

History of Advent of Christianity In Tamil Nadu

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St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Lord Jesus Christ, landed in Malabar Coast in 52 A.D. During the colonial period, a large number of Portuguese, Dutch, British, German and Italian Christian missionaries came to Tamil Nadu. Currently, Christians are a minority community comprising 6% of the total population. Christians are mainly concentrated in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu - Kanyakumari (48.7% of the population, 2001, Thoothukudi (17%, 2001) and Tirunelveli (11%, 2001). The history of Christianity in Tamil Nadu stated back to 2000 years ago, but in the 16th century, the religion is believed to have made a mark with the introduction by St Francis Xavier in Tirunelveli region.

Advent of Christian Missionaries

It is generally believed that India was one of the few countries where Christianity was preached as early as the beginning of the Christian era. It is also said that Christian faith was first proclaimed in the south-western corner of India by St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, the founder leader of Christianity and that Apostle Thomas founded a church in A.D. 52 in Kerala which has endured to this day under different names and himself to have suffered martyrdom near Madras. Whatever might be the validity of such beliefs and claims, it is certain that the Syrian Orthodox Church in Kerala has had a continuous life of at least fourteen centuries and that Christianity to this part of the country came not from the West but from the East, having in all probability been originally introduced by the Nestorian missionaries. However, Western form of Christianity was introduced the Portuguese Catholic missionaries who were soon followed by other European Missionary bodies, both Catholic and Protestant.

Between A.D. 1500 and A.D. 1800 Christianity was propagated in India by more than one group and by both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Of them the Portuguese were the first. Then came the Dutch, the French and the English. The most widely spread and numerically successful

missions were those of the Roman Catholics. Protestants were late in beginning work and were more restricted geographically.

A new epoch in the history of India may be said to have begun when Vasco da Gama's three little weather – beaten ships anchored off Calicut in A.D. 1498. With his arrival at Calicut India was brought into contact with modern European civilization first by the Portuguese and then by other Europeans who followed suit. At the time of the Portuguese arrival in the south-western part of India, the Coromandel Coast, particularly the area covering the Madurai – Trichinopoly region, was under the rule of the Madurai Nayaks a vassal of the Vijayanagar Empire. In course of time the region became the scene of European enterprise. The first European power that presented itself actively in this region of India was the Portuguese who came to India with the twin purpose of seeking Christians and securing spices. The two clear objects in their view were thus of missionary and commercial character.

They were as what they were before conversion. One Mr. S. Thomas, while recounting the missionary work in South India, has said that the Christians of the Madura Mission wore marks of their caste on their foreheads as their non-Christian neighbors did, took part in the Hindu festivals and bowed down before the images of Hindu gods. A part of their marriage ceremony was performed in the Christian Chapel, and the couple was blessed by the Catholic priest. At home, they kindled fire and walked around it, tied the wedding knot (Tali) in the presence of Agni, The Fire god, and called upon that fire god to witness the solemn contract. Christians of this kind could be seen in certain districts of South India in Madurai, Trichinopoly, Tanjore and in some other places. Even Fr. Jerome D'Souza, a well-known Jesuit scholar, says that Catholics on the western shores of India are surprised to hear about Christians whose names are very similar to Hindu names and who dress like Hindus, and observe many social customs peculiar to the Hindus and such are found in large numbers mainly in Tamil Nadu or in the Tamil-speaking parts of the Madras State.

The first Protestant missionary enterprise in India began with the arrival of Bartholomew Ziegenbaig and Henry Plutschau on 7th July, 1706 at the Danish Settlement of Tranquebar. Soon the Tranquebar Mission, also known as the Royal Danish Mission (RDM), was followed by the Anglican SPCK and SPG. At the turn of the 18th century when the modern missionary movement began in England and the USA, and when the East India Company had also removed its veto by the Charter Act of 1813, the way became clear for the Missions. Soon a number of Protestant Missions such as the LMS, CMS, WMMS, AMM and FCS (Free Church of Scotland) commenced their activities in different parts of Tamil Nadu.

