence of the ailment, and the dead are as many as the plague stricken, and the corpses are not buried but cast in deserted places."[28]

They abandoned the sick in the jungles leaving them "to the mercy of wild animals with the result that while they are still alive they are buried in the stomach of bears, leopards and other wild animals."[29] Father Pedro Ferrao came across a Buddhist woman thrown in such manner in the jungle who became the food of animals.

The epidemic lasted one year. During that period, Joseph Vaz (1651-1711) and his assistant José Calvalho continued to work without taking a rest. Because of this display of charity, several conversions occurred in Kandy. The Catholic priests continued this tradition of attending to the sick and dying, during times of pestilences. Very often their own priests died as a result of contracting the germ.[30] But, they did not abandon the practice of nursing the sick at such times.

Protestants in Dutch Times

Dutch rule in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka lasted from 1642 to 1796.[31] They set up hospitals in Colombo, Galle, Trincomalee, and Jaffna.[32] The purpose of the Dutch hospitals in Sri Lanka was to provide medical facilities to the employees of the Dutch East India Company.[33] These hospitals were not manned by the church. However, the comforter of the sick (*ziekentrooster*) and the visitor of the sick (*krankbezoeker*) were deacons of the Dutch Reformed Church, who gave medical and spiritual assistance to people. They were not ordained ministers. In rare instances, the "*ziekentrooster*" (comforter of the sick) covered the duties of nurse, pastor

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[28] V. Perniola, *Dutch Period*, I, p.147.

[29] V. Perniola, *Dutch Period*, II, p. 147

[30] Boudens, R., *Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony: Successes and Failures in Ceylon 1796 - 1893*, Immensee, 1979, p.87.

[31] K. M. de Silva, ed., *University of Peradeniya: History of Sri Lanka*, Vol. II, Colombo, 1995,

[32] Charles, Collins, *Public Administration in Ceylon*, 1952, p.9.

[33] Uragoda and Paranavitana, "The Seventeenth-century Dutch Hospital in Colombo," Med Hist. 1985 April; 29(2): pp.182–192.

and schoolmaster.[34] They were expected to attend to both the spiritual and medical domains, but a clear emphasis was placed on pastoral care.[35] Their attention was directed mostly to the Dutch residents. Even the Dutch religious establishment was geared to serve the Dutch residents; therefore, the Dutch Reformed Church lost almost all the local nominal Christians after the departure of the Dutch in 1796.[36] Among their hospitals, the one in Colombo served mainly Dutch residents and the employees of the Dutch East India Company. This hospital could accommodate about 300 patients in 1786. Their hospitals were not used for evangelical purposes.[37]

When the British conquered the Maritime Provinces, they used the medical establishment of the Dutch primarily for their officers. Eventually, however, the campaign against smallpox also encouraged them to open the health service to civilians as well. Governor North (1798-1805) reinforced the hospitals in Colombo, Jaffna, Trincomalee and Galle.[38] However, there was no missionary involvement in these institutions.

Catholics in the British Period

The Catholic Church, which was outlawed in the Dutch period, was able to once again work freely, without restrictions, soon after the British conquest of the Maritime Provinces.[39] The British gave full freedom to the practice and propagation of the Catholic faith in 1806.[40] During the early British period, the Oratorian fathers continued to minister to the sick according to the tradition of Joseph Vaz. Their services came to a standstill when the number

[34] S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1658-1687*, Colombo, 1996, p. 181

[35] Ole Peter Grell, “Plague in Elizabethan And Stuart London: The Dutch Response,” *Medical History*, 1990, 34:424-439.

[36] C. R. Boxer, *Dutch Seaborne Empire*, London, 1960, p.137.

[37] By Rajpal Kumar De Silva, Willemina G. M. Beume, *Illustrations and Views of Dutch Ceylon, 1602-1796*: *A Comprehensive Work of Pictorial Reference With Selected Eye-Witness Accounts*, London: Brill Academic, 1988, p.250

[38] Uragoda, *A History of Medicine in Sri Lanka*, p.172.

[39] H. A. G. Hulugalle, *British Governors* of Ceylon, Colombo, 1963, pp.18-25; *University of Ceylon: History of Ceylon,* Vol. III, p.74; Boudens, *Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony*, pp.28-29.

[40] *University of Ceylon: History of Ceylon*, Vol. III, Colombo, 1974, p.70.

of their missionaries began to dwindle since the suppression of their order in 1835.[41] Thereafter, European clergy began to minister to the people in Sri Lanka. The most prominent among them were the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Catholics in the nineteenth century

The cholera epidemic of 1850 did not spare the ranks of the missionaries.[42] Fr. Semeria reported to Bishop de Mazenod[43] in 1850 saying: "Only a few of those affected by the disease have survived. Every day we have 10, 12, 15, 18, and even 22 deaths."[44] In 1854, there was a serious outbreak of cholera in Jaffna. In Kayts alone there were more than 400 deaths. The Catholic Fathers, Vistarini, LeBescou, Rouffiac and Semeria, ministered to those affected by the scourge.[45] In January 1855, Fr. Lacombe died of cholera by attending to the sick. He was only 28 years old when he died.

The typical attitude of the missionaries regarding the pestilences is seen in this statement:

> In 1865, Fr. Boniface Gourdon took charge of the Kalpitiya mission, with Fr. Gustave Deaforets as assistant. That was the sad year of outbreak of cholera in the camp, when the pilgrims were gathering for the annual festival of July. We shall let Fr. Dearforets tell us the heart-rending story:
>
> > "Mgr. Semeria arrived at St. Anne's stricken with fever and went to bed immediately. Two days before that cholera had attacked the pilgrims who had come for the feast. Soon, the dead and dying were on all sides. Everywhere it was desolation; everywhere the unhappy pilgrims struggled in pain and agony. The zeal and courage of the missionaries were at their height in this sad task. In the meantime, terror was added to castigation; in a panic the pilgrims fled in all directions. But nobody

[41] A. C. Dep, *The Oratorian Mission in Sri Lanka, 1795-1874*, Colombo, 1987

[42] R. Boudens, *The Catholic Church in Ceylon under Dutch Rule,* Rome, 1957, p.87.

[43] Eugene de Mazenod (1782–1861) was bishop of Marseille from 1837 to 1861. In 1816 he founded the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

[44] V. Perniola, *British Period*, III, p. 424.

[45] P. N. M. Saverimuttu, *The Life and Times of Orazio Bettacchini*, Rome, 1980, p.93.

> would receive them or agree to give them food, even the most necessary; and those whom the disease spared subsumed to starvation. The roads were strewn with dead bodies; a heart-rending sight. The vanguard of the fugitives reached Chilaw, 50 miles from St. Anne's. The resident missionary, Fr. Chounavel, came himself to meet these unfortunate people. His school, he converted into a hospital where he gave them the most necessary assistance to soul and body."[46]

Infectious diseases were very common during Madhu and Talawila festival seasons as pilgrims came from various areas in Sri Lanka and South India. Some of them carried the germ as they came to offer vows for healing the sickness. The Catholic Church, having realized the situation, sent additional priests and supporting personnel to the areas concerned.[47]

The Roman Catholic Fathers were in the forefront when the sporadic pestilences devastated Sri Lankan villages in the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. The legendary manner in which these Fathers served the villages is still in the collective memory of the villagers.[48]

Nursing sisters

Dr. W. R. Kynsey, the head of the medical department, from 1875 to 1897, had expressed the desire to the Governor to have Catholic nuns for the nursing work of the General Hospital in Colombo.[49] The Executive Council approved the request at the meeting on January 8, 1886. The Governor conveyed the decision to Archbishop Bonjean in 1886 to request Catholic nuns to, initially, staff the General Hospital in Colombo. As a result, in 1886, six Franciscan Missionaries of Mary came to take over the nursing work of the General Hospital in Colombo.[50] The Little Sisters of the Poor came in 1888 to

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[46] Edmund Peiris, *St Anne's of Taliwila,* Chilaw, 1950 pp.43-44;.Philip Jesuthasan, *Our Tribute*, Vol. II, Pt. I, Colombo, 2001, p.152;

[47] Perniola, *British Period*, VI, pp.166-167.

[48] *Hewadiwela Janthi Samaruva, 1927-2002*, p.19

[49] Robrecht Boudens, *Catholic Missionaries in a British Colony*, p.144; Uragoda, op. cit, p. Perniola, *British Period*, VII, pp.662-665; H. A. Hulugalle, *British Governors of Ceylon,* Colombo, 1963, pp.124-132.

[50] V. Perniola, *British Period*, vol. VIII, p. 133.

continue in their purpose of caring for the elderly. The hospital was financed and managed by the staff appointed by the government. Gradually the government, often under the pressure of the people, requested the assistance of these Sisters for other hospitals. Eventually, Franciscan Sisters took care of the nursing service in several hospitals throughout the island. They were supported by the Sisters of Hope who took up the hospitals of Kurunegala (1892) and Nawalapitia (1927). In 1938, the government requested nuns for the Ragama T. B. Hospital. Since the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were unable to supply additional nuns, the Diocesan Congregation of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the Diocese of Courtria in Belgium acceded to the request. In 1946, the government requested nuns to serve in the new T. B. Hospital at Welisara. The Sisters of Providence from the Diocese of Le Mans came in 1949 for that purpose. Thus, in the course of time, the Sisters offered a tremendous service. They received a meagre maintenance allowance in the early years. However, later in the twentieth century they received salaries on par with the lay staff.

With the introduction of universal franchise in 1929 and independence in 1948, strong nationalist movements with Buddhist sentiments became active. Their opposition to the presence of Catholic nuns in hospitals was based on several factors. The Catholic Sisters who served in these hospitals were Europeans. Their complaint was that these European sisters were blocking the employment avenues of local girls. In 1954, the Buddhist Commission report accused the Sisters of using their position in the wards for proselytisation.

Missionary Order	Hospital	Arrival	Departure
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	General Hospital, Colombo	1886	15.3.1964
Holy Family Sisters of Hope	Civil Hospital, Kurunegala	1892	11.3.1954
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	Leprosy Hospital, Hendala	1914	15.3.1964
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	Leprosy Hospital, Mantivu	1921	15.3.1964
Holy Family Sisters of Hope	Civil Hospital, Nawalapitiya	1927	1.6.1963
Perpetual Succour Sisters	Chest Hospital, Ragama	1929	22.1.1963
Holy Cross Sisters	Civil Hospital, Kayts	1936	1.6.1963
Holy Cross Sisters	Civil Hospital, Jaffna	1938	30.11.1963
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	General Hospital, Mannar	1947	15.3.1964
Divine Providence Sisters	Chest Hospital, Welisara	1948	1.10.1963
Maryknoll Sisters	Civil Hospital, Kandy	1949	31.8.1953
Salvatorian Sisters	Civil Hospital, Kurunegala	1954	28.2.1959

This chart showing the duration of the Catholic nuns in Sri Lanka
is taken from *The Catholic Messenger*, March 7, 1964

The church, having considered these objections, realized that the situation from 1886, when the nuns first came to Sri Lanka, to 1956, had changed: and the church had failed or ignored to notice these changes that had emerged in the country.[51] Sinhala and Tamils girls were not encouraged to go out for public employment when the first Catholic sisters arrived to serve in hospitals in the nineteenth century. The nursing profession was especially disliked, because of caste taboos; therefore, European nuns or Burghers were employed in the nursing sector. As a result the Perpetual Succour sisters at Ragama (1929), the Sisters of Providence at Welisara (1948), and the Holy family Sisters at Kurunegala came to the rescue of the sick.

It was clear that the religious institutes were slow with local recruitments. The Franciscan Sisters opened their novitiate to non-Europeans only in 1931, at the insistence of Archbishop Marque. Before that, locals were taken at inferior or temporary status. The Franciscan Order was not willing to send them to government training schools to study with lay pupils. At the same time they were not willing to send the Sri Lankan girls abroad for training or to open a place for their training in the country.[52]

The service of the nuns in hospitals also had their drawbacks. They, in spite of their personal devotion to service, were government employees. Their caring for the sick was hampered by regulation and red tape. It gave an appearance that they were the members of government bureaucracy. The official public appearance obscured their personal devotion and their religious dignity. The salary from the state robbed the testimony of charity.

Since the termination of the services of Catholic nuns in government hospitals in 1957, Sisters of the Holy family of Bordeaux and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary started open-air clinics and domestic tendering service. The Missionaries of Charity of Calcutta also began their work of seeking the destitute, sick, and dying.

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[51] Claude Lawrence, *Work and Working of the Archdiocese of Ceylon 1947-1970.* Colombo, Catholic Press, 1970, pp.392-398

[52] Ibid. p.396

Other activities

The Jaffna Catholic Guardian, in a series of articles in 1916 and 1917, demanded the appointment of additional midwives to Mannar as the only midwife who worked in the area was unable to cope with the demand.[53] This shows the concern of the Catholic Church about the well being of the people of the area.

Methodists

The Methodist Church started a medical work in Welimada, in 1887. It provided treatment for cuts, wounds, and sores. Miss Eleanor Adams developed it into a small hospital in 1893, and named it the Wisemen Hospital for Women. At Happy Vale in Uva, a small children's hospital was begun. The missionaries trained a number of medical workers to serve as nurses in this hospital. In 1939, these medical services were terminated when the government opened medical facilities in the area.[54]

The work at Trincomalee was organized by Grace Nettleship, in 1897. The medical work at Batticaloa was begun by Dr. Miss Gamble in 1887, at Puttur in 1889, Kalmunai in 1905, and Trincomalee in 1905.[55] These centres were carried on for a number of years, till the end of the 1920s.

The work at Puttur, which was halted for a short period, was restarted by Grace Nettleship.[56] It began with a medicine cupboard in the mission bungalow, in 1898. In 1899, when two Wesleyan deaconesses took up permanent residence in Puttur, the work received further support.[57] A two-roomed building was opened as a dispensary for women and children at Puttur in 1901. In-patients were taken to this small ward for nursing. The medical work at Puttur received an impetus when Miss Easter Hayden joined the ministry in 1910. In 1929 antenatal work and welfare work

[53] *Jaffna Catholic Guardian*, Aug 4, 1917.

[54] Nimal Mendis, *History of the Methodist Church: Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Wesley Press, 2010, p.82

[55] W. J. T. Small, *History of the Methodist Church in Ceylon*, p.321.

[56] Small, op. cit. p. 454

[57] Dorothy Graham, *Saved to Serve: Story of the Wesley Deaconess Order, 1890-1978*, London, 2002, pp.165-170

were added. It was named St. Luke's Hospital. This work still continues. The hospital work was expanded during the tenure of Elizabeth Baker (1951-1957) with a labour ward, privates' wards, and kitchens. The hospital also started preventive medicine in 1961 when Dr. Adams was appointed.[58] The work of this hospital continued even after independence, although some work had to be curtailed since 1996 due to political and civil unrest in the area.

Taking care of sick people in times of plagues and pestilences was another area where the Methodist missionaries made a mark. In 1906, Rev. Darrel, the Principal of Richmond College Galle, died by nursing the hostellers in the epidemic of typhoid. Missionary wife, Mrs. Tekla Small took care of the sick when the epidemic attacked the hostellers and day students of Richmond College in 1910.[59]

A nursing home was built in Badulla, in 1918, by Rev. Samuel Langdon. It was named Langdon Home. Langdon Home provided a rudimentary medical training for deaconesses and Bible-women. Urubokka Medical Mission was another venture of the Methodist mission which served the people in the southern province. These activities continued till 1939, when government medical work was undertaken in the area.[60]

The Church Missionary Society

In cases of sickness, people had been accustomed to have recourse to many superstitious ceremonies. When the missionaries arrived, the natives refused to take their medicines, but later they seem to have gained more confidence in them. Rev. Robert Mayor, who was at the Baddegama CMS Mission Centre from 1818 to 1828, is reported to have restored the eyesight of many people who had cataracts, and this attracted many people to him for treatment. As there was no medical man in Galle, Mayor's knowledge in physics and surgery was helpful in rendering a valuable service. Therefore, many sick people were brought to him for healing.

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[58] Small, op. cit. p. 564.
[59] *Richmond College, Galle 1876-1951: Jubilee Souvenir*, p.11.
[60] Nimal Mendis, op. cit. p.82.

Talawa Hospital

Evelyn Karney (1869-1953) first came to Sri Lanka as a member of the Church of England's Zenana Mission in 1912. During her evangelical tours in the North Central Province, she found that the villagers were suffering from malaria, yaws, and poverty. Many of them died during the fever season. In her tours in the countryside, she offered special attention to the people at Talawa, where she eventually took up residence.[61] She set up a small dispensary in the mission compound when she came back from her service in Egypt during the war time. With the help of Mrs. Machinnon, she built a small building for a hospital which she called "House of Peace". She nursed the patients while the doctors from the government hospital at Anuradhapura came to help with the difficult cases.[62] The arrival of Dr. Anna John, to serve as a full-time doctor in the Talawa hospital, made the work easy and the hospital grew under her care. Many women in the province received medical treatment in this hospital. Miss Karney used to teach hygiene and sanitation to the patients in the Talawa hospital by way of health talks. She also told them stories from the Bible. She started an orphanage for children without parents. During the Second World War, the hospital was used as an emergency hospital for refugees.[63] Funds for the medical work came from Miss Karney herself and from her friends.

The object lesson of mercy and the spirit of loving compassion of the women medical missionaries of the calibre of Miss Karney and the Franciscan Sisters enabled them to weaken superstitious beliefs which held sway among rural women in many parts of Sri Lanka.

The Denipitiya Medical Mission of the Anglo-Catholic Union was established in 1917, and is the only Medical Mission in Sri Lanka maintained officially by the Anglican Church. It was funded by Canon Ekanayake with his private

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[61] F. Lerenz Beven, *A History of the Diocese of Colombo*, p.177.

[62] Evelyn Karney, *New Lanka*, 1953, p.17.

[63] Christina Brohier, "Evelyn Karney- A Villager among Villagers," *Breaking the Alabaster Box*, Colombo.

funds.[64] It is located at the edge of Denipitiya village. It received a grant from the government to continue the work in 1920. The Medical Mission building was expanded in the 1930s. The clinics were held in the mornings and afternoons, six days a week.[65] As a corollary of the Medical Mission, the Chapel in Denipitiya was built and gifted by Mrs. Charles Peiris of Moratuwa, in 1934.[66]

Friend-in-Need Societies

As the colonial British government was reluctant to be directly involved in welfare activities in Sri Lanka, they encouraged voluntary organizations to fill this gap.[67] The Friend-in-Need-Society was a charitable institution originally sponsored by the Anglican Church, which stepped in to serve the people. It was begun in 1825 with the visit of Bishop Turner of Calcutta to Colombo. He was struck by the numerous applications for relief made to him.[68] Within a short period, in addition to Colombo, branches of this society were established in Kandy, Jaffna, Trincomalee, Galle, Negombo and Moratuwa. They were supported, in that period, by the leading personalities of the area, many of whom happened to be Anglicans. The members of the Anglican clergy played an active role in these committees. The vice patron of the society in Colombo was the Archdeacon, and later, the Bishop of Colombo. Similar to the Ceylon Bible Society, the Governor served as the patron.

The Society was instrumental in establishing hospitals and dispensaries in these as well as other towns. They were maintained by the voluntary grants of the people and managed by the committees of the Society in the area,

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[64] Percy Wickremasinghe, *Canon Ekanayake of Colombo*, p. 50; Uragoda, *A History of Medicine in Sri Lanka*, p.93.; Lorenz Beven, *A History of the Diocese of Colombo,* Colombo,1946, pp.63, 168, 177.

[65] D. Dennis Hudson, *Tamil Hindu responses to Protestants: Nineteenth-Century Literati in Jaffna and Tinnevelly.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eardmans, 2000, pp. 95 - 123

[66] Percy Wickremasinghe, *Canon Ekanayake of Colombo*, p. 50

[67] Margaret Janes, *Health of Policy in British Model Colony: Ceylon 1900-1948,* London, 2004, p.66-67. Uragoda, Op. Cit. 91-92

[68] Arnold Wright, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon: Its History, People, Commerce*. 67; Uragoda, op. cit, p.990.

which in turn, was affiliated to the parent body in Colombo. Additional funds were raised through bazaars, flag days and appeals to individuals for help.[69]

The establishment of medical institutions by the Friend-in-Need Society in various towns of the country was useful in providing Western medicine to the people free-of-charge. The government provided partial financial support to these institutions which were begun by Christian charities. During the early stages, the doctors came from the military establishments and missionary hospitals. Dr. Samuel Green gave his full support when the Friend-in-Need Society founded a hospital in Jaffna, in 1852.[70] Similar hospitals in Colombo (1845) were also begun in Trincomalee (1846) and Kandy (1842) in the first half of the nineteenth century, by the Friend-in-Need Society. The hospitals in Kandy and Trincomalee were taken over by the government in 1869. The hospital in Jaffna, however, resisted the government takeover till 1905 due to the heavy involvement of the medical missionaries in the work of that hospital.

The institutions run by the Friend-in-Need Societies did not officially embark on a programme of evangelism. However, the doctors who were interested in evangelism witnessed at a personal level.

These hospitals were later handed over to the government. Some hospitals, which were started by the missionaries in villages, such as the one at Talawa, were also handed over to the government in the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, it is remarkable that most government hospitals owe their origin to Christian philanthropy.

American Congregationists

Most of the medical work undertaken by American missionaries was confined to the Jaffna Peninsula. The American religious societies continued the religious tradition of social reform and philanthropy of the Christian

[69] Margaret Janes, p.66.

[70] The Society was founded in 1841 in Jaffna. Daya Somasundaram, "Abandoning Jaffna hospital: Ethical and moral dilemmas", *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, Volume 13, 4 October 1997 , pp.333-347.

heritage.[71] Soon after the arrival of the first American missionaries in 1816, their concern for humanitarian work found expression through many charitable initiatives. Their attention was drawn to the sick around them. Among the first group of missionaries to arrive in Sri Lanka, Rev. James Richards and Rev. Edward Warren had taken a course of medical study and a one-year medical practice in a hospital before they arrived at the island. They were able to open a clinic at Tellippalai, in 1816.[72] They brought some medicine with them, mainly to take care of the health of their colleagues. However, because of the sufferings of the people around them they requested the help of the American Board to broaden their medical work. Although they had little training and limited medical supplies, they served as the only source of medical care for many of the people living in remote villages in Jaffna. With the concurrence of the ABCFM they established a temporary hospital at Tellippalai in Jaffna, in 1817. They stated that it was “for the cure of both soul and body.”[73] From this modest start, medical missions eventually became the most prominent activity of the American mission in Sri Lanka.

Their first qualified medical missionary, John Scudder (1793-1855), arrived on the island in 1819.[74] He served in Sri Lanka from 1819 to 1836. With his arrival, the American missionaries were able to start a public system of medicine in Jaffna based on Western medicine.[75] As medicine had already been identified as a valuable tool for evangelism before Scudder's arrival, his work opened a new era of medical missions.

Scudder began his medical work in a small thatched building at Pandeterippu. He combined medical work with evangelism. When he travelled into the villages of the Jaffna Peninsula, he carried medicines and surgical instruments

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[71] James Ratnam, “Earliest American Impact on Sri Lanka: American Mission Seminary in Jaffna,” *Ceylon Journal of Historical Social Studies,* Vol. VI, no. 2, 1976, p.77

[72] Ratnam, op.cit. p.17.

[73] Uragoda, op. cit. p. 89.

[74] Jared Bell Waterbury, *Memoir of the Rev. John Scudder, M.D.: Thirty-six Years Missionary in India,* New York, 1870, p. 23.

[75] S. Jebanesan, *The American Mission Seminary and Modern Education in Jaffna*, Colombo, 2002, p.133.

with him to relieve bodily distress. He set up a second hospital in Chavakachcheri in 1832.[76] There, he began imparting practical medical training to the youth in Jaffna. He trained three men for medical missions. His initial goal, which was to give medical education to the local people, eventually developed into a permanent programme. Therefore, from the 1830s, several Sri Lankans were found in the medical profession in Jaffna.[77] His work included not only medical care but also the establishment of schools. He also trained many young Tamil students in medicine, long before the establishment of medical schools in the country in 1870.[78]

Dr John Scudder established his dispensary at Pandaterippu on 18 June 1820, and worked long hours attending to patients with diverse diseases, and teaching medicine to a few local men. He performed many operations in the 1820s, including plastic reconstruction of mutilated ears, amputation above the knee, excision of large tumours and even cataract operations. These were valuable works during a period when there were no facilities for anaesthesia, blood transfusion and sterilisation.[79]

Dr John Scudder was one of the most indefatigable distributors of religious tracts. He also gave away almanacs. The tracts were merely an accompaniment to his preaching. Even one of Asia's foremost clinical medical schools at Vellore in South India may claim descent from Jaffna because of its connection with John Scudder.

When Scudder left Jaffna for work in South India in 1836, his work was continued by Dr Nathan Ward. During his fourteen years of service (1834-1847) in Jaffna, Ward continued the tradition started by Scudder of training Tamil youth in medical studies. He served there for fourteen years in the dual capacity of clergyman and physician. His most important service was the establishment of a large hospital, of which he was chief physician. He was

[76] Uragoda, op.cit. p.89; H. I. Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, Jaffna, 1916, p.41.

[77] *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon*, Vol. III, p.272.

[78] Ebenezer Cutler, *Life and Letters of Samuel Fisk Green*, p.443.

[79] J. B. Waterbury, *Memoir of the Rev. John Scudder, M.D., 36 years Missionary in India*, New York, 1856, p.116.

especially successful in the treatment of cholera and yellow fever. He also founded several native schools and churches in the Jaffna Peninsula.[80]

Dr Samuel Fisk Green

The next medical missionary of the American mission, Dr Samuel Fisk Green, served in Jaffna from 1847 to 1873. He immediately embarked on a healing ministry programme.[81] The medical mission offered its services to thousands of victims of cholera, during the epidemics of 1845 and 1846. During these epidemics, about one tenth of the population died. There were two other epidemics in 1854-55 and 1866-67, where Green's services were valuable. Ordinary missionary operations were temporarily suspended for ministering to the sick and the bereaved.[82] All the missionary organisations in Jaffna did everything within their power to alleviate suffering in these periods. In 1854, Dr Samuel Green, who was in the forefront of the fight against cholera, contracted the disease, but recovered after a period.[83]

Green regarded the humanitarian work of medical mission as a demonstration of the compassionate attitude of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he took measures to train a sufficient number of local personnel for the medical profession to serve the needs in Jaffna. His aim was to have a doctor for every 10000 persons, thereby making Jaffna the centre of medical training in Sri Lanka. His students were in demand in the plantation sector and in government hospitals in Sri Lanka.[84]

Green offered scientific knowledge to the people in Jaffna. In order to achieve the task of impacting a larger population, he provided Tamil translations of English books on Hygiene, Physiology, Chemistry and

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[80] Ibid.

[81] B. Amirthanayagam Mills, "Dr. Samuel F. Green, MD 1822-1884, *Journal of the Colombo General Hospital*, `97`, vol. 2, pp.145-156.

[82] Root, *A Century in Ceylon*, p.34; K.M. de Silva, *Social Policy and Missionary Organizations*, p.246.

[83] Uragoda, op. cit. p.259.

[84] *Life and letters of Samuel Fisk Green*, p.288.

Medicine.[85] He also intended to educate the Tamil-speaking ayurvedic physicians in Western medicine through these books. He first made a vocabulary of English and Latin terms, giving their definition in Tamil. Together with Jeremiah Evarts, he compiled a Tamil Dictionary of Medical Terms in 1852.[86] Then, he prepared a number of medical and surgical books in Tamil. In this manner, he popularized medical knowledge among the people in Jaffna. He also wrote a number of pamphlets on healing and hygiene while encouraging his students also to write similar pamphlets. Green trained his students to assist him in this task. He prepared glossaries in Tamil for Anatomy, Chemistry, Physiology and Hygiene. He often translated English books, which were newly-published in England and America. He tested the accuracy and readability of the translation in his classes. In this manner, he created a corpus of scientific medial literature in Tamil.[87] Green made a valuable contribution to the Tamil language by demonstrating that it was possible to provide medical education in that language.[88] Dr Green's pioneer contribution towards the development of scientific literature in Tamil, scientific and technical nomenclature in Tamil, and his original Tamil treatises for dissemination and popularization of scientific knowledge amongst the laymen is noteworthy, and historically significant.

Dr Green translated several medical books into Tamil. In this task he was assisted by J. Periathamby Danforth, J. Dennison, and J. Waittilingam, who were his pupils. These are the books on medicine that Green was instrumental in translating into Tamil and publishing: *Human Physiology* (1861) by John Call Dalton; *Human Anatomy* by Gray, Horner, Smith, and Wilson; Wells' *Principles and Applications of Chemistry* (1858); *The Science and Art of Surgery* by John Eric Erickson (1860); *The Practice of Medicine* by Thomas Hawkes-Tanner (1869); and, *Hooper's Physician's Vade Mecum* by Robert Hooper and William Augustus Guy (1858). As mentioned earlier, he also published several glossaries of medical terms, explaining them in the Tamil language. The *Morning Star (Uthayatharakai),* the monthly

[85] R. Ambihaipahareer, *Scientific Tamil Pioneer: Dr. Samuel Fisk Green;* Dhuhlasi, 1998, pp. 25, 29, 62; *Life and Letters of Samuel Fisk Green*, p.114.

[86] *Life and Letters of Samuel Fisk Green*, p.80.

[87] *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon*, Vol. III, p. 279.

[88] *Life and letters of Samuel Fisk Green*, pp.145, 308.

Tamil/English magazine published by the American Mission in Jaffna, also carried articles on hygiene in order to instruct the people in Jaffna.[89]

Samuel Green's other contribution was the training of Sri Lankan doctors. He began to construct a Medical Mission School at Manipay, in 1848.[90] His medical training, which began in 1852, continued to produce local doctors qualified in the practice of Western medicine. For the first batch of medical students, he selected a few students from the Vadukottai seminary. They were offered a 3-year training, in line with the practice in contemporary America. Having found that those who were educated in the English language were leaving the mission for lucrative jobs elsewhere, he began teaching medicine in the Tamil language, so that they would serve the people of the area. His sixth batch of medical students was the first to be taught in Tamil and it went on to eleven batches.[91] When the Madras Medical College began, some of the students were drawn towards it.[92] Nevertheless, Green's classes continued in Jaffna. Some of his former students carried on the medical teaching while Green was on furlough.

Since 1852, the government, having realized the value of Dr Green's work, began to financially support the medical training in Jaffna under Green. His success in training local youths in the medical profession prompted the government to open a medical college in Colombo in 1870.[93] Green offered a helping hand when the Friend-in-Need Society set up a hospital in Jaffna in 1863. He served there as the first superintendent for three years while continuing his services at Manipay.[94]

Green placed his local medical assistants in clinics and dispensaries in the precinct of American mission stations scattered throughout the peninsula. The work of the medical mission continued to progress. At the turn of the

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[89] Ambihaipahar, *Scientific Tamil Pioneer*, pp.25, 29, 62.

[90] Ebenezer Cutler, *Life and Letters of Samuel Fisk Green,* New York, 1891, pp.71-73.

[91] C. H. Piyaratna, *American Education in Ceylon 1816-1875*, Univeristy of Michigan, PhD Thesis, 1968, pp.492-573.

[92] *Life and Letters of Samuel Fisk Green*, p.84.

[93] Uragoda, *A History of Medicine in Sri Lanka*, pp.115-122.

