

The Study of Church History

(We present below three papers, slightly shortened, read at a Conference of Teachers of Church History in B.D. Colleges, held at Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, under the auspices of the Senate of Serampore College (University) in December 1956.)

I. THE VALUE OF CHURCH HISTORY

MARVYN H. HARPER

It is usually taken for granted that a patriotic citizen should be familiar with the history of his own country. Such knowledge makes for better citizenship, for greater stability of government, and for more harmonious community life. It is not taken for granted that a member of the Church should be acquainted with the history of the Christian movement. Yet such information would make him not only a more useful member of his own denomination but a much more vital factor in the spread of the Kingdom of God. Members of congregations will not become familiar with the main features of the history of the Church unless their pastors instruct them, and pastors will not have the ability or incentive to give such instruction unless their interest in Church History has been stimulated and guided while they were theological students. Those who are being trained to become pastors and leaders of the Church will find the study of Church History of value for a better understanding of the development of Christian faith and order, as source material for pastoral work, for guidance in conducting the affairs of the Church, for the enrichment of their own devotional life and that of their congregations, and for a deeper appreciation of the significance of Jesus Christ in human history. A knowledge of Church History is basic for the study of most of the other branches in the theological curriculum.

1. *The study of Church History is essential for one who would have a better knowledge of the doctrines and creeds which set forth the Christian faith and of the development of the organization of the Church through which the Christian movement finds expression.* There are two tendencies abroad in the Church today, both of which are likely to cause trouble to the young pastor. The first is the tendency on the part of some to minimize the importance of theology and doctrine in the life of the average Christian. The creeds are archaic, they say, and most of the doctrines are superfluous and unrelated to everyday

experience. There are others who tend to lay excessive emphasis on certain doctrines to the practical exclusion of all others, particularly of those which do not accord with their own theological point of view. As a matter of fact, no doctrine can be given its rightful place until its history is known. No one has a right to express his judgement on the creeds who is unacquainted with their rise and development. Similarly, the undue emphasis laid upon certain doctrines, often leading to a departure from sound Christian teaching, may be recognized by the student of Church History as some discredited ancient heresy in modern garb. Having become previously acquainted with such tendencies through his study of Church History the pastor will not be thrown off his balance by the arguments of those who belittle the importance of doctrines and creeds or of those who distort theology to serve their own purposes. On the contrary, he will be able to interpret the beliefs of the Church in such a way as to win their acceptance by those who seek the truth.

Similarly, familiarity with the history of the institution of the sacraments, the development of the ministry, the growth of organization, and the rise of denominations within the Church is essential for one who will effectively and intelligently guide his own congregation and participate in the councils of his Church. The study of Church History gives the theological student firmer foundations for the study of other subjects in the theological syllabus. The application of the Scriptures to life, the interpretation of theology in the historical setting of the Christian movement, the contact of Christianity with non-Christian religion in many lands, the interaction of Christian thought with world philosophies, the ability to gather believers into congregations, to teach them and lead them in the worship of God—these and many other aspects of theological education are enriched through an acquaintance with the history of the Church.

2. *Church History provides source material for more effective pastoral work.* The history of the Church should be regarded as a veritable gold mine of sermonic material. Apt illustrations and gripping tales to fit any turn of thought may be had for the seeking. Sometimes an incident or a reference from history will light up a point in a sermon much more effectively than reference to a contemporary situation. No one will deny the value of drawing sermon illustrations from the Old Testament, but it is to be regretted that many ministers fail to make use of the even richer source of sermonic materials to be found in the record of God's dealing with men in the ages which have followed the supreme revelation of Himself in His Son Jesus Christ.

One who reads such a work as John T. McNeill's *A History of the Cure of Souls* will be impressed with the contribution which a study of Church History can make to his parish ministry. Considerable emphasis is being laid today upon pastoral counseling. It will be helpful to the student to learn how ministers of

past generations have sought to meet the spiritual problems of their people. St. Francis and Luther, among many others, have much to teach about the use of spiritual resources in healing men's mental, physical and spiritual ills.

3. *As the student learns to live in fellowship with the saints and mystics of the past there will come an enrichment of his devotional life, an enrichment which he will later be able to share with his congregation.* The devotional writings of Augustine, Luther, Tauler, the ancient prayers of the Church, the great hymns of Christendom, provide spiritual nourishment for our own times even as for Christians of earlier generations. It is our privilege as teachers to induct our students into the fellowship of the saints.