Like his predecessors Schwartz also took a more lenient view of caste, which he regarded as in essence only distinction of rank. He was one of those missionaries who were not entirely convinced of the effectiveness and wisdom of 'coercion and who advocated a more tolerant, flexible approach. Schwartz believed that with gentle persuasion and gradual dissemination of Christian ideas caste within the churches would gradually disappear. Many of his converts seem to have thought with their Roman Catholic neighbours that the high caste converts ought to have nothing in common with the low caste Christians. Notably among them were the Christians of Tanjore who have become proverbial in caste scandal which called forth in 1834 the bitter sarcasm of Lord Macaulay : As to Schwartz's people in Tanjore, they are a perfect scandal to the religion they profess.

After Schwartz his followers who took the Gospel to the south also continued the policy of caste tolerance in the Christian Church. One Rev. S. Paul, in his paper on 'Caste in the Tinnevely Church' says that the missionaries of that period copied to some extent the methods of the Romish priests who preceded them. After the death of Jenicke, the famous Tinnevely Mission founded by Schwartz, was left to the charge and guidance of Mr. Sathianathan, a native minister posted there by

Schwartz. He and his native catechists were all caste men and they refused to give up caste. Instead they infused she caste spirit into the infant church of Tinnevely. On this point Rev. S. Paul writes : The missionaries of Tranquebar and Tanjore, who went to Tinnevely very early to preach and to whose hands the superintendence of the church was entrusted for a long time, were the cause of it. He goes on to say that:

'They chose to make caste friend rather than enemy. In doing this, however, while they made their path easier, they sacrificed their principles, and admitted an element into their midst which arced in their Christian community like poison. They embraced an' adversary who. could never become their friend. They sowed the seeds of pride, distrust and alienation in their congregations which brought forth abundant crops of rank and vexatious weeds. Have they stood the test of time? It might be fairly supposed that missions established from 100 to 170 years ago, if originally sound and true, would in the present day be the largest and most flourishing of all missions in India. But what do we actually find? Instead of thousands of converts, which the Tranquebar Mission possessed in the last century there were in 1850, 717 Christians and twenty years later only 771'.

Wilson's letter aroused a veritable hurricane of unrest in the southern churches. In 1835 he visited the disturbed churches and faced the storm without budging an inch from his 'resolution of abolition, wisely and kindly, but unalterably, the heathen usages of caste from the Christian churches. In spite of such earnest and energetic measures taken against caste, Wilson by no means solved the question, nor did his position command universal support among the Anglican missionaries. A number of them refused to implement his edict. The Veprey Christians in particular became more adamant and among them caste feeling was apparently as strong as ever. The congregation throughout the south continued to be deeply divided on the issue and there was continual migration from the Anglican congregations in Madras and Tanjore into the Leipzig Mission which was more permissive and had adopted a conciliatory attitude on the issue of caste. Despite all the confusion that prevailed there was still a gradual consolidation of feeling and practice in the Anglican missions in favor of the 'Wilson-line'. This change of attitude and shift in policy could clearly be seen in the subsequent developments in places like Madras. In 1845 Bishop George Spencer (the second Bishop of Madras, (1837-49) sponsored an enquiry at Veprey and the Commissioners appointed for this purpose were two missionaries G. W. Mahon and A. R. Symonds. They carried out their enquiry into the question of caste in general and into the still scandalous condition of the Veprey congregation in particular. On the completion of their task these two missionaries reported that 'The distinctions are unquestionably religious distinctions, originating in and maintained by, the operation of Hindu dolatry' and denied any similarity with European ideas of rank. Caste is, they thought, utterly incompatible with 'the very principles of Christian morals'. Three years later in 1848 Bishop Spencer and 84 clergy and missionaries of his diocese published a resolution in which they expressed their 'extreme concern' that 'the Heathen Institute of Caste' should have found any place in the Christian Church and declared that its retention was incompatible with 'the Spirit of the Gospel'.

The English Wesleyan Methodists who commenced their work on the Coromandel Coast largely followed the lead given By the Anglican Missions in as far as opposing the practices of caste within their churches. They were definitely and decidedly against it. In the 1830's when the question of caste disturbed the church in Melanattam, a village forty miles south of Negapatam, the Methodists had to take a stand. The trouble started when the Harijan members of the Church were expected to accept a position of inferiority in public worship. The Rev. Thomas Cryer, the resident missionary at Melanattam, set his face like a flint against all such attempts to recognize caste in the Christian Church. As a result of the stringent measures and straightforward conduct of the missionary many

were affected, and left the Society and congregation entirely, and as they were in regular intercourse with the Christians of Tanjore, the dissidents were greatly influenced and led away by them.