[94] Devarajah, *175 years of American Mission*, p.12.

century there was a network of medical facilities, including women's and children's hospitals, and training schools for nurses and women doctors under the supervision of the American Mission in Jaffna. The hospital could accommodate about forty patients. The Nurses' Training Home accommodated sixteen nurses and a matron, in 1890.[95]

It is reported that Green trained 60 doctors and 87 paramedical practitioners during his tenure of twenty-six years in Jaffna.[96] The majority of them were Tamils in Jaffna. They were sent out to the villages in Jaffna as trained physicians at a time when patients were at the mercy of quacks.[97] This is remarkable in view of the fact that the Colombo Medical School had a majority of Eurasians in the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth century.[98]

Dr Green is reported to have said: "I would rather here see Christian Hindus than Hindus Europeanized". Dr Green's idea was that Christianity and Westernization should not be confused one with the other. He was very happy that native physicians bought his Tamil medical textbooks and some of them sent their sons to study Western medicine under him. He recommended that medical missionaries should investigate the native systems of medicine and consult with the native physicians. Regarding his confidence in translating Western texts into Tamil, it emerged from his having learnt literary Tamil.

The common diseases then-prevalent in Jaffna, as can be obtained from Dr Green's recordings, are frequent epidemics of cholera and small pox; fever and lung infection during dewy seasons; an itch of a virulent kind – perhaps scabies; fever and ague with enlarged spleen – which we now know as malaria; cancer of the mouth arising from habitual use of quicklime with

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[95] Mary Margaret W. Leith, *Seven years in Ceylon*, New York, 1890; "Women's Medical Mission, Ceylon" *Journal of American Medical Association*. 1895; XXV (24),1056. Boston, Mass., Nov. 30, p.1395.

[96] Devarajah, *175 years of the American Ceylon Mission*, p.13.

[97] Lloyd R. Devarajah, *175 years of the American Mission,* Colombo 1991, p.112.

[98] "Sir J. R. Longden's address at the distribution of prizes on 7th August, 1879, *Annual Report, Peace Corps Medical Officer Application*, p.258. Uragoda, *op.cit*. p. 119.

betel quid; and the wealthy died of diabetes, the effect of vegetarianism and indolence combined. He decided that for his work to be of any lasting benefit to the people, he should, in his own words: "Stud the province with well-educated physicians".

Green's Successors

Dr and Mrs Scott arrived at Manipay in 1883. Dr Scott had qualifications in Arts, Theology, and Medicine. Yet, his biggest asset was his wife, also a doctor. She was the first lady doctor to serve in Jaffna. They began to work together at Manipay hospital. Mrs Scott started a Nursing School, another pioneering effort at Manipay. By this time, the medical college had become a testimony to how medical missionaries became accepted within a local community. These medical missionaries were successful in training local personnel, who knew the problems of the people in Jaffna, at the grassroots level. Attracting local patronage was a particularly important step in the indigenisation of medical institutions, and was often an intermediate stage between foreign mission and post-colonial government funding of medical institutions. The Scotts, who were successful in this, served the medical mission in Jaffna for 27 years.

The next medical missionary in Jaffna, Dr W. J. Jameson, began his ministry in 1923 and served for 15 years till 1938. He erected new buildings to meet the demand of the rapidly increasing population in Jaffna. For this purpose, he recruited doctors and nurses trained locally and elsewhere. This gave a boost to the nursing school by increasing the annual intake of trainees. In order to meet the need, he had to find qualified professional staff. At the end of his tenure, the two American missionary hospitals in Jaffna were run by professionally qualified local personnel. The training of qualified local medical staff is a tribute to the services of the missionaries.

These medical establishments offered services free-of-charge till 1960. Although there was a nominal charge, the mission hospitals became an integral feature in the lives of the people of Jaffna.

Medical services, like other humanitarian services offered by American missionaries, were offered free-of-charge. This helped to allay the social prejudices of the people of this period. As a result of the American medical services, the females, who were segregated in the traditional Hindu society, could seek medical help even from male doctors. Similarly, the female education introduced by the missionary medical establishments led to the emancipation of Tamil women in Jaffna from many social prejudices and taboos.

The Americans, who were not linked to the colonial rulers of Sri Lanka, did not have the inhibitions that the British missionaries had. They pumped in large sums of money into the educational and medical activities of the Island, thus venturing into the field of philanthropy, which became a challenge to the other missionaries, including the Roman Catholics.

Plagues and Pestilences

A plague killed thousands, quickly. It terrified communities, families, and individuals. A plague put enormous pressure on social cohesion and economic activities. At each visitation of a deadly disease to a particular area, a large percentage of the population died. Individuals and families responded to the dilemma by fleeing. Flight, rather than medical measures, had been the preferred option ever since the Anuradhapura period.[99] However, flight left property and goods open to destruction. Moreover, the poor often could not flee. They usually had no savings, and at a time of plague many of them became unemployed and destitute. Flight into the countryside with no money often meant starvation and a lonely death. Thus, they were caught between the Devil and the deep blue sea.

The Christian medical establishments were often overwhelmed by the emergence of plagues, pestilences, and famine. However, as shown earlier, the *Misericordia* in Portuguese times, *Diaconia* in Dutch times, and Christian

[99] *University History of Ceylon*, Vol, I, Part II, 715-716; C. R. de Silva, *Sri Lanka, A History*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 141-157.

churches in British times were able to offer relief to some extent to a proportion of the suffering people.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is best-known for its charitable efforts. Ever since the introduction of their work in 1883, they have continued in the ministry to alleviate the suffering of the people in Sri Lanka. Since 1990, the Salvation Army has been offering medical assistance to hundreds of people affected by HIV by providing clinical care and medicine without a charge. They have also been providing medical care to thousands of people since the tsunami catastrophe of 2004. The Salvation Army doctors, nurses and paramedical personnel responded to the emergency and have continued the work for nearly five years. The Salvation Army mobile clinics have served Matara, Galle, Colombo and Jaffna for over two decades. Their doctors worked in the war-affected areas during the last two decades, while the civil war was going on.

Various other Christian groups with international affiliations have taken a share in serving in Sri Lanka in the medical field. The Pentecostal Assemblies of God, a Canadian missionary body, served in the North Colombo area from 1990 to 1995 by running mobile clinics with the help of local medical personnel.

A host of Christian groups arrived in Sri Lanka during the aftermath of the tsunami in 2004. They provided medical equipment, mobile hospitals, drugs, and the temporary services of medical specialists.

New Churches

The Pentecostals, who have been serving in Sri Lankan villages since the beginning of the twentieth century, see themselves as a “faith mission”. While they were not primarily medical missionaries, they did rely on divine power, not only for their own material support but also for curing the sick. Such groups by nature were less likely to create written material for scholarly

studies; therefore, a systematic study of their contribution would be a difficult one.

Bokkawala

Assemblies of God minister, Jacob Perera, together with his Swedish wife, began a medical work in the 1970s in Bokkawala and the surrounding area. Although Perera was a minister of the Assemblies of God, his medical mission was not regarded as an official work of the Assemblies of God. Work was done with the help of funds they received from Swedish donors, and later, for about two years, from a church in Singapore.[100]

The Pereras conducted medical clinics in the neighbouring villages with the help of locally-trained medical personnel. In 1980, they started a fully-fledged General Hospital with an operating theatre. In addition to an out-patients department, they maintained a 40-bed hospital for residential treatment. They were assisted by Sri Lankan and foreign medically-qualified personnel. However, they had to suspend the work in 2000 as a result of dwindling of funds, which thus far had arrived from Sweden. This demonstrates the role of funding bodies and individual donors in shaping the institutional development of missions, and the restrictions imposed on medical work by economic insufficiencies. They did not charge money from the patients for the treatment offered, as the rural community in the surrounding villages could not afford to make such payments.

However, they continued to care for the destitute and deformed children – a work which they began in 1970. In addition, they started a programme of training family members to look after their own terminally ill and other disabled persons. Although they had to suspend the curative medical work, the area of preventive and community medicine has continued unabated.

The perennial complaint from the neighbouring Buddhist establishment was that the treatment in these clinics was mingled with attempts to convert the

[100] Anna Greta Perera, *Journey of Faith*, Colombo, 1991.

Buddhists – even though the medical staff of the hospital often included Buddhists.

Seventh-Day Adventists

Early Adventist missionaries, Mrs. Sophia Hansen in Colombo and S. F. Jessen in Moratuwa, dispensed medicine to the sick in their mission stations, in the 1920s. In 1930, they ran a dispensary in Kottawa. The Lakeside Hospital in Kandy forms part of a worldwide network of hospitals and related healthcare facilities operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The hospital was officially opened on 24 August 1965.[101] Their mission has been to offer healthcare with a difference as a Christ Healing Ministry. The hospital has 50 beds and an out-patients department. Some of the coordination is done through Adventist Health International. Their aim, as that of the American missionaries in northern Sri Lanka, has been to care for individuals in a holistic manner – nurturing mental, spiritual and physical wholeness, promoting healthy living, providing healing treatments, and touching people's lives through compassionate and expert care. They dispensed "both curative and preventive medicine in an attitude of prayer and selfless service".[102] The hospital staff visited the homes of patients where they prayed with them and read the Bible. They also posted the *Signs* monthly magazine to those patients who expressed a desire to receive it.[103]

The role of women in medical mission

The field of medical mission was dominated in the early years by men. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were women missionaries in the medical field. Medical missions by women and for women have done far more than bring the balm of healing to many a poor sufferer. Degraded womanhood and neglected childhood were the hallmarks of traditional Sri Lankan society. The problem was more acute among the Hindu and Muslim women who were segregated from outsiders, during this period.

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[101] R. S. Fernando, *The Isles Shall Wait,* Kandy, 1986, pp.156-174

[102] Ibid. p156.

[103] *Ceylon Daily News*, July 10, 1974.

Women doctors alone could alleviate the pitiful suffering prevalent amongst women.

Female medical missionaries tended to take a particular interest in women's health issues. They devoted attention to maternity and childcare, which used to be an area neglected under colonial government. They also trained, and indeed, empowered, indigenous women in paramedical services. A considerable number of nurses were Christian, or trained in Christian hospitals during the early part of the twentieth century. Many of the missionary wives, although not nurses, gave some of their time to help in this work. They used their knowledge of first aid, and treated the sick the way they would have treated members of their own families.

The female medical missionary organization "Church of England Zenana Mission" began serving Sri Lanka in 1883. Medical work had been added to its ministry to encourage conversions as well as to alleviate suffering caused by sickness. It also provided schooling for girls in Kandy. As a result, the Zenana Mission helped break down the male bias against colonial medicine in Sri Lanka to a considerable extent.

Two sisters of the American Mission, Mary and Margaret Leitch, arrived in Jaffna in 1880, more or less at the same time as Zenana missionaries.[104] They started a hospital, in 1898, which was later known as the McLeod Hospital for Women and Children, at Induvil. Dr Isabella Curr served as the doctor. She ran the hospital, single-handedly, with dedication and missionary zeal. She was able to train local girls for nursing duties in the hospital. She served as a medical missionary for over 40 years in Jaffna.[105]

The popular misconception promoted by critics has been that missionary medical services were primarily curative, in contrast to preventative colonial

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[104] Mary and Margaret Leitch, *Seven Years in Ceylon: Stories of Mission Life,* New York, 1890; pp.160-162; Dorothy Graham, *Saved to Serve: Story of the Wesley Deaconess Order, 1890-1978,* London, 2002, p.162.; *Annual report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1917,p. 63.*

[105] John H. Martyn, *Martyn's Notes on Jaffna: Chronological, Historical, Biographical,* Laurier Books, 2003, p.66.

state medicine. The truth, however, is that the dominance in maternal and child welfare services, established by the missions, was a result of a particular Christian regard for the place of the 'child' and 'mother'. Their position in local communities allowed the culturally-intrusive public health message to be transmitted in a more sensitive and acceptable way. Yet, comparatively few conversions were recorded. While itinerant medical missions found some success, their attitude which undermined local traditions of healing and the Christian opposition to exorcism were regarded by local patients as a hindrance to their own methods of healing.

Short-term medical missions

The recent experiment of short-term medical missions has been a well-established means of providing healthcare. They normally work with local medical professionals, students, and community volunteers to help people receive free surgeries and medical treatments they could not otherwise afford. They helped to deliver, install, and train users to operate medical equipment to various Christian charities, government agencies, and refugee camps, especially after the tsunami in 2004. PMU of Sweden, in cooperation with local Pentecostal churches, supported the medical work after the tsunami, in Galle and Kalmunai.

The practice of conducting clinics and setting up of hospitals has also helped to open doors for further evangelism. They have helped to disarm prejudices and create goodwill among the people of the neighbourhood. The presence of these vital services has made it difficult for non-Christians to continue to be hostile towards Christian philanthropic work. Intimacy and closeness, created by contacts through the medical fields have developed deep gratitude in the minds of people who either received these services or heard about them.

The Navajeewana dispensary in Dehiwela and Kalmunai form a part of the curative medicine of the Hospital Christian Fellowship. As discussed, in earlier times, the American medical mission not only provided curative and preventive medicine, it also trained generations of medical practitioners to serve the people in the area. They believed that "the light of erudition and

sciences is always favourable to Christianity".[106] Medical missions are committed to meet the need for medical care among the world's poor with lasting solutions through excellence in medicine, patient care, and health education. They have done this by mobilizing volunteers for one- and two-week trainings. The SS Hope has docked in Sri Lanka on a number of occasions between 1960 and 1974 to treat patients with acute ailments. During those visits they also undertook surgery.

CONCLUSION

Christian missionaries were the first to introduce Western medicine to Sri Lanka. Although their contribution was not adequate to help all the people in the country, they were instrumental in encouraging the government to establish hospitals and dispensaries in rural and urban areas of the country. Other religious organizations have ventured into other avenues of Christian evangelism.[107] However, so far, none of them have even tried to challenge Christian medical philanthropy. The missionaries also helped the people in times of plagues and pestilences, when every other person fled the areas affected by the disaster. This difficult task, which at times cost them their lives, was achieved by the missionaries' devotion and love for the gospel. Missionary care was not limited to the Christian community, but extended to the entire community affected by pestilences. Those who did not have a similar tradition misunderstood the Christian medical work and blamed them for using it as a secret method to convert their people to Christianity. It is also noticeable that the criticism of the medical work was negligible in the Hindu area of the country. Consequently, medical and other philanthropic work progressed among those people. The medical enterprise in the Jaffna Peninsula was appreciated by the people. Therefore, it blossomed into an institution supported by foreigners and locals alike, improving the quality of life of the people in that region over the years.

[106] S. Jebanesan, *The American Mission Seminary and Modern Education in Jaffna*, Colombo, 2002, p.154.

[107] Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese society, 1750-1900,* Berkeley, 1976, p.203.

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WITHOUT CHRIST
I COULD NOT BE A BUDDHIST:
AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE
TO CHRISTIAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING
IN A BUDDHIST CONTEXT[1]

PRABO MIHINDUKULASURIYA

INTRODUCTION

The safe outrigger

In his 1850 account of Christianity in British Ceylon, Sir James Emerson Tennent documents “a curious illustration” of the tendency among Sinhala Buddhists to append formal Christianity to their traditional way of life and thought:

> A Singhalese chief came a short time since to the principal of a government seminary in Colombo, desirous to place his son as a pupil of the institution, and agreed, without an instant’s hesitation, that the boy should conform to the discipline of the school, which requires the reading of the Scriptures and attendance on the hours of worship and prayer; accounting for his acquiescence by an assurance that he entertained an equal respect for the doctrines of Buddhism and Christianity. ‘But how can you,’ said the Principal, ‘with your superior education and intelligence, reconcile yourself thus to

[1] This paper originated from the author's participation representing the WEA at the consultation on 'Christian Self-Understanding in Relation to Buddhism' (9-14 December, 2009, Colombo) convened by the WCC programme for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Cooperation. The consultation was part of an ongoing series of intra-faith conversations on how Christians worldwide perceive their identities in the contexts of the world's major religions. A version of this article is due to be published in a forthcoming issue of the WCC journal *Current Dialogue* dedicated to the consultation.

> halt between two opinions, and submit to the inconsistency of professing an equal belief in two conflicting religions?' 'Do you see,' replied the subtle chief, laying his hand on the arm of the other, and directing his attention to a canoe, with a large spar as an outrigger, lashed alongside, in which a fisherman was just pushing off upon the lake, 'do you see the style of these boats, in which our fishermen always put to sea, and that that spar is almost equivalent to a second canoe, which keeps the first from upsetting? It is precisely so with myself: I add on *your* religion to steady my *own, because I consider Christianity a very safe outrigger to Buddhism*.'[2]

This exchange is a particularly eloquent local example of a phenomenon that has and always will accompany the cross-cultural process of Christian evangelization. When considering the opportunity of genuine conversion, the individual or community involved in that process will naturally ask (whether given that option by the evangelist or not) how their former beliefs and practices will relate to this new commitment to Christ. Is there any possibility of holding both old and new commitments together? If so, how? If not, why? The WCC consultation on 'Christian Self-Understanding in Relation to Buddhism' (Colombo, 2009) carried the general consensus that among the many possible configurations of religious identity-formation, the option of 'dual belonging' (understanding oneself as both Buddhist and Christian at the same time) was the most enlightened. In presenting an evangelical response, I shall take the opportunity to focus on the proposition of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging and its underlying presupposition of religious pluralism.[3] But, I will also reflect on the consultation's broader theme of Christian self-understanding in relation to Buddhism from within my own context of contemporary Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

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[2] *Christianity in Ceylon* (London: John Murray, 1850; Reprint: New Delhi: Asian Education Service, 1998), 240-41 (original italicization). See also the preceding extract from Methodist missionary scholar Rev. D. J. Gogerly entitled 'Theory which reconciles the Buddhists to profess two religions' (240).

[3] For a recent evangelical response helpfully outlining the main issues raised by 'dual belonging' please read Kang-San Tan, 'Dual Belonging: A Missiological Critique and Appreciation from an Asian Evangelical Perspective,' Mission Studies, 27 (2010), 1-15. I am very grateful to Dr. Tan for providing me his article.

Evangelical evaluative standpoint

Evangelicalism may mean different things to different people. Yet, on the issue of self-understanding, the insistence on personal conversion to Christ as a relational commitment over and against any prior 'religious' affiliation (even to denominational Christianity) will be broadly acknowledged as an evangelical peculiarity.[4] This placing of Christ as the identity-giving centre of an individual's life has decisive implications for Christian self-understanding in any context. With regard to self-understanding in relation to persons, institutions and traditions of other religions, in this instance Buddhism, my evangelical response is, perhaps predictably, one of critical affirmation. I shall explain the tension of my response by describing both its negative and affirmative aspects. The negative part of my response is based on the New Testament claim that an authentically Christian identity can have only one true centre – the Lord Jesus Christ, who draws us into communion with the triune God. To accommodate any other loyalties at the centre effectively constitutes an identity that is something other than Christian. Therefore, I shall critique initially the proposition of religious pluralism, which is almost always assumed as the basis for interfaith discourse. The affirmative part is based on the New Testament's proclamation of Christ's incarnation and resurrection, which together affirm and transcend our encultured humanity and the meanings of their necessarily particular identities. Under Christ's renewing lordship, we are then freed and enabled to discover, explore, and nurture inherent or adopted identities in order to love our God and neighbours more integrally with our whole selves.

I. WHY RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IS A RAFT THAT NEEDS TO BE ABANDONED

Dual belonging and monocentric pluralism

Before participating in the consultation, I assumed that any proposition of genuine dual belonging would need to posit the soteriological co-centrality of

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[4] Bebbington uses the term "Conversionism" to describe this evangelical hallmark. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-17.

the Buddha and Christ, and would presuppose a polycentric interpretation of religious pluralism. In my reading of Rose Drew's rigorous doctoral thesis, *An Exploration of Buddhist Christian Dual Belonging,* I learned that polycentric interpretations fail to provide a coherent theory for the experience of dual belonging.[5] Drew concludes that monocentric pluralism is necessary despite the reservations of its iconic exponent John Hick on whether dual belonging is strictly possible ("since one cannot reach the summit of a mountain by *simultaneously* walking up paths on different faces of that mountain").[6] Drew therefore sets aside a 'hard pluralism' that would claim the equal efficacy of two separate 'religious traditions' (analogous to two paths up a mountain), and opts instead for a 'soft pluralism' which speaks of "the uniqueness of every individual's salvific/liberative journey" in which "a single person employ[s] the insights and methods of more than one religious tradition in order to foster the salvific/liberative transformation," (analogous to two maps of mountain paths from which the climber plots his/her own route). She states that this is possible because, in her view, "...Buddhism and Christianity do not undo each other's work; rather, they are mutually reinforcing and complementary." One may initially comment that this is a radically individualistic interpretation of religious practice, to say nothing of belonging. For such a person will eventually encounter the skepticism of both traditions' mainstream interpreters and faith communities, and find full belonging only in a third community of other such 'belongers'.[7]

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[5] See the critiques of polycentric pluralism as argued by Roger Corless, and Process Theology in Rose Drew, 'An Exploration of Buddhist Christian Dual Belonging' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), 47-55. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Rose Drew for making this document available to me.

[6] For Hick's reservations see Drew, *An Exploration*, 167-68 (emphasis added).

[7] What then is the difference between this choice of religious practice and that of millions of South Asians, say, who routinely observe an admixture of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and folk religion? The difference is precisely one of self-identity. One confessionally 'belongs' only to one faith community, even though in practice one might 'reach into' (if not "passing over and passing back to" in Dunne's sense) the beliefs and rituals of other traditions. Still, such syncretisms are always open to the periodic correction of each tradition's reformers and revivalists who have only to represent the tradition's orthodoxy and orthopraxy by appealing to its authoritative sources. This is the positive function of fundamentalism without which genuine diversity may not survive over the longterm.

Apophatic theology and the raft analogy

The commonplace appeal to 'apophatic' theology as though it were a total admission of God's unknowability, followed by the assertion of 'Ultimate Reality' and the way thither as a semantic blank on which an individual is free to assemble an idiosyncratic 'mix and match' path is to misconstrue that brilliant insight of Byzantine Christianity. As Maximus the Confessor explained, what was unknowable was the ontological nature of God's being (*divine theology*); which is different from the revealed knowability of His initiatives by which He relates to His creation (*divine economy*), especially in the Incarnation and salvation achieved through Christ in history. Furthermore, Gregory Palamas elucidated that 'apophatic' theology properly implies that God transcends both positive and negative knowledge. He is not simply 'unknowable' but is "beyond the unknowable (*huperagnôstos*)," which is exactly why He had chosen to reveal Himself.[8]

Similarly in the Theravada tradition, the limitation of language for describing the supramundane (*lokuttara*) by no means precludes the definitive communication of its path and goal. The Buddha categorically reiterated that the 'Four Noble Truths' are "real, not unreal, and invariable" (*tathâni avitathâni anaññathâni*).[9] Buddhist analogies such as the 'raft simile' or the 'finger pointing to the moon' are not admissions of the ultimate inexactitude, relativity, or optionality of the *dhamma* as cognitive instruction towards *nibbana*. They only remind the seeker of the *dhamma's* limited role as mere cognitive instruction (unalterable though it is) because the realization of the goal finally depends on the seeker's actual practice of it. As Asanga Tilakaratne clarifies: "Obviously the road-map does not produce the destination. Nevertheless, it is very important to remember that one has to have the road-map until one reaches the destination. It is only at that culminating point that one can get rid of it. Actually, at this point, one

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[8] See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp.31, 265.

[9] *Kathāvatthu*, quoted in Asanga Tilakaratne, *Nirvana and Ineffability: A Study of the Buddhist Theory of Reality and Language* (Kelaniya: The Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 1993), 95.

naturally loses one's interest in it."[10] Therefore, in Buddhism too, the option of making your own path by amalgamating routes from different maps simply does not exist.

Buddhism and religious pluralism

When I stand within the mainstream of orthodox catholic Christian teaching and profess that the cross of Christ is the only solution to the fallenness of the human condition and that no other solution is as efficacious as the redemptive work of Christ, I am fully conscious of the counter-claim of any knowledgeable Buddhist scholar who will assert with similar conviction that this claim is properly attributable only to the Buddha and his self-discovered path. In his essay *Gotama Buddha and Religious Pluralism*, Richard Hayes closely examines the oft-repeated claim of the pluralistic openness of the Buddha's teaching (routinely contrasted with the 'narrow exclusivism' of Jesus and/or NT writers). He observes that such proof-texts are merely instances of the Buddha conceding the possibility of attaining lesser goals (union with Brahma, favour with gods and humans, etc.) in contrast to *nibbana* for which his *dhamma* alone showed the way. Hayes cautions that "it would be ideologically anachronistic and intellectually dishonest to try to find anticipations of a now fashionable way of thinking in traditions that evolved in a social and political setting entirely different from that of the present world."[11] In conclusion, Hayes commends a mutual critique of both (post)modern religious pluralism and ancient Theravada Buddhism:

> It is to be hoped that the recently evolved ideology of religious pluralism will provide a useful challenge to the ideologies found in classical Buddhism and other traditions coming into the modern world from the remote past. It is equally to be hoped that the classical traditions will themselves provide a stimulating challenge to the uncritical acceptance of any new ideologies, including that of religious pluralism.[12]

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[10] Tilakaratne, *Nirvana and Ineffability*, 102 (86-108).

[11] Richard P. Hayes, 'Gotama Buddha and Religious Pluralism', *Journal of Religious Pluralism*, 1 (1991), 96.

[12] Ibid.

Arguably, most religions (including Christianity) make some provision for what may loosely be termed ‘inclusivism’. But to profess thoroughgoing pluralism is to posit a completely new religious system altogether. Approaching interfaith dialogue and dual belonging from that basis will predictably evoke the incredulity, even suspicion, of our other-faith neighbours and dialogue partners. Whatever Buddhists feel about what some Christians are doing to their own religion by adopting religious pluralism, they themselves will not accept it as a paradigm into which they will willingly allow the Buddha *dhamma* to be integrated. At least in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist position is clear: the *Dhamma* of the Enlightened One is supremely self-sufficient. It needs neither supplements nor complements.[13] This confidence is expressed by Asanga Tilakaratne writing in the *festschrift* honouring Fr. Aloysius Pieris on his seventieth birthday,

> A piecemeal kind of adherence to more than one religion does not make one a follower of any religion. Accepting a religion requires one to accept a view of reality unique to that particular religion... It is impossible for one to adhere to more than one paradigm simultaneously. Speaking in the particular context of Buddhism and Christianity, I do not see how one can accept simultaneously the Buddhist world-view informed by the doctrine of Dependent Co-origination and that of Christianity centred around the concept of almighty God. What I think in other words, is that ‘core-to-core dialogue’ as envisioned by venerable people like Fr. Aloysius Pieris seems to be fraught with serious difficulties.[14]

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[13] Even in the period of Buddhist ‘openness’ to Christianity in early 19th century Ceylon (well documented by Elizabeth Harris, ‘Double Belonging in Sri Lanka: Illusion or Liberating Path?’ in Catherine Cornille (ed.), *Many Mansions: Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 76-92), the accommodation was clearly conditional: "If, therefore, the supremacy of Buddhu (*sic*.) and the absolute perfection of his system were conceded, they saw nothing inconsistent in respecting both systems, – Buddhism as the perfection of wisdom and virtue; Christianity as an approximation to it, though mingled with many errors" (See fn. 1, above).

[14] Asanga Tilakaratne, 'Aloysius Pieris s.j. on Inter-religious Dialogue and the Problem of Truth in Religion: A Buddhist Perspective', *Encounters with the Word*, eds. Robert Cruz, Marshal Fernando, Asanga Tilakaratne (Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2004), 395-6. Tilakaratne is assistant editor of *Dialogue* and currently Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies at the University of Colombo.

The point is that any claim to develop multiple religious belonging on a pluralistic platform is, at best, unconvincing to the thought of mainstream Christianity and Buddhism. At worst, it could be perceived as a novel form of Western arrogance asserting the paradigmatic superiority of pluralism over Buddhist ultimacy; ironically reminiscent of colonial missionary paternalism.

Sri Lankan Buddhist response

It is most interesting that while 19th century evangelical missionaries grew frustrated by the pragmatic accommodationism of native Ceylonese Buddhists (ever-willing to amalgamate Christianity as a superficial corollary to their existing Buddhist identity, as illustrated by the above narrative), the converse frustration vexed the Theosophists (the pioneer multiple-belongers). The Buddhist leaders of the post-Panadura period apparently showed no positive interest in other religions. *The Old Diary Leaves* of Henry Steele Olcott are strewn with fulminations about the apathy of the Sinhalese towards the eclectic Theosophical agenda. “That is what makes my work so hard among them,” he once lamented, “all they care for is the intellectual and moral training of their families,” a reference to the establishment of counter-missionary Buddhist schools. “[T]he spiritual is something beyond their grasp.”[15] Elsewhere he vented that,

> The Sinhalese are not much given to study... they have no class like that of the Brahmins, who have a hereditary proclivity for philosophical and metaphysical speculation.... They neither understand nor wish to understand the contents of other religious systems; and when they speak of themselves as Branches of our Society, it is always with this reservation, that they do their best for Buddhism...[16]

Local leaders of the Buddhist revival grew increasingly suspicious of the generosity and syncretism of their Theosophist sympathizers. The once-

[15] Henry Steele Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. IV, (Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1931), p.175.

[16] Ibid, pp.216-17.

euphoric partnership eventually ruptured in hostility and recrimination.[17] There is a lesson here. Interfaith dialogue and dual belonging may seem the most obvious (and to some, the only acceptable) responses of Christian liberality towards other faith communities. Well-intentioned though this may be, such overtures will inevitably be perceived as the latest ploy of Western Christianity to undermine Buddhism.[18] Having failed to colonize outright, it will be said, the restless agents of Christianity are back; this time on the gunboat of religious pluralism, demanding soteriological free-trade with self-sufficient Buddhism. Buddhist cynicism against these interfaith overtures has been fermenting for many years already. Consequently, they are more respectful of the plain-dealing position of their evangelical 'foes' who are more recognizably representative of mainstream Christianity than of the pluralistic 'friends' whose self-conceding relativism is perceived as a conciliatory yet unsustainable aberration. So it appears that they would sooner debate with Christians who actually believe

[17] See Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1976), pp.250-55; and Susantha Goonatilake, 'Pānadurā Vādaya and Its Consequences: Mischievous Association with Fundamentalism,' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, NS Vol. XLIX (2004), 98-101.