4. *The knowledge of Church History will prove of considerable value to those upon whom will rest the responsibility of guiding the affairs of the Church.* One of the best preventives of a repetition of past mistakes is to be forewarned, and thus forearmed, by a study of the facts of history. Many of the problems now confronting Church leaders have had their parallels in the past. Many methods of Church government which have proved successful in earlier periods may be found useful for our own day. Church History may thus serve both as a corrective and guide. The stabilizing influence of an acquaintance with history is not to be overlooked. Amid the kaleidoscopic changes of our complex civilized life, when it may seem that the very foundations of the Christian way of life are being undermined by the forces of evil and destruction, we may stand firm in the compelling faith that chaos will not win the race. We still look for the City of God, whose foundations will never be shaken. This sure faith is convincingly set forth by one of the greatest of modern Church historians, Kenneth Scott Latourette, in the concluding chapter of his most recent work, *A History of Christianity*.

As the Church confronts our complex age her leaders may gain guidance and encouragement from the experiences of past leaders. What is more inspiring than the magnificent courage of Bishop Ambrose in calling the great Emperor Theodosius to account; the bold stand of Leo I against the foreign invaders in Italy; the thrilling life battle of Hildebrand against the foes of the Church; the winsome love service of Saint Francis; the daring ventures of Roger Bacon into realms forbidden; the challenging crusade of Luther; the marvellously effective spiritual renaissance wrought by Loyola; the passion of social prophets of recent times?

The architects of Church Union also have much to learn from the study of Church History. John T. McNeill, in his *Unitive Protestantism*, has rendered a most valuable service in counteracting the generally accepted criticism that Protestantism has been divisive and that the Protestant theology has been largely responsible for the growth of so large a number of

denominations. He reminds us that there is a fundamental Protestant catholicity, an ecumenical outlook. Luther, Bucher and Melanchthon all lent their support to reunion activities. Calvin wrote extensively on the Biblical and theological bases of Christian reunion. Cranmer vigorously worked for a Reformed Consensus. Other writers on the subject of Church Union have drawn lessons from the past history of the Church. It is clear that the prospects for the successful consummation of Christian reunion will be immeasurably greater if there can be a wider study of the history of the Church, both by leaders and ordinary members.

5. *And, finally, a study of Church History will lead to a deeper appreciation of the person and work of the Founder of the Church.* The full significance of the life and work of Jesus Christ cannot be exhaustively revealed within the limits of the New Testament. As we note the marvellous touch of Christ, not only upon His immediate disciples and followers, but also upon an Origen, an Augustine, a Francis, a Luther, a Tolstoy, a Kagawa, we begin to sense the real meaning of His life. As Latourette has observed, 'To be seen in its proper perspective the entire course of mankind on the planet must be surveyed with reference to Christ, from the incarnation in Jesus Christ, through his teaching, deeds, life, and resurrection, and it is no accident but of the very stuff of history that chronology is measured as B.C.—before Christ—and A.D., *anno Domini*, the year of the Lord of men and of history.'

At a time when the traditional religions of India are awaking and are setting forth their claims for consideration as world religions, reinterpreting the work and influence of the founders and leaders of their own faiths in modern terms, often seeking to equate them in influence and authority with Jesus Christ, it is all the more important that we assist our students, through the study of the pages of Church History, to arrive at an adequate appraisal of the claims of Jesus as 'the Lord of men and of History'.

II. THE STUDY OF CHURCH HISTORY

C. E. ABRAHAM

What is Church History ?