Notwithstanding the loss in number, the Methodist missionaries of the Nagapatnam and Trichinopoly *District* stood firm in this matter. In his letter dated 7th July, 1835, the Rev. Thomas Cryer, wrote : 'We were unanimously of opinion that Caste is directly opposed to Christianity and that it must be met with the most resolute firmness but on account of the force of prejudice, with meekness and love'. When Cryer was appointed as the Superintendent of the Nagapatam Circuit in 1843, he took up a strongly antagonistic position in the matter of caste. In Nagapatam there were many Christians who observed caste and the parents of boys in the Mission Boarding School also insisted that social distinctions should be recognized in that institution. But Cryer did not budge. In 1847 We find him refusing to meet in the Methodist instruction class those who continued to observe caste, nor would he administer to them the Sacrament. The Church members of Melanattam and Mannargudi were practically put out of Society on this score.

The test case, however, was presented by two of the paid servants of the Mission. A. D. Ponniah Pillai and Devasagayam Pillai were the two of the Native Assistant Missionaries of the Society who from the beginning observed caste rules. In 1846, when A.D. Ponniah Pillai reached the stage of ordination and 'full connexion', he was challenged in the matter of caste. But Ponniah rather refused to enter the ministry than to give up his caste. The same course was followed in the case of his colleague in the following year. The hold of caste was so relentless on them that the Synod of the District recommended their removal from the Methodist Church. The missionaries proceeded to make an all important declaration: 'We unanimously agree : 1. No person holding caste in any respect shall be employed as a paid agent in the Church. 2. No person holding caste in any respect shall be admitted as a member of our Society. 3. No candidate for admission into the Church shall be baptized until he has given satisfactory proof of having renounced caste'. This emphatic declaration led to a reduction of the existing membership and prevented any great accession to the Church, in the immediate future. It also reversed the proportion of Sudras to Panchamas in the Churches *so* that the latter became numerically more prominent. But the declaration saved the Church from the scandal of caste.

The American Missions, mainly Calvinist and Lutheran, also took a strong stand against caste. In the American Madura Mission it was reported that 'no distinctions of caste were allowed, and at first it was deemed a sufficient evidence that converts had renounced caste when they were willing to come out from among their friends,' join themselves with foreigners, attend Church, sit down by the side of persons of lower castes, and partake with them of the bread and wine of communion. But caste, with its wonderful power of stooping to conquer, yielded these religious observances, and maintained itself as strongly as ever in other ways. It was entrenched in social customs and was impregnable in marriage relationships'. In 1847 the *American Madura Mission* insisted that all employees should demonstrate their rejection of caste by taking part in the so called Move-feasts', (like the present day samabandhi bhojana), eating with missionaries and Christians from various castes food usually prepared by a low caste cook. When the missionaries insisted upon everyone to participate in the love-feast, it became a focus for dissension and 'all the stations suffered from the dismissal of catechists and nearly all lost in the membership of their churches'. Nevertheless less the idea of such tests of renunciation of castes spread rapidly from mission to mission and became a common feature of mission life, despite vigorous objections of a number of individual missionaries.

All these facts reveal an unpleasant state of affairs. This backwardness in the life of the Church is largely due to 'spiritual malnutrition'. The real, and perpetual problem has been that of inadequate Christian teachings and spiritual nourishment after baptism. Besides the drastic changes that are sweeping the country as a result of Government plans for development also tend to keep the

spirit of caste alive. They provide a great temptation to the Christians of Harijan background, especially when discrimination against them, because they are Christians, is severe. More employment opportunities in the Government than in the Church institutions and more material benefits such as Government scholarships for those who profess themselves to be Hindu Harijans rather than Christians act as an attractive bait. Most Christian Harijans are as under-privileged as their Hindu counterparts. Therefore, they greatly resent their 'promotion' to the other backward classes, as the loss of Harijan status deprive them to improve their position. On the other hand, to substantiate their claim to preferential treatment similar to that of other Scheduled Castes, they have to disclose their untouchable origin, which would seriously harm their desire, for enhanced social dignity. Thus the Government policies also greatly contribute to this sort of dilemma in which thousands of Christians of Harijan origin are condemned to live.