[18] These sentiments are characteristically expressed by Kamalika Pieris, a lay Buddhist and regular commentator on Buddhist-Christian issues in Sri Lanka: "...[I]t has been suggested that [there is] an attempt to metamorphose Christianity into a quasi Buddhist appearance by using orange robes and Buddhist 'ideas'. This, it is suggested is intended to blur the distinction between Christianity and Buddhism, so that a person could be persuaded to move from one to the other without much trauma. There is now an attempt to present Christ as an Asian, on the ground that he was born in West Asia. The Pope [John Paul II] stated in India that Jesus Christ took flesh as an Asian. This is to make Christianity acceptable to the Asians. The emphasis on inter-religious dialogue is also a part of this transition. Dialogue is fast becoming the common mode of action for the Asian church. It was useful for transmitting the message." 'Christian conversion in Buddhist Sri Lanka' (newspaper article), *The Island*, March 8, 2000.

in the ultimacy of their own faith than dialogue with those who have somehow conceded that particular self-understanding.[19]

Inclusive pluralism and constitutive Christology

The impasse of religious pluralism has been acknowledged by many notable Catholic theologians such as Jacque Dupuis, Claude Geffré and Peter Phan who nevertheless attribute a salvific role to non-Christian religions. As an alternative they propose an 'inclusive pluralism' paradigm which, they claim, holds together both the universality of God's salvific will ("…who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" 1 Ti. 2.4) and the particularity of God's salvific act ("For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time" vv. 5-6). 'Inclusive pluralism' is presented as a revised 'Christo-centric' model which affirms both the irreducibly distinct soteriologies of different religions and the soteriological uniqueness of Christ as claimed by Christianity. The contradiction of this double affirmation finds resolution, these theologians claim, by expanding the 'normative Christology' of official Catholic teaching to a 'constitutive Christology' which will now encompass the wider dynamics previously performed by the theo-centrism of the classic pluralist model. Here, there is a fall-back on the patristic 'Logos' Christology which postulates the revelatory 'seeds' and 'shafts of light' of pre-Christian philosophies. The declared motive behind the 'inclusive pluralism' alternative is to give the proposed salvific role of other faiths a better grounding in established Roman Catholic theology. Its conclusion: that it was God's intention from the beginning that there should be multiple paths to salvation, although those

[19] The above cited article by Susantha Goonatilake (fn. 16) concludes with the call, "...[O]pen and public debates like the Pānadurā Vādaya should now be restarted." (109). Similarly, Kamalika Pieris proposes that "The second Panadura Vaadaya will have to return to the theme of the first Panadura Vaadaya – Christian conversions. It will have to examine the place of Christianity in the modern world." 'The Need for a Second Panadura Vaadaya: Buddhism as State Religion', *Lankaweb*, 19/04/2005, *http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items05/190405-3.html* (accessed 24/06/2010).

paths were all "expressions of the Spirit of Christ ever at work in history and in human hearts" which were not exhausted by the Incarnation.[20]

In addition to an exegetical problem involving the patristic interpretation of the Johannine Prologue to which the *'logos spermatikos*' theory is attached,[21] the difficulties inherent in the 'constitutive Christology' modification arise as soon as the respective roles of 'Christ', 'the Church' and 'Christianity' begin to be delineated. For instance, when Geffré cautions against the "logic of absolutization" which places "the universality of Christ on the same plane as that of the Church or Christianity"[22] my evangelical response would be to agree on the relative disjunction between Christ and the Church, but not on that between Christ and Christianity. This is because, as stated at the beginning, the evangelical confession is that Christianity *is* Christ, and that whatever historical-cultural form the world's Christianities have taken and will take in the future are all equally validated and authenticated on the extent to which they demonstrate commitment to the transforming lordship of Christ, crucified and risen. Therefore, when Geffré states that "After twenty centuries, no Christianity in history can claim to incarnate the essence of Christianity as a religion of the complete and definitive revelation of the mystery of God,"[23] my evangelical impulse is to ask why an attempt to reduce (let alone incarnate) such an abstraction as "the *essence* of Christianity as a religion" was undertaken in the first place. And, again, when he states that "It is by insisting on the very paradox of the incarnation, that is, the union of the absolutely universal and the absolutely concrete, that one is in a position to deabsolutize Christianity as a historic religion and to verify its dialogical nature,"[24] I am impelled to point out that this paradox would lead one to "deabsolutize Christianity as a historic religion" only because one has constructively dismissed the "strong expression" of Colossians 2:6 (that "the fullness of the divinity dwelled in him, bodily"), as Geffré does, with the *non*

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[20] Claude Geffré, O. P., 'From the Theology of Religious Pluralism to an Interreligious Theology' in Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honour of Jacque Dupuis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), 54.

[21] See section II.4 (below).

[22] Geffré, 'From the Theology of Religious Pluralism to…,' p.53.

[23] Ibid, 54.

[24] Ibid, pp.53-54.

sequitur that “this identification itself sends us back to the inaccessible mystery of God who eludes all identification.”[25] If all that the Incarnation ultimately signifies is that God is “inaccessibly mystery” and “eludes all identification” what was the point of it anyway? Rather, is not the paradox of the Incarnation quite the opposite: that although God is indeed mystery and eludes all (human attempts at) identification, He nevertheless made Himself known to us in the particularly encultured humanity of Jesus of Nazareth? Indeed, Christ’s very cultural particularity is universal *paradigmatically* (just as Israel’s was meant to be for the other nations).[26] By demonstrating how He lived in the relative context of *His own culture*, Christ modeled how His disciples must live in the diverse contexts of *their own cultures* as they enter into deeper relationship with Him and do His will.

So, this then is the question: What does it mean to be Christian in a Buddhist context? To answer it, we first need to clarify some confusions.

II. SOME CLARIFICATIONS

1. The syncretism bugaboo

The religion/culture distinction which underlies the syncretism/contextualization (or inculturation) disjunction is not always helpful for discerning what authentic faith and practice look like in a new situation. As has been often stated, although ‘religion’ and ‘culture’ may be said to exist as spheres, their complex interplay makes it virtually impossible to extricate one from another. Perhaps it would be easier to talk about ‘worldviews’ (internal perceptions) and ‘lifeways’ (external behaviours); and state that conversion transforms both. Certainly, one’s worldview itself may determine what is ‘religious’ or ‘cultural’. Secular people who have no religious commitment will still want to have a church wedding, circumcise, or baptize their children, celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas simply as cultural activities with no religious intentions at all. Whereas in a premodern society, this would simply be inconceivable and routine practices such as

[25] Ibid, p.53.

[26] See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), pp.52-68.

opening shop, starting a bus journey, bathing, eating, exercise or taking medicine will be couched in some spiritual signification. Geffré states that:

> …[E]specially in Asia, Christianity is confronted with a complex whole in which the cultural and the religious elements are inextricably intertwined. One should thus avoid the illusion that it would be possible to make a clear distinction between the cultural values that might be kept and the specifically religious elements that would need to be discarded. The work of *Aufhebung* (destruction-assumption) must manifest itself with regard to this cultural-religious universe in a way that the leaven of the gospel gives rise to a new historical image and form of Christianity [i.e. specific to the context of that Asian culture].[27]

NT examples may be ethically illustrative here. We may see Peter's refusal to continue table fellowship with the Antiochene Gentiles as a 'cultural' choice (to accommodate the strong sensibilities of the Judaizers), since eating a communal meal is not strictly a 'religious' activity for us. Yet, Paul rebukes Peter's hypocrisy as a 'spiritual' violation ("not acting in line with the truth of the gospel," Gal. 2:14). For us, Peter's choice was 'contextual', though Paul rebukes it as 'syncretistic'. On the other hand, Paul attributes to the "Unknown God" (Acts 17:23) descriptions that explicitly refer to the Pagan god Zeus.[28] This would be for us 'syncretistic' as the quotations are clearly from Pagan religious hymns, but for Paul it was 'contextual' ("some of your own poets have said," Acts 17:28) because the theological statements were true, regardless of their original usage, when attributed to the One he was now proclaiming. The point is that 'spiritual' or 'cultural', they are both legitimate resources if they can be unambiguously re-oriented towards the worship of Christ and the service of His kingdom. Just as missionary anthropologist Paul Hiebert called for '*critical* contextualization' in the gospel's engagement with

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[27] 'Double Belonging and the Originality of Christianity as a Religion' in Cornille (ed.), *Many Mansions*, p.98.

[28] Minos addressing Zeus declares: "For in thee we live and move and have our being" (Epimenides, Cretica); "Let us begin with Zeus, whom we mortals never leave unspoken./For every street, every market-place is full of Zeus./Even the sea and the harbour are full of this deity./Everywhere everyone is indebted to Zeus./For we are indeed his offspring..." (Aratus, Phaenomena pp.1-5).

culture,[29] so there must also be '*critical* syncretism' in its engagement with religions.

2. The image problem

When contemplating our Christian self-understanding in relation to Buddhism, we face the double dangers of conformity and rejection. On one hand, we can become so self-conscious and apologetic about our Christian 'otherness' vis-à-vis the Buddhist community that our identity becomes a liability, even a source of self-loathing. Some Christians feel compelled to erase any outward marks of Christianity that might possibly cause offence, and conform to Buddhist conventions so as to seek inclusion and approval by the majority community. On the other hand, we can become so self-conscious and assertive of our 'otherness' that we try at every opportunity to contrast ourselves by reflexively rejecting anything associated with Buddhism. Both these tendencies are reactionary and false to our true identity. There is an intrinsic difference about authentic discipleship that can neither be hidden nor brandished. The metaphors of salt and light (Mt. 5:13-16) are often misinterpreted by those who argue that Christian identity must necessarily be dissolved and diffused in order to enhance the condition of their contexts. The plain intent of the metaphors is quite the opposite, for it calls for the perseverance of its demonstrative qualities: "If the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything… In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven", vv. 13, 16). We must be true to who we are (identity), if we are to be useful to others (mission). However, as we are soberly forewarned, to some we will be "the fragrance of life," but to others who have it on their agenda to deny us any acknowledgement no matter what we do, we will always be "the smell of death" (2 Cor. 2:16). This is because the Cross of Christ is intrinsically a "stumbling block" to all religions and ideologies which encounter its 'intolerant' and 'incoherent' claims (cf. 1Cor. 1:23). To attempt to erase that offensiveness is to miss the point entirely. Therefore, learning to obey and worship Christ in contextually meaningful ways must never be done in order to seek the approval or

[29] 'Critical Contextualization,' Missiology 12 (July 1984), 287-96.

permission of those who resent our distinctiveness. It must be done for the sake of our own integrity as contextualized disciples, regardless of whether the self-appointed 'authorities' of our cultural-religious milieu endorse us or not.

3. The question of authenticity

Generally speaking, Western Christians and Asian Christians have different experiences of Buddhism in its many forms. For Western Christians seeking a spiritual supplement or alternative, Buddhism is one among a growing number of choices (e.g. Native American spirituality, Wicca, New Age, guru-centred Hindu movements, Scientology, etc.). Asian Christians have a different historical and cultural experience of Buddhism, often more ambivalent than that of Westerners who are, arguably, exposed to a type of 'therapeutic' Buddhism. Westerners are also exposed to many more varieties of Buddhism while their Asian counterparts are typically acquainted with one dominant local form. What must be emphasized is that Asian Christians must work out their own response to the Buddhist realities around them without feeling in any way pressured to conform to Western interpretations of it experienced elsewhere. Otherwise, we are back to square one; not only having been taught by the West how to be Christian, but now, also to be taught how to be Christian in relation to Buddhism! Similarly, Western explorations of Buddhism (with its application of Christian and other insights) must continue on its own path, and continue to yield fresh scholarly, devotional, and ethical results. The difference of perspective engendered by these two experiences within the global Christian community can potentially be most instructive, sobering and encouraging.

4. The light of Logos Christology

As mentioned earlier, some clarification is required about 'Logos Christology'. The text that "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (Jn. 1.9) has often been interpreted to mean that in some mysterious way, the pre-Incarnate Christ has been imparting salvific wisdom to every human being; and furthermore, has been doing this through non-Christian religions and philosophies through the ages in all cultures. This

was certainly the interpretation of the early Christian apologists Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandra. But this interpretation is more influenced by the Hellenistic concept of *logos spermatikos* (the 'seed' of salvific wisdom) of Middle Platonism than a close reading of the Fourth Evangelist.

The key question is: In what way does the text mean that the Light "enlightens" everyone? The word *phôtizei* could mean 'to shed light upon' (its primary lexical sense) or 'to illuminate inwardly' (a secondary derivative meaning), or even, as John is wont to do, both senses together. As with all the other themes introduced in the Johannine Prologue that are further expanded in the subsequent narrative, the theme of "the true Light" is picked up again in John 3:19-21, where the specific Johannine nuance of "enlightens" is helpfully elucidated:

> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practises the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

In the context of Johannine Christology, the stated action of the Light on persons is that their deeds are "exposed" (Gk. *elengchthç*) and "manifested" (*phanerôthçi*), demonstrating the primary sense of 'shedding light upon' rather than some sort of inner spiritual or intellectual enlightenment. This leads to the further question: Who is the one "who practises the truth" (an apparent Semitism for 'acting faithfully' or 'honourably')? The decisive role of Christ in the existential human engagement with good and evil is the exposing of the human heart. As they are encountered by God's provision of Christ, both the wicked and the righteous may (in the derivative sense of 'inner enlightenment' now), awaken to the innermost true motivations of their lives. What has our spirituality, religiosity, morality and humanitarianism really been about? Have they been tragic forms of self-centeredness? To the genuine 'practitioner of truth' Christ would make perfect sense. For those who are penitently aware of their own moral inadequacy before a righteous God will never cease to act righteously nor sink into despair and cynicism. Rather, they will strive the harder to please

God more truthfully. And when they hear the gospel of God's reconciliation in Christ, they will readily recognize that He alone has always been the true source of their goodness, and seek refuge in His grace (cf. 18:37b).

III. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Having cleared the ground of the more pesky issues that obstruct our task, we may now seek to build a biblical basis that can nurture and sustain our theological exploration.

1. What is 'salvific' for God?

The inner response of any human being desirous of receiving God's salvation is *repentant faith* in God's grace. This disposition of penitent self-surrender to the justice and mercy of God is authenticated by a life of faithful loyalty to Him and the extension of that same justice and mercy towards one's fellow creatures. This 'salvific' disposition is consistently revealed in both Testaments as God's basic requirement (e.g. Ge. 15:6; 18:25; Dt. 23:7; Ps. 51; Pr. 12:10; 1Sa. 15:22; Mic. 6:8; Jer. 22:16; Mt. 5:1-12; 7:21-23; 18:23-35; Acts 10:34-35; Ro. 2:1-16, 26-29; 1Co.13:1-3; 1Jn.3:17; 4:20; Js. 1:27, etc.). Concluding his incisive critique of the pluralistic theologies of three major fellow Asian theologians, Vinoth Ramachandra lays bare this simple truth, which turns our conventional grandiose sentiments about world religions on its head.

> The cross… tells us that it is not the 'good Christian' or the 'sincere Hindu' or the 'devout Buddhist' or the 'men and women of good will' who are assured places in the kingdom of God. But, rather, that it is the bad Christian, the bad Hindu, the bad Buddhist– those who know themselves to be moral failures, that they have fallen hopelessly short of the kind of life they know (in their better moments) they should be living– it is these who are closer to the kingdom of God. This can be so precisely because salvation is through grace, mediated in the cross of Christ, received by faith. From the perspective of the cross, then, it appears that there are only two kinds of human being: those who, accepting their wretchedness, lift their eyes to God for mercy; and those who, seeking to establish their own identity, spurn

> God's mercy and look down on others (cf. Lk. 18:9-14). True humanness, as Irenaeus reminded us, *is* salvation, and it can be received only as *gift*.[30]

What Ramachandra has done here is to simply apply universally the contrastive attitudes of religious self-understanding (exemplified by the Tax Collector and Pharisee) which existed in the Palestinian milieu of Jesus' day. The relevance of this story to human salvation is denoted by Jesus' pronouncement: "I tell you, this man went to his house justified" (Gk. *dedikaiômenos*; from *dikaiô*, righteous) – an almost-technical term for salvation.

To the extent that a religious tradition presents God as holy, just, caring for His creatures and worthy of our worship; to the extent that it lays bare our sheer moral inadequacy; to the extent that it urges us to place our hope and yearning for forgiveness and acceptance in a righteous and gracious God; to the extent that it fosters confidence that such a God will decisively intervene to defeat evil and its painful manifestations; and to the extent that it exhorts us to reverently and responsively imitate God's righteousness and mercy in our dealings with one another and the world around us, that tradition may, as best as we can understand from the Bible, be said to lead us on the path on which salvation comes to us (cf. Lk. 15.18-20; Acts 17.27). To the extent that a religious tradition (even some forms of 'Christianity') that moves us in an opposite direction, again according to what we learn from the Bible, may be said to lead us farther into idolatry, destruction and alienation from God.

In relation to Buddhism, Lynn de Silva observed that the doctrine of *anatta* must necessarily lead to dependence on God rather than to self-effort.

> For, Buddhism while it denies the soul affirms that man has an intrinsic power by which he can save himself. To assert that man has within himself an intrinsic power to transcend conditioned existence is, from the Christian point of view, to deny the full import of *anatta*…. Christianity can take the meaning of *anatta* in all its seriousness denying any form of intrinsic power

[30] *Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), p.267.

> in man – be it karmic force, power of mind or *vinnana* or continuing memory – by which man can save himself.[31]

The Gospel takes self-denial to the truest extent because it looks to God's gracious mercy rather than to the self at the critical moment of liberation.

2. Why is Christ 'central'?

Without rehearsing the entire biblical theology of salvation here, it may be pertinent simply to attend some aspects of it that are directly relevant to the discussion of other faiths. The place of Christ in Christian soteriology can hardly be understood outside the biblical narrative. Christ is central to salvation history because He spans the entirety of history from beginning to end. He is the giver of all life at creation and its sanctifier at the consummation. The incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection are meaningful only in connection to the entire biblical narrative of the earth, humankind, Israel, and the nations. Salvation is about understanding our humanness in a particular way–the way shaped by the biblical narrative. We are God's creatures, His children, we are broken by our autonomous disparagement of our relationship with God, we need to be healed. Jesus comes not only to teach us to be better persons, but to begin healing our brokenness on a deeper level, a level we have no control over, let alone an understanding. Christ's redemptive work on the cross is properly called 'mystery' not because its salvific achievement is incomprehensible, but because its totality cannot be reduced to a definitive formula by exhaustively interpreting its aspectival and analogical images. The plurality of these soteriological metaphors has been one reason why the cross-cultural transmission of the Gospel is possible. It is also the reason why new Christologies are possible from within the conceptual frameworks of all human cultures.

But the Bible never gives any indication that intermediate salvific interventions have been made through other religious traditions. Universal redemption is promised and longingly awaited. The theme of God's waiting for the right time in universal history, the waiting of His people, the waiting of the Nations, and the waiting of Creation itself for God to act redemptively

[31] 'Anatta and God', *Dialogue* (NS), Vol. 2. No. 3 (Nov-Dec 1975), p.108.

pervades the Bible (e.g. Ps. 22:27-28; 130; Isa. 51:1-6; 64:4; Zeph. 3:7-10; Mal. 3:1; Lk. 2:25; Ro. 8:22; 16:25-27; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:4-11; Col. 1:26-27, etc.). The notion that God has made 'salvific' provisions independent of his covenant mediation with Israel is simply absent. Furthermore, the salvation of the Nations is never anticipated independently of Israel's own salvation. The Nations are always envisaged as being united with the faithful remnant of Israel in their redemption (e.g. Ps. 67:1-3; 102; Isa. 2; 19:20-25; 56; 60; Zech. 2:10-11; Jn. 10:16; Ro. 11, Gal. 3:27-29, Eph. 2:11-13, etc.).

3. Did God 'provide' other faith traditions?

The clearest biblical teaching on the role of other spiritual/religious traditions in salvation history may be found in Gal. 4:8-9 and Col. 2:8, 20-23. The term Paul uses for these traditions is *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* (lit. 'the basic elements or principles of the world'), a term which evidently encompassed Pagan deity-veneration, ascetic ethics and the spirituality that held them together. In both epistles Paul addresses Christians of Jewish and other ethno-religious backgrounds who sought to supplement their salvation in Christ by re-submitting to codes of spiritual veneration and ascetic discipline *as salvific practices* (cf. Col. 2:20-23). Several insights may be gained from the apostolic teaching that follows. Firstly, the 'basic principles' functioned among the Nations in a comparable (yet not identical)[32] manner as the Torah did within Israel. This goes beyond the affirmation of mere individual "conscience' in the Gentile context (Ro. 2:14-16). Paul here recognizes the external "traditions" in Gentile cultures (Col. 2:8; 20-22) as the ethical counterpart to the function of the Torah in Israel's context. Secondly, personification of the 'basic principles' as "guardians" (*epitropoi*) and "managers" (*oikonomoi*) (Gal. 4:2), parallel to the Torah's role as Israel's "supervisory guardian" (*paidagôgos*, Gal. 3:24-25), is a relatively constructive assessment. The 'basic principles' are therefore seen to have exercised a custodial function over human societies: positively, by inculcating ethical virtue, spiritual piety, existential wisdom, and community bonding; and negatively, by restraining, to an extent, humanity's propensity for collective

[32] As the gift of divine revelation the Torah was intrinsically superior to the traditions of the Gentiles in Paul's thought (cf. Ro. 2:20; 3:31; 7:7, 12; 9:4).

evil. Thirdly, there is a contingent providentiality about these roles. The Nations are said to have been "held in bondage under" the 'basic principles' (4:3), as Israel was "under the Torah" (v. 5), "until the date set by the Father" (v. 2). Within this allegory, the work of the many "guardians and managers" makes sense only in relation to the purpose that the Father has for the children. Yet the role of the 'basic principles' is never implied to be independently 'salvific'. They are 'moralistic'. It is here that the ambivalence of Paul's characterization of the 'basic principles' makes sense. For, fourthly, it is only in relation to the full freedom and inheritance of mature sonship that Christ brings that the 'basic principles' are called "weak and poor" (v. 9), just as the Torah would be found to be "weak"(Rom. 8:3) if one misused it as a tool for self-liberation. Indeed, such an attempt would be a pitiful self-enslavement (Gal. 4:9; Col. 2:23). Is it not interesting that the Buddha too rejected the 'basic principles' of dependence on *devas* (deities) and extreme asceticism as paths to *nibbana* as part of his own 'basic principles'?

The 'guardian'/'father' inter-relationship is directly relevant to Christian self-understanding in response to the emotive Buddhist accusation that Sinhalese who convert to Christianity are thereby "forgetting mother and father" (i.e. betraying their native Buddhist patrimony). In a traditional story motif, a young prince entrusted to the temporary tutelage of a renowned sage learns to honour and care for his *guru piyâno* (lit. teacher-father) as his own father. Once he has completed his education, the prince is gloriously reunited with his *raja piyâno* (lit. king-father) who embraces him back into the royal household, assigning his duties and privileges. The prince never loses his esteem and gratitude for his *guru piyano*; neither is he confused about whose son he really is. Likewise, those of us who have been blessed with a Buddhist heritage and understand in retrospect that it was God who placed the culture of our ancestors under its formative 'basic principles', will never despise or disparage its exceptionally rich ethical, cultural, and intellectual endowment. If the Greek and Latin Fathers could express gratitude to God for the wealth of their Pagan heritage,[33] Christians of Buddhist culture can celebrate with at

[33] For the assessments of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Augustine of their own philosophical tradition, see Alister E. McGrath (ed.), *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 4-6.

least as much enthusiasm. For surely, the discerning enjoyment of the wealth of Buddhism is part of the “all things” for which Christ has matured and entitled us (cf. Gal.4:1, 7).

4. What does it mean to be ‘Christian’?

The NT understanding of conversion has always presented a challenge to the cross-cultural missionary experience of the church. The challenge for the Jewish Christians among the Greeks was ‘Must one be a Jew in order to be a Christian?’ The challenge for Bonhoeffer among the secular moderns was ‘Must one become religious in order to become a Christian?’ The challenge for Panikkar in the Indian milieu was ‘Must one be spiritually a Semite and intellectually a Greek to be a Christian?’ Paul’s answer to the Corinthians was emphatic: “[A]s the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk…. Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called… each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called” (1 Cor. 7:17, 20, 24). For genuine conversion is not an abandonment of one identity for another, but the radical re-orientation of the original identity towards Christ. The examples cited by Paul, of circumcision/uncircumcision (ethno-religious belonging), slave/free citizen (socio-political status) and married/single (family situation), are all equally valid identities. The critical factor is the *intra-identity* transformation that must take place with Christ as its new centre (cf. Gal. 5:6; Col. 3:8-12). This is a radically new Christ-centred *way of being* what one has always been. This is why Christianity infuses indigenous cultures and languages rather than replacing them with sacred languages, dress codes, dietary laws, and normative philosophical templates.[34]

But what about religious identity? Is intra-identity conversion possible in terms of a person's religious affiliation? In other words, if one can be a Sinhalese or Tamil *Christianly*, can one also be a Buddhist *Christianly*? This is

[34] In Sri Lanka, Christians are the only community that can celebrate their entire religious service in Sinhala or Tamil without the use of a foreign language.

possible because of what Geffré calls "the originality of Christianity as a religion."[35] As he helpfully reminds us:

> …Jesus did not found a new religion, if by religion we mean a system of doctrinal propositions, symbolic representations, a whole of rituals, a catalogue of prescriptions, and a program of determined behavior. Christian life is not determined a priori. It exists wherever the Spirit of Christ gives birth to a new being in the individual and collective person.[36]

For genuine conversion to take place, a person's initial religious worldview and practices must be taken very seriously. For former worldview conceptions do not simply disappear upon formal conversion. If they are not meaningfully reinterpreted, former beliefs will subsist in an unintegrated and compartmentalized form that is not conducive to a holistic way of life. That is what constitutes *bad* syncretism. To help fellow American converts assimilate their new Buddhist worldview, scholar Clark Strand reportedly "leads a Buddhist Bible Study group in Woodstock, where converts re-read the Bible of their childhood – this time through Buddhist eyes."[37] Likewise, re-reading familiar Buddhist religious-cultural 'texts' (literary and otherwise) from a biblical perspective will be an ideal way to integrate a well-situated Christian worldview. Some practical implications of the process of being Buddhist *Christianly* are suggested below (in section IV).

5. Can a Christian 'add on' another faith tradition?

It is one thing to critically integrate the religious element of one's pre-Christian background in the process of conversion and discipleship. But can the voluntary 'adoption' of a subsequent religious identity be an authentic option for a Christian? In his examination of the rise of Neo-paganism in Europe in recent years, Christian philosopher and environmental activist Loren Wilkinson came to the conclusion that:

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[35] 'Double Belonging and the Originality of Christianity as a Religion', p.102.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Stuart Laidlaw, 'Awaiting the Dalai Lama' (newspaper article), *Toronto Sun*, October 28, 2007, A10.

> Neo-paganism… is an attempt to recover an aspect of being human that is central to the gospel but is often obscured—that is, we cannot be fully human until our restored relationship with the Creator results in a restored relationship not only with other men and women but also with the rest of creation, which is seen and accepted as a divine gift.[38]

This acknowledgement is helpful for addressing our question about the possibility of 'adopting' Buddhism in the service of recovering a fuller, more holistically biblical spirituality in the West. Western Christianity has suffered successive reductionisms at the hands of Scholaticism, Protestantism, Liberalism and Fundamentalism which have bled the ancient Spirit-filled faith of its earthy vitality and cultural colour.[39] It is quite understandable, therefore, that the spiritual and aesthetic hunger created by the pseudo-humanism of secular modernity will make seekers look outside the Western tradition, including the anaemic Christianity with which it is closely associated. Therefore, certain insights and practices of Buddhist philosophy and spirituality may well be ways of recovering the creational interconnectedness which suffuses biblical spirituality. Again, Geffré explains this instrumental relating of traditions well:

> The originality of Christian salvation in Jesus Christ must be shown as liberation from sin and death and especially as a gift of eternal life which has already begun. But at the same time, a greater familiarity with the other religious traditions, especially those of the East, put us on our guard against a conception too exclusively polarized on salvation as liberation from sin. In terms of the confused expectation of our contemporaries, it is important to spell out better all the virtualities of Christian salvation, not only as reconciliation with God, but as healing of the affliction of the human condition and as life wisdom, that is, as reconciliation with oneself and with all creation.

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[38] In John G. Stackhouse (ed.), *What Does It Mean to be Saved: Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation* (Baker Academic, 2002), p.154.

[39] Director Bernardo Bertolucci captures this contrast visually in the movie *Little Buddha* (1993) where scenes set in Seattle are depicted in a cold blue tint and scenes in Nepal in a warm red tint.

> In short, the point is not to complete the Christian message with positive elements displayed by other religious traditions but to open oneself up to a mutual fertilization that leads to a better deciphering of the resources hidden in the revelation that has been gratuitously entrusted to us by God.[40]

IV. SOME MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS

What missional ramifications would dual belonging entail? A few examples may be suggested from among the many tensions in the practice of the Buddhist philosophy by the laity of a Buddhist society. Inability to satisfactorily resolve these ruptures between 'ultimate/ideal' and 'intermediate/real' presents an acute existential tension that undermines the ability of cognitive Buddhism to intervene transformatively in critical real-life situations. This often results in a cynical pragmatism towards the everyday struggles of the laity as they are affectively caught between the behavioural necessity to make commitments and take action even though, cognitively, those commitments and actions do not bear ultimate significance in themselves.[41]

1. Human relationships

If the bonds of love and kinship are manifestations of worldly attachment that prolong the agony of *sansara*, the serious disciple of the *dhamma* must ideally disengage from these ties. The commonest story motif depicted in temple murals in Sri Lanka is the *Vessantara Jātaka* which idealizes the renunciation of the *Bōdhisatva* King Vessantara of his wife and children. Yet at the same time, popular Buddhist morality emphasises a strong ethic of maternal devotion ('May my mother attain to Buddhahood,' 'The mother is the Buddha of the home,' etc.), filial piety, family duty and the bonds of true friendship. The soteriology of relational cessation and the ethics of relational obligation present a dilemma not only for the laity, but also for members of the *sangha* as well.

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[40] 'From the 'Theology of Religious Pluralism to …', p.57.

[41] In Sri Lanka today, this dissonance experienced by students and young workers has produced a lucrative market for a booming self-help literature industry that promises, revealingly, to be a 'new' and 'positive' way of thinking.

Jesus teaches that family can become a major obstacle (like wealth) to a person's commitment to the Kingdom of God (e.g. Mt.10:34-37; Lk. 9:59-62; 14:26; cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35, etc.). But the 'renunciation' he demands is not 'ascetic'. In Christ, giving priority to the Kingdom means embracing a wider family (e.g. Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 10:28-30, etc.), rejecting the false values, loyalties and expectations that families often demand. In fact, true discipleship involves a radically Christ-imitating commitment to family (e.g. Mk. 7:6-13; 10:2-12, etc.) and a radically inclusive sense of kinship and community. Jesus reconciles the spirituality of renunciation and responsibility, making human relationships not a hindrance to one's liberation but a manifestation of it (e.g. Eph. 5:25-33; 1Tim. 5:1-8, etc.).

2. Ethno-nationalism

Although Buddhist teaching exposes the illusion of individual and collective 'identity' as one of the root causes of *dukkha*, the ethno-religious identity of 'Sinhala-Buddhism' is a dominant theme in contemporary Sri Lankan society. The preservation and assertion of hegemonic 'Sinhala-Buddhist' rights is widely held to be a perennial struggle against ethnic and religious 'outsiders'.

In Christ, there is a validation of ethno-linguistic identities as part of God's good creation order (e.g. Ge. 10; Amos 9:7; Acts 17:26, etc.). Yet, these identities are relativized under the overarching identity of the new humanity created by the Kingdom of God (e.g. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 3:11, etc.). Thus, even at the consummation of civilizational history, the people of God are described as those representing "every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Rev. 7.9). Christ makes it possible to affirm and celebrate ethnic culture and belonging without the arrogance of civilizational superiority and the fear of the ethnic enemy. Again, the sign of convertedness is the believers' ability to embrace the excluded 'foreigner' as a 'neighbour' (Lk. 10:25-37).

3. Arts and aesthetics

Although Buddhism had produced and fostered a rich aesthetic heritage in the spheres of architecture, literature, visual and performing arts, the fundamental message has remained that the delighting of the senses is a snare to the seeker of liberation. The *Thēlapatta Jātaka* is probably the

second most common visual parable in the country's temples. The *Vinaya Pitaka* forbids monks from engaging in 'secular' arts, although they still do.