In discussing Church History curricula there are certain preliminary questions that need to be asked, as these have a bearing on the subject. The first of these questions is 'What is Church History?' In Church History what are we most concerned with? Is it the history of the origin and development of the Church as an institution, or the history of the emergence and development of the Christian faith, its conflict with other faiths and the vicissitudes of its career down the ages? Or, limiting the idea of faith still further, is it the development of the

convictions and of the point of view that one holds and tracing them back through the centuries and finding confirmation for the same in the New Testament? Or, yet again, taking a broader view, may we define Church History as the history of the development of the interaction of three forces in human history—the Gospel, the Church and the World (this is how Bishop Stephen Neill chose to describe Church History in a recent conference of Church historians held in Bossey in Switzerland). As far as the present writer is concerned he would plead for the broader rather than the narrower conception of Church History and from this point of view Church History may be defined as the story of the people of God known as Christians, in their understanding of the faith that held them together, and in their attempt to express that faith in terms relevant to the life of the individual and society, and in their efforts to uphold and propagate that faith in the world in the face of rival faiths and no faiths. In other words Church History is the history of the Church as understanding, interpreting, expressing and propagating its faith in the world. Church History, to put it negatively, is not the history of Christian ideas nor the history of the culture of people who have become Christians, but positively, it is the story of the way in which people all over the world have reacted and still do react to the Christian Gospel. This reaction is a continuing process and Church History therefore is a continuing history. To change the metaphor, it is the story of a whole army on the march and not the despatches of war correspondents on selected engagements in the campaign launched by our Lord. If Church History is viewed in the comprehensive manner suggested above it may be objected that it embraces the whole field of theological studies, including Christian doctrine, liturgics and Christian ethics. There is no intention to lay claim to all these fields to be included in the scope of Church History, but it is well to bear in mind the close relation that different branches of theological discipline have one towards one another and especially to Church History.

Why study Church History?

Another question that is pertinent to our enquiry is 'Why study Church History?' The reason for the study of a subject is vitally related to its nature; in fact the latter often determines the former. If we look at the past history of the teaching of Church History in India we may see certain trends in the reasons for such study. These trends are by no means confined to schools or teachers in India and may be illustrated from other countries too.

Church History has been studied and taught for dogmatic and apologetic purposes and very often in the interests of particular denominations. The Church History Deputation to the

Orient observed that 'When practical values are sought in the study of Church History, sometimes they are restricted largely to apologetic or dogmatic interests, as though the chief purpose in studying Christian history was to defend the validity of a particular kind of ecclesiastical organization, ritual practice or doctrinal formula' (Report of the Church History Deputation to the Orient, September 1931 to March 1932, p. 74). It may be asserted with confidence that this observation is much less true today of schools in India than when it was written 24 years ago. Yet it cannot be said that this attitude is fast disappearing. No one would care to belittle the value of the witness to truth that different groups or denominations are bearing in the present divided state of the Church in the world. Every bit of truth needs to be conserved and safeguarded for the Church that is to be.

A consequence, however, of this dogmatic and denominational approach has been that the study of Church History has tended to become patchy, parted and one-sided. To some there is little or no Church History after the Council of Chalcedon or at best after the first seven ecumenical councils, or between the New Testament and the Reformation; other periods are of interest only as exhibiting the idiosyncrasies of particular individuals and sects. By implication this may be construed as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, who is supposed to have been on holiday except at particular periods of one's choice.

A point of view that may be subscribed to by all of us is that concentration on a particular epoch or era should not mean blindness to the workings of the Holy Spirit of God in the history of men at other times.

In contrast to this mode of approach to the study of Church History a new attitude is being developed in recent times as a result of two causes—(a) a scientific view of history, (b) the ecumenical outlook of the Church. As historical methods become more scientific there is a likelihood of history being written and studied more objectively, though it is doubtful, human beings as we are, whether the shadow of subjectivity will ever be detached from the works of man. Every statement of fact is an interpretation and an unbiased historian, as someone has said, is a phenomenon. Again as the ecumenical movement gains ground throughout the world the denominational view of Church loses in respectability. But it is by no means clear that the tide has turned in favour of ecumenism as yet. All the indications are that a new bout of confessionalism provoked by ecumenism is much in evidence in various parts of the world. Ecumenism itself may become a phobia as bad as denominationalism, but if historians seek to serve the vital interests of truth preserved in these two approaches this new ecumenical attitude has every chance of being established on a secure foundation.