The Nagapatam and Trichinopoly District was the oldest Methodist District in India. Far back in 1820 the first resident missionary arrived in Nagapatam, and thereafter, work was carried on for many years in well-chosen centres of population such as Nagapatnam (1820), Melanattam (1830-31), Mannargudi (1835), Trichinopoly (1847), Tiruvurur (1859), Karur (1861-62) and Dharapuram (1881-82). Their work spread from east to west for a distance of 240 mile, following the course of the rivers Kaveri and Amaravati to the Anamalai Hills in the Western Ghats expanding from decade to decade. In 1885 it was detached from the Madras District and made a separate administrative unit under a Chairman. Their work stretched from an area entrenched in strong Brahminical Hinduism, caste and wealth to an arid, windswept place of impoverished conditions. This was the general pattern of growth of work in which almost all agencies and all processes of missionary work in India were employed, the chief among them being evangelism and education, medical and industrial missions.

As pointed out already, the missionaries believed that the religions of India were responsible for the degradation of the natives. The remedy they suggested therefore was that Indians must charge their religions for Christianity, which to the missionaries was the only true religion in the world and the panacea for all social maladies. From this it becomes clear that the prime object of the missionaries was the conversion of the Indians to Christianity and nothing less than their total conversion would ever satisfy the missionaries, for the Evangelicals held the conversion of individual souls to Christ by the preaching of the 'Gospel' to be the true end of all their work. In order to achieve this object the missionaries devised certain methods of Which the first and foremost was Evangelism or preaching of the Gospel.

Evangelism

The missionaries concentrated first on preaching for winning converts and only with such converts the nucleus of the Church could be formed. Therefore, the missionaries first undertook preaching in their immediate neighborhood. They visited choultries, market places, bathing tanks in the city-streets, under the shadow of an idol-car, under the canopy of a country-tree, in the open square of the villages and other places where they expected to meet a good number of people. In the villages situated in the immediate neighborhood of each Mission Station, the Gospel was preached very often, and places more remote were visited less frequently. These visits were generally undertaken by missionaries, accompanied by a staff of native preachers. A tent would be pitched at a suitable centre and the whole neighbourhood would be visited. The singing of Christian lyrics and hymns accompanied by musical instruments soon attracted a congregation. Sometimes the novelty of the affair also brought people to listen, for they had never heard an Englishman addressing them in their mother tongue.

The Evangelicals concentrated in their preaching on the question of sin, repentance, reconciliation, salvation, atonement for sins and the personal relationship of the individual with the

Deity rather than the institutional aspect of religion. Their sole authority was the Bible and they interpreted it for the most part literally. These characteristic elements of the Evangelicals preaching are clearly brought out in the Rev. Dr. Elijah Hoole's report on his preaching to a group of Brahmins in a village called Poondi near Tanjore. He wrote in his report :

All these captions and excerpts are evidences to show that the mainstay of the preaching of the Aryan Revivalists, as they were also referred to, was not positive Hinduism. Instead, they devoted themselves to gross misrepresentations of Christianity and Christ and to virulent abuse of Christians in general and the Christian missionaries in particular. These statements of the Hindu preachers also reveal the fact how fear and frustration had taken hold of them which made them search for pandits 'for money' if possible. Whenever the missionaries began to preach on the street, the 'Hindu Evangelists' and colporteurs of the Hindu Tract Society at once appeared on the scene and either made the missionaries a laughing-stock, shouted them down, or incited the mob to actual violence. The missionaries were often badly treated, attacked with stones or covered with filth. Specific instances are not however, cited.