Yet, Jesus taught that evil flows outward from the inner inclinations of the heart rather than what is absorbed from outside by the senses (Mt. 15:19; cf. Col. 2: 21-23). Even what is observed by the eye becomes harmful when the eye is evil (Mt. 5:29-30; 6:22-23). When the eye is full of light, then all things are pure to the pure (Tit. 1:15). Again, Jesus relativizes the gifts of human aesthetics and judges the tendency so easily to idolize the creative genius of the creature (e.g. Lk. 21:5-6). He thereby sanctifies the treasures of human creativity and gives it an eternal home in the New Jerusalem (Rev.21:24, 26).

CONCLUSION

So, yes, it is possible from an evangelical perspective to endorse the proposition of 'dual belonging' because that is what genuine conversion and discipleship must be anyway. In fact, truly integrative dual belonging can only take place within an evangelical conviction that the centrality and ultimacy of Christ makes the reconciliation of all things possible. Yet, honest caution is required. Close attention to the spiritual narratives of dual belongers reveals that difficulties of achieving parity between two traditions is not confined to their cognitive 'coinherence' (as coined by Roger Corless) but, perhaps more so, to the very experiential harmony that they set out to seek in the first place. One system of belief will inevitably emerge as the integrative matrix over time.[42] In his much anticipated spiritual autobiography Paul Knitter works out for himself the inter-relationship between the Buddhist and Christian elements of his religious identity over the years. Towards the end of

[42] As Gideon Goosen insightfully observes: "The psychology of conversion showed us that the process of integration followed by disintegration and then a new integration is normal in human development. There is an inbuilt human need to integrate after a stage of change, growth and disintegration. This applies to intellectual pursuits in general as well as to religious beliefs. I believe Corless is fighting that inbuilt need with his attempting to keep his two commitments to Christianity and Buddhism equal and separate. This could be the source of his confusion and extreme tension, and the reason why this category is not common." 'Towards a Theory of Dual Religious Belonging' in John O'Grady and Peter Scherle (eds), *Ecumenics from the Rim: Explorations in Honour of John D'Arcy May* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007), p.244.

his narrative Knitter explains what he means by the book's title, *Without the Buddha I Cannot be a Christian*, with which I wish to conclude:

> As I believe this book makes clear, my core identity as a Christian has been profoundly influenced by my passing over to Buddhism. Even though my primary allegiance is to Christ and the gospel, my Christian experience and beliefs have not dominated nor always had to trump what I learned or experienced through Buddha. There have been many instances in this book where I have recognized, often with great relief, that Buddhism can offer us Christians a deeper insight, a clearer truth. And yet, at the end of the day, I go home to Jesus.[43]

[43] Paul F Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could not be a Christian* (Oxford: One World, 2009), p.215. I am very grateful to Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardena for introducing me to this book.

HINDU ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY IN WESTERN INDIA

ATUL Y AGHAMKAR

INTRODUCTION

Hindu attitudes toward Christianity form an extremely important, but largely neglected, area of study. Often, efforts have been made to find out how Christians have approached or should approach Hindus with the gospel, but rarely are any efforts undertaken to understand the Hindu point of view.

The modern missionary era began with the arrival of William Carey in 1793. It took a few decades for the Christian missionaries to begin their work in different parts of India. As the missionaries started to expand their work, they developed various ways of witnessing to the Indian people. This triggered mixed responses and reactions from the people. Coupled with the missionary endeavours in India, the introduction of various reforms and Western education began to impact a segment of Indian society–especially the educated urban upper segments. Consequently, a series of Hindu reform movements emerged in various parts of India that started seriously addressing the various concerns and inadequacies of Hinduism. This has been labelled "Hindu Renaissance" by some, and was instrumental in bringing about significant changes in beliefs and practices in the contemporary Hindu society. The Hindu Renaissance leaders and their movements exerted a great amount of influence on the Hindu masses. The speeches, writings and other activities of socio-religious movement leaders projected certain attitudes towards Christianity. Arguably, much of the reform initiated by these leaders and their socio-religious movements, had its roots in their interactions with the Christian missionaries and their criticism of Hinduism. These interactions served as indicators of Hindu perceptions of and attitude towards

Christianity–particularly Christianity presented by the Western Christian missionaries.

This paper attempts to examine attitudes towards Christianity of the late-nineteenth-century Hindu Renaissance leaders in Pune City in Western India, and to critically assess their impact on contemporary Indian society.

Towards an understanding of Pune City

In order to understand the city of Pune, we will have to understand its context. The city of Pune is located about 120 miles southeast of Bombay in the western part of India. It belongs to the State of Maharashtra, which was called Bombay Province until 1960. When the borders were rearranged in 1960 along linguistic lines, Maharashtra came to encompass the area of land inhabited primarily by the Marathi-speaking people. The city is known as the "Queen of Deccan", on account of its historical, cultural, educational, and political importance (Chaudhari 1982:205). From ancient times, the city has been known to be a religious and cultural centre of India.

Long before the city of Bombay came to prominence, however, Pune dominated the western coastal area of India. Though the state capital has been the city of Bombay, for centuries Pune has been considered the "real" capital of Maharashtra. Today's Pune reflects the blend of ancient tradition, British influence, and modern industrial technology. Toward the end of 1817, by defeating the Peshwas, the British conquered Pune and the population of the city suffered a large decline right after the defeat of the Peshwas. British forces occupied the city and eventually established in Pune a cantonment that housed a large British garrison and military and civil officiers.[1] In due

[1] Cantonments were usually attached to major towns in order to guard and control them. Poona had two cantonments, one near the city, and one at Kirkee. The military cantonment was located at a safe distance from the city, and contact between the two was discouraged by declaring the city out of bonds for the military. All land in the cantonment was government property, and its administration was managed by a specially-appointed Cantonment Board. Technically, the military cantonment – the "Sadar Bazaar" – was an Indian commercial quarter for the shopkeepers, servants, and others providing supplies and services to the army (Kosambi 1988:23-24).

course, Pune also became the summer capital of the Bombay presidency. "The establishment of the cantonment and the civil lines made Pune more important and communication between Bombay and Pune improved" (Gadgil 1952:89). Eventually, the road between Bombay and Pune was established, which enhanced transportation between those two cities. Further, construction of a railroad through Bor-Ghat between Bombay and Pune in 1863 affected Pune in that it began to function as a "funnel", facilitating the free flow of goods and services from Bombay and the eastern regions (Deshpande 1978:69). The establishment of railways and improvement of the roads enhanced Pune's trade, especially in agricultural products, textile materials, and metals. The door was opened for the traders to move into the city.

Because of the influence of the Brahmin community on the city, the British initiated the establishment of educational institutions for it. The first college initiated officially by the British government was a Hindu College in 1821. This college eventually became known as Deccan College. Along with this, a few English schools were started for the children of British soldiers who were stationed in Pune. The city became a renowned educational centre in India.

Though the British considered Pune to be a military centre, it eventually emerged as the educational and cultural centre of India, with a strong focus on political revival. Much of the extreme political thought during the pre-independence era evolved in and around Pune. During this period, the city became known, in political circles, for the freedom movement. Naturally, the city became the centre of revolt against the British. Along with initiating extreme political movements, the city played a leading role in initiating major social and religious reform movements. It was during this period that many Christian missionary societies entered the city and began to make their presence felt.

While Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras became prominent centres of socio-religious reforms, cities like Pune and Ahmedabad have also played a comparatively significant role in such activities. As a matter of fact, the city of Pune provided a number of outstanding leaders to these and other movements. A number of these leaders either lived in Pune or originally

came from Pune, and eventually moved on to Bombay to become naturally prominent. Pune, being a strong Hindu centre dominated by the Chitpawan Brahmin community, resisted the British rulers and Christian missionaries equally. Hindu rigidity and orthodoxy was stronger in Pune than in Bombay. Moreover, in the words of Hewat: “Poona was perhaps the most intellectually alive centre in the country…” (1960:58). Since Bombay was, for a long time, ruled by the British, it was more cosmopolitan than Pune. Reformers in Bombay had to face a less hostile Hindu society there than those in Pune. And yet, Pune produced much stronger reformers, who initiated numerous social and religious reforms. In a sense, Western Maharashtra led the socio-religious movements, with Bombay-Pune being their centres. Hiemsath rightly observes that: “In the province of Bombay, Poona has always been a centre for agitation for social reform ideas and it has also produced an exceptional number of institutions carrying on active reform work” (1964:238). Perhaps the uniqueness of Poona lies in the fact that, being such an orthodox Hindu city, it still produced many outstanding socio-religious reformers.

The emergence of Christian missionary activities in Pune

Soon after the British conquest of Pune, many missionary societies attempted to establish their work there. The British governor of Bombay, however, was cautious in allowing their entry into the city. Since the Peshwas had been defeated and banished from Pune by the British, the dominant Brahmin community felt a deep sense of loss. The defeat of the Peshwa king, who himself was a Brahmin, had created ill-feelings in the hearts of the local Brahmin community towards the British. Keeping in mind the domination and hold of the Brahmin community over Pune, the governor of Bombay did not want to offend them by allowing Christian missionaries to work in Pune.

Furthermore, the East India Company was basically not interested in missionary work. Right from the beginning, it opposed the interference of missionaries in its territories. When the first American missionaries arrived in Bombay in 1813, they initially were prevented from going beyond Bombay into the Marathi area. Some were permitted to start work in the Konkan

coast area. But the governor rejected, repeatedly, requests to start missionary work in Pune.

Elizabeth Hewat, a veteran Scottish missionary to western India, commented on the British attitudes towards the first missionaries in Pune:

> When the Scots (Scottish missionaries) arrived, the Government flatly refused to allow them to settle in Poona, being desperately afraid of offending the religious susceptibilities of the Brahmins; and a distributor of tracts had been seized in Poona by the British authorities and hurried off under escort out of the Deccan (1950:64).

The Scottish missionaries attempted to initiate their work among the Marathi-speaking people of Pune. But they did not succeed in their first attempt. Even though the Christian population increased substantially within a few years of the British occupation of Pune, no Christian witness was allowed in the city. There was hardly any Christian work among the Marathi-speaking people. Occasionally, a concerned military chaplain would undertake an evangelistic work among those Hindus in the cantonment, but as far as the old city was concerned, there was no Christian witness there.

In 1829, however, three Scottish missionaries visited Pune, with the intention of starting their work among the Marathi-speaking Hindus. Permission to visit the city was given, since it was for a short period of time. It must, however, be noted that this permission came eleven years after the British takeover of the city. These missionaries were accompanied by a Brahmin convert, who acted as a guide for them in Pune. Naturally, he led them to the Brahmin section of the city, where these missionaries preached the gospel. This was probably the first time that the Hindus in Pune heard the gospel from a foreign missionary in their own mother tongue. A great amount of curiosity was created by the presence and preaching of a white man.

Although these Scottish missionaries were able to share and discuss the gospel with the Brahmins of Pune, some Brahmins could not tolerate such Christian intrusion. Cameron notes: “Although there was some opposition and the Brahmins lodged a complaint with the government, it was not of sufficient moment for the government to take action” (1973:43). Some

Brahmins considered this as an attack on their religion. By complaining to the government, they wanted to express their resentment towards Christian missionaries.

However, on the other side, the missionaries received a sympathetic hearing from the Hindus of the city. As Cameron puts it: “Actually, many people had shown interest in the preaching and this opened the way for the establishment of a Christian mission two years later, in 1831” (1973:43). The first preaching of the gospel in Marathi in Pune City was heard by eager listeners. This interest among the people encouraged the missionaries to start a permanent mission work in Pune. Their stay in Pune for about six weeks during their first visit showed them the openness of the people to the gospel. This first gospel preaching encounter brought both positive and negative reactions from the Hindus of Pune.

The missionaries apparently came prepared to share the gospel in a most acceptable way to the Marathi intellectuals of Pune. They adopted a discussion rather than a preaching method, which was more suitable. Pune had a tradition of discussions and debates over religious issues, so the missionaries aptly used that method. Further, we note that they did not go out on the streets to preach the gospel. Rather, “they preached to all who came to them...” (Cameron 1973:44). They did not force their views on people. The discussion method gave them sufficient time to interact with the intellectual Brahmins and answer their questions. Though the missionaries were, at least in the eyes of the Hindus, representing the ruling class, their gospel presentation indicated sensitivity toward the culture and language of local people.

Conversion[2] to Christianity was vehemently opposed by the Hindus in Pune. Hindus, particularly high-caste, could not accept individual conversion from Hinduism to Christianity, or for that matter, to any other religion.

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[2] The Hindus consider conversion as *Dharmantar*, which means the change of religion. Such an idea is alien to them, for they strongly believe that one’s religion cannot be changed.

The amount of work the missionaries did in winning the people of Pune to Christ is amazing. But the results, in terms of conversions, were just meagre. The people of Pune did not yield substantially to the claims of Christ. Elwin said: “Probably there is no city, except Benaras, where idolatry can be seen more openly practised...” than in Pune. He further points out that: “...as you enter Poona City the first thing that stirs your spirit is to find that it is a city wholly given to idolatry” (Elwin 1911:4). No wonder very few people were won to Christ.

Every conversion to Christianity brought a severe reaction from the Hindus. Shirgaonkar, a Hindu scholar, observed: “After every baptism the orthodox reacted with anger, grief, and sometimes helplessness and cruelty also” (1978:502). The Hindus strongly objected to the conversion of individuals who had rejected their traditional old religion, rich culture, family and community to become Christian. Conversion, they contended, upset social stability in India. Christianity was looked down on as a religion that disrupts family unity and community. Despite this opposition, however, there were conversions taking place here and there. Each one of these conversions stirred up the families of the converts. Occasionally, the whole Hindu society reacted to such conversions.

The importance of studying attitudes

Studying and understanding attitudes are important, for they are significant determinants of social or religious behaviour. Attitudes are literally mental postures, guides for conduct to which each new experience is referred before a response is made.

One can determine a person’s or group’s response by studying attitudes. Because attitudes influence behaviour that is favourable or unfavourable, understanding them is crucial. Craig Ellison, in his article, ‘Attitudes and Urban Transition’, says: “An attitude is the way we think, feel, and act toward something”. Illustrating this further, he comments: “Attitudes are psychic eyeglasses which affect the way we see things, and the way we respond emotionally and behaviourally to those things” (1985:14). Understanding attitudes, therefore, is important, because through them we can understand

and predict the way people will respond towards things, other people, or situations.

Several factors are responsible for the formation of attitude. Ellison asserts that our attitudes are formed as a result of the accumulation of direct information, experience, and values (1985:14-15). Elaborating, Ellison says that attitudes are developed "...in response to personal interaction with another individual, an institution, or other attitude objects" (1985:14). Ellison further states: "Some attitudes are developed because we identify with someone, putting ourselves in their place, and adapt a set of feelings and judgments towards something which affects them" (1985:14). In such cases, attitudes are formed on the basis of indirect information, which may or may not be true.

Observing and understanding attitudes is a complex matter, for attitudes cannot be directly observed, but must be inferred from observable behaviour, such as verbal statements of opinion, or overt acts in relation to objects. In understanding early Hindu attitudes towards Christianity, we may not be able to observe their behaviour, but at least we have their writings, which give us some glimpse of their opinion.

The need for studying Hindu attitudes

Samartha has observed that Hindu attitudes "... [range] from aggressive rejection to warm welcome, from uncritical appreciation to thoughtful understanding, and from vague admiration to partial commitment" (1974:15). Therefore, we should take into consideration the complexity and variation of Hindu responses to Christianity. To understand the traditional Hindu attitude toward Christianity, we must go back to the nineteenth century. The coming of the Western Christian missionaries officially began in 1813,[3] when the English Parliament renewed "The Company Charter" and allowed missionaries to start their Christian work in India. It was during the latter part of the 19th century that the Hindus felt the need of responding to

[3] Although there were Protestant missionaries already working in Serampore near Calcutta, and in Tranquebar near Madras, prior to 1813.

the Christian missionary activities. As a result, during the latter part of the 19th century, the "Hindu Renaissance" took place. During that time, continuous interaction between Hinduism and Christianity occurred. A number of prominent Hindu thinkers came forward either in defence of Hinduism or to reform it. In the process, they also expressed their opinion about Christianity. They were, so to say, the pioneers in developing certain attitudes towards Christianity. Therefore, studying them, and their perceptions and attitudes towards Christianity is vitally important. The so-called "Hindu Renaissance" was basically a response to the Christian presence and activities in India. While setting their own house in order, these Renaissance leaders commented on, and compared and contrasted Christianity with Hinduism. In the process of doing this, their attitude towards Christianity was reflected.

Attitudes of the Hindu Renaissance

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Hindu thinkers began to grapple with their awareness of the deplorable living conditions in India. This awareness, which led to an awakening in Hinduism, was caused by several factors. According to Soman Das: "They were the various missionary movements, British colonialism, English education and the inherent vitality of Hinduism" (1983:22). What Das observed is valid, but there were other significant factors that contributed to this awakening. Perhaps what Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the former President of India, said is true: "The Hindu religious revival is partly the result of Western research, partly reaction against Western dominance, and partly the revolt against Christian missionary propaganda" (1956:108). S. Natarajan succinctly puts it this way: "Fear of Christianity has been the beginning of much social wisdom in India" (1962:8). Scholars agree that the impact of the Christian missionary activities was at the root of the socio-religious reforms in India. Most reform leaders during the Hindu Renaissance period were either educated in Christian institutions or influenced by Christian missionaries or their institutions.

As Hindu society came into constant contact with the Christian missionaries and their institutions, changes were bound to occur. K. M. Panikkar observes that: "The first result of the Christian attack on Hinduism was a movement

among educated Hindus in favour of a social reform of religion" (1955:320). While reforming their own religion and society, they also began interacting with Christianity as a religion and Christ as its founder. Most of these reformers had to take into consideration what the Christian missionaries did in terms of huge philanthropic work and the alleviation of social evils.

Attitudes of select Hindu Renaissance leaders

The city of Pune, though not a dominant city in the 19th century, became a prominent centre of socio-religious reformation in Maharashtra and consequently in India. Most of those who led the socio-religious movements during this time were from the Brahmin castes and had been exposed to Western Christian thought through English education. This English education in western Maharashtra by and large was provided by the Christian missionaries and the government agencies. When it came to the Christian schools run by the missionaries, it was observed that, "in their enthusiasm to win Indians to Christianity, the missionaries believed that Indians could be changed by a direct attack upon their minds through education" (David 1977:59). At the same time, the missionaries constantly attacked the evils of Hindu society, which indirectly sowed the seeds of suspicion and disregard for what was considered traditional Hindu beliefs and practices. Consequently, missionary propaganda and education in Christian institutions led to social turmoil in Maharashtra (David 1977:59). Since many, if not most, of the Hindu reformers were educated in Christian institutions they were inevitably influenced by Christianity, and especially its social and ethical dimensions. Many educated Hindus began to critically reflect on the prevailing conditions in which the majority of Hindus were living in the light of severe criticism of Christian missionaries. By and large the response of the educated Hindu elite to such criticism was negative, though some responded positively even by consciously giving up certain Hindu practices and adapting certain Christian principles in their lives. However, according to M. D. David, the Hindu reaction to these efforts led to a renaissance in Maharashtra (1977:62). In this regard, it is important to study some of the prominent leaders of Hindu Renaissance, who lived and operated from western Maharashtra, and particularly in the Bombay-Pune area. In responding to the British introduction of various changes and Christian missionary endeavour,

key attitudes of Hindu leaders emerged. These eventually paved the way for others to respond to or reject Christianity. This paper attempts to critically understand the attitudes of key Hindu renaissance leaders of Pune towards Christianity, and analyse such responses in the light of contemporary realities. Understanding and analysing these attitudes is crucial since the traces of their influence on the educated Hindus can still be seen even today.

Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901)

"Maharashtra provided modern India with Brahmin leaders of quality and intellectual distinction whose contribution to the Renaissance of Hinduism was significant" (Glyn Richards 1985:91). He further stated: "They advocated social, economic, and religious reforms in response to the challenge of Western thought, and prominent among them was Mahadev Govind Ranade" (1985:91). Most of these Hindu Renaissance leaders were Brahmins, particularly the Chitpawan Brahmans. Ranade was highly educated and known for his intellectual distinctions. He made his debut as a lawyer and later became a judge, serving both in the Bombay and Pune courts. Through his speeches and writings, he advocated numerous social and religious reforms and laid the foundations of Indian nationalism. He was instrumental in establishing the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha-Pune (the public society to represent public opinion to the government). After the extremists took over the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, he started the Deccan Sabha. (Deccan Society) He was also instrumental in starting the Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society) in Pune, in 1870. The Prarthana Samaj, first organized in Bombay in 1867, was closely and directly connected with the Social Reform Movement in western India. Ranade was "…the person who was responsible for launching the Social Reform Movement" (Cameron 1973:161). He, being a very capable and educated Hindu reformer, came to national prominence in a short period of time. Natarajan comments on this as follows: "Because of his energy, his education, and his sympathetic nature, Ranade won early recognition as the leader of the reformers" (1962:66). His contribution in the socio-political life of India is invaluable.

Ranade's contact with the Christian missionaries and institutions was frequent, though not in-depth. He was sympathetic toward the philanthropic

activities of the Christian missionaries. As was true with the Brahmos, the Prarthana Samajists were also influenced by the Christian principles of equality, love and compassion. Chandavarkar, who took over the leadership of the Social Reform Movement, once reported that he and his associates in the National Social Conference, K. T. Telang, and M. G. Ranade, all had read the Bible (Kaikani 1911:31). But due to the pressure from the Hindu orthodoxy, rarely could they mention that openly.

Personally, Ranade was quite positive toward Christianity and especially toward the Christian missionaries. He was one of those who attended and participated in a "tea party" given by the Panch Howd Mission in October, 1890, along with B. G. Tilak, against the tremendous religious pressure of the orthodox Hindus of Pune. Through this, he and others wanted to demonstrate that they were determined to break away from their caste restrictions. However, when a local newspaper declared the names of those who participated, they finally had to perform "penance" (*prayaschit*) under the given caste restriction. Such enforced penance shows the tremendous power of the Hindu orthodox wing in Pune City. Having defiled themselves by getting involved with the Christians, they had to, through "penance", pay the price for defiling their caste taboos. He was nevertheless of the opinion that the Hindu caste distinctions and untouchability should be abolished.

Ranade supported religious reforms such as "...the removal of idol worship and the restoration of the worship of God as Supreme Being" (Richards 1985:91). This was partly his response to the constant criticism the Christian missionaries wrought upon Hinduism. He was of the opinion that in God's providence the British had been placed in India to uplift the country and that Western education, machinery, capital, and ethics were necessary for the rehabilitation of the nation (Lacy 1965:95). In the context of the Prarthana Samaj, he spoke often from the Bible, liberally quoting from the moral teachings of Jesus. He emphasized that the Prarthana Samaj was a "...society based on faith in prayer as the chief duty of man and the means of attaining God..." (Lacy 1965:97). That shows the influence of Christianity on him, especially in the area of prayer, which is fundamentally different from the traditional Hindu practice of prayer.

Even though Ranade revered Jesus and quoted from the teachings of Jesus, he never acknowledged him as the Saviour. Most of the movements he was instrumental in starting had Christian principles at their heart, but he rarely made any effort to acknowledge them.

Despite constant pressure from the Hindu orthodoxy, much of Ranade's thinking and practices continued to be influenced by Christian principles. "Ranade and his followers, though knowing the importance of Christian values and actually adopting them, did not openly acknowledge this dependence" (David 1977:65). Constant harassment and pressure from the orthodox Hindu society was probably a factor behind their being silent on this issue.

Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar (1855-1923)

Narayan Chandavarkar became a prominent leader of the Social Reform Movement after the death of Ranade. At that time, Chandavarkar resided primarily in Bombay but his roots were in Pune. He was deeply committed to the eradication of social and religious evils from Hindu society. Among many Maharashtrian Brahmins who were at the forefront of the national social reform movement, Chandavarkar was courageous enough to acknowledge his debt to the Christian missionaries, explicitly and publicly. He was also considered to be a staunch critic of Hindu civilization, and demonstrated a clear openness toward Western and Christian reform ideas. He was positive towards what the Christian missionaries were doing in India and particularly in Western India. Joining in with the missionaries, he denounced the Hindu caste system and attempted to introduce a resolution to end the discrimination in the National Social Conference. While being closely associated with the National Social Conference, he was also the president of the Depressed Classes Mission Society, which was started exclusively for the upliftment of the lower caste Hindus (Heimsath 1964:252). As the president of this mission, he worked to give the depressed classes access to schools, public roads, and wells. He was of the opinion that "missionary agitation and arguments against caste, together with the spread of Christian ideas, at least stimulated or reinforced Hindu attempts at reform" (Oddie 1979:69). He was willing to join hands with the missionaries in eradicating the evils of the caste

system. He admitted that he was committed to reforming the Hindu society but disagreed with the missionaries on the issue of conversion. He never came close to becoming a Christian.

Although Chandavarkar did not write much on his views of Christianity, whenever he spoke or wrote about the Christian influence on himself, he did it with utmost honesty and clarity:

> If today there is an awakening among us on the subject of religion and society that is a great deal due to the light brought by him.... To the Christian Missionary... is due to a great extent the credit of the religious and social awakening of which the school of 'Hindoo Protestantism' of the present day is the fruit (Kaikini 1911:43).

Chandavarkar was among the few who acknowledged a positive Christian influence. He not only appreciated what the Christians were doing, but also acknowledged that the motivation behind their work was their love for Christ. This was rather significant, for when his colleagues kept quiet on this issue, he openly spoke about it, despite the fear of being denounced by his own community and people.

Jyotiba Govind Phule (1827-1890)

Jyotiba Phule, who became known as *Mahatma* (a great soul), was an outstanding socio-religious personality of Pune. He was an exception among the heavily dominated Hindu Brahmin reformers of Pune. Phule was not a Brahman; he was not even from a high or middle caste. He was a Shudra of the Mali-gardener caste. Since Pune was the centre of Brahmin dominance, most of the socio-religious reformers came from the upper castes. This was primarily due to the fact that they were educated and had socio-religious acceptance. But, Phule not only overcame the Brahmin dominance of Pune, he also initiated a reform movement among the depressed classes and pioneered an anti-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra.

Phule was the product of a Christian mission school, partly because of his education in the Scottish Mission School in Poona (Keer 1964:13). Admittedly, he was influenced by the Christian missionaries and their

commitment to the causes of the lower castes and women. He opted to teach in the girls' orphanage school of the Scottish mission. Probably during his interaction and experience with Christian missionaries, he picked up the vision of providing education to the women and children of the lower castes. Soon, he launched out on his own and started a school for girls in Pune, calling it a "Low-Caste Female School" (Keer 1964:23). This he did at a time when educating the lower castes, let alone educating the female, was severely prohibited by Hindu society.

Phule expanded his educational vision by starting more schools in Pune.

[He] had been concerned with the ignorance and misery of the low castes and had felt that he could help better their situation by means of education (Cameron 1973:153). …He aimed at educating females so that they could influence the whole family and eventually society. His concern for the widows, poor and the lower castes was basically triggered by the influence and work of the Christian missionaries. David, in his article entitled "Glimpses of Socio-Religious Life in Western India", states: "Jyotirao Phooley, the Indian pioneer in the education of women in Maharashtra, drew his inspiration from the work of the American Maratha Mission in Ahmednagar" (1980:47-48). Shirgaonkar also agreed that Phule and other reformers were influenced by Christianity. Writing in an article entitled "The Effects of the Protestant Christian Missions in Western Maharashtra (1813-1858)", she affirmed that "Jyotiba Phule and Dadoba Tarkhadkar were attracted in their early years to the thoughts and ways of missionaries..." (1978:502), so much so that many accused them of being secret or hidden Christians and therefore attempted to ostracize them. Phule never openly declared that he had any intentions of becoming a Christian, but he was willing to put several of the Christian principles into practice.

Phule's contribution to reforming the Hindu society was unique in many ways. He precisely selected many Christian principles and practices, and formed a society that was dedicated to the reformation of Hindu society. Hiemsath, in his "Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform", commenting on Phule's contribution, states:

> ...Jyotiba Govind Phule (1827-1890), [was] one of the few social reformers whose practical efforts matched his announced convictions. While most of the crusaders against unreasonable orthodoxy confined their activities to individual protests in journals or private groups, Phule started a girls' school at Poona, about 1850, two schools for untouchables, and in 1863 a foundling home to care for the unwanted children of widows – a Home for the Prevention of Infanticide. Central to his scheme for rebuilding Hindu society was the liberation and education of women, whom he felt had been kept unenlightened by those who wanted to preserve their own superiority. Consequently he favored widow remarriage and opposed polygamy and child marriage (1964:102-103).

Phule's unique contribution is seen in the formation of the Satyashodhak Samaj (The Truth Searching Society), toward the latter part of the 19th century. "The objects of the *Samaj* were to redeem the *Shudras* and *Atishudras* [depressed classes] from the influence of Brahminical scriptures..., to teach them their human rights, and to liberate them from mental and religious slavery" (Keer 1964:126). Similarities can be observed between the Christian missionaries in Pune, who were attacking the Hindu scriptures and attempting to liberate people from the so-called religious slavery of the caste system, and those of Phule, through his Samaj doing the same thing. Heimsath pointed out that the Satyashodhak Samaj "...later became the nucleus of a movement in Maharashtra, which was to have profound reverberation on social and political life in the 20th century, the awakening of the non-Brahmin castes and their struggle for influence and even dominance" (1964:103). This non-Brahmin, or anti-Brahmin movement, took quick roots in Maharashtra, especially when "...the Satyashodhak Samaj was established in Kolhapur State in 1911 and gained the Maharaja's support" (Heimsath 1964:250). This was the beginning of the lower caste agitation against Brahmin dominance. The Samaj paved the way for it. Dhananjay Keer, his Brahmin Hindu biographer, points out that "Phule emphasized the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.... This he learned in the Christian mission school, where he was deeply influenced by Christian teachings on equality" (1964:4). He was admittedly influenced by the Bible and Christian ethics. His motivation for establishing schools for female education and the depressed classes and establishing the Satyashodhak Samaj was derived from his association with Christian missionaries in Poona

and Ahmednagar. He had a number of Christian friends, including some missionaries. “Hence some suspicion existed furthermore, that Phule might have been a Christian, which was enough to deny him a popular following” (Heimsath 1964:249). However, since Phule's main interest was reformation, he hardly commented on Christianity or Christian doctrines.

However, one thing is clear. Phule was not negative towards Christianity, or anti-Christian in his views. He was quite sympathetic towards the missionaries, particularly their work among the lower castes and women. “He regarded Western influence in the country not only as conducive to individual liberation from restrictive ideas and customs, but as the basis of a massive social upheaval” (Heimsath 1964:103). He continued to be supportive of the missionary work in Pune and its surroundings. His attitude towards Christianity, one can say, was quite positive.

Balwant Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920)

Tilak’s place in Indian politics is unique, and his contribution to the reformation movement is strong. He studied at Elphinstone College in Bombay and then at Deccan College in Pune. He became a renowned social reformer, educationalist, fiery journalist, and a shrewd Hindu politician. Initially, he got involved with Pune social reformers at different levels. “Later with Agarkar began publishing two weekly newspapers, Marattha in English and Kesari in Marathi, both criticizing the government's system of education and promoting nationalist ideals” (Richards 1985:103).

As an educator, and especially as a journalist, Tilak contributed significantly to the life of Pune. He got involved with other reformers and stood with them in their cause. In his initial years, he was also instrumental in starting the “Deccan Educational Society” and in establishing Fergusson College as an institution of higher learning in Poona, in 1885 (Richards 1985:103). Partly because of his temperament and partly because of his changing convictions, he turned to politics and became less concerned about social reforms. He “...was of the opinion that the political movement was being hampered by any association with social reform issues” (Cameron 1973:179). He disassociated himself from Ranade and his National Social Conference. He led

the extremist wing of the Indian National Congress party. However, he was very supportive of many of the social reforms carried out by other reformers in the Pune-Bombay area.

