

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Missionaries and a United Church.

SOUTH INDIAN Christians are facing anew what is a very old problem; varying customs of missionaries, and the need of one strong native church. It is interesting to see how this problem was faced on another field.

The district had had a few feeble Christians, who were swept out of it by a new race of conquerors, though behind a belt of lagoons they kept a precarious footing. The invaders occupied a territory bounded most effectively by water and jungle, of perhaps 470 square miles.

After a few abortive missionary attempts, three different denominations, from different countries, succeeded within a few years. One man seems to have come single-handed, and to have aimed high. He established himself at court, and persuaded the rajah to send his daughters to boarding-school on the home field. Before long he was able to baptize the rajah. He travelled round with the court, and so was in constant touch with all who sought justice. He was able presently to form two centres, on opposite coasts, from one of which he could look across the lagoons to where the untouchables, Christians of the exiled race, lingered on their islands. Later on, the young ranees came back, and themselves opened a boarding-school for girls at a third centre. He had made the movement native.

A second denomination from another quarter was represented by a group of four, one of whom had had long experience on a different field. He too won the favour of the rajah, who let him occupy a deserted fortress, remnant of a by-gone civilization. The methods here were based largely on Bible-study. Itinerants would interest the villagers, get boys entrusted to them, teach them to read the scriptures, and train them to act as evangelists and pastors to their own countrymen. The rajah so appreciated this method that he abdicated, and founded a new settlement on the same lines, of which he became head. It sounds like the Buddha.

A third man had a more varied preparation. He was perhaps of the same race as the second group, but not of the same country; of gentle birth, with a good general education; then had gone abroad for special missionary preparation. There he met the young ranees, and was indeed constituted their guardian. The field for his work was obvious, and he was offered his choice of the royal domains. He preferred to break new ground, and was allowed to clear a peninsula round which a river looped,

near the sea. Here he established a co-educational centre, which flourished so well that in a few years he put up most substantial buildings, spoken of with admiration for years after.

A fourth man, with yet other experience and connections, started work in an adjoining tribe, and won its rajah, who crossed the border and was baptized close to number three, in the presence of his brother rajah. Inter-marriages now facilitated work greatly, despite setbacks.

In a distant district, there was a similar variety of work; and the converts were puzzled at the importance attached by some missionaries to their denominational customs. A rajah was winning his way to become Maharajah; Constantine in like fashion had seen that if Christianity was to be worked into his political system, it had better be rationalized and standardized. So the Maharajah invited the leading missionaries to state their cases, and then decided on the system he would adopt. Constantine had let the bishops argue, and vote, then he enforced the majority decision: the Maharajah heard the missionaries, but he decided, and enforced his own decision. Several missionaries, of different denominations, took this very badly; some withdrew altogether and went home, one aspiring man left the country but broke new ground in two other districts.

News of these distant proceedings came hither. No trouble is known, though it does seem possible that the second group transferred its energies to another field. Without any dramatic event, the work went steadily on. Number three was wise enough to acquiesce in the people giving him a name of their own, like Li-Ti-Mo-Tai; and indeed his original name dropped out of knowledge; he grasped the importance of identifying himself with his converts. His fame grew, and a Maharaneé visiting from the Maharajah's kingdom took back such an account that a promising young convert came to study under him, transporting his reputation and his methods to a land he never saw. A little town grew up, a few miles from his headquarters, called after him, like MacMillanpatna or Arthington; then a second in another direction.

A masterful ecclesiastic arrived from a fifth quarter, strong on uniformity of Faith and Order. He tried to unify the various mission-fields, and invited several rajahs and missionaries to meet him. He brought with him the conception that one area must be under the superintendence of one man, the Bishop; and he read resolutions to that effect agreed upon in early days round the Mediterranean. He wanted the same plan in this congeries of petty kingdoms and missions, and desired to plot them out geographically, multiplying the dioceses. But vested interests were too much for him. In the kingdom we are studying, all

that was done on his lines was to establish two territorial Bishops, instead of one. Moreover, from their jurisdiction were expressly excepted all the mission-centres already existing, and apparently any others their heads might choose to establish. Our man number Three did not become a territorial Bishop, but continued as a missionary-bishop. And it would seem that he continued on his own lines, planting new Christian centres; while it is regrettable to add that by the territorial Bishops nothing seems to have been done. "Walker of Tinnevely" was never a bishop, but he is better known than those who were, in his area.