Education

Another strategy which the missionaries devised for the propagation of the Gospel and for the conversion of Hindus was education. On the introduction of higher education through English medium, it was confidently believed that such an education would be an effective instrument of conversion, and that Hinduism would be eventually undermined by an education infused by Christian thought; darkness would be dispelled by the light of knowledge. Dr. Alexander Duff, while addressing a Church General Assembly in 1835, expressed the belief that every branch of western knowledge would destroy some corresponding part of the Hindu system, and so one stone after another would be thrown down from 'the huge and hideous fabric of Hinduism. And by the time that an extensive range of instruction is completed the whole will be found to have crumbled into fragments; not a shred will be left behind.' While discussing the question of Missionary Education, the South India Missionary Conference of 1858 declared its firm belief as:

'Education in some form, and to some extent, is admitted by nearly all the friends of Missions to be an important part of the means to be employed for evangelizing the world. The object of all Missionary labour is, or should be, not primarily the civilization, but the evangelization of the heathen; and the value of any form of effort must be estimated by its adaptedness to accomplish this end. With this general object ever in view, education may be employed with the design of diffusing the light of divine truth among the people, and thus preparing the way for the subsequent triumph of the Gospel ; or schools may be regarded as converting agencies, and their value estimated by the number who are led by the instructions they receive to renounce idolatry and make an open profession of Christianity ; or the principle object aimed at may be the raising up the Native helpers in the Missionary work. Each of these is a legitimate object of Missionary labour, and the value of any system of education as a Missionary Agency must be tested by its adaptedness to accomplish one or more of these objects.

Thus education was regarded as one of the instruments of conversion and was thus looked upon as *praeparatio evangelica*-preparation for the Gospel. Therefore, in the scheme of missionary organization, second place was always assigned to education, and among the valuable auxiliaries schools held a distinguished place.

In all missionary institutions the teaching of the Bible occupied an exalted position. While aiming at the imparting of a superior kind of secular education, the missionaries did not, however, lose sight of their duty to the teaching of the scriptures and unfolding the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. In all their schools, starting from the nursery schools right up to the college classes, the Bible was taught in a systematic way and the Gospel truths were pressed upon the hearts of the children. It

was the firm belief of the missionaries that apart from its religious importance, the Bible has got great educative value as a store-house of lessons of literary, historical and ethical significance. Efforts were made in more than one way to preach the Gospel and to preserve the Christian atmosphere in their institutions. Some of the measures taken to preserve a Christian atmosphere in the mission institutions of the *Nagapattinam and Trichinopoly District* were : daily public worship, personal contacts with the students, Christian education which included the dispelling of superstitious beliefs, conversations and essay writing on religious topics, suitable textbooks and the employment of as many Christian teachers as possible. The presence of an European missionary, as the head of a mission institution was also deemed an equally important factor in exerting Christian influence. Substitution of laymen for the clergy was also strongly deprecated. Any change-over was regarded undesirable either on grounds of economy or efficiency. This is of course an important point to be recognized, for some of the missionaries were men of great learning and skill, highly, qualified from universities of world repute. Children who studied under such great missionary teachers could hardly ever remain unaffected by their exemplary character and immense personal influence.

The teaching of the Bible made many discover new Spiritual truths about man and God and made them alive to their own spiritual need. The knowledge of the Bible resulted in a critical appreciation of Christian ethical teachings, sometimes resulting in the conversion of a few. But on the basis of what has been said, it must not be supposed that all the students were able to appreciate the Bible teachings alike. Far from it. To some it presented a real difficulty and they could not easily get reconciled to the revolutionary and sometimes strange doctrines of Christianity, although they were ready to follow the path of Jesus, whom they considered as an ideal man. On some others the Christian teachings had an altogether different effect. It produced in them a hostile spirit and an outright rejection of Christianity. It hardened their hearts and confirmed them in the faith of their forefathers.

At the turn of the 19th century India was in the throes of a national awakening. Modern educated Hindus looked upon Christianity and Christian missions as totally alien to India and showed little sympathy for missionary cause. The resurgence of the Swadeshi movement (boycotting, all foreign-made goods in favour of home-made goods), the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent political developments in India such as the founding of Home Rule League by Mrs. Besant, intensified the nationalist feelings. The quiet atmosphere on the mission campuses was at times seriously affected by the influence of the Home Rule League. The Movement had created an anti-Missionary atmosphere everywhere which made definite Christian teaching exceedingly difficult. Influenced by the teachings of Annie Besant the educated young Brahmins were highly critical of the missionaries and their institutions.