Being an extremist by nature, Tilak was open to the revolutionary steps to break from traditional Hindu customs and practices. In his initial years at Pune, he was open to Christianity. He was among those who were committed to breaking the Hindu caste restrictions. "In 1890, he had attended a missionary meeting, along with Ranade, where tea and biscuits were served, and both submitted equally to the purification ceremony after protracted arguments with the religious head" (Natarajan 1962:66). Being an orthodox Hindu and at the same time getting involved in socio-religious reforms was a difficult exercise for him to perform. As he drifted from social reform and got more and more involved in Indian politics, his opinion toward Christianity changed.

Tilak drifted towards active politics as a fundamentalist Hindu and became more involved in leading the extreme wing of the Indian National Congress party. He saw in Hinduism a unique religious base to oppose the British rule in India. He appears to have taken steps towards becoming a devout Hindu. He wrote a book to prove the antiquity of the Vedas and the secret of the *Bhagvad Geeta.* Then he initiated a religious revival by sponsoring the *Ganesh Utsav* (a festival of god Ganesh) and *Shiv-Jayanti* (a festival celebrating the birth of the Maratha king Shivaji). These festivals and his inflammatory articles (which mostly appeared in *Marattha* and *Kesari* newspapers) against the British and Muslims, created a great stir among the Hindus. He was given the title *Lokmanya,* which means revered or approved of people. Perhaps Richards is right when he says that “Tilak saw Hinduism as the unifying factor of Indian society and strove incessantly for the restoration of Hindu orthodoxy. He denounced Western secular education for its indifference to the Hindu religion and neglect of morality” (Richards 1985:104). Because of his militant Hindu views, in the latter part of his life he drifted away from being sympathetic to Christianity, even though he was initially supportive of some of the missionary work carried out in India.

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)

"Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1858-1922) was the greatest woman produced by modern India and one of the greatest Indians in all history" (Shah 1977:i). Ramabai was considered to be an outstanding woman social reformer, educator, and champion of women's rights. Having studied Sanskrit scriptures and travelled all over India at a young age, the title "Pandita" was conferred on her by the Pundits of Calcutta. After marrying a Shudra lawyer and becoming a widow within two years, she returned to Pune. It was here that she "formed a women's group called the Arya Mahila Samaj, which had as its object the improvement of the conditions of women" (Cameron 1973:115). This she did under the auspices of the Prarthana Samaj for social service among Hindu women (Natarajan 1962:86).

Ramabai was a fierce fighter for social reforms, particularly those that were related to female education and widows' remarriage. She herself was both educated and widowed. She did not marry again, but devoted her life to the cause of the destitute and widowed. While in Pune, she conducted a series of meetings for women and made them aware of their pitiful position. Initially, she was interested in the high caste women, but eventually she began concentrating on the other caste women. Because she had already lost her faith in her own traditional Hinduism, she was critical of many Hindu practices and customs. Often she condemned them openly. She herself had renounced practising caste. It was in Pune that she came in contact with the Christian missionaries of the Panch Howd Mission, and with their help she went to England, where she became a Christian and was baptized. From there she went to the United States and formed the Ramabai Association to support her in educating widows and orphans of India. On her return to India, she started Sharada Sadan–a home for the widows–first in Bombay, and then shifted it to Pune in 1890. "It was a home for high-caste widows, which both Ranade and Bhandarkar supported in spite of the fact that Ramabai had been converted to Christianity" (Heimsath 1964:238). They remained on her Advisory Board as long as Ramabai promised to allow the widows to remain Hindus and practise their religion. However, "there was growing apprehension amongst Hindus about the Christian teaching and example to which these girls were being exposed" (Cameron 1973: 117). Eventually,

when some girls showed an interest in becoming Christians, a furious storm burst out in Pune among the orthodox Hindus. Tilak denounced her for engaging in conversion under the garb of imparting education, and the social reformers [criticized her for] betraying Hinduism (Natarajan 1962:87).

As a result, the Hindu reformers withdrew their support, and Ramabai moved out of Pune to Kedgaon. Despite this, Heimsath observes: “Pandita Ramabai was an inspiration to many Hindus because of the devotion of her service to young widows and the tenacity of her struggle for women's rights” (1964:238-239). This incident shows the attitude of the orthodox and reformed Hindus towards conversion to Christianity.

Ramabai is one of the outstanding examples of the conversion of a social reformer. Her story shows why her contemporary reformers were apprehensive. Many of them were aware of the ills and deficiencies of their religion but did not have enough courage to renounce it and become Christian.

Dhondu Keshav Karve (1858-1962)

Karve was originally from Murud, a village in the Ratnagiri district, south of Bombay. He left his village and arrived in Bombay in pursuit of higher studies. Having studied at a Christian school and college and taught at three different Christian schools, he was invited to teach at Fergusson College in Pune. It was in Pune that he began to get involved in social reform. One of the outstanding contributions of Karve was in the area of establishing the “Widow Marriage Association” – both to aid widows wishing to remarry and to break down public opposition to such marriages" (Karve 1963:13). Although the practice of *sati* – burning of widows along with their dead husbands had long been banned, the Hindu society did not allow the widow to remarry.

Further, Karve took concrete steps in doing something substantial for the Hindu widows. First of all, he himself married a widow, against the opposition of his society – “When Karve’s first wife died, in 1891, he resolved to marry a widow. The widow whom he married had been the first widow to enter

Pandita Ramabai's home for widows, Sharda Sadan, in Bombay, in 1889" (Cameron 1973:233). His relations with Ramabai and other Christian missionaries were cordial. He was, in fact, influenced by their charitable work among the destitute and the widows. He, along with other Hindu reformers, decided to start a Home for Hindu widows. Heimsath feels that his home for the widows followed the "...pattern of Pandita Ramabai's Home." (1964:240).

Karve also founded the Mahila Vidyalaya, a girls' school, with the assistance of the existing Deccan Education Society (Heimsath 1964:240). Because of his contribution to the cause of widows, he was awarded the title "Maharshi" (i.e. a great sage).

He had already gone through so much suffering and ostracism from Hindu society for his radical beliefs and practices that perhaps he did not want to express his gratitude to Christian missionaries for fear of the orthodox Hindu society. However, since he did little writing, his opinions on Christianity are not known. Nevertheless, his life and work reflect much Christian influence. Being involved in social reforms himself, his attitude toward Christian missionaries, who were also committed to reform, was positive and supportive.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915)

Like Karve, Gokhale came to Pune to teach, first in the new English School then at Fergusson College (Richards 1985:122). Though moderate in his beliefs, he joined hands with some outstanding reformers in Pune. Among them were B. G. Tilak, Ranade, and Agarkar. Having been associated with several reformers and their institutions, he felt that a number of them lacked a religious foundation and commitment. Therefore, "in 1905, he founded the "Servants of India Society", more or less on the pattern of the Society of Jesus" (Thomas 1976:324). Commenting on the objectives of the Society, Gokhale stated that: "The Servants of India Society, will train men prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, and will seek to promote, by all constitutional means, the national interest of the Indian people" (quoted by Richards 1985:126). This he did, primarily, because of the influence of dedicated Christian missionaries. "Impressed with the

Jesuits and the American Mission missionaries' devotion, Gokhale was convinced that India's progress depended upon recruitment of a similar type of person for nation-building work" (Heimsath 1964:241).

The impact of the "Servants" was slow but substantial. A number of outstanding leaders who committed to social reforms were produced by the Society. "The best known of the Society's social reformers and workers was Gopal Krishna Devadhar of Poona, who founded the Seva Sadan" (Heimsath 1964:243). Others went out from Pune to establish social service organizations, such as cooperative societies and labour unions. Some got involved in relief work during the famine time, and a number of them devoted themselves to the cause of the poor, depressed classes. The influence of the Society could be felt beyond Pune. Its emphasis on spiritual commitment and socio-political involvement was novel at that time and gained much respect.

Gokhale was a strong advocate of promoting education among all classes of society. He was associated with several educational institutions of Pune and made a lasting impact on the country. Though not a religious reformer, he was influenced by Christian ideals and dedication. He continued to strive for social reform with a devotion and commitment equal to that of the Christian missionaries.

Other Hindu leaders in Pune

There were a number of other social reformers in Pune who have contributed significantly. Prominent among them were Ramakrishna Govind Bhandarkar, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar, and Kashinath Trimbak Telang. These people, while being related to several reform societies, also either initiated or were a part of founding some institution that contributed to the reform movements. Almost all of them were of Brahman descent. Their commitment to social reform was outstanding.

Bhandarkar (1837-1925) was a contemporary of Ranade and a known Sanskrit scholar and Orientalist. Having taught Sanskrit at the Bombay

University, he was appointed to teach at Deccan College in Pune until his retirement. Though his involvement in social activities emerged from Pune, they were not restricted to Pune. "Although he was concerned with all aspects of social reform, he was particularly interested in the removal of caste restrictions and the improvement of conditions for women" (Cameron 1973:167). In the initial years of Ramabai's Sharda Sadan, he was an executive president and was very much involved in Karve's work among the Hindu widows. He was prominently involved with Ranade in the National Social Conference in providing leadership at different levels. Being closely connected with the social reform in the Pune-Bombay area, he was keen and sympathetic toward the missionary initiative in female education.

Agarkar (1823-1892) was a contemporary of Tilak and cooperated with him in starting the *Kesari* and *Marattha* weekly newspapers. Agarkar was also a fiery speaker and a prolific writer, deeply committed to social reforms. After breaking with Tilak, "...in 1888, Agarkar and Gokhale established *Sudharak* [Reformer]" (Heimsath 1964: 209), a newspaper in Marathi. Both Agarkar and Chiplunkar inherited the Hindu militancy and fervour for nationalistic reform from the extremist group led by Tilak. Agarkar, being a rationalist, contended that reason is the only proper guide, and condemned many religious practices in contemporary Hindu society. He also encouraged others to write and allowed some outstanding reform writings in his newspaper. During his time, he made *Sudharak* a true advocate of the Hindu reforms. It was primarily in *Sudharak* that he published critical and condemnatory writings of people like Gopal Hari Deshmukh. These articles, in the form of letters, are considered a milestone in the reform literature of Maharashtra. While being appreciative of certain aspects of missionary activities in the area of social reform, Agarkar was an ardent Hindu nationalist. Hence, he was critical of missionary motives and condemned them openly.

Deshmukh (1823-1892), a senior among his contemporaries, was given the title Lokhitwadi, which meant "promoter of the good of the people". He regularly wrote in local newspapers, especially in Agarkar's *Sudharak*. His series of writings on various evils of society and religion were finally published in Marathi under the title Shatpatre – hundred letters. "His critical writings on social matters began to appear in the 1840s, and provide a classic

example of the early Maharashtrian response to the West" (Heimsath 1964:102). In his writings, he condemned many traditional Hindu practices, including the caste system, child marriage, the treatment given to widows, and particularly the monopoly of the Brahmins. Because of his constant attack on traditional socio-religious practices, he was also suspected of having become a Christian. Though he was personally supportive of the Christian missionary work for the improvement of society, he never acknowledged any religious commitment to Christianity. Rather, he rendered a strong support to Dayananda's Arya Samaj. He "...almost matched Dayananda's vitriolic condemnation of the traditional Brahmin monopoly of education and religious life" (Heimsath 1964:16). Often, while condemning the traditional Indian practices, he would praise the West and some Christian practices. That brought much wrath from Pune's orthodox Brahmins. Perhaps due to constant fear of ostracism, he could not put into practice what he was propagating.

During the Hindu Renaissance period, Pune provided some of the outstanding leaders. These leaders, while reacting to the Western and Christian influences, initiated several socio-religious reform movements. These movements attempted to reform traditional Hindu religion and practices and at the same time provide a substitute to the Christian missionary activities in India. By initiating numerous reform movements, these prominent Hindu leaders showed their attitude toward Christianity. Pune, being an intellectual centre at the time, provided direction and initiative in reforming Hindu society.

Because Pune and Bombay were strong centres of Christian missionary activities, many intellectual Hindus came in contact with the missionaries. One of the results of such interactions was the formation of various reform movements. Whether the Christian missionaries were directly responsible for such a result or not is still being debated. But the very fact that these reformers arose in the cities where the missionary influence was strong points to the fact that there was some connection.

Analysis of Hindu attitudes in Pune

One cannot study the attitudes of the neo-Hindus of the late 19th and early 20th centuries without understanding a few crucial factors that shaped their attitudes. The impact of the West, particularly through the British rulers and Christian missionaries, largely triggered a Hindu Renaissance and nationalistic movement. Since the Christian missionaries were perceived to be the agents of Western colonialism and expansion, the Hindu Renaissance reacted against both of them with equal vigour and opposition.

Interestingly, the intellectual Hindus who had been exposed to Christianity and Western education took the initiative in responding to the challenges of their time. They were the first ones to understand and analyze the situation in India and bring about reforms. It was clear that the Christian missions and missionaries appeared to go hand-in-hand with Western thought and education. Thomas rightly observes that, "The Christian missions corresponded with the period and spirit of Western imperial expansion in India..." (1976:241). Those who were oriented to Western education and had studied at the Christian institutions became the leaders of India's religious and national awakening.

For most Hindu leaders, the historicity of Christ did not mean much. What attracted them most were the ethical teachings of Jesus. They admired Jesus' simple lifestyle, renunciation and self-sacrifice much more than his historicity. They, at times, attempted to interpret Christ in the framework of the Hindu *Advaita Vedanta* system and attempted to separate Christ from Western Christianity. Most of them rejected a systematic understanding of the Bible. Rather, they were ruthlessly selective in their use of the Bible. Noticeably, they showed little or no interest in the Old Testament and Pauline letters. Moreover, their insistence on self-experience (*Anubhav)* led them to neglect the centrality of the Bible.

Most Hindu Renaissance leaders started with the assumption that all religions are different paths leading to the same God. Hence, they regarded religions as equally valid. They advocated tolerance toward people of other faiths. Yet, they affirmed that since all religions are created by men, they are imperfect.

Consequently, they vehemently opposed and rejected the Christian claims of supremacy. They felt that it was not ethically right on the part of the Christian missionaries to expose only the ills of the Hindu society and religion. They appealed through their interactions with the Christian missionaries that they be more sympathetic, at least to some aspects of Hinduism.

However, partly because of the missionaries' continuous attacks on Hindu society, they were, so to say, compelled to react negatively and inclined to expose the evils of Christianity. They felt that such attacks and criticism on the part of the Christian missionaries were not in line with the teachings of Christ. They concluded that such an attitude reflected the cultural and religious imperialism that they denounced.

Organized Christianity with its practices was rejected by most of these Hindu thinkers. To them, it was perceived to be an arm of the Western power. It was obvious to the Hindus that there was some relationship between Protestantism and the British Government in India. It was not difficult to link the Protestant Christian missionaries with the British rulers, since the Queen of England was seen as the defender of the (Protestant Christian) faith, and the British chaplains were assigned to conduct religious ceremonies for the British troops in India. Hindus could not separate Christianity from Western colonial rule, and opposed both equally. To accept Christianity was to strengthen the hands of the British.

Related to this was their attempt to synthesize Christianity with Hinduism. They often advocated an assimilation of Christianity into their Sanatana Dharma (eternal religion). Hinduism is considered open to all good ideas, ideals, and doctrines; consequently, much of what is considered to be good in Christianity, was appreciated and accommodated into its fold. In their opinion, different religions should not be considered to be rivals but friends. Accepting what is good in Christianity did not pose any problem to most of these Hindu leaders. While continuing to be Hindus, they accepted certain good principles in Christianity.

By rejecting traditional Western interpretations, many of these thinkers began giving Eastern meanings to Christianity. Many felt that the West

emphasized the ethical and secular aspect of Christianity without understanding the spiritual aspect, and so failed to put its spiritual message into practice. Therefore, many Hindu intellectuals who were well-versed in the Hindu scriptures began developing a Hindu framework for interpreting Christianity.

In rejecting traditional Western interpretations of Christianity and providing their own, they demonstrated a typical Hindu attitude of assimilation and synthesis. They began accepting the best of Christianity and adopting it into the Hindu fold. This shows that they were not willing to accept the view that Christianity and the interpretations of Christian scripture as the monopoly of the Western theologians. In their view, if Christianity had certain good teachings and doctrines, then it should not become the monopoly of the Christians only.

Interestingly, while condemning certain aspects of traditional Christianity, these Hindu reformers accepted selected aspects of it. This is shown by the very fact that several Renaissance leaders ended up starting different societies based on the Christian church structure, and began functioning on the same line as the traditional Christian church. Though this practice seems to be alien to Hinduism, they copied it from traditional Christianity and used it effectively. Most of these leaders also began getting involved in social, educational, and charitable work. This too was borrowed from Christianity. Hinduism, as such, does not have a social conscience. It was only after the Christian missionaries' effort to uplift the downtrodden people that the social conscience of the Hindu Renaissance was awakened. They were certainly influenced by the Christian values of equality, freedom, and love, which triggered much social and religious reform.

Those who studied in mission schools reflected and interacted in English. In this way, their views and attitudes towards Christianity could be studied and evaluated. Not so with the reformers in the Bombay-Pune area. Although almost all of them were well-educated and could write in English, they preferred to write in the local language, Marathi, and they continued to influence, primarily, the people of western Maharashtra. English was

considered the language of the foreign rulers, and writing in English was not appreciated.

Most renaissance leaders were from the Brahmin castes, particularly the *Chitpawan* caste. Often they were harassed by their fellow-caste men for their efforts in reforming society and religion. Frequently they were ostracized, and the Hindu community demanded that they take *Prayaschitta* (penance) for their liberal views or deeds. But there were other caste people, particularly from the lower castes, who also contributed substantially to the overall progress of reform. Heimsath categorizes them into three movements.

The first was the predominantly Brahmin-led urban-centred movements, the Prarthana Samaj and the National Social Conference, as well as their various offshoots, and a few independent undertakings, such as the Maharshi Karves. The next was the non-Brahmin or anti-Brahmin movement begun by Jyotiba Phule in the 1870s, whose main purpose came to be the gaining of social and religious recognition for the middle-ranking castes, in particular the Marathas. The third movement was that of the untouchable Mahars, who together with other outcastes made upto 11% of the population of the province of Bombay; they were led vigorously in the 1920s and thereafter by Dr. Ambedkar (1984:247-8).

The influence of Christianity was definitely felt at different levels of contemporary society. It affected the educated Hindus who, stirred by Christian philanthropic services, wanted to do something for their society. The motivating force was thoroughly Christian. Due to the socio-religious pressure at that time, they could not show sympathy to Christianity. As politicians, they shrewdly avoided any connection with Christianity. Thus, even though a number of them were influenced by the Christian missions and missionaries, rarely did they admit it.

The coming of the Christian missionaries coincided with the British victory over the Maratha kingdom. This created ill-feeling in the minds of the Hindus, particularly in the Brahmin community, since the former rulers of the Maratha kingdom were from the *Chitpawan Brahmin* community. They

developed an anti-Christian attitude right from the beginning. Initially, most Hindus in Pune were indifferent to Christianity. But soon after some conversions to Christianity, a segment of orthodox educated Hindus began reflecting over the reasons behind such conversions.

Christianity began to have an influence on the educated Hindus as their ethical consciences were stirred. Many of them came out with zeal to reform their society. An outcome was a formation of various reform movements. A number of dissatisfied youth opted either to initiate such reform movements or became active members. There were, of course, those who opted to become Christian. But their number was not very significant.

The pressure from orthodox Hindu society was stronger in Pune than in any other part of western India. These orthodox Hindus, being alerted by the missionaries' attack on their religious practices, showed much resistance in accepting further attacks from these Hindu reformers. If the pressure from the Hindu orthodoxy had been less, who knows, a number of those educated Hindu reformers might have become Christian.

When some young Hindu leaders began joining the missionaries in criticizing Hinduism and Hindu society, the orthodox Hindus could not tolerate such attacks from within. This trend was on the increase, especially among the Christian-school-educated young Hindus, who, while criticizing their traditional Hindu religion and practices, glorified Christianity. The orthodox wing in Pune was very cautiously watching the reformers and was highly suspicious of their admiration of Christianity. Probably to avoid undue criticism from the orthodox Hindus, the reformers, even though very much influenced by Christianity; did not acknowledge it. Christian missionaries inspired many intellectuals in Pune and Bombay to take up the task of social reform work, as rightly observed by Joglekar.

The preaching of Christianity has succeeded in instilling the spirit of social service in the minds of a great many educated persons. The social reform movement, which began in about 1870, owes much to the social work taken up by Christian missionaries about the same period. Institutions for social

reform and social service in Maharashtra were due to the contact of missions and missionaries... (1928:79).

A number of these Hindu reform leaders had to compromise with their convictions and bow to the pressure of Hindu orthodoxy. A double standard was apparent in their lives, especially with Tilak, Gokhale, Ranade, Deshmukh, and Bhandarkar. On the one hand, they wanted to renounce their caste restrictions, and on the other hand, they gave in to the pressure of the orthodox wing which insisted that they do penance or be threatened with ostracism. Some advocated widow-marriage, but in their own life they could not put their convictions into practice. There were exceptions: Karve and Phule could be cited as those who, despite threats, and social ostracism, did insist on putting into practice what they believed and preached. In order to prevent the attacks from the missionaries and slow-down the influence of the Western education, the Hindu society in Pune built walls of protection and defence. Moreover, with the constant attacks from the Christian missionaries on their religion and society, they tended to become more rigid in observing their religious and cultural practices. Under the circumstances, they resisted most reform ideas that were introduced by the liberal Hindus. When the reformers began attacking the evils of Hindu society, the orthodox Hindu wing began linking them with the Christian missionaries and so resisted their reform for a long time. They did everything they could to protect and defend their traditional religion and society.

Interestingly, even in the Bombay-Pune area, most reformers and Hindu leaders ended up establishing some institutions or societies. Most of these societies were started with the hope of replacing church-like Christian institutions and providing the Hindus some alternatives to Christianity. Most Hindus in Pune looked upon Christianity as a threat. Every convert to Christianity was considered to be a loss to the Hindu religion and society. By starting *Samajs and Sabhas* (societies), they tried to create alternatives to the Christian church.

However, most of these societies were wiped out in a short period of time. Only a few of them survive today. Probably, these leaders could not pass on the vision to the younger generation. But another reason for their failure

could be that these movements were primarily reactionary. The motivation behind them was to resent and react to Christian missionary activities and thus prevent further penetration of Christianity into Hindu India.

Most of these reform societies lacked the love, passion and deep commitment that the Christian missionaries had in initiating institutions and spreading the message of Christ. It should be understood that the Christian missionaries came to India and got involved in various socio-religious works out of their love for Christ. The Hindu reformers lacked that kind of love and commitment. Hence, even though they established numerous societies in the name of religion and society, these did not last beyond their lifetime. A shift from religion to socio-politics is seen in the thinking of these leaders. To begin with, they seemed overly concerned with religion. Many of them tried to evaluate Hinduism in the light of Christianity. In the process, a number of them developed a positive attitude toward Christianity and Christian social services. Most of them were even appreciative of Jesus' teaching and revered him as one of the great saints and teachers. However, the focus of these leaders drifted gradually but definitely towards the social issues and eventually toward the political issues. One of the reasons a segment of high-caste Hindus came forward in socio-religious reforms is that they were the ones who had access to higher education. So, it was the elite of society who were "enlightened" by Western thought and Christian influence.

But why did Pune produce so many outstanding leaders who contributed to various fields of reform movements? Perhaps, the city had always been a centre of learning and education, and those who were educated in the missionary schools were exposed to the deficiencies of the Hindu religion and society. Since the high castes, and particularly the *Chitpawan Brahmin* castes, were dominant in Pune, they have been providing leadership in virtually all the fields, and have also provided the lead in socio-religious reform movements. While many leading Hindus read the Bible and admired the teachings of Christ, they were unanimous in rejecting traditional Christianity. Wherever possible, they joined hands with Christian missionaries in humanitarian work, but they showed steep resistance to any efforts of proselytisation on the part of the missionaries. In fact, in one or two cases, those who stood with the missionaries at one time, stood against them in

protecting a Hindu family from being torn apart through conversion to Christianity.

Thus, it can be argued that the Hindu Renaissance leaders in Pune initially appeared to be open to Christianity even as they joined Christians in condemning certain evils and wrongs in Hinduism. However, as the Indian freedom struggle became intense, and the missionary vocal and written attacks on Hinduism became intolerable, they gradually became negative towards Christianity.

SUMMARY

The traditional Hindu attitude toward Christianity was based on many misconceptions, the most prominent being the equation of Christian mission work with colonialism. The Hindus could not differentiate Christian missionary activities from British imperialism. Joining Christendom was considered as strengthening the hands of the British Empire in India.

Primarily in response to Christian missionary activities and the introduction of Western education, the so called "Hindu Renaissance" emerged in India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The effects of this Renaissance on Indian society, particularly Hindu society, were profound and lasting. The Renaissance produced outstanding Indian leaders who had been exposed to Christianity. As they interacted with, responded and reacted to the Christian activities in India and Pune, there emerged a certain attitude towards Christianity. This attitude became quite representative of the Hindus in India. It was obvious that the Renaissance leaders appreciated the many philanthropic works of Christian missionaries. As a matter of fact, many of them took their inspiration from them in starting their own Hindu philanthropic work. Practically every Renaissance leader ended up starting some kind of philanthropic work. In this way, they created an alternate avenue for those who were attracted to Christianity, and tried to prevent them from joining the Christian church. Almost all of them were positive towards Jesus and his teachings. A number of them openly revered him. But they also tried to interpret him and his teachings in the light of Hindu *Vedantic* teachings. They attempted to indigenize Christ and his teachings

and rejected the Western interpretation. Jesus' simple lifestyle, renunciation of the world, self-sacrificial spirit, and ethical teachings were widely admired. Accepting Jesus as one of many gods did not pose any problem for them. The Christian influence was clearly felt by each one. Most of them admitted that it was because of the Christian missionaries that their own ethical and social conscience was stirred.

Among the things they resented and rejected was the Christian attack on and criticism of Hinduism. This made them react to Christianity negatively. Their reluctance to accept conversion to Christianity, which included church membership and baptism, was very evident. Conversion from Hinduism to other religions often baffled them.

On the whole, the attitude of the traditional Hindu toward Christianity was positive. While admiring Jesus and his teachings, most Hindus resented conversion, baptism and membership in the church. Yet, their overall perceptions of Christianity have been amazingly affirming.

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THE IRISH IN SRI LANKAN METHODISM

NORMAN W TAGGART

INTRODUCTION

From the outset we need to be clear that in mission it is never a case simply of "sending countries" giving and other countries, in this case Sri Lanka, "receiving". For example, local people played a key part in the work of mission in Sri Lanka from the beginning – people like William Lalmon, a Burgher, ("the first preacher who was raised up" to assist the Sri Lanka mission "among the inhabitants of the country" from 1816 to 1863); John Philip Sanmugam, the first Tamil Methodist minister in Sri Lanka, noted for his "loyal and loving service" from 1825 to 1864; and Cornelius Wijesingha, a Sinhalese, serving from 1819 to 1864 ("the first Asiatic to enter the Wesleyan Ministry").[1] Those who went to various parts of the world from Ireland and elsewhere, known first as missionaries and later as mission partners, returned to their own countries as changed people following years of exposure to different peoples and cultures. Increasingly, too, people from the countries to which missionaries went, including Sri Lanka, contributed to churches and wider society elsewhere. In the 20th century, for example, D. T. Niles made a significant impact on the West, his visits to Ireland being much appreciated. Sri Lankans also successfully completed courses of study in Ireland, including most recently Dr. Jerome Sahabandu, the new Principal of the Theological College of Lanka. While in Ireland, he and his family became actively involved in the life of the (Methodist) Dublin Central Mission circuit, and Dr. Sahabandu taught on a part-time basis at Edgehill Theological College (Methodist) in Belfast. Ajith Fernando, too, has been widely appreciated in a

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[1] Walter J T Small (ed.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka, 1814 –1964*, no date, pp.627, 639 and 646.

variety of settings in Ireland, and was, for example, invited to address a special Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 2010.

I first became aware of God's call to missionary service while still a teenager. For me, becoming a Methodist minister was a first step towards responding to that call. In appointing me to India, the Methodist Churches in Britain and Ireland took the decision that my ordination should be as a deacon and presbyter in the Church of South India (CSI), in solidarity with the united Church in which I served from 1962 to 1966.[2] After a period in Ireland due to illness within the family, our failure to obtain a visa to return to India in 1968 came as a major blow. In time, however, this led to opportunities to serve in other parts of the world, including Sri Lanka. In all, by the time of my retirement in 2001, twenty-four years of my ministry had been spent in Ireland and seventeen years outside Ireland.

After attending the annual conference of the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka (MCSL), in 1987, officially on behalf of British and Irish Methodism (MCI), I received an invitation to join the staff at Kollupitiya Methodist Church, Colombo, where I served from January 1990 until mid-1994, returning to Ireland for a final period of ministry. After 1994, I re-visited Sri Lanka several times, ministering, for example, for four months at Mount Lavinia Methodist Church following the tsunami, when I also taught an introductory course on world religions at Colombo Theological Seminary.

John Wesley's right-hand man for mission was Dr. Thomas Coke (1747-1814). A Welshman and an Anglican priest, Coke had been unceremoniously driven from his work as a curate in the parish of South Petherton, Somerset, England, in 1777, having shown Methodist sympathies. Deprived of his livelihood, Wesley is said to have challenged Coke to "go out, and preach the gospel to all the world!" Despite frustrations and difficulties, Coke rose to the challenge, paying nine visits to America where he contributed to the founding of the autonomous Methodist Episcopal Church. He also founded missions in

[2] The Rev. George E. Good, an Irish Methodist minister serving at the time in Kollupitiya Methodist Church, Colombo, was invited to preach at the service in Medak Cathedral when, with eleven others, I was ordained presbyter on 25 January 1963.

the West Indies, British North America (Canada), the Channel Islands, Northern Scotland and Ireland. An Irish Mission, started in 1799, initially with three Irish-speaking preachers, sought to spread evangelical witness to rural parts of Ireland where mainly Irish was spoken and the majority of people were Roman Catholics.[3]

Before exploring the role of Irish mission partners in Sri Lanka, we consider first Dr. Adam Clarke, the distinguished Irish-born Wesleyan Methodist minister who, though he never served in Sri Lanka, took a keen and practical interest in the Asia mission. Three-times President of the British Methodist conference, he also presided over the Irish conference on four occasions. A founder member of the Royal Asiatic Society, a linguist particularly in Middle Eastern and Oriental languages and the author of a much-consulted eight-volume commentary on the Bible (1810-26), Clarke was one of nine members appointed to the first Methodist Mission Committee in 1790 to be given the task of sharing with Thomas Coke the responsibility for the management of Methodist missions in the West Indies. Following conversations in London in 1809, involving Sir Alexander Johnston, the Chief Justice of Sri Lanka, William Wilberforce and Thomas Coke, concerning the possibility of a Methodist mission in Sri Lanka, Adam Clarke raised the question of a Sri Lanka mission at the annual British Methodist conference, without success.[4] Nine years later, Clarke was given responsibility for the Christian instruction in England of two Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka. He composed *Principles of the Christian Religion*, 1820, as an aid to their understanding basic Christian teaching. In this he cited Scriptural texts in support of each theological principle. The two monks were baptised in 1820, Adam Sri Muni Ratna and Alexander Dharmarama. Problems surrounded them after their return to Sri Lanka.[5] Even in his late fifties Clarke re-affirmed a continuing interest in and commitment to the mission in Asia:

[3] N. W. Taggart, *Gideon Ouseley, Evangelist and the Irish Methodist Mission*, 2001.