How to study Church History

The value for inspiration and guidance of the study of Church History has perhaps not received adequate attention in India and this aspect therefore will bear stressing again. The truth in Carlyle's dictum that the Bible of every nation is its history needs to be brought home to the Church in India. Another thinker expresses the same truth even more forcibly by saying: 'All our hopes of the future depend on a sound understanding of the past.' If illumination for the problems of the present is to be sought in the lessons of the past, history should be studied in such a way as to yield its meaning for the present generation. Church History should outlive its reputation of being 'a graveyard study' concerned with the dry bones of the dates and events of the past, but must become a study of issues that are of vital relevance to us at the present time. Then only can history act as 'the best cordial for drooping spirits' in accordance with a prescription given long ago by a celebrated historian.

It is against this background that the present writer would make the suggestion that the best results are perhaps obtained by a combination of an intensive study of the history of one period or country with a survey course of the ecumenical history that is apposite to that period or country. By intensive study is meant not merely acquaintance with the details of developments in the Church but also observation and study of the Church (understood in the wider sense of the community of God's people) in relation to its environment on the one hand and its objectives on the other; or in other words, the Church, the Gospel and the World in their relations to one another. Dr. Latourette in his seven volumes described by the Oxford University as a seven-fold shield against ignorance has given a notable demonstration of this method. He asks three main questions among others with regard to the different periods in Church History he deals with:

- (i) What effect has Christianity had on its environment?
- (ii) What has been the effect of the environment on Christianity?
- (iii) What bearing do the processes by which Christianity spread have upon the effect of Christianity on its environment, and of the environment upon Christianity, or in other words what are the causes of success and failure in reaching the objectives before the Church?

If, as stated above, the object of our study of the past is to find illumination for the present a detailed study along the lines indicated above is essential. Again it is best done in relation to a country with which the student and the teacher are most familiar, preferably one's own country. There is only one proviso to be thought of and that is that the history of Christianity in that country should extend over a fairly long period, say a century, so as to afford the data for the above enquiry. To take an

illustration we may list some of the problems facing the Church in India today :

- (a) the union of churches and questions regarding the ministry and the sacraments raised in this connection,
- (b) the naturalizing of the Church in the cultural soil of the country,
- (c) the most effective methods of Christian propaganda,
- (d) the nature of Christian literature for apologetic and instructional purposes,
- (e) the ministry of lay people, including that of women,
- (f) how best to apply Christian principles in the social, economic and political aspects of the life of the nation ?

In the solution of these and other problems a study of Christian history should prove of the utmost service. It is then with such a purpose in view that an intensive study of selected periods or areas of Church History should be taken up in every theological institution.

This intensive study must, however, go hand in hand with a comprehensive survey, a panoramic view of the particular period or area covered so that the field of study may be seen in its proper perspective. While we are seeking answers to our questions it may happen that we may not be able to see the wood for the trees, hence the need for the right kind of background to our study. It is a truism to say that when we isolate a period or area in history we mutilate it ; it is only as a part of the general ongoing Christian movement that we can see the history of a particular period or area or of a group of churches in the right perspective. This does not presuppose that the historian assumes an alignment of all the churches all down the centuries in an ecumenical movement starting from the first century, reading into the past what is not to be seen there. Even when conflict rather than unity seems to be the keynote of inter-church relations, as in the period of the great theological controversies or in that of the Great Divide in Church History in the eleventh century, it is well to see the different churches against the total background of the main currents of Church life in the period. Perhaps a discerning observer may detect underlying bonds of unity in the Church's life behind apparent tension and conflict.

Thus a comprehensive survey is as important as an intensive study of a particular period and one may be taken as complementary to the other.

III. THE TEACHING OF INDIAN CHURCH HISTORY

H. W. GENSICHEN

The subject of this paper should not be viewed in isolation but in the context of the teaching of Church History in general,

or rather in the still wider context of the Christian interpretation of history. If it is true that, as has been said by a great historiographer, even the study of general history will necessarily end up in theology, the teaching of church history is a theological task of the first order, and its methods and aims cannot merely be governed by the requirements of a degree course. It must take into account the broader principles suggested by the first historian of the church, St. Luke, when he, in his account of the Day of Pentecost, referred to 'ta megaleia tou theou', the mighty works of God, as the substance of what we would call church history (Acts 2:11).

The first principle implied in this definition has to do with the factual character of God's acting in church history. Just as the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ was an historical fact, the history of the church moves on on the level of actual facts, not on the level of Lessing's general truths of reason or on the level of pious imagination and wishful thinking. The obligation to distinguish properly between facts and conjectures, history and legend, is based on the incarnation itself. No teaching of Church History is worth while unless it takes the factual character of the mighty works of God seriously.