After the location of exact site the missionaries proceeded to seek the official permission. Mr. Woodward, an American missionary who met Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General and Sir Frederick Adams, the Governor of Madras together at Nilgiris got the official permission to establish schools and conduct other departments of missionary labour in the district of Madurai. It was only then Mr. Todd, Spaulding and three young native helpers from Jaffna arrived at Madurai on 31st July 1834 and founded the American Madura Mission.

When they commenced their evangelical work, they began to face problems. Madurai from its very early days had been the strong hold of staunch Hinduism and Tamil culture. When the American missionaries came in contact with the Tamil people they were taken aback by the ignorance, superstitions and formalities of these people.

The sacrifices of varied kinds, exercise of devils, influence of astrologers, child marriage, and sati were very common among these people. The converts who were drawn into the church tried to

maintain their former cultural traits, customs, group loyalties and determinations to resist domination of the other groups.

The period from 1834 to 1851 was a time of trial for the AMM which the Mission workers over came supportively with a missionary zeal. Like all other missionaries who stepped into this soil the American missionaries were also faced with innumerable challenges. Most of the problems were connected with the caste system and caste conflicts.

Though their prime motive was gaining souls for Christianity, the means and modes they adopted to achieve their goal needs special reference. Soon after they entered the city, the American missionaries acquired land to establish mission institutions. An English school of the AMM was conducted within the fort walls even before the fort walls were erased. Free schools for Hindus and Muslims, boys and girls were held separately. The schools were either English schools or schools of local languages. Day schools, boarding schools, teachers training schools and trade schools were the different types of schools the missionaries had started soon after their entry into Madurai.

Not only within Madurai city but also around the town the mission stations grew very swiftly. Within five years of the commencement of the mission there were ten mission stations in Madurai district. Dindigul, Sivaganga, Tirupuvanam, Tirumangalam, Madurai Fort, Periakulam, Mandapasalai, Palani, Melur and Pasumalai received the benefits and services of the American missionary activities.

The services of the American Madura Mission centred on four important aspects-evangelical, educational, medical and social. The prime motive of the Christian missionaries was to preach the Gospel among the non-Christian. People and convert them to Christianity. These missionaries made use of educational institutions, medical aid to the suffering, the uplifting of the socially backward as the adjuncts in spreading Gospel.

The evangelical work of the American missionaries had a bright start. The success in their conversion was due to the circumstances that prevailed in the district of Madurai when those American missionaries arrived at Madurai. It was at that time that the Roman Catholic converts of the district were thoroughly disgusted with the quarrels between the French and the Portuguese priests. The Catholics were awaiting to relinquish Catholicism and were badly in need of a fall back. Todd and Histington, the pioneer American missionaries availed these circumstances. They preached the Gospel, baptized people and formed Christian congregations. Churches were erected and native catechists were appointed in them. They installed a Theological Seminary to train the pastors. Thus keeping Madurai as the nucleus a number of mission stations were started throughout the district. Each of these stations were under the management of a missionary usually assisted by his wife.

The American missionaries were aware of the fact that pure evangelism alone could never be an effective measure to attract the local people. So they established a number of educational institutions which were thrown open to children of all castes. This helped in rural uplift and the general spread of education. They tried to make the village school a social centre of the community. The school teacher imparted knowledge on social service, personal hygiene and Christian ethics along with the contents of the text book. In 1904 there were 193 village mission schools spread along the length and breadth of Madurai district with 5,872 little pupils and 234 teachers in their roll. In the year 1901, the city of Madurai with a school going population of 10,000 had the Madura Christian High School for boys as the only high school for the town.

In September 1901, the American Madura Mission appointed Revs. J.S. Chandler, Tracy, Herrick, Thiruthuvadan and Y. J. Taylor, a conference committee to consider with representatives of the L.M.S. Mission in South India the questions of any possible union. In January 1902 the South India District Committee appointed Revs. W.H. Campbell, Bemad Lucas, C.G. Marshall and A.W. Borough to confer with the Madura Committee "with a view to obtain such union and co-operation as