[4] John Vickers, *Thomas Coke Apostle of Methodism*, 1969, p.337.

[5] Philip R. Meadows (ed.), *Windows on Wesley: Wesleyan Theology in Today's World*, 1997, Elizabeth Harris, 'Wesleyan Witness in an Interreligious Context', pp.59-62; and N.W.Taggart *The Irish in World Methodism 1760-1900*, 1986, pp.89-92 and pp.114 - 5.

> I still feel the spirit of a missionary; and if I did not, I should not feel the spirit of a minister of Christ; and were there none other (to go), even at this age of hoary decrepitude, I would volunteer my little services to the East, teach in the school – at Sri Lanka; or enter the Peninsula of India, to bear the seed-basket.[6]

Ireland and Sri Lanka

The islands of Ireland and Sri Lanka are comparable in size, Sri Lanka occupying 25,332 square miles in the Indian Ocean, and the island of Ireland 32,052 square miles on the western fringe of the European continent.[7] The largest Irish Churches, namely the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland (Anglican) and the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, known together as 'the four main Churches',[8] all relate to the island as a whole. Methodism is by far the smallest of the four, having in 2008 a total community of over 51,000.[9] The MCI owes much to John Wesley's twenty-one visits to Ireland between 1747 and 1789. Wesley founded and presided over the first Methodist conference in Ireland in 1752, the second of only two conferences founded by him, the other being the conference in Britain. Thereafter, Wesley normally presided over the annual Irish conference.

Methodism was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1814 on the initiative of Thomas Coke with the backing of the Methodist conferences in Britain and Ireland. At first an 'overseas district' of British Methodism, Sri Lanka Methodism became an autonomous Methodist Church in 1964, retaining its historic links with Britain and Ireland while also developing direct relations with churches in other parts of the world including Germany, Korea and the United States of America. In all I am aware of twenty-six Methodist mission partners from

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[6] *Missionary Notices*, March 1819, p.34, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.88.

[7] Since the early 1920s the island of Ireland has however been politically divided, with Northern Ireland occupying 5,452 square miles and remaining within the United Kingdom (UK); and the other part, called Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, becoming an independent country occupying 26,600 square miles.

[8] The church scene in Ireland is though changing.

[9] This 'community' figure for Methodists is inclusive of all those formerly distinguished as 'full members' and 'adherents', the latter group including children and adults with varying levels of commitment.

Ireland who served in Sri Lanka in the 19th and 20th centuries[10], four completing their service within the 19th century; three beginning their service in the 19th century and carrying over into the 20th century; eighteen serving entirely within the 20th century; and one serving from 1996 until 2001. Of these twenty-six mission partners from Ireland, ten were ministers of whom six became Presidents of the MCI.[11] Generally speaking, lay missionaries served for longer periods in Sri Lanka than ministers. Two deaconesses, two teachers, and one minister, five of the total of twenty-six, each served for more than thirty years in Sri Lanka. What accounts for the fluctuations in the number of Irish people serving over the period? What major issues did they face? How did Irish Methodism benefit from its involvement in world mission? These are among the questions we shall examine.

Colonialism and Christianity

Archaeological and other evidence points towards a very early Christian presence in Sri Lanka.[12] In more recent centuries a link between colonialism and Christianity emerged, sometimes involving force. The use of force was not however inevitable, nor was it one-sided. Christian converts could also become victims, being ostracised and subject to unfair pressures within their traditional communities. Interfaith conversion remains a sensitive issue today, calling for open, responsible and respectful attitudes between and within differing faiths. Christians in the past often showed sensitivity and respect towards people of other faiths while bearing witness to Jesus Christ,

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[10] Technically treating each person or married couple as one unit.

[11] In British and Irish Methodism, a President is in office for one year. The six were Robert (Bob) McVeigh, Robert (Bob) Nelson, George Good, Vincent Parkin, Winston Graham and Norman Taggart. Winston Graham was ordained in Sri Lanka, when D.T. Niles was President.

[12] See Prabo Mihindukulasuriya, 'Another Ancient Christian Presence in Sri Lanka: The Ethiopians of Aksum', *Journal of the Colombo Theological Seminary*, vol. iii, 2005, pp.1-22; and three articles in the *Sri Lanka Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol. iii, no.1, 2007, Chellaian Lawrence, 'St. Thomas: The Apostle of Sri Lanka', pp.i-vi; G.P.V. Somaratna, 'Christianity in Sri Lanka in the Anuradhapura Period', pp.1-19; and Paul Benjamin, 'Christians of Mattoddam', pp.20-30.

as will become evident within the current paper.[13] Nowadays, the use of unfair incentives and pressures is rightly rejected on all fronts. It remains an urgent requirement for people of differing faiths to work together in the interests of society as a whole. The challenge is to seek to bear witness to one's own faith with integrity and sensitivity while at the same time seeking goals on which all can work together with understanding and openness.

The Portuguese introduced Roman Catholicism to Sri Lanka in the early 16th century, while the Dutch brought Calvinism in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1796, the British Royal Navy seized coastal ports from the Dutch, setting in motion a chain of events by which Britain gained greater control in Sri Lanka than either of its colonial predecessors. Helped by regional chiefs whose relationships with the king of Kandy had deteriorated, Britain occupied the central Kandyan kingdom in 1815, which till then had retained its independence. However, as a wider intention to reduce the influence of Buddhism and the Kandyan chiefs emerged, an unsuccessful rebellion took place against the British in 1817-1818. Britain's victory led to the Kandyan provinces being administered with the rest of the country. Overall control was further strengthened through the introduction of a more comprehensive and efficient civil administration, backed by greatly improved communications by road, rail, and the telegraph.

An overtly Christian and wholly uncritical gloss on Britain's colonising policy by William Harvard, one of the first missionaries, without reference to the 'Great Rebellion' of 1817-1818, comes across today as insensitive, inappropriate, and triumphalist:

> The British troops were hailed as deliverers at every stage of their progress; the Kandyan dominions submitted to the British crown; and the tyrant[14], by whom every tie of humanity and justice had been violated, was delivered a prisoner into the hands of the Governor (Sir Robert Brownrigg). Thus was the whole territory gained almost without the loss of a single life; and a way

[13] I am seeking to explore this topic further in a paper entitled 'The Place and ''Problem'' of Interfaith Conversion' , in which I affirm the need for both boldness and humility in Christian witness.

[14] Sri Wickrama Rajasinha, King of Kandy.

> opened for the introduction of the Gospel among those idolaters… *The Lord reigneth!*… The British standard was hoisted at the Government House, and the royal standard of Kandy placed beneath it; to indicate the subjugation of that kingdom to the British crown. *The scene was interesting to the politician; but much more so to the Christian Missionary,* before whom it presented a new and interesting field for the moral culture of faithful labourers.[15]

Against this background of British conquest and advance, Baptist missionaries arrived in 1812, Wesleyan Methodists in 1814 and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1818.[16] It has long been acknowledged that colonialism and imperialism are inappropriate channels through which the aims and objectives of Christian mission may be advanced. In this connection it should be noted that, as in other places, Methodist witness was not extended to Kandy until the late 1830s, by which time converts from other parts of the country had settled in the area, forming the nucleus of a new congregation and increasing the potential for wider sustained witness.

Against this background it now seems incongruous that the opening paragraphs of *A History of the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka 1814-1964*, published in Colombo in 1974, and therefore around twenty years after Sri Lanka's political independence, emphasise the essential 'Britishness' of Methodism in Sri Lanka, claiming that its 'missionaries were British', that it was 'the British pattern of Methodism' that was introduced to Sri Lanka and that its 'Methodism is of British origin'. [17] This strikes one today as being wholly insensitive to Sri Lanka's selfhood as a nation, and contrary, too, to the Irish contribution and indeed to the essentially catholic nature of worldwide Methodism. Despite differences between Methodism in America

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[15] W. M. Harvard, *A Narrative of the Establishment and Progress of the Mission to Sri Lanka and India*, 1823, pp.253-4. The italics at the end of the quotation – referring to 'the politician' and 'the *Christian missionary*' – are mine. The fact that according to Elizabeth Harris, Harvard had earlier been invited to preach in a Buddhist temple, makes his insensitivity all the more striking. See her book, *Buddhism for a Violent World*, 2010, p.132; and more widely in her academic monograph, *Theravada Buddhism and the British Encounter*, 2006.

[16] Earlier Anglican priests had acted as chaplains to British soldiers, administrators, and merchants.

[17] W. J. T. Small (ed.), op. cit. p.5.

and Britain, Methodism is traditionally thought of as one family of faith throughout the world. Those from Ireland who served in Sri Lanka did so under arrangements agreed by both the British and Irish Methodist conferences, each founded and presided over by Wesley. The missionary task too was, and is, essentially universal and above national loyalties.

Methodist beginnings in Sri Lanka

As previously acknowledged, Thomas Coke had long entertained a cherished dream of launching a Methodist mission in Asia. After the death of his second wife, Anne, in December 1812, and with the East India Company contemplating relaxing its opposition to Christian missions on the Indian sub-continent coming up for renewal in 1813[18], Coke seized the opportunity to press for an Asian mission. With the blessing of both the British and Irish Methodist conferences, he assembled a team of six preachers, booked their passages, and made final preparations to travel with them in late 1813. His hope was to make Sri Lanka the headquarters for an even wider mission. After seeing the work started in Sri Lanka, he intended to visit Madras, Calcutta and possibly Java before returning to Britain to report progress.[19] The voyage to Sri Lanka would take them along the west coast of Africa, round the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean to Bombay before proceeding to Sri Lanka.[20] The members of Coke's team were William and Sarah Ault, Benjamin Clough, George Erskine, William and Mrs. Harvard, James Lynch and Thomas Squance. Of the six, two were Irish, Erskine and Lynch. A third Irishman, John McKenny, was shortly to travel to Cape Colony. Frustrated there by restrictions affecting the work, he, too, made his way to Sri Lanka in 1816 accompanied by his wife Elizabeth, where he served until 1835. McKenny, therefore, takes his place among the first Irish Methodist pioneers in Sri Lanka.

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[18] The East India Company believed its trading interests in India would be at risk if it encouraged missionary outreach. It therefore facilitated chaplaincy services among Christians, but opposed evangelism among people of other faiths. In early 1813, William Wilberforce added his weight to an evangelical campaign which led to the insertion of a new clause in the charter under which the East India Company operated, allowing for 'Religious Instruction and Moral Improvement of the Natives'.

[19] John Vickers*, Thomas Coke etc.*, 1969, p 363; and W. J. T. Small (ed.), op. cit., p.5.

[20] The Suez Canal was not opened until 1869.

What preparations did Coke, the team members, and McKenny make prior to starting out on their journey? By today's standards they would not be considered adequate. They spent time getting to know one another and preparing for their ordination by Coke. They also studied the Portuguese language in the belief that it was still in use in Sri Lanka, but were unable to find anyone to introduce them to either Sinhala or Tamil. They also visited local churches to inform people of their plans and to seek their support. At no point did they seem to have received an introduction to basic Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim beliefs and practices. Clearly, on arrival in Sri Lanka, much would depend on their adaptability, maturity and personal resources of heart, mind, and spirit.

At Portsmouth early on 30th December 1813, the signal guns were fired, alerting Coke and his party to make ready for departure. In their fleet there were eight Indiamen, ships engaged in trade with India and the East Indies, on two of which the missionaries travelled. William and Mrs. Ault, George Erskine, James Lynch and Thomas Squance travelled together on the *Lady Melville*, while Benjamin Clough and William and Mrs. Harvard accompanied Coke on the *Cabalva*. In addition, there were merchant vessels in the fleet bound for various parts of the world, and an escort of warships, since at the time Britain was at war with France. The *Cabalva* carried around 400 people, half of them soldiers, including many Irish. Conscious of possible hazards and recognising the need to keep in touch, the team members devised a simple signal for use when their vessels drew close. They displayed a white handkerchief when all was well and a coloured one in case of illness or other difficulty. February 10th brought the sad, but not entirely unexpected, news of Sarah Ault's death. She had shown signs of 'pulmonary disease' prior to departure from Portsmouth, but it had been hoped she would improve as the weather grew warmer.

An even greater shock awaited them. On May 3rd came the tragic news that Coke had died on board the *Cabalva*. He had been found lifeless on the floor of his cabin in the early hours of the morning. The two ships drew alongside one another, Coke's funeral service was conducted and his body was committed to the ocean, all within a single day to lessen the risk of infection spreading. Devastated by the loss of their leader, the enormity of the Mission

party's predicament soon became apparent. No one among them was privy to Coke's plans for their time in Bombay, nor was anyone aware of how, where or when the mission itself was to be launched in Sri Lanka, or what resources were available to meet even initial costs. During and after his lifetime, Coke was criticised for being too ambitious and a poor judge of character. He was accused, too, of inadequate planning and a failure to keep more detailed financial accounts.[21] The historian David Hempton, for example, claims that Coke 'combined remarkable zeal with equally remarkable administrative incompetence'.[22] John Vickers, Coke's biographer, feels however that such criticisms fail to take account of the restraints and circumstances under which Coke operated.

On the initiative of Harvard, who had been in closest contact with Coke during the voyage, the Mission team gradually took stock of the situation. Conferring with Captain Birch, Harvard was given access to the private papers Coke had entrusted to the Captain. On the Captain's advice, he also compiled a document containing the background and aims of the mission, outlining the call and status of each preacher and his selection as a missionary, with an assurance that the MMS would underwrite the Mission's expenses. For his part, the Captain undertook to introduce the members of the Mission party to people in Bombay who would help them on arrival. They reached Bombay on 21st May after a voyage of twenty weeks, and Captain Birch proved true to his word. He first breakfasted with Mr. W. T. Money, a British merchant sympathetic to Christian causes, on the morning Money was due to meet Harvard. When the two came together, Money was therefore in a position to assure Harvard that he would advance finances 'on the credit of (their) society at home.' [23] Mr. Money also gave Harvard a copy of the first report of the Colombo Bible Society, a small token of his personal interest in Christian work. It was not long before the Methodist Mission in Sri Lanka became responsible for publishing reports and other literature for the Bible Society. Arrangements were also made for Harvard to be presented to the Governor,

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[21] See my paper 'Missionary Finance and Administration in the Thomas Coke Era (1784-1813)', in the *Bulletin of the Wesley Historical Society in Ireland*, vol.12, pp.44-53.

[22] David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society*, 1984, p.96.

[23] W. M. Harvard, op. cit. pp.115-116.

Sir Evan Nepean, and accommodation was provided for the missionaries during their stay in Bombay.

The party left Bombay on June 20th on a ship bound for China. The Harvards, however, remained behind to await the birth of a child. On reaching Point de Galle in southern Sri Lanka on 29th June, Lynch, Squance, and Clough proceeded ashore and were met by the harbour master who had already been alerted from Bombay of their coming. He introduced them to the Commandant of the Fort, Lord Molesworth, who with his wife received them and arranged for their stay at Government House. Meanwhile Ault and Erskine remained on board ship to supervise the unloading of the party's baggage, but were carried out to sea again by strong winds and tides, eventually landing at Weligama Bay some sixteen miles further south. On Sunday morning, 3rd July, and again the following Sunday, the party conducted services in the large Dutch church at Galle.

Encouraged by the endorsement they had received from leading figures in the British administration in Bombay and Galle[24], the missionaries quickly turned their attention to initiating and planning the work of the Mission. On 11th July 1814, a 'little conference' was convened and chaired by James Lynch, the senior minister.[25] Its decisions indicated an intention to respond to the needs of the whole island and to work in both Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking areas. After prayer, each person was appointed to a station by lot. James Lynch and Thomas Squance were sent to Jaffna in the north, Squance being considered too ill to work by himself; William Ault to Batticaloa in the east; Benjamin Clough remained in Galle; and George Erskine was sent to

[24] It remained for later generations to discuss whether and how it might have been possible for the first missionaries to be less dependent on British colonial authorities.

[25] There have been differences of opinion about the leadership of the missionary team following Coke's death. Cyril Davey, a prominent British minister and writer on mission, claimed that William Harvard fulfilled this role, and has been followed by others. See *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, 1974, vol. 1. p.1090. More recently John Vickers has also taken this line in *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, 2000, p.152. It is my belief, however, that James Lynch became the leader. Lynch presided at the first conference, when Harvard was still in Bombay, and continued to do so after Harvard's arrival. Harvard himself referred to Lynch as 'the senior Missionary'. See W. M. Harvard. op. cit., pp.242 and 256.

Matara also in the south.[26] The Harvards, who had stayed in Bombay for the birth of a child, eventually arrived in Galle on 23 February 1815. Sadly, their son, John, died within a week of their arrival and was buried at the Dutch church in Galle 'in sure and certain hope of his resurrection to eternal life'.[27] The Harvards were appointed to Colombo, partly on account of his knowledge of printing. William Ault – whose wife had died on the journey – died himself in his first year at Batticaloa. Methodism had been launched, but with great pain and loss. Marked so early by distress and death, time would tell whether the Mission would survive to point people towards new life and transformation in Christ.

A list of the Irish in Sri Lanka in the 19th and 20th centuries[28]

Lynch, Rev. James, 1814-1824 (including Madras, 1817-1824)

Erskine, Rev. George, 1814-1821 (New South Wales, Australia, 1821-1834)

McKenny, Rev. John and Mrs. Elizabeth McKenny, 1816-1835; (Cape Colony,1814–1816 and New South Wales, 1836-1847)

Beauchamp (pronounced 'Beecham'), Anna (commonly known as 'A.M.'), 1876-1880, 1881-1884 and 1898-1906 (India, 1869-1876 and 1880)

Hoey, Isobel, 1891-1895

Teasey, Elizabeth, 1895-1907

Hunter, Sister Faith (married Rev. Edgar T. Selby, 1910), 1898-1934

Shire, Elsie (BA), 1909-1942

Hayden, Sister Easter, 1910-1944

Park, Helen (BA), 1912-1943

Bamford, Henrietta, 1914-1946

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[26] Some of these decisions were short-term due to circumstances. Squance's health, for example, quickly deteriorated, and he returned to Galle. See W. J. T. Small (ed.), op. cit. p.37. The principle of trying to minister to the island as a whole, remained.

[27] W. M. Harvard, op. cit. pp.272-3.

[28] Remaining gaps and queries in information are marked by question marks.

Northridge, Mary, 1916-1944

Sharpe, Jean (BA), (married Rev. Middleton Weaver, 1933), 1924-1942

Beckett, Dorothy (M Sc), 1925-1946 (married Rev. Clarence Thorpe), (after 1946, S. Rhodesia)

Wilson, Eileen (MSc), (married Dr Ralph Bolton, 1932), 1925-1931, (China, 1932- ?); London (Mission House) 1940s

McDonald, Mary (MSc), 1927-1931, died, buried at Galle

Twinem, Ella, 1928-1939

Johnston, Maud (BA), (married Rev. Frank White, 1937), 1929-1932, 1965-1966, (Hong Kong, ?)

McVeigh, Rev. Robert (married Evelyn nee McCoubrey, 1931), 1929-1942

Nelson, Rev. Robert and Mrs Lorna (nee Warren), 1930-1944 and 1948-1966

Good, Rev. George (MA) and Mrs Eileen (nee McIntyre), 1961-1965 and 1971-1974

Parkin, Rev. Vincent (MA, BSc) and Mrs Nellie (nee Richardson), 1965 [29]

Corfield, Christine (SRN, SCM), 1967-1970 (Papua New Guinea, 1970-1971)

Graham, Rev. Winston and Mrs. Blanche (nee Gibson), 1968-1970 (London, Mission House, 1991- 2000)

Taggart, Rev. Norman (BA, BD, PhD) and Mrs Margaret (nee Adams) (SRN, SCM), 1989-1994 (India 1962-1966 and London (Mission House) 1972-1977

Skuce, Rev. Stephen (BD, MPhil) and Mrs Marlene (RGN) (nee Greenaway), 1997–2001

[29] Vincent and Nellie Parkin were both English. After his appointment as Principal of Edgehill Theological College, Belfast, Mr. Parkin however transferred to the ministry of the MCI and was appointed President in 1979. A close friend of the Rev. George Good, he served at Kollupitiya for six months following the completion of Mr. Good’s first term in Sri Lanka. He later returned for a short period to teach at the Theological College of Lanka, Pilimatalawa.

Why such a sharp decrease in the number of Irish Methodist missionaries serving in Sri Lanka in the 19th century?

Questions concerning Irish Methodism's involvement in world mission followed Coke's death and continued throughout the 19th century. Why, for example, were there no new Irish Methodist ministers and very few Irish lay missionaries serving in Sri Lanka in the 19th century after the 1830s? I suggest two reasons. Firstly, the founding of the London-based Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1814, an essential development in view of Coke's earlier 'hands on' approach prior to departure for Asia followed by his death, fundamentally altered the dynamics of the relationship between British and Irish Methodism. From a position of Ireland being 'Coke's chief recruiting ground' for ministerial missionaries during his lifetime, the MCI's strictly subordinate role under the Missionary Society soon became apparent. Inevitably this led to a loosening of relationships and a sharp reduction in the number of Irish missionaries, whether ministers or lay people. Irish ministers who expressed an interest in serving overseas were made to feel that there was no way open to them short of transferring their ministry from the Irish to the British conference. A generally unsatisfactory state of affairs was not resolved until the following century. At the annual Methodist conference in Ireland in 1904, presided over by Marshall Hartley, the British President and a Secretary of the Missionary Society, there was a rare 'kairos' moment leading to radical change. Thereafter, Irish ministers becoming missionaries were not required to transfer to the British conference, though transferring remained an option.[30]

Secondly, Irish Methodism was deeply affected by the rapid decline in Ireland's population in the 19th century, with higher than average mortality rates due to periodic failures in harvests and greatly increased levels of emigration. In the absence of official statistics either for deaths or emigration, the following figures are best thought of as informed estimates. It has, for example, been claimed that from 1780 to 1845, about 1.1 million

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[30] See the discussion in N. W. Taggart *The Irish etc*, pp.14-17; and more especially in his recent paper, '''A minority Movement in Mission'': Irish Methodism and Foreign/Overseas Missions in the 20th Century' in the *Bulletin of the Wesley Historical Society in Ireland*, volume 15, 2009/10, pp.5-6.

people emigrated from Ireland to the United States and Canada, around 400,000 of them between 1831 and 1841.[31] Emigration seems to have peaked during the decade 1846-1855, when around two and a half million people are said to have left Ireland because of the potato famine (known as the 'Great Famine') in the mid-1840s, and the social upheaval that followed.[32] It is believed that as many as a million people may have died in the famine, perhaps more from disease than starvation, with the old and the very young being particularly vulnerable. A further three and a half million Irish people are believed to have emigrated from Ireland between 1856 and the beginning of the First World War.[33]

Such figures obviously affected every area of life in Ireland including the churches. From 1830, official Methodist statistics were kept, indicating that between 1844 and 1900 the figure for Methodist 'members' declined from 44,000 to 27,046. Small wonder then that in a small church struggling for survival, interest and the capacity to be involved in wider mission declined. There was, though, a positive side to emigration. Many of those driven from Ireland by harsh conditions took their faith with them and became involved in Christian witness in the countries to which they travelled, repeating a story well-known since Biblical times. The first missionaries sent to 'new areas' around the world were often encouraged on arrival to find that Christian work had already begun.

Irish pioneers in Sri Lanka

James Lynch, George Erskine and John McKenny from Ireland, were among the first Methodist missionaries in Sri Lanka.[34] Understandably, all experienced initial difficulties. With the death of Coke, they found themselves in wholly unfamiliar surroundings with no established practices and procedures to follow and no experienced leader to consult. Contact with

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[31] G. O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine 1798-1848*, 1972, p.141. See too S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, pp.228-9.

[32] David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, 1984, p.3.

[33] Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918*, 1973, p.6.

[34] For a fuller account of the contribution of Lynch, Erskine, and McKenny see N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc. pp.104-145.

the Missionary Committee in London proved highly unreliable due partly to wartime conditions, with ships lost at sea and difficult and irregular communications.

Of the Irish pioneers, *George Erskine* proved a major disappointment in Sri Lanka and later in New South Wales, to which he proceeded in 1822 via Madras and Calcutta. References to him are few and uninformative, suggesting a lack of energy and zeal. He may also have suffered from a chest condition, possibly asthma. Eventually, the Missionary Committee decided in 1831 to recall him from Australia, concluding that his gifts were inadequate 'for mission work.' He however chose not to return, but instead became a supernumerary minister in Australia, where he died in 1834.[35] Of all the original group of pioneers, Erskine appears to be the only one of whom no 'likeness' survives.

In November 1814, six months after Coke's death, *James Lynch*, as the Mission team's unofficial leader, wrote to the Committee in London to say that he and his colleagues had not yet heard from them. He wrote again the following June, saying that they remained anxious 'on account of receiving no letters from Ireland or England since I left there.'[36] In the absence of regular communication with its missionaries, the Missionary Committee sometimes made decisions on the basis of partial information or comment from people passing through London on private or government business, or after receiving unrepresentative expressions of opinion from people in Sri Lanka. Inevitably, this undermined confidence and led to strained relations. Distances between colleagues within Sri Lanka also added to difficulties in communication.

From the outset, Lynch was convinced of the need for schools and a trained indigenous ministry. His own acknowledged 'dullness' in learning the Tamil language was a factor in pressing for both. Without 'native preachers', teachers, and interpreters of Christian truths, he argued, the efforts of European missionaries would remain 'contracted' or 'comparatively

[35] These comments on Erskine are based on original manuscript letters held in London; and on J. Colwell, *The Illustrated History of Methodism*, Sydney, 1904, p.138.

[36] N.W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc. p.123.

unfruitful'. But what kind of schools would best serve the Mission? Should they opt for general schools in which 'no religion whatever is taught; the books are selections of morality, both from Heathen and Christian authors…that by them the ability of reading the Holy Scriptures, etc. is given to children…that when they reach to maturity they will read and judge for themselves, and ultimately embrace Christianity', or failing that, at least have 'their strong prejudices removed'? The advantage in having an open approach, Lynch suggested, was that 'non-Christian' parents might be more willing to allow their children to attend Christian schools, lessening the risk of the children remaining 'in ignorance'. An alternative approach was for the Mission to work through overtly Christian schools in which Christian beliefs, values and practices were clearly taught and commended. Lynch clearly favoured the second approach, fearing that the first might produce few converts and encourage confusion and even ungodliness among Christians:

> Does not the word of God command us as Christians to do all to His glory, and in the name of Christ; and can he be glorified by any institution or labour where the Lord Jesus is excluded – or where he is not directly taught to be the only Lord and Saviour of a fallen sinful world. Or how can any Christian with any degree of Faith pray for, and expect the blessing of God on such labours – and if the Grace of God does not affect the heart, of what saving advantage is learning – is it not rather a real hindrance to the Gospel when destitute of Grace.[37]

According to David K. Wilson, a Sri Lankan minister, Lynch started an English school in Jaffna, which by 1834 became known as Jaffna Central College, which he described in the 1960s as "the premier Methodist institution in North Sri Lanka today".[38]

Some of the most striking and important of Lynch's surviving letters dealt with social and religious conditions, particularly as he found them in Jaffna, and the search for appropriate Christian responses:

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[37] N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc. pp.108-109, in which I quote from Lynch's letter of 13 March 1818.

[38] David K. Wilson, 'Methodism in North Sri Lanka: its History and its Influence 1814-1890', PhD thesis, London, 1969, p.187.

> Before my arrival… I had formed an idea that very little poverty and distress prevailed.... I also expected to find a greater degree of the knowledge and practice of Christianity. But I have found a great deal of the former and very little of the latter. Poverty, and indolence, and ignorance prevail to a great degree… I have seen and caused to be taken off the street, one dying…. I have seen native women with one, two, three, four or five children, the widows and children… whose husband and father were dead (sic)…. I have seen aged people in a starving state.[39]

In response, Lynch suggested setting up a poor-house or work-house in which people would be employed in picking, carding, and spinning. Profits would flow from the manufacture and sale of calico and muslin, and local Europeans would help to defray the initial costs of acquiring cotton, spinning wheels, looms, and so on. "About 600 pounds would commence the whole establishment", he wrote, and would support the children and poor until money was raised from sales. His missionary colleagues favoured the scheme, Lynch reported, and though he was conscious of the danger of spending too much time on temporal affairs, he felt that the person responsible for supervising the scheme would not be different from Methodist ministers in Britain who were teachers, book stewards and editors. Another reason for opening such centres was to provide accommodation and employment for those who, upon becoming Christians, tended to become socially isolated. Lynch pressed the need for settlements for "heathen and Mahometan converts" who could not remain with their families and friends after becoming Christians. Without such practical support they would become discouraged, he wrote.[40] Lynch's thinking may well have been influenced by John McKenny's arrival from Cape Colony, where similar circumstances prevailed. This is relevant to the earlier discussion about the need to give practical support to converts who were ostracised and under pressure within their traditional communities.

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[39] N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc. pp.115-6, quoting from Lynch's letter of 5 February 1816. It is interesting that Lynch apparently held such high expectations of the spiritual status of people in Sri Lanka upon arrival in Sri Lanka, presumably based on what he had heard of the work done by the Portuguese (Roman Catholic) and the Dutch (Reformed faith).

[40] Lynch, 5 February 1816, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.116.

The Committee's response to Lynch was sharp and uncompromising. Under no circumstances, it argued, should Lynch or his colleagues become involved in this type of venture. Significantly, the Committee's opposition does not appear to have been based on cost or Lynch's administrative ability, but on theological grounds:

> They think it their duty to express their most decided disapprobation of the plan and solemnly enjoin you and the Brethren to have nothing to do with manufactories or worldly traffic of any description whatever; but that you give yourselves entirely to prayer and the ministry of the word, not entangling yourselves with the affairs of this world that the word of the Lord be not hindered.[41]

The Committee sent another letter two months later, clarifying and re-enforcing its response:

> There are strong temptations in the East for trade and commerce but all our brethren must keep themselves totally disentangled with the world. As men of God and Ambassadors for Christ you must have nothing to do with trade in any way whatever. Let the whole of your time and strength be given to the salvation of your own souls and of the souls of those among whom you labour.[42]

In a postscript, the Committee underlined that while it would not object to lay people becoming involved in such projects, the preachers should not be entangled. Implicit in the Committee's response was the conviction that what was of paramount importance for Methodist missions was religious rather than social or political considerations. People in Britain were aware of the stance of some critics of missions, that they provided a cover for commercial and other forms of exploitation. As the work developed further, however, it became clear that mission had to be expressed in ways relevant to people's total conditions and needs. Richard Watson's address to the Anniversary meeting of the WMMS in 1830, though referring mainly to the plight of slaves in the West Indies, clearly acknowledged this:

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[41] Buckley to Lynch, 23 August 1816, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.117.

[42]Marsden and Watson to Lynch, 29 October 1816, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p 117.

> All our Missionary enterprises, all our attempts to spread Christianity abroad… tend to increase our sympathies with the external circumstances of the oppressed and miserable of all lands. It is impossible for men to care for the souls of others without caring for their bodies also.[43]

One senses that such early clashes between missionaries 'on the field' and their responsible mission committees at home in Britain, revealed a lack of awareness among headquarters' staff-members about the realities of life overseas. Coke's sudden death would have intensified this problem within Methodism. Well aware of the conditions, challenges and questions arising in missions overseas, Coke would have been in a much better position to assess the complexity of the issues involved and to suggest ways forward.