The second principle involves the recognition that the mighty works of God as such can be discerned by faith only. Neither the incarnation nor the ongoing history of the church as the Body of Christ in this world is evident, plausible or demonstrable apart from the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. Church History is not in itself a part of God's revelation. It shows the ongoing story of our salvation as hidden under what Goethe deemed a blend of human error and violence, or, in the words of Blaise Pascal, its deepest meaning is the continuing struggle of Jesus with the powers of darkness till the end of time. No teaching of Church History is worth while unless it makes room for this constant challenge to the faith of those who teach and those who learn.

The Factual Character of Church History

Applying this to the teaching of Indian Church History, the first principle alone reveals a task of tremendous magnitude. The docetic trend of Indian thought, its tendency to disregard historical facts seems to create an ever-present smoke-screen behind which the facts are vanishing, dissolved into ideological or legendary mists. This is amply borne out by the lack of reliable Indian sources for the study of Indian Church History as well as in everyday class-room practice with students to whom a hundred, if not a thousand, years are easily as one day. They will write with full assurance—to quote just two examples from examination papers—that Thomas of Cana, who settled down in Malabar some time between the fourth and the eighth century, was a 'rich American', or that Thomas Aquinas had a distinct

aversion against Luther, and it is not easy to convince them that such details of chronology really matter. A reliable up-to-date Church History of India remains still to be written and is probably the most immediate need for the proper teaching of this subject, not to speak of the long-felt wish for a series of authentic biographies of great men and women of the Indian church, a foretaste of which was given in Bishop Neill's *Builders of the Indian Church* (now unfortunately out of print).

Turning to the various periods of the history of Christianity in India, it must be stated with gratitude that the confusion prevailing hitherto with regard to the earliest period has now largely been overcome since the publication of Bishop Brown's book on 'The Indian Christians of St. Thomas' (1956). This is not the place to show in detail what remains of the whole complex body of St. Thomas' traditions after an analysis from the point of view of modern impartial research, as carried out by Bishop Brown. Suffice it to say that there is definitely no evidence for a mission of St. Thomas to South India. Neither Malabar nor Mylapore has any demonstrable claim to an apostolic mission. It may be possible to make out a case for St. Thomas' coming to the Parthian India of the north-west. But if there was such a mission nothing is known about the church that has grown out of it.

It will be the urgent task of the teaching of Indian Church History to focus all attention on what can reasonably be established about the coming into history of the Indian church. Nobody need be afraid of lack of material or boredom if conjectures are consistently substituted by facts. There is a good deal of excitement left in the story of early Indian Christianity. There is also considerable scope for the expansion of our knowledge of the facts. To give just one example: not a single English work on Indian church history, including Bishop Brown's book, has as yet taken note of Mani's visit to India in 240 or 241, though his own description of it has been available for about twenty years. All in all, the teaching of early Indian Church History offers all the attraction of, and demands all the care necessary for, cultivating a largely virgin soil, even if we have to assume that the story began with the coming of Christian traders from East Syria or Persia rather than with an apostolic mission. And what is more, there is simply no substitute for all the lessons on the problems of 'indigenization' of Christianity, both in a positive and in a negative sense, than that which can be derived from a study of the further developments of the Syrian Church in India. In any event, the teaching of early Indian Church History has only to gain if it will henceforth more rigorously submit itself to the apostolic maxim that 'we cannot do anything against the truth'.

Bishop Brown's book will also be of great value for the study of the post-Portuguese period of Indian Church History. It will help the teacher more carefully to distinguish between light and

shade in the expansion of the Roman Church, specially in relation to the Syrian Christians, as full use has been made of the sources from both sides. It has become customary to think, for example, of the actions of Archbishop Menezes in terms of ecclesiastical imperialism only. But it ought not to be forgotten that the Jesuits made persistent efforts to eradicate many Hindu practices current among the Syrian Christians and to stimulate in them a sense of evangelistic responsibility which had never before been in evidence.