it is possible between the American Madura Mission and the London Missionary Society. The first official joint committee was held at Madurai in 1903, An All Indian Presbyterian Union was formed in 1904. Four missions, L.M.S. of Travancore and South India with the Madurai and Jaffna Missions of the American Board, accepted the simple confession of faith as a ground work of union. The first general assembly of the United Churches of South India connected with the L.M.S. and the American Board of Commissioners or Foreign Missions, Madurai was held at Madura in July 1905. The Missions which formed the Union, were requested by the executive committee to avoid denominational bickering on flimsy grounds. The general assembly of the Presbyterian Church of India at its meeting held on 28 December, 1907, at Calcutta, resolved to take such steps as would facilitate a union. Accordingly, the South India Syhod of the Presbyterian Church adopted the scheme of organic union, and it resulted in the formation of the S.I.U.C. on 25 July, 1908. It was for "the first time that the different church politics which the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians had been "actually fused into one". The role of the missionaries and the Indian members of the church in achieving the union was well acknowledged by the first general assembly. "It may be noted in passing that without the interest in the movement on the part of the missionaries on one hand and the pastors and members of the Indian Church on the other, nothing of any value could have been accomplished. It was natural that a considerable share in the task of bringing about the union should fall to missionaries... But they could have done nothing, had there not been in the church itself a strong feeling that the course proposed was the right one". But the L.M.S. congregation at Purasavakam in Madras declined to join the union "owing to the misconception concerning the meaning of Congregationalism and of the nature of this church union". The North Tamil Church Council of L.M.S. also kept aloof from the union till 1909.

John Mott carried out a visit in 1912 on behalf of the Edinburgh Conference in order to find out the means to strengthen the relations among the missions. In the course of the tour his primary concern was Christian Unity and he made discussions with leaders who were influential in the church union negotiations in South India, Sherwood Eddy, former missionary and Y.M.C.A. Secretary to India accompanied Mott. However for a true account of Mott's visit it would not be sufficient just to enumerate these business meetings and their results The Governor of Madras arranged a conference between him and the Roman Catholic Archbishop on the question of Christian Unity probably the first Roman Catholic-Protestant dialogue held in India. In between the conference Mott held discussions with Sherwood Eddy to make an evangelistic campaign among Indian students a campaign which demonstrated visibly the unique opportunity for united evangelism. The campaign found its climax in the All India Students' Conference at Sera pore during the Christmas holidays at the end of which two students who had been converted in the evangelistic campaign in Calcutta were baptized by the newly consecrated Bishop Azariah. The major part of the discussions, however focused on the necessity of unity and co-operation. Especially the Anglican Bishop Whitehead emphasized the first measure. In order to work out the decisions, the local conferences at the end of their meetings decided to recommend the formation of representative councils of missions in each area.

The national conference did not limit itself to missionary cooperation but also discussed the problem of church union. One of the memorable speeches of the meetings was given by Bishop White head of Madras almost extempore. The speech made history for it gave cause to a debate not only at the conference, but in the whole church in India, and his distinction between historic episcopate and apostolic succession was a point which later came to play a significant role in. the church union negotiations in South India. It might be said therefore that the conversations which led to the formation of C.S.I, began at Calcutta in 1912. The resolutions of general assembly of the S.I.U.C. met

at Calicut, and Episcopal Synod of the Church of England in India met in February 1920 and the Madurai Church Council in July 1920 promoted the movement towards the union.

Banning, was the Secretary of the S.I.U.C. at the time, and he drafted the resolution of the Assembly. V. Santiago, was the President of the Assembly. He presented the case of the Tranqubar Conference and the Madura Church Council, in which he himself took a leading part, Popely and Brough stressed the need for union in view of the tremendous opportunities of evangelism among the masses. The success of the Madura proposal was thus secured. The Malabar church council which comprised one part of the Basel Mission work, had been formed only in March 1919. The other council particularly those with Presbyterian influence, Madura and Madras with Arcot, decidedly approved of the union with the Anglican and Mar Thoma Syrian Churches.