One of his former wards, a ranee, was struck with pity at the untouchables in the lagoons. They had indeed a minister of their own, but there was a fair-sized island with some 600 families. She crossed thither, and established a strong centre in their midst, to which they soon attached themselves, and before long we find the two races blending; Christian family names show descent from both stocks still.

Our man died after some thirty years' work; like Samson he did much by his death as well as by his life. A few more centres seem to have been named after him at once, like "Spurgeon Memorial" churches where Spurgeon never trod. Far away, a man who had never met him, on retiring from a large bishopric, built a church which he dedicated in his honour. It is a sign that there was no jealousy between the territorial Bishop and the missionary-bishop of another denomination.

He had two posthumous periods of fame. Another wave of pirate-settlers conquered the kingdom, and no records were made locally for a century. But when the veil was lifted, it proved that many Christians survived, and that they cherished a deep attachment to him. When old churches, destroyed by the newer race, were to be rebuilt, they contended for his body. The Maharajah went on Solomon's lines, but improved; the body was divided into three or four, and he took one part as his fee. The ranee's old island centre obtained one portion, the rajah's old centre took a second; a third was taken in procession to yet another island; while to a new capital went the remainder, and at every halting-place a church was named after him.

Yet another race conquered, which had splendid ideas of architecture. At a re-constituted centre, a diligent student became interested in origins, and produced a full-length biography—on whose credibility it is not wise to rely. The missionary's body was in demand again, almost like the Holy Cross. Fresh churches were named after him, in districts he never visited. One of these was afterwards rebuilt on such a magnificent scale that it gave its name to the town. And from that town emigrants went thousands of miles to a land he never dreamed of, founding

a new Boston which in the New World commemorates the faithful missionary Botolph.

South India to-day is facing the same problem that concerned the South Folk of East Anglia in the seventh century. The missionaries from Burgundy, Ireland, the Scots, Lindisfarne, did not quarrel; and when an organizer from Tarsus tried to impose Roman methods on the island, the native converts adopted just as many as they liked. May history repeat itself.

A CHAP BOOK. In the British Museum, at 1078. k. 17 (13), is "A New History Of All Religions . . . By A. Campbell, Falkirk, Stirling: Printed and Sold by C. Randall 1806." This queer little publication abounds in statements which will not be found elsewhere. Thus of the Quakers it is said (p. 15) that "their founder was one David George, a respectable Shoemaker in Oxford." The previous page (p. 14) is headed, "Of The Pedobaptists," and begins thus: "They baptize none till the person actually profess faith in Christ." After some further remarks, the page closes with this statement: "But are improperly called Anabaptists; for the Anabaptists are another Sect, who baptize all their members every year. The Latin word *Anno*, from which Anabaptist is derived, signifieth year; and therefore that denomination may more plainly (*sic*) be rendered Yearly-Bapstit (*sic*)." A further reference to Anabaptists occurs on p. 22, which is headed, "Of The Douglasites," and begins thus: "They hold the heresy of the Originists (*sic*), and some German Anabaptists, viz., that not only the wicked, but the devils themselves, after suffering the torments of hell for an appointed period, shall be received into the favour of God, and be made for ever blessed and happy." Why these persons were called Douglasite is not here stated; for the source of their views see the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* under Neil Douglas (1750-1823). Perhaps the above fancies of A. Campbell may be new to your readers.

A. GORDON.

SUTCLIFF'S ACADEMY AT OLNEY. The list of scholars educated by John Sutcliff, of Yorkshire and Bristol, chiefly for the B.M.S., which was annotated in our last volume at page 276, was furnished by the Rev. Maurice F. Hewett, pastor of the Sutcliff Baptist Church. It was compiled by Mr. Thomas Wright, who found the materials in various nonconformist magazines collected by Taylor of Northampton, which are now deposited in the Carnegie Library of that town. It is possible that Sutcliff had other pupils also. Any scraps of information are always welcome for publication.