The Quarter Millennium Jubilee of the Tranquebar Mission should have led to a more balanced assessment of the significance of that great pioneering venture for all Protestant churches in India, extending far beyond the limits of the Lutheran denomination. Professor A. Lehmann's book, *It Began in Tranquebar*, can serve as a useful guide for every teacher who wants to bring home to his students that, in the words of Bishop Stephen Neill, on Indian soil 'a new epoch opened in the development and expansion of the Christian society in the world', and that 'these first attempts of the Lutherans were to point the way to the grandiose achievements of William Carey'. Nobody will diminish the importance of Carey and Serampore. But one may remember that, to quote Bishop Neill again, 'Anglo-Saxons have tended to exaggerate the part played by Carey, forgetting that he was building on the experience of the pioneers of the eighteenth century'.

The Discernment of Faith

What may be said about the teaching of nineteenth and twentieth century Church History in India leads on to the second of the two principles mentioned above, the task of making the facts of history come alive on the level of the faith of the individual and the witness of the church. This is of course largely a matter of the personal attitude and convictions of the teacher. Nevertheless attention may be drawn to a few selected points which appear to be suitable for developing this specific theological dimension of depth in the teaching of Indian Church History.

In the first place, the tension of the denominational and the ecumenical aspect may be mentioned. Looking at the bare historical facts only, most of nineteenth century Church History in India appears to be the history of denominational enterprises, and only too easily the teacher will be tempted to present it exclusively as such, even more so if he is careful enough to follow Richter's account for which there is still no substitute. Perhaps the denominational attachment of the teacher will lead him to emphasize one trend of development at the expense of the others, or, what would be worse, he may decide lightly to pass over this whole period and hurry to reach the safe haven of Sundkler's splendid account of the movement for church union in South

India. But neither procedure would in itself solve the theological problem: How to make the student aware that in, with and under the embarrassing multitude of denomination all missionary enterprises and their developments God has been able to build His One Catholic Church in this country? There is no room here to suggest a solution of the problem. But the problem must be faced, and it will certainly not do to dismiss the whole nineteenth century or, for that matter, the co-existence of separate churches in India since the sixteenth century, as a colossal blunder for which we can only repent on behalf of our misguided fathers. Incidentally, the problem will also have to be solved if the movement for church union is to be dealt with in an intelligent way. A church like the Church of South India is in itself evidence for the fact that denominational churches are to be taken seriously if a truly ecumenical approach is to be evolved. We are fortunate indeed to have in Sundkler's book not only an admirably exact factual account of the church union movement but also an excellent guide into the theological problems implied in it.

Closely related to this problem is another one which constantly puts our teaching of Indian Church History to the test. Regional Church History is always in the danger of being treated as something narrow and provincial, with no universal appeal, and time and again the teacher of Indian Church History may feel the temptation to escape into the loftier realms in which the main streams of church history seem to flow. However, in such an attempt he may miss the full blessings of his task. A narrow provincialism may certainly be a real menace. But, as has rightly been said, the Biblical Gospels are provincial and hence universal, and that distinguishes them from the massive and magnificent generalities of the Dialogues of Plato. Church History, too, has to be of immediate interest somewhere in order to be of any interest everywhere. In other words, the universal appeal in regional Indian Church History is there, if we are only able to bring it out, without sacrificing all the life and colour of the actual events in the local and regional setting. Only thus the teacher will be able to present Indian Church History as what it really is—a regional manifestation of the history of the Church universal, rooted in Christ and related to the soil of India. On the other hand, this may also be the only way effectively to meet the charge that the history of the Christian church in India amounts to just another chapter in the wicked story of foreign imperialism. It would be a poor defence indeed hurriedly to condemn all the world-wide connexions which have enriched the Indian church from the earliest period to this day, and to withdraw into the imaginary self-sufficiency of an Indian Christian ghetto. The past history of the church in India offers more than one example for the almost suicidal effects of such a move—from Roberto de Nobili to the short-lived National Church of India, founded in 1885 by Dr. Pulney Andy—and it may not least be the teacher of Indian Church

History who is today called upon to watch over the proper balance and co-ordination of the provincial and the universal aspect.