The Bangalore Meeting was convened to prepare the agenda for the Lambeth Conference in 1920. India particularly Southern India was well represented at Lambeth. But far away in India, whole churches and congregations were watching intense expectancy for any signal which might be hoisted at Lambeth. From the view point of Pasumalai and Bellary and Conjeevaram the signal was not quite what they had expected. The criticism from the South India United Church of Lambeth appeal was concentrated chiefly on the problems of re-ordination and inter communion. The proposals were submitted to the Lambeth conference which laid down several conditions for acceptance. The Methodists accepted first in 1947. In 1945 the Anglicans reached an agreement. The South-Indian United Church (S.I.U.C.) accepted the proposals in 1946. For the period of twenty seven years from 1919 to 1947, various conferences were held to strengthen the integration among the churches. But The Lambeth Conference paved the way to form the church of South India, with the suggestion that not to have the bishop as head of the united churches in the beginning. Afterwards it was decided to have the bishops as head of churches. The dislocation caused by the Second World War had also delayed the union and Azariah the first Bishop died on 1st January 1944. William Paton who tried to accelerate things in 1942 was also dead in August 1943. So the union became possible only on 27th September 1947 after the attainment of independence and the formation of the Indian Union.

The arrangements for the inauguration itself were in the hands of a committee appointed by the Coordination Committee back in 1943. J.S.M. Hooper was the convener. Bishop Noel Hall of Chota Nagpure gave valuable help. Bishop Waller as convener of the subcommittee took a leading part in this work. With him were C.H. Mohan and W.H. Warren of the Methodist church and G. Parker of the S.I.U.C. A committee on dioceses in the United church was constituted under the chairmanship of Bishop A.M. Hollis in December, 1946. He suggested the creation of sixteen dioceses, including Coimbatore or North Tamil Nadu and the organization of South Travancore (with 1,40,000 membership) in two dioceses, one for the Tamil and one for the Malayalam area of Travancore. The North Tamil council in 1946 decided not to join the church of South India. The Anglican church with the diocese of Dornackal, Madras, Tirunelveli and Travancore with a strength of 4,99,966 members, the Methodist church with the four districts including Madras, Trichinapally, Hyderabad and Mysore with a strength of 2,24, 655 members and South India United church with seven Diocesan Councils including Madras, Travancore, Madurai, Canaries, Jafna, Andhra Pradesh and Malabar with a strength of 2,76,652 were united to give shape to the Church of South India, in 1947. At the time of the unification the total strength of the C.S.I. was 10,01,183. Thus the church of South India is the church constituted by the union of 1947 of the Madras, Madurai, Malabar, Jafna, Kannada, Telungu and Travancore church councils of the South India United Church and the South Indian province of the Methodist church, comprising the Madras, Trichinopoly, Hyderabad and Mysore districts and the dioceses of Madras, Dornackal, Tirunelveli, Travancore and Cochin. Burma and Ceylon were added to the North Tamil church council of the South and a United church.

The Church of South India affirms that the purpose of the union by which it had been formed is the carrying out of God's will as this is expressed in Lord's prayer "That they send me." It is believed that by this union the Church of South India would become a more effective instrument for God's work and that there would be greater peace, closer fellowship and fuller life within the church and also renewed eagerness and power for the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. It is hoped that it would be a true leaven of unity in the life of India and through it there might be a greater release of power for the fulfillment of God's purpose for world. The Church of South India is thus formed by a combination of different elements each bringing its contribution to the whole and not by the absorption of any one by any other.

The Church of South India acknowledged that in every effort to bring together the divided members of Christian's body into one organization, of the final aim must be the union in the Universal Church of all who acknowledged the name of the Christ. The Church of South India desires to regulate all the actions by the principle that it should maintain fellowship with all those branches of the Church of Christ.

Hence in 1947, after 25 years of planning and negotiations the various protestant missionary societies in South India-Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Anglicans with a section of Basel Mission united to give shape to the Church of South India (C.S.I.). The inauguration of the Church of South India was staged on September 27, 1947 in St. Georgics Cathedral, Madras. It was the first time that Episcopal and non-Episcopal churches united to form one church and therefore it was an epoch making event in the history of the church.

The South Indian United Church was in fact a federal union rather than an organic union. The lack of any strict authority for the General Assembly over the church councils, appointment of permanent committee on federal union even by the first General Assembly and the rigid nature of the constitution - all these features clearly reveal the federal nature of the union rather than to any organic entity. Thus the compact nature of South India as a distinctive geographical unit, the Dravidian racial unity of the local Christians, enterprising nature of the local Christians especially the Nadars, self sufficient nature of the native congregations, the indigenous evangelical efforts etc. promoted the union.

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