In response to a request from a group of people in Madras that a missionary be sent to them, Lynch sailed from Jaffna on the 23rd January 1817 "in a small open boat about nine feet" across, landing after thirty-eight hours at Point Calimere in the south-east corner of the Tanjore district of India.[44] Travelling to Madras via Negapatam and Tranquebar, he visited Dutch mission stations on the way, including the graves of Plutschau and Ziegenbalg, the first missionaries sent under the King of Denmark's mission early in the 18th century. Lynch found this deeply moving, as he recalled the impact the deaths of Ziegenbalg and Plutschau had on Susannah, the mother of John and Charles Wesley. Having read their story, she found she could think or speak of little else for days. Lynch, therefore, had the distinction of helping to found Methodism's first permanent mission on the Indian subcontinent, making the journey several times from Jaffna to Madras to oversee the work in both places. Two of the first sites chosen in Madras, Georgetown, and Royapetta, became long-term centres of church life.[45]

Influenced by his contacts in Madras, Lynch's attitude towards Hinduism appears to have become much more open than might have been expected.

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[43] *Missionary Notices*, vi, June 1830, p.283, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.118.

[44] The information in this paragraph is partly based on an article by E. B. Thorpe in *The South India Churchman*, December 1965, p.4. See also N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.106.

[45] In time, Royapetta became the headquarters of the Church of South India.

Commenting on “idol-worship”, he wrote that “Brahmins and other sensible people” claimed that their idols were “no Gods” and that they did not worship them as such. Further, Lynch continued, Brahmins believed that there is only one God, “the almighty Creator of all things”, who cannot be seen, fills all space, is in every place and in that sense is also within the idols. Lynch did not apparently consider that the Hindus he met were idolaters in the sense condemned within the Bible. Nonetheless, he accepted that he had the task of seeking to introduce them “to the knowledge and happiness of the children of God” through faith in Jesus Christ.[46] Not surprisingly, the Secretaries of the Missionary Society considered that Lynch had raised fundamental questions relating to Christian mission and the role of missionaries. They responded at length:

> If you think that any of us have stated that the Heathen will perish because they have not the Gospel, you are mistaken. We do not think they will perish as heathens, that is, persons without revelation, but as sinners, violating the laws and the light they have. We believe in a law ‘written in the heart’ but if that be a law from God, it cannot prescribe idolatry, un-cleanness etc.; it must on the contrary forbid them. Idolaters and immoral persons act contrary to the law written on their hearts… We do believe that as wherever the Gospel is preached the means of salvation are multiplied, and the remedy applied in its strongest form, many will be saved by the gospel who would not be saved without it.[47]

Regrettably, I am not aware if these questions were discussed further by Lynch and members of staff at the Missionary Society headquarters in London. Returning to Ireland in 1824, Lynch clearly retained his commitment to mission in the wider world, passing it on, for example, to William Butler who entered the Irish ministry in 1844. Butler proceeded to America in 1850, founded the Methodist Episcopal work (MEC) in North India (1856-64) and greatly strengthened the MEC work in Mexico (1873-8). Referring to his

[46] A letter from Lynch, 23 June 1820, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.110.

[47] Letter from Taylor to Lynch, 9 October 1821, quoted in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.111.

contacts with Lynch in Ireland, Butler claimed that 'James Lynch laid his hands on my youthful head, and from him I received the missionary spirit.'[48]

John McKenny was an important figure with three distinct phases in his ministry, in Cape Colony from 1814 to 1816; in Sri Lanka from 1816 to 1835; and finally in New South Wales from 1836 until his death in 1847. In Sri Lanka, he met up again with some of those with whom he had been ordained in 1813. McKenny was by far the longest-serving Irish preacher in the first phase of Sri Lanka Methodism. His letters are full of interest. Commenting on disasters, he reported serious outbreaks of disease. In June 1824, for example, he described "a dreadful epidemic" of what he called "Kandian or jungle fever".[49] It had been widespread for months, with thousands dying, public works on roads and bridges suspended, and schools closed. He later reported from Colombo:

> The hospital of this small garrison has exhibited, for some months past, one of the most dismal scenes I ever witnessed: for some time there was not less than one hundred individuals in it, principally laid up with fever, to which about fifty have fallen sacrifice.[50]

Apart from soldiers, only one European had died of the disease in Colombo, while hundreds of Muslims and Sinhalese perished. Special prayer meetings had been held in the Baptist church. Five years later, again in July, he described how fever and dysentery had prevailed in the villages around Galle, with "hundreds of young and old… hurried into eternity".[51]

McKenny expressed strong views on a number of issues including missionary finance, Buddhism, and education. Somewhat dismissive of Buddhism, he showed a degree of cultural superiority. In general terms, he was positive about work among Burghers and the British, the latter being mainly soldiers, but negative concerning the Sinhalese work, referring to the Sinhalese as

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[48] Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, volume v, p.178; and N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.169.

[49] John McKenny, 12 June 1824, in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.136.

[50] *Missionary Notices*, iv, March 1825, pp.417f., in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.136.

[51] John McKenny, 29 July 1830, in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.136.

"Christian pagans engaged in idol worship and devil dancing".[52] Writing of this work a decade later, he commented:

> The poor Singhalese (sic) are a most discouraging people. Their character and circumstances is (sic) difficult to understand but still more so to explain; for not only their own system of heathenism, but everything connected with them is altogether against the Gospel… In the West Indies the bodies of men are in slavery, but here their minds are bound with powerful chains.[53]

A few years later, he seemed more hopeful or maybe more understanding of the situation:

> There is much good doing in Sri Lanka but the work is slow though progressive. How very different from its character in other parts of the world where a nation is born in a day.[54]

Perhaps the most inspired initiative McKenny took was to acquire a site of three acres at Kollupitiya, Colombo, in 1824. This action was unauthorised by the Missionary Committee, for which he was heavily criticised.[55] In time, however, it came to be seen as a bold and brave step from a mission point of view. Today the MCSL headquarters, Kollupitiya Methodist Church, Methodist College and the home of the President of Conference all stand on or near this strategic site.

An increased role for women

Attention has recently been drawn to the enhanced role of women in mission in the 20th century:

> By the early twentieth century, the majority of missionaries were women: wives, single women, or, in the case of the Catholics, members of a wide variety of religious orders. In the period after the First World War women

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[52] *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Wesleyan Missionaries*, 1820, in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.132

[53] John McKenny, 26 September 1831, in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.133.

[54] John McKenny, 31 July 1834, in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., p.133.

[55] J. McKenny, 5 February 1830, in N. W. Taggart, *The Irish* etc., pp.136-7.

> demanded, and in many cases obtained, full recognition as missionaries…Their role in education, medicine and evangelism as well as in fostering Christian family life, was crucial to the whole mission enterprise.[56]

As we can see from our list of Irish Methodist missionaries serving in Sri Lanka, women outnumbered men by sixteen to ten, and indeed by many more when wives are taken into account. Yet, traditionally it has been a small number of men whose ministry has been singled out for special mention. Greater account needs to be taken of the role of women within and beyond the life of the churches.

When in 1997 an Irishwoman attended the annual conference of Sri Lankan Methodism at Kollupitiya on behalf of British and Irish Methodism, she referred by name to five men from Ireland "who had given outstanding service in recent days" through their ministry at the conference church. This drew a response from Grace Robbins, a former English mission-partner who herself had served in Sri Lanka for many years:

> May I add… the names of five women from Ireland who… gave the best part of their lives to serve with the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka: Elsie Shire, Easter Hayden, Helen Park, Henrietta Bamford, and Mary Northridge. We also remember the wives from Ireland who, through the years, have worked alongside their husbands.[57]

Accepting that the role of Irish men in Sri Lanka has often been acknowledged and that we cannot here focus on all sixteen Irish women missionaries, I confine my remarks to the five women singled out by Grace Robbins.

Elsie Shire, a BA graduate whose father was an Irish Methodist minister who became President of the MCI, went to Sri Lanka in 1909, where she was at first associated with a school in the busy Pettah area of Colombo. She soon joined the staff of Methodist College, Colombo, a new girls' school with a

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[56] Kevin Ward, chapter 5 in volume 9 of *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, entitled 'Christianity, Colonialism and Missions' p.77.

[57] The *Methodist Recorder*, British Methodism's weekly newspaper, 6 November and 4 December 1997.

boarding department, where she remained until her retirement in 1942. She overlapped with Helen Park, also from Ireland, who served from 1912 to 1944. Both served for periods as Principal of the College; Miss Park from 1927 to 1936 and from 1939 to 1943, and Miss Shire from 1936 to 1938. The close relationship between the two, vitally important in the interests of the school, was described as “one of the most beautiful things in the long history” of the college.[58] In 1930, Miss Shire introduced a ‘house’ system, which remains in place today. Shire House has the motto, “aim high and persevere”, while Park House has “unity is strength”. Described as “grey-haired and brisk”, “something of a disciplinarian” and yet “a true missionary with a warm Irish heart”, Miss Shire became Captain of the 1st Colombo Guide Company, formed in 1917. Possessing a strong social conscience, she expressed anger at the practice of some households having ‘child’ servants. Of her teaching, it was said that whatever the subject – history, Latin, Scripture, or English – there was joy both for teacher and pupils in pursuing it:

> The dry bones of Latin grammar or of the complexities of political history were made live by her. She taught nothing she did not adorn. The reading of a play of Shakespeare or of an English novel gave abundant scope for her lively wit.[59]

An early letter by Elsie Shire provides insights into her sensitivity concerning other faiths, showing an awareness of the ‘fulfilment’ school of thought in relation to mission and her personal maturity. Expressing disappointment at the small number of girls from other faith backgrounds who were seeking Christian baptism, she acknowledged the need to re-focus her approach:

> In recent years the very success of Christianity has led to a revival of Buddhism. It has driven the Buddhists back to their own Scriptures, and they are striving to reconstruct Buddhist thought in modern terms, so that in the religion of their fathers they may satisfy their own spiritual needs. This movement may put back Christian progress – or what seems Christian progress – for a few years; but ‘God fulfils himself in many ways,’ and who

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58 *The Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record*, vol. 96, July 1952, pp.198-200.

59 The *Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record*, vol. 51, May 1942, pp.400-402, a tribute By Gladys Loos, a former principal at Methodist College, Colombo.

> can say if a spiritual movement of this kind, a movement which deepens the sense of spiritual need in the heart of the people, be not prepared for Him who came 'not to destroy but to fulfil'? We pray that the day may not be far distant when these sincere seekers after truth may find in Him the answer to all life's problems, the satisfaction to all life's needs.[60]

We have already been introduced to *Helen Park*, Miss Shire's colleague, and learnt of her work. Described as "small and diminutive in appearance", she was "quite strong-willed", teaching girls to "speak the truth and share with others". Said to anticipate the recommendations of later educationalists, Miss Park formed a Parent-Teacher Association in 1940, ensuring a broader level of support for the school in the wider community. With Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian pupils attending the school and reflecting Sri Lanka's diverse ethnic and religious groupings, the college bore witness to Jesus Christ and made a valuable contribution towards cross-community understanding and co-operation. Miss Park left Sri Lanka in 1943, returning in 1956 to lay the foundation stone of a new two-storey block at the college, opened two years later. She was a niece of Dorothy Beckett who also served in Sri Lanka.

Sister *Easter Hayden* from Waterford, Ireland, entered the Wesley Deaconess Order in 1905 and trained as a nurse and midwife. After serving for a period in Leeds, she proceeded to Sri Lanka in 1910 where she joined Sister Gertrude Nettleship who had initiated medical, teaching, and evangelistic work at Puttur, between Jaffna town and Point Pedro in northern Sri Lanka. Evangelism was focused on eight villages, where they had the help of Bible Women in visiting homes, teaching children, and establishing contacts – mainly among women and children. Commenting on the medical work, Sister Easter wrote:

> Patients come from many parts of the Peninsula to the Dispensary. Some have never heard the Gospel before… (and) listen earnestly to the story of God's love and providence… If in-patients are in the ward, we hold a meeting and have prayer every evening. When we pray for them they wonder much,

[60] A letter by Elsie Shire in *The Christian Advocate*, an Irish publication, 10 July 1914, p.329.

> but are very glad. If sometimes we do not pray, they show they expect it. Some people from Pt. Pedro were surprised and pleased when we prayed for the blessings of this life as well as the other for them and their neighbours, remarking their religion did not seek the good of a neighbour. They returned home with many new thoughts of possible salvation actively at work.[61]

Requesting help from Ireland for a 'new Training Home' at Puttur, where they planned to train women as deaconesses, Sister Easter reported in 1917:

> There are now many well-educated women in the Tamil Methodist Church, but the difficulties in the way of their becoming deaconesses are very great, and we ask… that in the development of this latest department of our work every guidance and help may be given as each need arises and that God will choose and call the right women for pioneer Tamil deaconesses.[62]

Jean Sharpe, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, joined Sister Easter in 1924.[63] By 1933 there remained an "urgent need for funds, staff and equipment".[64] The emphasis at the Puttur training centre was now less on the dispensary and more on training "young women for a life of Christian service and leadership" through courses aimed at being comprehensive and practical as well as theoretical. Included among the subjects were:

> Old Testament and New Testament Introduction, Comparative Religion, Homiletics, Psychology and a course in Social Work, including such subjects

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[61] *The Christian Advocate*, 27 March 1914, p. 148. See too *The Christian Advocate*, 16 May 1913, p.233.

[62] Letter from Easter Hayden, *The Christian Advocate*, 27 March 1917, p.148.

[63] Jean Sharpe, BA, married the Rev. Middleton Weaver in 1933, an Englishman also serving in Sri Lanka, following the death of his first wife. They remained in Sri Lanka until 1944. Their son, Leslie, born in Sri Lanka, entered the Irish ministry and served in British Guiana in the 1960s, after which he resigned from the ministry and became a teacher. Following retirement, Leslie returned to Sri Lanka in the early 21st century where he served under the joint 'Experience Exchange Programme' of the MMS and the USPG, the first Irish person to do so.

[64]A quotation from 'an attractive booklet' by Sister Easter and Jean Sharp in the *Irish Christian Advocate*, 13 October 1933, p.3. See also *Irish Christian Advocate*, 22 March 1935, p.7. An earlier Irishwoman, Sister Faith Hunter, who subsequently married the Rev. E. T. Selby and remained in Sri Lanka until 1934, worked with Sister Gertrude Nettleship prior to marriage.

> as Infant and Maternal Welfare, Home Nursing, Physiology, First Aid, Social Service and Sanitary Law. Along with these training is also imparted in Type-writing, Book-keeping, and Record and Report writing.[65]

The main strength of the work at Puttur, led and carried out by women, lay in taking seriously the place and role of women in their homes and neighbourhoods and in seeking to enable them to share their faith effectively with others. Sister Gladys Stephenson, a deaconess in China who in 1932 visited Puttur on her way home on leave to Britain, described it as presenting a challenge to "age-long barriers" of prejudice.[66]

The fourth person named by Grace Robins was *Henrietta Bamford*, known as Hettie. A teacher, she was Principal at Rippon bilingual school at Galle from 1914 until the late 1930s. After a period of furlough, she became Principal of Kandy Industrial School (Ferens), Peradeniya, from 1939 until she retired in 1945. In retirement she lived in Northern Rhodesia, moving later to South Africa. As "a woman of strong personality… direct and outspoken… never afraid to take an independent line of action", Miss Bamford combined her work in schools with training local evangelistic women workers in and around Galle.[67] Like Dorothy Thorpe (nee Beckett) and Robert Nelson, Miss Bamford benefitted from involvement in 'the Oxford Group' or 'Moral Re-Armament' movement, with its emphasis on the four moral absolutes of purity, unselfishness, honesty and love.[68] Describing a house-party held in this connection at Kingswood College, Kandy, during the Christmas holidays in 1934, Nelson admitted that though the numbers attending were not large, between twenty and twenty-five, they included people from the Sinhalese, Tamil, and Burgher communities, and included missionaries, a young Persian student who was a Muslim, a tea planter, and Anglicans as well as Methodists. Referring to "the depth and reality of the fellowship", Nelson

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[65] *The Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record*, vol.45, December 1936, no.528, p.279.

[66] Dorothy Graham, *Saved to Serve*, *The Story of the Wesley Deaconess Order 1890-1978*, 2002, p.173.

[67] *The Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record*, October 1946, vol. 53, p.364; and September 1973, vol. 117, p.24.

[68] *Irish Christian Advocate*, 16 October 1936, p.9; and *The Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record*, vol.44, March 1935, pp. 37-38; and October 1938, pp.216-7.

commented, “I never thought Christians could trust one another like this”, adding, “we came away braced by a new fellowship and inspired by a new vision”. Ferens later became the site of the Theological College of Lanka (TCL) in 1962, where women and men are trained together for ministry in the Church of Ceylon (Anglican), the Baptist, and Methodist Churches. The college is situated just off the main Kandy–Colombo road at the village of Pilimatalawa, six miles from Kandy and close to the University of Peradeniya.[69]

May Northridge (1916-44), was one of a total of around thirty Irishwomen engaged in evangelism through the MMS in different parts of the world during the 20th century. They worked mainly with and through women’s groups, distributing Scripture portions, teaching Bible stories and home skills, and encouraging Christians to witness to people of other faiths. In describing a contact with a Muslim man near Matara in south Sri Lanka, she wrote:

> We had a frank talk about Christianity. Jesus as a great teacher he willingly acknowledged but not as the only Saviour of the world – as one teacher amongst many, such as Moses or Mahomet… In due time I went to his private residence where he received me very graciously. A Gospel was given and he insisted on giving me sixteen times its value… I had a delightful chat with his wife and daughters.

On another occasion while travelling by train, Miss Northridge found herself seated opposite a Buddhist priest carrying a fan “so that he might not look upon the face of a woman”. When she opened her Sinhala Bible, he showed interest, leaned forward and spoke a few words in English, asking whether she could speak and understand Sinhala. In time he forgot that he was a man and a Buddhist priest, while she forgot she was “a mere woman” as they engaged in serious conversation in Sinhala on what she described as the “deepest needs of men”:

> I learnt from him something further of the ethical teaching of Buddha, but a lack of a living personal teacher and Saviour was very marked. Merit, demerit, devil possession were all discussed. As I left him some two hours

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[69] Harold de Soysa, *The Sri Lanka Churchman*, June 1963, pp.226-230.

> later, I felt the time had not been in vain, and that the Spirit of God was able to complete the message given.[70]

Receiving in world mission

The main focus of this paper has been on the part played by Irish Methodists in encouraging Christian growth and influence in Sri Lanka. In summary, the Irish had a secondary and supportive role. As acknowledged at the outset however, Irish Methodism also benefitted greatly from its involvement in world mission. Its horizons were extended, its awareness of global issues sharpened, and its inner life renewed through exposure to and involvement in the wider world. Saved from a narrowness that can destroy, Irish Methodism was enabled to play a fuller and more responsible part in the life of the wider world. Editorials in Methodist publications in Ireland frequently drew attention to this particular aspect of world mission, claiming for example, in 1884, that missionary interest and concern in Irish congregations:

> ...stir the spiritual pulse of our churches; they deepen our sense of obligation for home privileges, they help to counteract an ever growing tendency to selfishness, they lift our thoughts to higher altitudes of duty, and they diffuse valuable information… concerning the condition and fortunes of our common race.[71]

Statements of this kind were not uncommon. Ten years later a similar note was sounded:

> The foreign Missionary enterprise is essential to the prosperity of the work of God at home. It does not sap our strength, but acts as a spiritual tonic, preparing the churches for the more vigorous prosecution of the work at home…. We are ever in danger of becoming contracted in our views and sympathies, and even in matters spiritual, we need to be lifted out of our insularity.[72]

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[70] Both contacts, with a Muslim man and a Buddhist priest, were reported in a letter from May Northridge in *The Irish Christian Advocate*, 26 February 1926, p.100.

[71] *Irish Christian Advocate*, 4 April 1884, pp.158f.

[72] *Irish Christian Advocate*, 27 April 1894.

Here, we find significant pointers towards a motivation for mission based not on narrow self-interest or a desire to control others, but on worldwide embracing concepts including the essential unity of humankind, an awareness of one another's needs, international interdependence and a concern for the spiritual health and wellbeing of nations.

Those privileged to be involved directly in world mission have been personally enriched through their experience. I conclude with two recent examples. *Stephen Skuce* referred to his time in Sri Lanka from 1997 to 2001 as essentially "a life changing experience", greatly adding to his theological understanding and helping him to recognise the importance of "doing theology contextually":

> Perhaps of first importance, I came to know numerous Christians whose faith directed their lives in the… context where Christian faith brought few advantages. Ordinary Christians, many from poorer sections of society, viewed their faith as being the way to God, without this needing to condemn or critique the faith of others. They were sure that faith in Christ brought salvation. They were often unsure about how people of other faiths stand before God – a very different position to being sure about the lack of salvation for others. I found this *firm but generous faith*… very attractive. In Ireland, Christians tend to be as sure of their condemnation of others as they were of the qualities of their own perspective; a *firm but negative faith* that has been one harmful influence on Northern Ireland's long-running political conflict.[73]

In some ways, this too has been my experience of ministry outside Ireland, whether in a rural setting in India in the 60s, at the Methodist Mission House in London in the 70s, or in Sri Lanka at Kollupitiya in the 90s. Kollupitiya Methodist Church shares the same campus as Methodist College, Colombo, and occupies a vital place in Methodism and the wider church, with services in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. Among its ministers were Robert Nelson[74],

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[73] Stephen Skuce, 'The Sri Lankan Influence on an Irish Theological Journey', *Sri Lanka Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol.3, no.1, June 2007, pp.88-96. The italics within the quotation are mine.

[74] See *Sri Lanka Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol.3, no.1, June 2007, N. W. Taggart, 'Robert A. Nelson: His Ministry in Sri Lanka', pp.71-87.

George Good,[75] Vincent Parkin, Stephen Skuce[76] and myself, from Ireland. Focusing on my time at Kollupitiya Church, where three congregations (Sinhala, Tamil and English-speaking) share the same building, I found it an immensely challenging and rewarding experience. I had never before served in a church in which there were so many qualified professional people, while some within and beyond the congregations also lacked basic human requirements. Members in the English-speaking congregation, my own immediate area of responsibility, were enormously understanding and supportive, as were my Sri Lankan ministerial colleagues. Highly motivated and gifted lay people in all three congregations were ready and willing to engage in effective forms of ministry and outreach at a time of national crisis. Was there a role for me in this complex situation, I wondered? If so, what was it?

Back in Ireland in 2002, I was invited to write the annual 'pastoral address' to be sent from the Methodist conference to the Methodist people of Ireland. The subject given to me was 'God's Calling: Ministry Together in a Changing World'. I approached it under the three obvious headings: firstly, 'God's calling'; secondly, 'a changing world'; and thirdly, 'ministry together', emphasising 'body ministry' or 'team ministry' together. This gave me an opportunity to reflect on my indebtedness to the people among whom I had served in Sri Lanka, enabling me to emphasise that in changing times and circumstances we constantly need to take a fresh look at methods and forms of Christian ministry. This was my closing paragraph:

> Is it significant that within my own ministry, my most vivid experience of 'body ministry' took place outside Ireland? It was a beautiful, demanding, and somewhat disconcerting experience in which I initially wondered what my own role should be. In time this became clear. It was to nurture God's people; to work for tolerance, understanding, and unity among gifted and committed people who tended to mistrust one another and to become divided; to affirm local leaders who were taking extraordinary social and

[75] George Good also served as Editor of *The Sri Lanka Methodist Church Record* from 1962 to 1965, during which time articles by Irish authors appeared, including Albert Gamble, Tom Johnston, and Aileen Crawford.

[76] See the article by Skuce referred to in note 74.

> evangelistic initiatives; and to learn to step back in wonder at the marvellous things the Lord was doing in and through his people. Are lay people up for this challenge? Are those in the ordained ministry prepared to accept an enabling role? In words attributed to the Methodist Church in Singapore, it may perhaps involve them in forms of ministry which are 'smaller and less spectacular' than the ones for which they first offered. Are they content 'to foster in community through word and sacrament the encounter with truth which will set women and men free to minister as the body of Christ'? If so, they may find that in this way they are best able to render lasting service to God's kingdom.[77]

What today is our task in churches in Sri Lanka, Ireland, and the wider world? Based on Biblical passages such as Matthew 4.12-5.16; 2 Corinthians 5.17-6.2; Ephesians 2.11-22; and Colossians 1.15-23, it is to play our part as Christians, in company with others whenever and wherever possible, in the work of personal renewal and universal redemption. God's call as taught in scripture is the place to begin. The church, after all is God's idea, His creation. Jesus is its head. The Holy Spirit breathes new life into it. Only when we believe and live these truths, is the church "fit for purpose". Robert Nelson, served in Trincomalee, Hatton, Kandy, and Colombo for a total of more than 30 years. As the minister at Kollupitiya he wrote: "It is because the Christ has come that we go, go into every region of human life, cross every human frontier… with the message that both redeems all men (and women) and human society."[78] The summons to mission and ministry in every area of life and to all creation could not be clearer.

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[77] The Pastoral Address of the Irish Methodist Conference, Enniskillen, 2002, slightly amended.

[78] See N. W. Taggart, 'Robert A. Nelson: His Ministry in Sri Lanka', *Sri Lanka Journal of Theological Reflection*, vol. 3, no.1, June 2007, p.85.

LEADERS AS SERVANTS: A RESOLUTION OF THE TENSION

DEREK TIDBALL

THE ISSUE

Christian leadership is meant to be different from other forms of leadership because Christian leaders are called to be servants. Jesus stated the distinctive mandate of Christian leaders succinctly when he said to his disciples:

> You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-27).[1]

The way in which Jesus characterised the Roman and secular leaders of his day may have been a stereotype but it was close enough to the truth for no one to want to contradict him. Leadership was masculine, powerful and concerned with status. It was dedicated to accomplishing the task, no matter what the cost to ordinary people. But Christ introduced a new way of leading which was to be incumbent on all his followers, that of leading by serving, even sacrificial service.

In introducing this form of leadership, however, Jesus posed a problem for his disciples which many still find it hard to resolve. How can one simultaneously be a leader and a servant? Are not the roles of leader and servant irreconcilable? Do they not call for opposing abilities and characteristics? Are they not more readily in conflict with each other than in harmony? The

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[1] NIV Inclusive Language edition is used throughout this article.

popular image assumes leaders command and servants obey; leaders determine the direction and servants follow. Leaders supply vision and strategic thinking; servants deal with the mundane and everyday maintenance jobs. Leaders are proactive; servants are reactive.

The tension is a very real one for many pastors who daily seek to practice servant leadership, often putting themselves under some degree of stress as they do so. Trained to preach, teach, and lead in mission, many pastors end up putting out the chairs, dealing with the plumber and locking up the church; more caretaker than pastor. Seeking to avoid the constant worry of being able to affirm that they are both leading and serving, some resolve the tension by emphasising one pole at the expense of the other. So, some pastors are task-orientated, visionary, achievers, committed to forging forward, even if it means leaving those who cannot keep up with them behind. To these pastors, the church in the West has floundered long enough, been complacent about its mission, and too defeatist in accepting decline. The church must change and adapt to exercise a ministry which is active and relevant to today. Others shun such images of leadership and seek to serve their flocks and meet their every need. They will often find themselves undertaking menial tasks and putting themselves out to keep the flock contented and, as much as possible, united. It means the pace of any change is often set by the slowest of the sheep and great attention is shown to the stragglers in the flock. These stereotypes – the pastor as leader and the pastor as servant – may be overdrawn, but not by much.

The questions this poses are: is there not a better way to understand servant leadership and is this what Jesus had in mind when he taught it to his disciples? How do these twin aspects of Christian governance cohere? How can they be integrated?

On a wider scale, the history of the church suggests some forms of ministry have focused on the one almost to the exclusion of the others.[2] The more

[2] This relates to the sect-church typology introduced by Ernst Troeltsch with the sect tending to equality and the church tending to hierarchy. But the correspondence is not exact as a number of sects are, in reality, quite hierarchical. See, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Church,* vol. 1 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931) pp.331-343.

radical wing of the church is very suspicious of the language of leadership and shuns anything that places one group of Christians on a higher plane than another, rejecting anything that smacks of a clergy/laity divide. The more institutional wing of the church is more at home in the secular world of national, political or business affairs and more relaxed about hierarchies and leadership and more cautious about emphasising servanthood too much. In its extreme forms this was evidenced in the 'prince bishops' that were once common, at least in the English and Roman churches during much of their histories.

The biblical basis

Give the recurring tendency for individuals and institutions to resolve the tension of servant leadership by deferring to one pole rather than the other it will be helpful briefly to review what the Bible teaches in respect of both.

a. Leaders

It is not uncommon to read comments that suggest leadership is downplayed in the New Testament. Mark Storm, for example, "Paul avoided the vocabulary of leadership… preferring (instead) to use metaphors of service and care from work and the household".[3] It is undoubtedly true that Paul never describes pastors as leaders of congregations, presiding over church activities and services and as being the head of a complex organisation. It is also true, as we shall see, that he stresses that leaders were servants. But to draw the implication that leadership, as such, was unimportant or a topic to be avoided in the New Testament would be misleading.

First, we must acknowledge that a great deal of attention is paid to leaders and leadership in the Bible as a whole. The form and focus of leadership varies over time. The Patriarchs give way the tribal leaders who then acknowledge the authority of Moses, the exceptional leader, and his heir Joshua, and who are then followed by Judges who summon the tribes as a whole to fight for deliverance from oppression. This period of 'erratic' leadership gives way, first to the leadership of the priest, Samuel, and then to

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[3] Mark Strom, *Reframing Paul: Conversations on Grace and Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000) p.180.

the more regular pattern of kingship, with all its attendant problems (1 Sam. 8:1-21). Kings did not rule alone but in conjunction with the priests and wise men of Israel, and the Prophets, who came largely from outside the institutional structures (Jer.18:18). Concurrent with all these forms of leadership the role of the family head continued to be influential.[4]

The Old Testament suggests that leadership is essential if any society is to be healthy. Hence, Moses pleaded with God to "appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the Lord's people will not be sheep without a shepherd" (Num. 27:18). The absence of leadership tends to weakness and chaos, as the book of Judges demonstrates (Jdg. 21:25).

In the light of all this it would be surprising if there was no concern about leadership in the church. But there is, as a brief but far from exhaustive study establishes. Consider the following:

1. The metaphor of the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-18) applies not only to Jesus Christ but in a derived sense to the 'under-Shepherds' in the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11 and 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The metaphor of the shepherd not only had overtones of the person who feeds, protects and leads the flock but also of ruling over it. In the ancient world the shepherd was a metaphor for the king and carried connotations of authority.[5]

2. Leadership is demonstrated throughout the Acts by the apostles and elders under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

3. Paul appointed Elders and recognised deacons as leaders in the church (Acts 14:23 and Phil. 1:1). While not too much is made of them, their existence is established. Furthermore, Paul encouraged the church to

[4] For a fuller exposition see, Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997) pp.31-54.

[5] E. Beyreuther, 'Shepherd', *NIDNTT*, vol. 3, pp. 564-569, J. Jeremias, '*poimēn*' *TDNT,* vol. 6, pp. 485-502 and Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart*, (Downers Grove: IVP and Leicester: Apollos, 2006) pp. 58-74.

submit to its household leaders (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17).

4. The metaphor of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31) implies structure and order, with some parts providing direction to other parts. Paul writes of God having placed in his church '*first* apostles, *second* prophets and *third* teachers' (1 Cor. 12:28) and so places them in a guiding role in the church.