There is still another context in which the church historian will have good reasons to warn against the dangers of the ghetto. Bishop Brown has made it unmistakably clear that there is a distinct relationship between the traditional equation of church and community among the majority of the Syrian Christians and their lack of evangelistic zeal. All this has long been known, and there is no need to elaborate on it. But the teacher of Indian Church History who feels the need for a theological penetration of his subject may more than others be in a position to safeguard the necessary golden mean between the Catholic and the Evangelical principle, the static and the dynamic aspect, the church in being, as it manifests itself chiefly in the worshipping community, and the church in movement for which evangelism is a matter of life and death. Here again the solution cannot be found in an either-or but rather in that equilibrium which alone corresponds to the teaching of the New Testament and the need of which has in so many instances been borne out in the course of Indian Church History.

Finally, it may be fitting to recall the little-known fact that what may be one of the earliest references to the existence of a church in India is a reference to martyrdom. Toward the end of the fourth century Symeon of Mesopotamia mentions 'Indian barbarians' who have given their lives for Christ's sake, and a Syrian catalogue of martyrs, dating back to about the same time, may be taken to confirm this. Since then persecution has been the companion of the church in India through the centuries. This may appear insignificant, as for example the first half of our century alone has elsewhere taken a heavier toll of lives of persecuted Christians than any of the previous centuries, while the Indian church has at the same time been able to live and develop in comparative peace. But more important than the comparing of figures is the fact that in India, too, the blood of martyrs has proved to be the seed of the church, and the world has been an uneasy home for Christians in many ways. Whenever the church tries to make itself too much at home in this world, it is in danger of denying its character as the *ecclesia pressa*, the church under the cross. It is not the least theological task of the teaching of Indian Church History to keep alive the testimony of those earliest martyrs, of the fourteenth century martyrs of Tana, and of the countless others who have since then joined this noble band of witnesses—not in order to cultivate a vain hero-worship or a morbid other-worldliness, but to underline the true dimension of the life of the church as part of a kingship that ultimately is not of this world, and of Christian existence as governed by a *politeuma* that is in heaven. This emphasis will not be popular. It may be misconstrued as a symptom of a timid defeatism, at a time when the cry of the hour is for more and closer 'identification' of the church with

its environment. But the history of the Indian church teaches clearly that no such identification has been a blessing as long as it amounted to the church's conforming itself to its age, in the sense of the apostolic warning (Rom. 12:2), whether by compromising with non-Christian beliefs, by association with the aims of colonial authorities or by propagation of a social gospel.

Though the teacher of Church History has aptly been described as a prophet turned backward, he knows as little as anybody whether in the future evil days will befall Christianity in India. It would certainly be wrong unnecessarily to dramatize events and situations by which the free propagation of the Gospel in India is unjustly restricted, though the church historian should carefully take note of them. Yet if there is any lesson at all to be learned from Indian church history, it should be this that no such situation should catch the church unawares, and that there should be no other answer to it than more fervent prayer, more serious self-scrutiny and more courageous witnessing to the full truth of the Gospel.

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It is the steady and even dynamic control of almost cosmic forces that we meet in the Johannine interpretation of the inner rhythm of the life of Jesus. We have the manas, the buddhi, and then the ātman or puruṣa in the threefold division of Indian psychology. The Synoptic tradition describes with great vividness the manas and buddhi of the Lord; but the Johannine view looks into the ātman of the Lord, dark with excess of light, transcending the deepest scrutiny of the intellect. It is only when the soul of the bhakta and jñānī are in union with the soul of the Lord that these great truths are flashed into the soul.

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The miracles of Jesus are . . . not indeed evidences of what is called His divinity; what is of far more importance, they point to Him as the supreme norm, constituting the highest region or loka of God. Some of those who participate in His nature are also endowed with these gifts, for the upbuilding of the body of Christ, making it free from physical and mental deformities.

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The immanence of our Lord Jesus Christ, if it has any meaning for men, is the postulation of the immanence of His ātman in human lives. That is, as Christian anubhava and śruti have agreed in emphasizing, the Lord Jesus, the Galilaean, is still with us; and His once historical personality, His life and death, have in some unaccountable way established this immanence. Today we speak of Him as the exalted Jesus, but He who ascended is the same as He who once descended. Our contention is that the avaroḥaṇa of Jesus and his āroḥaṇa are the rhythmic processes of the one indivisible Divine act. The humiliation and exaltation, the death and resurrection, the historical Jesus and the spiritual Jesus constitute the two sides of the one reality.