5. While there is much dispute about the actual meaning of the terms and the role they indicate, the Pastoral Letters[6] make clear the church had leadership in the form of elders (*presbeuteroi)* or overseers (*episcopoi)*[7] and deacons (*diakonia).*[8] In addition, they show clear apostolic leadership being exercised, through authority delegated to Timothy and Titus, because of Paul's restricted circumstances.

6. In spite of shunning language that inflates his role Paul describes himself in 1 Corinthians 3:10 as an *architektōn*, that is, a master or an expert builder. The suffix *archē* usually refers to a ruling authority.

7. Among the spiritual gifts that Paul mentions in Romans 12:8 is that of leadership. The word he uses, *proistēmi*, is used in Greek literature to mean 'to lead, conduct, direct, govern'.[9] It is used altogether eight times in the New Testament mostly to refer to leadership, but, as Bo Reicke points out, usually in the context of caring for others, (as is explicit, for

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[6] Whatever one's view of the authorship of these letters they (and Ephesians) are part of the Pauline corpus and will be treated as authentic, primary evidence, not to be relegated to some secondary division.

[7] I take *presbuteroi* and *episcopoi* to be interchangeable. See my *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns of Pastoral Leadership* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008) pp.151-157.

[8] On *diakonia* see further below.

[9] Ricke, '*proistēmi', TDNT,* vol. 6, p.700.

example, in 1 Thess. 5:12).[10] A related term is that of the pilot (*kubernetes*) in 1 Corinthians 12:28.[11]

8. The role of the teacher implies leadership and authority (1 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:28, 1 Tim. 2:7; 6:1; 2 Tim. 1:11).

9. Leadership language is to be found elsewhere in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24. Significantly, Hebrews uses the secular word *hēgoumenoi* for church leaders without any embarrassment. The term is usually used of military leaders, princes, pagan priests and other great men.[12]

10. John Elliott's careful examination of Jesus' disciples and the community of the early church has convincingly argued that neither were egalitarian movements. Not only is egalitarianism a modern concept, which it is anachronistic to impose on the writings of the New Testament, but the overwhelming use of family language undermines egalitarianism. Families are warm, personal and living organisms but also small face-to-face communities in which people adopt defined roles and operate with different degrees of authority.[13]

11. Negatively, it should be said that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, does not, rightly understood, imply equality of leadership. This doctrine concerns equality of access to God but it is a confusion to assume this implies that everyone is a leader in the church. It does not and to abuse it in this way would be to conflict with what has been said above, and especially the concept of the church as a body.

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[10] *Ibid.,* pp. 701-703. Reicke writes, this emphasis 'agrees with the distinctive nature of office in the NT, since according to Lk. 22:26 the one who is chief (*ho hēgoumenos*) is to be as he who serves'.

[11] For an exposition see, Derek Tidball *Builders and Fools: Leadership the Bible Way* (Leicester: IVP, 1999) pp.103- 21.

[12] F. Buchsel, '*hegeomai' TDNT,* vol. 2, p.908.

[13] John H. Elliott, 'Jesus was not an egalitarian. A critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory', *Biblical Theology Bulletin,* 32 (2002) pp.75-91 and 'The Jesus Movement was not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented', *Biblical Interpretation*, XI (2003) pp.173-210.

12. Everywhere, however, the character of the leadership mentioned is different from the accepted patterns of leadership in wider society. Elsewhere, leaders are concerned about title, status, position and the honour they are due. They would be quick to take offense and to defend their honour. Words for honour are significantly absent in any discussion of leadership in Paul's writings.[14] People were there to serve leaders, not to be served by them. In contrast Paul delights in using the prefix *syn*, making himself a colleague rather than a superior to a host of others who work for the gospel (Rom. 16:2, 9, 21; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; Col. 1:7; 4:7, 10,11; Phlm. 1, 2, 23,24; 1 Thess. 3:2). And, he provides a typical insight into Christian leadership as when he writes of Stephanus and his household that they "have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people" (1 Cor. 16:15). Prevailing secular models of leadership are eschewed and new patterns put in place.[15]

Four conclusions can be drawn from this brief survey. They are that:

1. the provision of proper leadership is a matter of frequent concern in the New Testament;

2. the church is not egalitarian, and leadership carries overtones of authority and governance;

3. contrary to some contemporary Christians who are afraid to use business or military models of leadership, the New Testament is not afraid to adopt secular terminology for its leaders, in spite of the counter-cultural nature of Christian leadership and potential misunderstanding in doing so;

4. leadership is recast into servant and caring leadership.

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[14] Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) p.233.

[15] The best discussion is in *ibid, passim.* Clarke, however, does, I think, overstate his case in writing "Avoiding the notion of leader, Paul did, however, regard himself as a servant" (p.250). See also his *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study in 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006)

b. Servant

The concept that the Christian leader is a servant is less disputed. Although there is one debate about it to which we shall come. Even those who do not model it in practice are unlikely to disagree with it in theory.

1. Jesus presents himself consistently as a model of service. When his disciples were discussing when they would partake of the benefits of leadership, as conventionally understood, Jesus specifically contrasts his style of leadership with that of the Gentiles and says: "...for even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45 and parallels in Matt. 20:20-28 and Luke 24-27 in which the 'ransom' motif is absent).

2. In a transparent demonstration of the principle, even though the language of *diakonia* is not used, Jesus washed his disciple's feet (John 13:1-17), telling them: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done" (John 13:15).

3. In reflecting on the self-humbling of Christ, Paul describes Jesus as "taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil. 2:7).

4. Paul describes himself in a number of ways ('apostle', 'teacher' etc.) but most persistently as a 'servant' (*diakonos* = 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Col. 1:23, 25; Eph. 3:7), or 'slave' (*doulos* = Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1), or 'household steward' (*oikonomos* = 1 Cor. 4:1). He is variously serving God, Christ, the gospel, or the church.

5. Paul describes several of his fellow workers as servants including Phoebe (Rom. 16:1); Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5); Timothy (Phil. 1:1); Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col. 4:7) and Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12); as well as leaders in general (2 Tim. 2:24).

6. In his most extended reflection on the matter Paul describes himself and Apollos as 'only servants' (*diakonoi*) and emphasises their unimportance and lowly status in contrast to how the Corinthians speak of themselves (1 Cor 3:5-4:13).

7. A local church leader, Stephanus, together with his household, as we have seen, are commended for having "devoted themselves in the service of the Lord's people" (1 Cor. 16:15).

8. More generally, serving one another is to be characteristic of the whole Christian community (Gal. 5:13).

9. Other New Testament writers adopt the same stance. James describes himself as "a servant (*doulos)* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Jas.1:1) — a remarkable description if this James is the half-brother of Jesus, as is most likely. Peter (2 Pet. 1:1) and Jude (1) use the same term of themselves.

10. 1 Peter 2:16 uses the term servant (*douloi*) to apply to all Christians but, without using the exact words, then teaches that leaders are to be servant leaders in a way that obviously echoes the teaching of Jesus (1 Pet. 5:1-4). They are shepherds who must not lord it over their flocks and must remember they are accountable themselves to the Chief Shepherd.

While the data here may be uncontroversial, the full meaning of *diakonos* is not. Traditionally, it has been seen as referring to those who undertook menial tasks, such as waiting at tables.[16] In a fairly recent monograph, John Collins has re-examined the use of *diakonos* in Hellenistic Greek literature and his analysis leads him to conclude that although it often does refer to undertaking lowly tasks and household chores, in a significant number of cases it refers to the less menial task of being a go-between. The word is particularly used of those commissioned to deliver a message or carry out an activity on behalf of a god. It is also used of commercial activity as when a trader exports or imports goods. So, he concludes, "the sense of 'to serve at table' cannot be called 'the basic meaning'… If the words denote actions or position of 'inferior value,' there is at the same time often the connotation of

[16] The noun *diakonos* does not occur in Acts 6 but the verb infinitive occurs of 'waiting on tables' (*diakonein trapezais*). Many have traditionally traced the origin of the diaconate to this passage.

something special, even dignified, about the circumstances".[17] So they do not necessarily carry a sense of low status or servility. True, the one serving is in a subordinate position to the one he serves and subject to their authority, "and yet, as a representative of the one he serves, he carries the responsibility and authority that derives from the one he serves".[18]

Collins does not see that the usage in the New Testament differs from this. Therefore, he argues, it is incorrect to see the term *diakonos* as always implying servility and referring only to the undertaking of menial jobs. Instead, the word indicates the high privilege of being the representative of God or Christ in the world and of bearing the message of the gospel. This puts it in an altogether different light.

Andrew Clarke declares himself "unpersuaded" by Collins' discussion of the word in the Synoptic Gospels on which so much of his argument rests.[19] The notion of lowly status is present in a good number of references in the New Testament and in 2 Corinthians, it is explicitly used in the context of Paul's suffering as an apostle. But the word is also used of a range of tasks and so, Clarke adjudges that in spite of the specific reservations, it is correct to say that subordination and servility are not "essential ingredients(s)"[20] of the concept of *diakonia.* As he points out, the use of the word in English, as when we speak, for example of the Civil Service or Military Services, does not necessarily involve doing unskilled tasks and on many occasions refers to positions of great standing as people serve as emissaries of the Government. To be a servant is not inevitably merely to be responsive to someone else's demand for the performance of a menial chore.

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[17] J. N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) p.194.

[18] Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* Library of New Testament Studies (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2008) p.64. Clarke helpfully expounds and critiques Collins in pp.63-67.

[19] *Ibid.,* p.66

[20] *Ibid.* p. 67.

Common suggested resolutions

Having seen that the New Testament affirms the importance of leadership but then defines Christian leadership in terms of being a servant, we are left with the conundrum as to how one can lead and serve simultaneously. Whilst national leaders and politicians often speak of the idea of leading as a serving vocation, the reality is often quite different. Leadership involves high status, at the very least, making it difficult for those who are ranked more lowly to do other than comply with what leaders say. A degree of authority or power,[21] not just status, is nearly always inherent in leadership and power is insidiously corrupting. It is likely in some measure to colour even the most innocent act of service. So how can they fit together?

Several ways of seeking to resolve the tension are commonly proposed.

1. Redefinition

A classic example of this is seen in Collins' proposal, outlined above, that the word *diakonos* did not imply adopting a lowly position and doing a menial task but could refer to people who held important commissions, carrying the authority and status of the one who commissioned them. Though the argument has some merit, it only reduces the problem rather than resolves it, for *diakonos* continues to mean doing acts of lowly service much of the time.

Others have attempted to resolve the problem by widening the definition of leadership and thus removing the sting of power from it.[22] Influencing others is an essential ingredient of leadership but to define leadership solely as influence, and thus to suggest that in some respects we are all leaders, is to render the concept too vague and somewhat devoid of common sense

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[21] I take the difference to be that while power may be imposed, whether it is accepted or not by those on the receiving end of it, authority is power which is legitimately recognised and willingly accepted.

[22] An example is seen in David Cormack, *Team Spirit: People Working with People* (Bromley: MARC Europe, 1987) pp.9-10 and more recently see discussion in Walter C. Wright, *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000) pp.29-44.

meaning. It may be true, to a point, and is certainly helpful in encouraging leaders to accept that they cannot enforce their influence on others. Leaders need to recognise that leadership has to be a reciprocal transaction in which people are prepared to be influenced by them. But it is neither a sufficient definition of leadership, which involves other dynamics as well as influence, nor is it altogether useful in tackling the tension we are investigating.

So the redefinition of terms does not resolve the tension with integrity.

2. Redemption

More helpfully, it has been suggested that the heart of the problem of the tension between being a leader and a servant lies in the power factor. In itself power may be morally neutral but given that it is channelled through us who are fallen creatures, in spite of our salvation, it can too easily become a moral and spiritual liability. Tom Marshall has listed the potential pitfalls to which it leads as pride, arrogance, self-aggrandisement, insensitivity, domination, and tyranny.[23] These can creep up on leaders without them realising that they have been ensnared by them. Marshall's answer is to suggest that power has been redeemed in the incarnation and by the cross of Christ on which the tyrannical powers of the world were defeated.[24]

Marshall suggests that in Christ the power issue has been settled. First, Christ put the Father's will, not his own, first. His action demonstrated, secondly, that the goal of every activity is to be the Father's glory. Success, achievement and results are never the end; the glory of God alone is the goal. And, thirdly, the cross we embrace in Christ means that we have "died to all self-seeking, self-glorification and the will-to-power".[25] If we are clear on this, then, it will follow through into the practice of a redeemed leadership.

This approach is much more beneficial than the previous attempted resolution because it is grounded in the theology which is at the heart of the

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[23] Tom Marshall, *Understanding Leadership* (Chichester: Sovereign World, 1991) pp. 45-51.

[24] *Ibid.,* pp. 55-65.

[25] *Ibid.,* p.64.

gospel, namely that of the cross of Christ. But it perhaps suffers from being insufficiently linked to the practice and realities of everyday leadership.

3. Restricted understanding

A third way in which people have sought to resolve the conflict is to restrict the understanding of what it means to being a servant. Rather than relating it to doing a range of menial tasks people have said it is about the way any task is undertaken rather than what task is being undertaken. Tom Marshall, for example, explains: "The first thing we have to get clear is that we are dealing with a question of character or nature, not a question of function".[26] He then goes on to say this involves (1) always seeking the best interests of those they lead; (2) always finding satisfaction in the progress of those they lead; (3) willingly accepting the obligations of leadership; (4) having a desire to be accountable; (5) expressing caring love for those they lead; and, (6) being willing to listen.

The leader continues to lead and give direction. Ken Blanchard, an advocate of servant leadership, has written: "I want to make it clear that when we're talking about servant-leadership, we aren't talking about lack of direction".[27] In fact, the leader who fails to give direction fails as a servant of the body he is called to serve. Having been a theological college principal, I served the college best by giving direction to its academic, financial, legal, and spiritual management, and to leading its staff. What made it servant leadership was that I was called to do this without arrogance and pride, and by putting the needs of the college as an institution, and of its staff and students, before my own. I may have looked more servant-like if I had acted as its caretaker, its maintenance man or its caterer and shifted the chairs around, done the odd jobs and repairs and did the cooking and washing up. I should not have been (and wasn't) above doing some of those tasks when necessary. But I did not *serve* the college by my undertaking those tasks. In fact, it would have been a failure in service for me to have done so. My skills did not lie in maintenance (as my wife knows) and the law forbade me to do the cooking as I did not

[26] *Ibid*., p.68.

[27] Ken Blanchard, 'Servant-Leadership Revisited' in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Larry C. Spears (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998) p.23.

have the necessary certificates. I served best by managing, rather than by interfering in the responsibilities which had been given to others.[28] The key issue was one of style rather than role.

The academic grounding for these views, as for those of many in this area, is found in the work of Robert K. Greenleaf who wrote a seminal work for business leaders, called *The Servant as Leader* in 1970.[29] In a later summary statement, he speaks of it as leadership without hierarchy and says: "The servant-leader is servant (not leader) first… (It) begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. The servant-leader takes care first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being met".[30]

A whole industry has grown around the concept of servant-leadership, and one participant, Joe Batten, has expanded Greenleaf's concept into thirty-seven values in his 'Manifesto for Tough-minded Servant-Leaders'.[31] In summary, they are: openness and emotional vulnerability; warmth; consistency; unity; caring; positive listening; unsatisfaction (not dissatisfaction); flexibility; giving; involvement; tolerance of mistakes; values; psychological wages; simplicity; good use of time; winning formula = integrity + quality + service; open-mindedness; development of people; self-discipline; physical fitness; enjoyment of life; a broad perspective; faith in self and others; vision; positive thinking; a desire to learn; enjoyment of work; enrichment of others; integrity; results not activity; candour; management by example; a clear philosophy; accountability; purpose and direction; expectation of excellence; and, finally, laser-like focus.

How do we evaluate this approach? It has much to commend it and there is much from which I would not wish to dissent.[32] The discovery that the best

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[28] I recognise that in a smaller institution or church it may be necessary for the leader to undertake a range of these tasks as well as leading because of the lack of personnel.

[29] (Indianapolis: Robert Greenleaf Centre, 1970). See also, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977)

[30] In Spears (ed.) *Insights on Leadership* p.19.

[31] Joe Batten, 'A Passion to Serve', in *Ibid.,* pp.38-53.

[32] Wright helpfully applies much of it to Christian leadership in his *Relational Leadership*, pp.23-61.

form of leadership, even in the business world, is not one where leaders are tough bosses who have been trained to demonstrate the hard characteristics of leadership but one more akin to that advocated by Jesus Christ is a positive gain.[33] To emphasise that one can do any job as a servant, and that this is what we should be doing, provides us with a true and significant understanding of leadership.

Yet, there are some reservations. In one sense it does not completely resolve the tension between leadership and servanthood and it may even aggravate it, as it places leaders under renewed obligations. At face value, for example, making "sure that other people's highest priority needs are being met" may be a snare around a Christian leader's neck. What people think to be their highest priority may not be a worthy priority at all. The Christian leader is called to critique people's misguided priorities not just to affirm them and attempt to meet them.[34] Secondly, however much we may wish to re-interpret the notion of service, and restrict it to the manner in which we fulfil our roles as leaders, an uncomfortable nagging thought remains that biblically-speaking, it does involve undertaking menial tasks, like washing people's feet! Thirdly, we need to be aware that as the Greenleaf school has expanded its teaching, so the definitions have come to reflect more and more American culture than biblical essentials. I doubt, for example, if physical fitness, or enjoyment of life, or faith in self and others, or positive thinking, would have figured in Paul's understanding of what it was to be a servant! Indeed, in many respects the call to be a servant of Jesus was counter-cultural at precisely these points. As Ken Blachard has warned: "When people talk about servant-leadership, Jesus is often a model, without even referring to (his) ultimate sacrifice".[35] The cross is the missing step in the argument. Some writings in this school smack more of contemporary American culture than of a true understanding of biblical servant leadership.

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[33] Greenleaf is a Quaker and sees the concept as rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Robert Banks and Bernice C. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) p.108.

[34] See William Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002) pp.95-97.

[35] Quoted by Banks and Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership*, p.110.

4. Manipulation

Robert Greenleaf's venture into the field of servant-leadership came about through reading Hermen Hesse's *Journey to the East* where a party of travellers, sponsored by a monastic Order, are served by a man called Leo. He does their menial chores and sustains their spirits and then, one day, disappears with the result that the party falls to bits. Some time later, the narrator of the story becomes a member of the Order and finds that Leo is its head and guiding spirit. He is adjudged as "a great and noble leader". While serving the group of travellers his true status was disguised but his true character was utterly transparent. On the basis of Philippians 2:5-11 we could say that he was patterning himself on Jesus, the one co-equal with God who chose to become a slave.

There is indeed something noble and Christ-like in this portrait. But there are also dangers. Satan is a master at taking what is good and, through a slight distortion, twisting it into something corrupt (2 Cor. 11:14). His influence plays on our still-sinful natures that lust for power, and easily twists this model with its emphasis on an unpretentious and healthy attempt at influencing people and turn it into a means of manipulation.

British comedy thrived throughout the twentieth century on the servant figure who demonstrated just that. P. G. Wodehouse's stories portray a hopeless aristocrat, Bertie Wooster, whose life is not only held together but controlled by his butler Jeeves. Equally amusing, and many say true to life, was the book and TV series *Yes, Minister,* in which an incompetent Government Minister is constantly being manoeuvred by his senior civil servant, Sir Humphrey. In both cases the servants in the lowly position exercise a controlling influence which is both necessary and benign without their superiors being in the least aware of it. There is a fine line, however, between humble service and manipulative control.

Paul's relations with the Corinthians could have taken this direction but in 2 Corinthians he repeatedly stresses the need for him as a Christian leader to shun the manipulation other public figures might have adopted and, as is

consistent with the gospel, lead and speak plainly. Service can easily transform itself into control where this is absent.

A more biblical resolution?

Are these the only ways in which the tension between leadership and service might be resolved? May not an examination of the broader context in which the twin poles of governance occur provide us with more clues?

It can be argued that the pervasive image of the band of disciples that gathered around Jesus and the church that developed from them, is that of the family.[36] Other metaphors are certainly used of the church[37] but the overall framework and language is that of the family and household.[38] The household was the basic family structure of the time of the New Testament and although there may have been variations between Judea and the wider Greco-Roman world, Elliott points out it was never egalitarian in form but always hierarchical.[39] He counters those who would read extensive

[36] See Elliott, 'Jesus was not An Egalitarian" and 'The Jesus Movement was not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented'.

[37] E.g., Flock (John 10:1-21; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2), Body (1 Cor. 12:12-30; Eph. 4:11-13; Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18), Bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7) and Army (Gal. 5:25-6:5 [employs military language throughout]; Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim 2:3.

[38] The evidence is pervasive and too numerous to detail. It is found in explicit references like Jesus' sayings in Mark 3:31-35 and 10:29-31 but is implicit throughout in the language of father, brother and sister, which occurs frequently. S. Scott Bartchy, for example, has calculated Paul uses sibling language 118 times in the letters generally regarded as authentically Pauline alone, ('Undermining Ancient Patriarchy, The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings' *BTB,* 29 (1999), p. 70.) The church is referred to as 'the family of God' or 'of believers' (Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:17) and 'household' (Eph. 2:19; 1Tim. 3:15). Much use was made of the household structure in the mission of the early church and this influenced the shape of the church in its early days.

[39] There is extensive literature on the household. See, *inter alia,* R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980) pp. 33-43, 52-61; R. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of the Household Structure in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) pp. 60-91; C. Osiek and D. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*: *The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003, 2nd ed.) pp.74-110.

egalitarianism into the New Testament in a number of ways. The texts that are read in this way “are open to different and contrary interpretation” and there is no actual evidence of egalitarianism in the early church and it would have been a historical anachronism.[40] As to the key text often cited, Galatians 3:28, is, he argues, about the equal access of all to God by faith and rather than about social or economic realities.[41]

Having cleared the confusion of interpretation caused by the imposition of recent egalitarian theory on the text, the way is now open to ask what early families were like in practice, particularly with regard to leadership and service. The most significant factor, it is commonly argued, is the place of the father in the Roman family and household. The *pater familias* was is a position of power within the family.[42] The father ruled his children absolutely, even after they had reached the age of majority, as long as they were alive. The father also ruled over all females. Sons were trained for an aggressive and competitive role and “to pursue a never-ending quest for honour and influence”.[43] The near absolute and coercive authority was curtailed in practice by social pressures and was mitigated by a number of factors such as the shortness of life expectancy.[44] The full powers may have rarely been invoked even while in force. So it is possible to distort the picture by an over-emphasis on the power of the father and there is evidence of much affection between children and their family. Sons grew up not only wishing to honour their father but imitate them, too.[45] The Roman father also had great

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[40] Elliott, ‘The Jesus Movement was not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented’, p.175.

[41] *Ibid.,* pp.178-187.

[42] For a recent exposition see, S. Scott Bartchy, ‘Who should be called “Father”? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus Tradition and *Patria Potestas’,* in *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*, Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.) pp.165-180; Stephen J. Jourbert, ‘Managing the Household: Paul as *paterfamilias* of the Christian household group in Corinth’, in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific studies of the New Testament in its context* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) pp.213-223; and Eva Lassen, ‘The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor’, in *Constructing Early Christian Families* in Halvor Moxnes (ed.) (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) pp.103-119.

[43] Bartchy, ‘Who should be called “Father”?’ p.166.

[44] Lassen, ‘The Roman Family’ pp.106-107.

[45] *Ibid*., p. 107, and W. P. de Boer, *The Imitation of Paul* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962).

responsibilities in providing and protecting, nurturing and educating his children.

Patriarchy is a tricky concept and has become the *bête noir* of many libertarian and feminist theologians today, who frequently present a one-sided picture of it. It needs, therefore, to be approached with care and free from the assumption that it was always domineering, authoritarian and negative. The patriarchal head of the family was quite capable of ruling without arrogance or loss of affection on the part of the family members he ruled. Galatians 3:26-4:7 gives some inkling, for example, into the qualitative difference of relationship enjoyed between a father and his sons and the *pater familias* and his slaves.

Jesus teaches that no man should be called 'Father' except God (Matt. 23:9), and yet Paul is happy, in a different context, to use the designation for himself,[46] although he restricts it to churches he had founded (1 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 2:11), and he clearly relates to members of those churches as his children and therefore in an inferior position.[47] He claims authority over them, assumes the right of disciplining them (1 Cor. 4:14-21, 2 Cor. 10:8), and encourages them to imitate him (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7). In this respect Joubert is correct in his conclusion that in relation to Corinth, "his authority as their *paterfamilias* was beyond dispute. Members who threatened the cohesion of the new family of believers were therefore disciplined in order to instil subordination and obedience to himself and restore harmony within the household".[48] But this is not the whole story.

While apparently claiming the authority of the *pater familias,* at the same time, Paul also claims to be their servant (1 Cor. 3:5). Furthermore, it is the positive aspect of fatherhood rather than the authoritarian one that is uppermost in his relationship with his children. This is seen in his reminding

[46] Bartchy has rightly pointed out that "in the light of the patriarchal culture in which Paul was raised and continued to work, it must be striking that he avoids using the term 'father' for leaders in his communities". S. Scott Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', p.73

[47] See my *Ministry by the Book,* pp.113-122.

[48] Joubert, 'Managing the household in Paul', p.222.

the Thessalonians that "you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory". Bartchy summarises the position well: "When Paul refers to himself as 'father' … he clearly intends to focus attention on a spiritual 'begetting and on a nurturing relationship'".[49] He does not put himself forward as a ruling patriarch.

Gerd Theissen introduced the idea that Paul softened conventional patriarchy by revising it into the form of what he calls 'love-patriarchy'.[50] Love-patriarchy was essentially a compromise: the social structures were left in place but the wealthier members of the community were encouraged to be more considerate of and generous to their inferiors. His argument is based on Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34 and is found, he claims, "most clearly in the household codes"[51] of Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:21-6:9. Love-patriarchalism was a negotiation between the sociological reality and a theological ideal.

Bartchy does not believe Theissen's concept of love-patriarchy is radical enough and dismisses his claim that Paul was not concerned to regulate social conflicts.[52] To Bartchy, Paul teaches that 'a house-church functions as the "Body of Christ" when and only when patriarchal values are reversed by giving its weakest and least honourable members the greatest honour' (1 Cor. 12:22-24).[53] This, however, seems to me to stress the ideal situation for the household codes and letter to Philemon, as well as Paul's occasional use of his Roman Citizenship (Acts 16:35-40; 22:22-29; 25:10-12), suggesting Paul

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[49] Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy' p.73.

[50] Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* trans. John Schütz (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982) p.164. Theissen owed the concept to Troeltsch.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', pp.75-76. Theissen explicitly says, "…Paul's intention in no way (or at best only marginally) lay in regulating social conflicts". *Social Setting,* p.165. Bartchy writes elsewhere: "…the opposite of patriarchal dominance is not egalitarian anarchy (or cooperation), as interpreters have commonly inferred, but instead something else — something for which we may not yet have a better terms than *nonpatriarchy"* ('Who should be called "Father"?' p.177.

[53] Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', p.76.

mostly worked within the given social structures and used them or subtly undermined them from within, rather than working for their abolition.

A recent study has challenged the whole approach which generates these debates and may point to an even better way of resolving the tensions than those proposed above. Kathy Ehrensperger has convincingly argued that to interpret Paul's authority on the basis of the Roman *pater familias* is to build on a false foundation. She proposes that Paul's discussion of authority resonates with the father/mother discourse of the Second Temple period and has deep roots in the education tradition of Judaism.[54] As such, Paul's role was essentially functional rather than hierarchical and the primary objective is not one of maintaining dependence but of supporting their own growth and of empowerment. This is further underlined by the fact that Christ was the pattern for their leadership. He was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4). He deconstructed hierarchy. And proclaimed a message of grace.[55] To be authentic, Christian leaders have to embody these alternative values and demonstrate their message in the manner of their leadership. The use of power is subordinate to the goal of empowerment.[56] Placed in this context, the idea that leadership means power over others disappears and the tensions between leadership and servanthood evaporate.

It seems that Paul had little difficulty in reconciling leadership and service and that the meeting point was found in his role as father of the Christian families or households to which his preaching of the gospel had given birth. Here, he uses a Jewish form of parental authority to govern the churches he has founded while also acting as their servant. So, although he could command, and on occasions did (1 Cor. 7:10; 2 Thess. 3:4 6, 12 cf. Gal.), he would prefer to persuade and usually employs the language of advice or pleading (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:6, 25; 2 Cor. 5:20; 6:3-13; Eph. 4:1; Phil 4:2; Phlm. 8-9). It also meant he was not above working manually (1 Thess. 2:9-12; 1 Cor. 9:1-18); undertaking voluntary and self-imposed disciplines (1 Cor. 9:24-27); and suffering many, humiliating hardships (2 Cor. 11:16-33) for the sake of his

[54] Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement*, LNTS 325, (London: T & T Clark, 2007) pp.118-119.

[55] *Ibid.,* pp.151-154.

[56] *Ibid.,* pp.196-199.

children. The self-sacrifice that he demonstrated in sharing his life with his spiritual children (1 Thess. 2:7-9)[57] was exactly what one would expect of any father or mother worthy of the name. From one angle, fathers are the leader of the family, but from another angle they are quintessentially servants.

CONCLUSION

The resolution of the tension between leadership and servanthood is found when we place the concepts back into the New Testament social world and understand the nature of being a father. Fathers were figures of authority and they gave direction to the families. Their conversion to Christianity meant that Jewish, Greek, or Roman households adopted a Christian identity (cf. Acts 16:31-34). So, while fathers were in charge they were, because of Christ, simultaneously the family's servant. The family looked to them not only for decisions and direction but also for support, maintenance, encouragement and practical service. For all their authority most fathers would have known what it was to undertake menial tasks, without detriment to their position as a leader.

Fathers were not perfect and no doubt their personalities meant that one pole would have been more apparent than the other. Some would have permanently got the balance wrong and either been too severe or too servile in their role, causing damage to their families. All would have got the balance wrong on occasions. Yet, for the most part, although imperfect, the tension between leading and serving was happily resolved in creating an enjoyable and wholesome family life. In fact, the tension might not usually even have been noticed. Being a leader and being a servant happily co-existed in daily life. It was the way it was.

What was true of the ancient world remains evident in the contemporary Western world, even though parental authority has been diminished and

[57] The reference in 1 Thess. 2:7-9 is to "a nursing mother' rather than the father. But Paul immediately changes his metaphor and writes of himself as a father who displayed the positive aspects of fatherhood, namely, dealing with them individually "encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God". For a discussion of the parental motif and the background to 1 Thess. 2:7-12, see Derek Tidball *Builders and Fools: Leadership the Bible Way* (Leicester: IVP, 1999) pp.87-102.

somewhat undermined by the power of the state. Good parents still lead the family, making the major decisions, determining its moral and spiritual framework, and, when necessary exercising discipline. But much of the time parents are earning the money, doing the washing, cooking the meal, being the taxi-driver, listening to the uppity teenager, tidying the place up, attending the sporting fixture or concert performance, and paying the bills. For most, leadership and service coalesce in the role of the parent and the context of the family very naturally without too much difficulty.

The New Testament suggests that this 'parental'[58] model is the model which should be adopted by servant-leaders. It is there that the tensions of leader and servant are largely overcome. If we adopted this perspective, some of the personal *angst* experienced by those called to lead might be reduced and some of the distorted historical models might be assigned to the museum of yesteryear. We will have a healthier church, because we will have a healthier leadership, a leadership that leads but in the manner that Christ intended.

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[58] I hesitate to use the word 'parental' because it is often given a negative, preachy connotation. But I use the word in its best sense which combines the disciplinary and nurturing aspects of the role.

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